Title: Ernest Linwood; or, The Inner Life of the Author

Author: Caroline Lee Hentz

Release date: January 27, 2007 [eBook #20462]
Most recently updated: January 1, 2021

Language: English

Credits: Produced by David Garcia, Mary Meehan and the Online Distributed Proofreading Team at https://www.pgdp.net (This file was produced from images generously made available by The Kentuckiana Digital Library)

ERNEST LINWOOD;

OR,

THE INNER LIFE OF THE AUTHOR.

BY MRS. CAROLINE LEE HENTZ.

AUTHOR OF "LINDA; OR, THE YOUNG PILOT OF THE BELLE CREOLE," "THE BANISHED SON," "COURTSHIP AND MARRIAGE; OR, THE JOYS AND SORROWS OF AMERICAN LIFE," "THE PLANTER'S NORTHERN BRIDE; OR, SCENES IN MRS. HENTZ CHILDHOOD," "LOVE AFTER MARRIAGE," "MARCUS WARLAND; OR, THE LONG MOSS SPRING," "EOLINE; OR, MAGNOLIA VALE; OR, THE HEIRESS OF GLENMORE," "HELEN AND ARTHUR; OR, MISS THUSA'S SPINNING-WHEEL," "RENA; OR, THE SNOW BIRD," "THE LOST DAUGHTER," "ROBERT GRAHAM;" A SEQUEL TO "LINDA," ETC.

PHILADELPHIA:
T. B. PETERSON & BROTHERS;
306 CHESTNUT STREET.

"Thou hast called me thine angel in moments of bliss,
Still thine angel I'll prove mid the horrors of this.
Through the furnace unshrinking thy steps I'll pursue,
And shield thee, and save thee, and perish there too."

CONTENTS

ERNEST LINWOOD.

CHAPTER I.

With an incident of my childhood I will commence the record of my life. It stands out in bold prominence, rugged and bleak, through the haze of memory.

I was only twelve years old. He might have spoken less harshly. He might have remembered and pitied my youth and sensitiveness, that tall, powerful, hitherto kind man,—my preceptor, and, as I believed, my friend. Listen to what he did say, in the presence of the whole school of boys, as well as girls, assembled on that day to hear the weekly exercises read, written on subjects which the

master had given us the previous week.

One by one, we were called up to the platform, where he sat enthroned in all the majesty of the Olympian king-god. One by one, the manuscripts were read by their youthful authors,—the criticisms uttered, which marked them with honor or shame,—gliding figures passed each other, going and returning, while a hasty exchange of glances, betrayed the flash of triumph, or the gloom of disappointment.

"Gabriella Lynn!" The name sounded like thunder in my ears. I rose, trembling, blushing, feeling as if every pair of eyes in the hall were burning like redhot balls on my face. I tried to move, but my feet were glued to the floor.

"Gabriella Lynn!"

The tone was louder, more commanding, and I dared not resist the mandate. The greater fear conquered the less. With a desperate effort I walked, or rather rushed, up the steps, the paper fluttering in my hand, as if blown upon by a strong wind.

"A little less haste would be more decorous, Miss."

The shadow of a pair of beetling brows rolled darkly over me. Had I stood beneath an overhanging cliff, with the ocean waves dashing at my feet, I could not have felt more awe or dread. A mist settled on my eyes.

"Read,"—cried the master, waving his ferula with a commanding gesture,—"our time is precious."

I opened my lips, but no sound issued from my paralyzed tongue. With a feeling of horror, which the intensely diffident can understand, and only they, I turned and was about to fly back to my seat, when a large, strong hand pressed its weight upon my shoulder, and arrested my flight.

"Stay where you are," exclaimed Mr. Regulus. "Have I not lectured you a hundred times on this preposterous shame-facedness of yours? Am I a Draco, with laws written in blood, a tyrant, scourging with an iron rod, that you thus shrink and tremble before me? Read, or suffer the penalty due to disobedience and waywardness."

Thus threatened, I commenced in a husky, faltering voice the reading of lines which, till that moment, I had believed glowing with the inspiration of genius. Now, how flat and commonplace they seemed! It was the first time I had ever ventured to reveal to others the talent hidden with all a miser's vigilance in my bosom casket. I had lisped in rhyme,—I had improvised in rhyme,—I had dreamed in poetry, when the moon and stars were looking down on me with benignant lustre;—I had *thought* poetry at the sunset hour, amid twilight shadows and midnight darkness. I had scribbled it at early morn in my own little room, at noonday recess at my solitary desk; but no human being, save my mother, knew of the young dream-girl's poetic raptures.

One of those irresistible promptings of the spirit which all have felt, and to which many have yielded, induced me at this era to break loose from my shell and come forth, as I imagined, a beautiful and brilliant butterfly, soaring up above the gaze of my astonished and admiring companions. Yes; with all my diffidence I anticipated a scene of triumph, a dramatic scene, which would terminate perhaps in a crown of laurel, or a public ovation.

Lowly self-estimation is by no means a constant accompaniment of diffidence. The consciousness of possessing great powers and deep sensibility often creates bashfulness. It is their veil and guard while maturing and strengthening. It is the flower-sheath, that folds the corolla, till prepared to encounter the sun's burning rays.

"Read!"

I did read,—one stanza. I could not go on though the scaffold were the doom of my silence.

"What foolery is this! Give it to me."

The paper was pulled from my clinging fingers. Clearing his throat with a loud and prolonged hem,—then giving a flourish of his ruler on the desk, he read, in a tone of withering derision, the warm breathings of a child's heart and soul, struggling after immortality,—the spirit and trembling utterance of long cherished, long imprisoned yearnings.

Now, when after years of reflection I look back on that never-to-be-forgotten moment, I can form a true estimate of the poem subjected to that fiery ordeal, I wonder the paper did not scorch and shrivel up like a burning scroll. It did not deserve ridicule. The thoughts were fresh and glowing, the measure correct, the versification melodious. It was the genuine offspring of a young imagination, urged by the "strong necessity" of giving utterance to its bright idealities, the sighings of a heart looking beyond its lowly and lonely destiny. Ah! Mr. Regulus, you were cruel then.

Methinks I see him,—hear him now, weighing in the iron scales of criticism every springing, winged idea, cutting and slashing the words till it seemed to me they dropped blood,—then glancing from me to the living rows of benches with such a cold, sarcastic smile.

"What a barbarous, unfeeling monster!" perhaps I hear some one exclaim.

No, he was not. He could be very kind and indulgent. He had been kind and generous to me. He gave me my tuition, and had taken unwearied pains with my lessons. He could forgive great

offences, but had no toleration for little follies. He really thought it a sinful waste of time to write poetry in school. He had given me a subject for composition, a useful, practical one, but not at all to my taste, and I had ventured to disregard it. I had jumped over the rock, and climbed up to the flowers that grew above it. He was a thorough mathematician, a celebrated grammarian, a renowned geographer and linguist, but I then thought he had no more ear for poetry or music, no more eye for painting,—the painting of God, or man,—than the stalled ox, or the Greenland seal. I did him injustice, and he was unjust to me. I had not intended to slight or scorn the selection he had made, but I could not write upon it,—I could not help my thoughts flowing into rhyme.

Can the stream help gliding and rippling through its flowery margins? Can the bird help singing and warbling upward into the deep blue sky, sending down a silver shower of melody as it flies?

Perhaps some may think I am swelling small things into great; but incidents and actions are to be judged by their results, by their influence in the formation of character, and the hues they reflect on futurity. Had I received encouragement instead of rebuke, praise instead of ridicule,—had he taken me by the hand and spoken some such kindly words as these:—

"This is very well for a little girl like you. Lift up that downcast face, nor blush and tremble, as if detected in a guilty act. You must not spend too much time in the reveries of imagination, for this is a working-day world, my child. Even the birds have to build their nests, and the coral insect is a mighty laborer. The gift of song is sweet, and may be made an instrument of the Creator's glory. The first notes of the lark are feeble, compared to his heaven-high strains. The fainter dawn precedes the risen day."

Oh! had he addressed me in indulgent words as these, who knows but that, like burning Sappho, I might have sang as well as loved? Who knows but that the golden gates of the Eden of immortality might have opened to admit the wandering Peri to her long-lost home? I might have been the priestess of a shrine of Delphic celebrity, and the world have offered burning incense at my altar. I might have won the laurel crown, and found, perchance, thorns hidden under its triumphant leaves. I might,—but it matters not. The divine spark is undying, and though circumstances may smother the flame it enkindles, it glows in the bosom with unquenchable fire.

I remember very well what the master said, instead of the imagined words I have written.

"Poetry, is it?—or something you meant to be called by that name? Nonsense, child—folly—moon-beam hallucination! Child! do you know that this is an unpardonable waste of time? Do you remember that opportunities of improvement are given you to enable you hereafter to secure an honorable independence? This accounts for your reveries over the blackboard, your indifference to mathematics, that grand and glorious science! Poetry! ha, ha! I began to think you did not understand the use of capitals,—ha, ha!"

Did you ever imagine how a tender loaf of bread must feel when cut into slices by the sharpened knife? How the young bark feels when the iron wedge is driven through it with cleaving force? I think *I* can, by the experience of that hour. I stood with quivering lip, burning cheek, and panting breast,—my eyes riveted on the paper which he flourished in his left hand, pointing *at* it with the forefinger of his right.

"He shall not go on,"—said I to myself, exasperation giving me boldness,—"he shall not read what I have written of my mother. I will die sooner. He may insult *my* poverty but hers shall be sacred, and her sorrows too."

I sprang forward, forgetting every thing in the fear of hearing *her* name associated with derision, and attempted to get possession of the manuscript. A fly might as well attempt to wring the trunk of the elephant.

"Really, little poetess, you are getting bold. I should like to see you try that again. You had better keep quiet."

A resolute glance of the keen, black eye, resolute, yet twinkling with secret merriment, and he was about to commence another stanza.

I jumped up with the leap of the panther. I could not loosen his strong grasp, but I tore the paper from round his fingers, ran down the steps through the rows of desks and benches, without looking to the right or left, and flew without bonnet or covering out into the broad sunlight and open air.

"Come back, this moment!"

The thundering voice of the master rolled after me, like a heavy stone, threatening to crush me as it rolled. I bounded on before it with constantly accelerating speed.

"Go back,—never!"

I said this to myself. I repeated it aloud to the breeze that came coolly and soothingly through the green boughs, to fan the burning cheeks of the fugitive. At length the dread of pursuit subsiding, I slackened my steps, and cast a furtive glance behind me. The cupola of the academy gleamed white through the oak trees that surrounded it, and above them the glittering vane, fashioned in the form of a giant pen, seemed writing on the azure page of heaven.

My home,—the little cottage in the woods, was one mile distant. There was a by-path, a foot-path, as it was called, which cut the woods in a diagonal line, and which had been trodden hard and

smooth by the feet of the children. Even at mid-day there was twilight in that solitary path, and when the shadows deepened and lengthened on the plain, they concentrated into gloominess there. The moment I turned into that path, I was supreme. It was *mine*. The public road, the thoroughfare leading through the heart of the town, belonged to the world. I was obliged to walk there like other people, with mincing steps, and bonnet tied primly under the chin, according to the rule and plummet line of school-girl propriety. But in my own little by-path, I could do just as I pleased. I could run with my bonnet swinging in my hand, and my hair floating like the wild vine of the woods. I could throw myself down on the grass at the foot of the great trees, and looking up into the deep, distant sky, indulge my own wondrous imaginings.

I did so now. I cast myself panting on the turf, and turning my face downward instead of upward, clasped my hands over it, and the hot tears gushed in scalding streams through my fingers, till the pillow of earth was all wet as with a shower.

Oh, they did me good, those fast-gushing tears! There was comfort, there was luxury in them. Bless God for tears! How they cool the dry and sultry heart! How they refresh the fainting virtues! How they revive the dying affections!

The image of my pale sweet, gentle mother rose softly through the falling drops. A rainbow seemed to crown her with its seven-fold beams.

Dear mother!—would she will me to go back where the giant pen dipped its glittering nib into the deep blue ether?

CHAPTER II.

"Get up, Gabriella,—you must not lie here on the damp ground. Get up,—it is almost night. What *will* your mother say? what *will* she think has become of you?"

I started up, bewildered and alarmed, passing my hands dreamily over my swollen eyelids. Heavy shadows hung over the woods. Night was indeed approaching. I had fallen into a deep sleep, and knew it not.

It was Richard Clyde who awakened me. His schoolmaster called him Dick, but I thought it sounded vulgar, and he was always Richard to me. A boy of fifteen, the hardest student in the academy, and, next to my mother and Peggy, the best friend I had in the world. I had no brother, and many a time had he acted a brother's part, when I had needed a manly champion. Yet my mother had enjoined on me such strict reserve in my intercourse with the boy pupils, and my disposition was so shy, our acquaintance had never approached familiarity.

"I did not mean to shake you so hard," said he, stepping back a few paces as he spoke, "but I never knew any one sleep so like a log before. I feared for a moment that you were dead."

"It would not be much matter if I were," I answered, hardly knowing what I said, for a dull weight pressed on my brain, and despondency had succeeded excitement.

"Oh, Gabriella! is it not wicked to say that?"

"If you had been treated as badly as I have, you would feel like saying it too."

"Yes!" he exclaimed, energetically, "you have been treated badly, shamefully, and I told the master so to his face."

"You! You did not, Richard. You only thought so. You would not have told him so for all the world."

"But I did, though! As soon as you ran out of school, it seemed as if he made but one step to the door, and his face looked as black as night. I thought if he overtook you, he might,—I did not know what he would do, he was so angry. I sat near the door, and I jumped right up and faced him on the threshold. 'Don't, sir, don't! I cried; she is a little girl, and you a great strong man.'

"'What is that to you, sirrah?' he exclaimed, and the forked lightning ran out of his eye right down my backbone. It aches yet, Gabriella.

"'It is a great deal, Sir,' I answered, as bold as a lion. 'You have treated her cruelly enough already. It would be cowardly to pursue her.'"

"Oh, Richard! how dared you say that? Did he not strike you?"

"He lifted his hand; but instead of flinching, I made myself as tall as I could, and looked at him right steadfastly. You do not know how pale he looked, when I stopped him on the threshold. His very lips turned white—I declare there is something grand in a great passion. It makes one look somehow so different from common folks. Well, now, as soon as he raised his hand to strike me, a red flush shot into his face, like the blaze of an inward fire. It was shame,—anger made him white—but shame turned him as red as blood. His arm dropped down to his side,—then he laid his hand on the top of his head,—'Stay after school,' said he, 'I must talk with you.'"

"And did you?" I asked, hanging with breathless interest on his words.

"Yes; I have just left him."

"He has not expelled you, Richard?"

"No; but he says I must ask his pardon before the whole school to-morrow. It amounts to the same thing. I will never do it."

"I am so sorry this has happened," said I. "Oh! that I had never written that foolish, foolish poetry. It has done so much mischief."

"You are not to blame, Gabriella. He had no business to laugh at it; it was beautiful—all the boys say so. I have no doubt you will be a great poetess one of these days. He ought to have been proud of it, instead of making fun of you. It was so mean."

"But you must go back to school, Richard. You are the best scholar. The master is proud of you, and will not give you up. I would not have it said that *I* was the cause of your leaving, for twice your weight in solid gold."

"Would you not despise me if I asked pardon, when I have done no wrong; to appear ashamed of what I glory in; to act the part of a coward, after publicly proclaiming *him* to be one?"

"It is hard," said I, "but—"

We were walking homeward all the while we were talking, and at every step my spirits sank lower and lower. How different every thing seemed now, from what it did an hour ago. True, I had been treated with harshness, but I had no right to rebel as I had done. Had I kissed the rod, it would have lost its sting,—had I borne the smart with patience and gentleness, my companions would have sympathized with and pitied me; it would not have been known beyond the walls of the academy. But now, it would be blazoned through the whole town. The expulsion of so distinguished a scholar as Richard Clyde would be the nine days' gossip, the village wonder. And I should be pointed out as the presumptuous child, whose disappointed vanity, irascibility, and passion had created rebellion and strife in a hitherto peaceful seminary. I, the recipient of the master's favors, an ingrate and a wretch! My mother would know this—my gentle, pale-faced mother.

Our little cottage was now visible, with its low walls of grayish white, and vine-encircled windows.

"Richard," said I, walking as slowly as possible, though it was growing darker every moment, "I feel very unhappy. I will go and see the master in the morning and ask him to punish me for both. I will humble myself for your sake, for you have been my champion, and I never will forget it as long as I live. I was wrong to rush out of school as I did,—wrong to tear the paper from his hands,—and I am willing to tell him so now. It shall all be right yet, Richard,—indeed it shall."

"You shall not humble yourself for me, Gabriella; I like a girl of spirit."

We had now reached the little gate that opened into our own green yard. I could see my mother looking from the window for her truant child. My heart began to palpitate, for no Catholic ever made more faithful confessions to his absolving priest, than I to my only parent. Were I capable of concealing any thing from her, I should have thought myself false and deceitful. With feelings of love and reverence kindred to those with which I regarded my Heavenly Father, I looked up to her, the incarnate angel of my life. This expression has been so often used it does not seem to mean much; but when I say it, I mean all the filial heart is capable of feeling. I was poor in fortune, but in her goodness rich. I was a lonely child, but sad and pensive as she was, she was a fountain of social joy to me. Then, she was so beautiful—so very, very lovely!

I caught the light of her pensive smile through the dimness of the hour. She was so accustomed to my roaming in the woods, she had suffered no alarm.

"If my mother thinks it right, you will not object to my going to see Mr. Regulus," said I, as Richard lifted the gate-latch for me to enter.

"For yourself, no; but not for me. I can take care of myself, Gabriella."

He spoke proudly. He did not quite come up to my childish idea of a boy hero, but I admired his self-reliance and bravery. I did not want him to despise me or my lack of spirit. I began to waver in my good resolution.

My mother called me, in that soft, gentle tone, so full of music and of love.

In ten minutes I had told her all.

CHAPTER III.

If I thought any language of mine could do justice to her character, I would try to describe my mother. Were I to *speak* of her, my voice would choke at the mention of her name. As I write, a mist gathers over my eyes. Grief for the loss of such a being is immortal, as the love of which it is born.

I have said that we were poor,—but ours was not abject poverty, hereditary poverty,—though *I* had never known affluence, or even that sufficiency which casts out the fear of want. I knew that my mother was the child of wealth, and that she had been nurtured in elegance and splendor. I inherited from her the most fastidious tastes, without the means of gratifying them. I felt that I had a right to be wealthy, and that misfortune alone had made my mother poor, had made her an alien from her kindred and the scenes of her nativity. I felt a strange pride in this conviction. Indeed there was a singular union of pride and diffidence in my character, that kept me aloof from my young companions, and closed up the avenues to the social joys of childhood.

My mother thought a school life would counteract the influence of her own solitary habits and example. She did not wish me to be a hermit child, and for this reason accepted the offer Mr. Regulus made through the minister to become a pupil in the academy. She might have sent me to the free schools in the neighborhood, but she did not wish me to form associations incompatible with the refinement she had so carefully cultivated in me. She might have continued to teach me at home, for she was mistress of every accomplishment, but she thought the discipline of an institution like this would give tone and firmness to my poetic and dreaming mind. She wanted me to become practical,—she wanted to see the bark growing and hardening over the exposed and delicate fibres. She anticipated for me the cold winds and beating rains of an adverse destiny. I knew she did, though she had never told me so in words. I read it in the anxious, wistful, prophetic expression of her soft, deep black eyes, whenever they rested on me. Those beautiful, mysterious eyes!

There was a mystery about her that gave power to her excellence and beauty. Through the twilight shades of her sorrowful loneliness, I could trace only the dim outline of her past life. I was fatherless,—and annihilation, as well as death, seemed the doom of him who had given me being. I was forbidden to mention his name. No similitude of his features, no token of his existence, cherished by love and hallowed by reverence, invested him with the immortality of memory. It was as if he had never been.

Thus mantled in mystery, his image assumed a sublimity and grandeur in my imagination, dark and oppressive as night. I would sit and ponder over his mystic attributes, till he seemed like those gods of mythology, who, veiling their divinity in clouds, came down and wooed the daughters of men. A being so lovely and good as my mother would never have loved a common mortal. Perhaps he was some royal exile, who had found her in his wanderings a beauteous flower, but dared not transplant her to the garden of kings.

My mother little thought, when I sat in my simple calico dress, my school-book open on my knees, conning my daily lessons, or seeming so to do, what wild, absurd ideas were revelling in my brain. She little thought how high the "aspiring blood" of mine mounted in that lowly, woodland cottage.

I told her the history of my humiliation, passion, and flight,—of Richard Clyde's brave defence and undaunted resolution,—of my sorrow on his account,—of my shame and indignation on my own.

"My poor Gabriella!"

"You are not angry with me, my mother?"

"Angry! No, my child, it was a hard trial,—very hard for one so young. I did not think Mr. Regulus capable of so much unkindness. He has cancelled this day a debt of gratitude."

"My poor Gabriella," she again repeated, laying her delicate hand gently on my head. "I fear you have a great deal to contend with in this rough world. The flowers of poesy are sweet, but poverty is a barren soil, my child. The dew that moistens it, is tears."

I felt a tear on my hand as she spoke. Child as I was, I thought that tear more holy and precious than the dew of heaven. Flowers nurtured by such moisture must be sweet.

"I will never write any more," I exclaimed, with desperate resolution. "I will never more expose myself to ridicule and contempt."

"Write as you have hitherto done, for my gratification and your own. Your simple strains have beguiled my lonely hours. But had I known your purpose, I would have warned you of the consequences. The child who attempts to soar above its companions is sure to be dragged down by the hand of envy. Your teacher saw in your effusion an unpardonable effort to rise above himself,—to diverge from the beaten track. You may have indulged too much in the dreams of imagination. You may have neglected your duties as a pupil. Lay your hand on your heart and ask it to reply."

She spoke so calmly, so soothingly, so rationally, the fever of imagination subsided. I saw the triumph of reason and principle in her own self-control,—for, when I was describing the scene, her mild eye flashed, and her pale cheek colored with an unwonted depth of hue. She had to struggle with her own emotions, that she might subdue mine.

"May I ask him to pardon Richard Clyde, mother?"

"The act would become your gratitude, but I fear it would avail nothing. If he has required submission of him, he will hardly accept yours as a substitute."

"Must I ask him to forgive me? Must I return?"

I hung breathlessly on her reply.

"Wait till morning, my daughter. We shall both feel differently then. I would not have you yield to the dictates of passion, neither would I have you forfeit your self-respect. I must not rashly counsel."

"I would not let her go back at all," exclaimed a firm, decided voice. "They ain't fit to hold the water to wash her hands."

"Peggy," said my mother, rebukingly, "you forget yourself."

"I always try to do that," she replied, while she placed on the table my customary supper of bread and milk.

"Yes, indeed you do," answered my mother, gratefully,—"kind and faithful friend. But humility becometh my child better than pride."

Peggy looked hard at my mother, with a mixture of reverence, pity, and admiration in her clear, honest eye, then taking a coarse towel, she rubbed a large silver spoon, till it shone brighter and brighter, and laid it by the side of my bowl. She had first spread a white napkin under it, to give my simple repast an appearance of neatness and gentility. The bowl itself was white, with a wreath of roses round the rim, both inside and out. Those rosy garlands had been for years the delight of my eyes. I always hailed the appearance of the glowing leaves, when the milky fluid sunk below them, with a fresh appreciation of their beauty. They gave an added relish to the Arcadian meal. They fed my love of the beautiful and the pure. That large, bright silver spoon,—I was never weary of admiring that also. It was massive—it was grand—and whispered a tale of former grandeur. Indeed, though the furniture of our cottage was of the simplest, plainest kind, there were many things indicative of an earlier state of luxury and elegance. My mother always used a golden thimble,—she had a toilet case inlaid with pearl, and many little articles appropriate only to wealth, and which wealth only purchases. These were never displayed, but I had seen them, and made them the corner-stones of many an airy castle.

CHAPTER IV.

And who was Peggy?

She was one of the best and noblest women God ever made. She was a treasury of heaven's own influences.

And yet she wore the form of a servant, and like her divine Master, there was "no beauty" in her that one should desire to look upon her.

She had followed my mother through good report and ill report. She had clung to her in her fallen fortunes as something sacred, almost divine. As the Hebrew to the ark of the covenant,—as the Greek to his country's palladium,—as the children of Freedom to the star-spangled banner,—so she clung in adversity to her whom in prosperity she almost worshipped. I learned in after years, all that we owed this humble, self-sacrificing, devoted friend. I did not know it then—at least not all—not half. I knew that she labored most abundantly for us,—that she ministered to my mother with as much deference as if she were an empress, anticipating her slightest wants and wishes, deprecating her gratitude, and seeming ashamed of her own goodness and industry. I knew that her plain sewing, assisted by my mother's elegant needle-work, furnished us the means of support; but I had always known it so, and it seemed all natural and right. Peggy was strong and robust. The burden of toil rested lightly on her sturdy shoulders. It seemed to me that she was born with us and for us,—that she belonged to us as rightfully as the air we breathed, and the light that illumined us. It never entered my mind that we could live without Peggy, or that Peggy could live without us.

My mother's health was very delicate. She could not sew long without pressing her hand on her aching side, and then Peggy would draw her work gently from her with her large, kind hand, make her lie down and rest, or walk out in the fresh air, till the waxen hue was enlivened on her pallid cheek. She would urge her to go into the garden and gather flowers for Gabriella, "because the poor child loved so to see them in the room." We had a sweet little garden, where Peggy delved at early sunrise and evening twilight. Without ever seeming hurried or overtasked, she accomplished every thing. We had the earliest vegetables, and the latest. We had fruit, we had flowers, all the result of Peggy's untiring, providing hand. The surplus vegetables and fruit she carried to the village market, and though they brought but a trifle in a country town, where every thing was so abundant, yet Peggy said, "we must not despise the day of small gains." She took the lead in all business matters in-doors and out-doors. She never asked my mother if she had better do this and that; she went right ahead, doing what she thought right and best, in every thing pertaining to the drudgery of life.

When I was a little child, I used to ask her many a question about the mystery of my life. I asked her about my father, of my kindred, and the place of my birth.

"Miss Gabriella," she would answer, "you mustn't ask questions. Your mother does not wish it. She has forbidden me to say one word of all you want to know. When you are old enough you shall learn every thing. Be quiet—be patient. It is best that you should be. But of one thing rest assured, if ever there was a saint in this world, your mother is one."

I never doubted this. I should have doubted as soon the saintliness of those who wear the golden girdles of Paradise. I am glad of this. I have sometimes doubted the love and mercy of my Heavenly Father, but never the purity and excellence of my mother. Ah, yes! once when sorely tempted.

We retired very early in our secluded, quiet home. We had no evening visitors to charm away the sober hours, and time marked by the sands of the hour-glass always seems to glide more slowly. That solemn-looking hour-glass! How I used to gaze on each dropping particle, watching the upward segment gradually becoming more and more transparent, and the lower as gradually darkening. It was one of Peggy's inherited treasures, and she reverenced it next to her Bible. The glass had been broken and mended with putty, which formed a dark, diagonal line across the venerable crystal. This antique chronometer occupied the central place on the mantel-piece, its gliding sands, though voiceless, for ever whispering of ebbing time and everlasting peace. "Passing away, passing away," seemed continually issuing from each meeting cone. I have no doubt the contemplation of this ancient, solemn instrument, which old Father Time is always represented as grasping in one unclenching hand, while he brandishes in the other the merciless scythe, had a lasting influence on my character.

That night, it was long before I fell asleep. I lay awake thinking of the morning's dawn. The starlight abroad, that came in through the upper part of the windows, glimmered on the dark frame and glassy surface of the old timepiece, which stood out in bold relief from the whitewashed wall behind it. Before I knew it, I was composing a poem on that old hour-glass. It was a hoary pilgrim, travelling on a lone and sea-beat shore, towards a dim and distant goal, and the print of his footsteps on the wave-washed sands, guided others in the same lengthening journey. The scene was before me. I saw the ancient traveller, his white locks streaming in the ocean blast; I heard the deep murmur of the restless tide; I saw the footsteps; and they looked like sinking graves; when all at once, in the midst of my solemn inspiration, a stern mocking face came between me and the starlight night, the jeering voice of my master was in my ears, a dishonored fragment was fluttering in my hand. The vision fled; I turned my head on my pillow and wept.

You may say such thoughts and visions were strangely precocious in a child of twelve years old. I suppose they were; but I never remember being a child. My sad, gentle mother, the sober, earnest, practical Peggy, were the companions of my infancy, instead of children of my own age. The sunlight of my young life was not reflected from the golden locks of childhood, its radiant smile and unclouded eye. I was defrauded of the sweetest boon of that early season, a confidence that this world is the happiest, fairest, best of worlds, the residence of joy, beauty, and goodness.

A thoughtful child! I do not like to hear it. What has a little child to do with thought? That sad, though glorious reversion of our riper and darker years?

Ah me! I never recollect the time that my spirit was not travelling to grasp some grown idea, to fathom the mystery of my being, to roll away the shadows that surrounded me, groping for light, toiling, then dreaming, not resting. It was no wonder I was weary before my journey was well begun.

"What a remarkable countenance Gabriella has!" I then often heard it remarked. "Her features are childish, but her eyes have such a peculiar depth of expression,—so wild, and yet so wise."

I wish I had a picture of myself taken at this period of my life. I have no doubt I looked older then than I do now.

CHAPTER V.

I knew the path which led from the boarding-place of Mr. Regulus crossed the one which I daily traversed. I met him exactly at the point of intersection, under the shadow of a great, old oak. The dew of the morning glittered on the shaded grass. The clear light blue of the morning sky smiled through upward quivering leaves. Every thing looked bright and buoyant, and as I walked on, girded with a resolute purpose, my spirit caught something of the animation and inspiration of the scene.

The master saw me as I approached, and I expected to see a frown darken his brow. I felt brave, however, for I was about to plead for another, not myself. He did not frown, neither did he smile. He seemed willing to meet me,—he even slackened his pace till I came up. I felt a sultry glow on my cheek when I faced him, and my breath came quick and short. I was not so very brave after all.

"Master Regulus," said I, "do not expel Richard Clyde,—do not disgrace him, because he thought I was not kindly dealt with. I am sorry I ran from school as I did,—I am sorry I wrote the poem,—I hardly knew what I was doing when I snatched the paper from your hands. I suppose Richard

hardly knew what he was doing when he stopped you at the door."

I did not look up while I was speaking, for had I met an angry glance I should have rebelled.

"I am glad I have met you, Gabriella," said he, in a tone so gentle, I lifted my eyes in amazement. His beamed with unusual kindness beneath his shading brows. Gone was the mocking gleam,—gone the deriding smile. He looked serious, earnest, almost sad, but not severe. Looking at his watch, and then at the golden vane, as if that too were a chronometer, he turned towards the old oak, and throwing himself carelessly on a seat formed of a broken branch, partially severed from the trunk, motioned me to sit down on the grass beside him. Quick as lightning I obeyed him, untying my bonnet and pushing it back from my head. I could scarcely believe the evidence of my senses. There reclined the formidable master, like a great, overgrown boy, his attitude alone banishing all restraint and fear, and I, perched on a mossy rock, that looked as if placed there on purpose for me to sit down upon, all my wounded and exasperated feelings completely drowned in a sudden overflow of pleasant emotions. I had expected scolding, rebuke, denial,—I had armed myself for a struggle of power,—I had resolved to hazard a martyr's doom.

Oh, the magic of kindness on a child's heart!—a lonely, sensitive, proud, yearning heart like mine!—'Tis the witch-hazel wand that shows where the deep fountain is secretly welling. I was ashamed of the tears that *would* gather into my eyes. I shook my hair forward to cover them, and played with the green leaves within my reach.

The awful space between me and this tall, stern, learned man seemed annihilated. I had never seen him before, divested of the insignia of authority, beyond the walls of the academy. I had always been compelled to look up to him before; now we were on a level, on the green sward of the wild-wood. God above, nature around, no human faces near, no fear of man to check the promptings of ingenuous feeling. Softly the folded flower petals of the heart began to unfurl. The morning breeze caught their fragrance and bore it up to heaven.

"You thought me harsh and unkind, Gabriella," said the master in a low, subdued voice, "and I fear I was so yesterday. I intended to do you good. I began sportively, but when I saw you getting excited and angry, I became angry and excited too. My temper, which is by no means gentle, had been previously much chafed, and, as is too often the case, the irritation, caused by the offences of many, burst forth on one, perhaps the most innocent of all. Little girl, you have been studying the history of France; do you remember its Louises?—Louis the Fourteenth was a profligate, unprincipled, selfish king. Louis the Fifteenth, another God-defying, self-adoring sensualist. Louis the Sixteenth one of the most amiable, just, Christian monarchs the world ever saw. Yet the accumulated wrongs under which the nation had been groaning during the reign of his predecessors, were to be avenged in his person,—innocent, heroic sufferer that he was. This is a most interesting historic fact, and bears out wonderfully the truth of God's words. But I did not mean to give a lecture on history. It is out of place here. I meant to do you good yesterday, and discourage you from becoming an idle rhymer—a vain dreamer. You are not getting angry I hope, little girl, for I am kind now."

"No, sir,—no, indeed, sir," I answered, with my face all in a glow.

"Your mother, I am told, wishes you to be educated for a teacher, a profession which requires as much training as the Spartan youth endured, when fitted to be the warriors of the land. Why, you should be preparing yourself a coat of mail, instead of embroidering a silken suit. How do you expect to get through the world, child,—and it is a hard world to the poor, a cold world to the friendless,—how do you expect to get along through the briars and thorns, over the rocks and the hills with nothing but a blush on your cheek, a tear in your eye, and a sentimental song on your lips? Independence is the reward of the working mind, the thinking brain, and the earnest heart."

He grew really eloquent as he went on. He raised his head to an erect position, and ran his fingers through his bushy locks. I cannot remember all he said, but every word he uttered had meaning in it. I appreciated for the first time the difficulties and trials of a teacher's vocation. I had thought before, that it was the pupil only who bore the burden of endurance. It had never entered my mind that the crown of authority covered the thorns of care, that the wide sweep of command wearied more than the restraint of subjection. I was flattered by the manner in which he addressed me, the interest he expressed in my future prospects. I found myself talking freely to him of myself, of my hopes and my fears. I forgot the tyrant of yesterday in the friend of to-day. I remember one thing he said, which is worth recording.

"It is very unfortunate when a child, in consequence of a facility of making rhyme, is led to believe herself a poetess,—or, in other words, a prodigy. She is praised and flattered by injudicious friends, till she becomes inflated by vanity and exalted by pride. She wanders idly, without aim or goal, in the flowery paths of poesy, forgetful of the great highway of knowledge, not made alone for the chariot wheels of kings, but the feet of the humblest wayfarer."

When he began to address me, he remembered that I was a child, but before he finished the sentence he forgot my age, and his thoughts and language swelled and rose to the comprehension of manhood. But I understood him. Perhaps there was something in my fixed and fascinated glance that made him conscious of my full appreciation.

"I have no friends to praise and flatter me," I simply answered. "I have loved to sing in rhyme as the little birds sing, because God gave me the power."

He looked pleased. He even laid his hand on my head and smiled. Not the cold smile of yesterday,

but quite a genial smile. I could hardly believe it the same face, it softened and transformed it so. I involuntarily drew nearer to him, drawn by that powerful magnetism, which every human heart feels more or less.

The great brazen tongue of the town clock rang discordantly on the sweet stillness of the morning hour. The master rose and motioned me to follow him.

"Richard Clyde is forgiven. Tell him so. Let the past be forgotten, or remembered only to make us wiser and better."

We entered the academy together, to the astonishment of the pupils, who were gathered in little clusters, probably discussing the events of yesterday.

Richard Clyde was not there, but he came the next day, and the scene in which we were both such conspicuous actors was soon forgotten. It had, however, an abiding influence on me. A new motive for exertion was born within me,—affection for my master,—and the consequence was, ambition to excel, that I might be rewarded by his approbation.

Bid he ever again treat me with harshness and severity? No,—never. I have often wondered why he manifested such unusual and wanton disregard of my feelings then, that one, only time. It is no matter now. It is a single blot on a fair page.

Man is a strangely inconsistent being. His soul is the battle ground of the warring angels of good and evil. As one or the other triumphs, he exhibits the passions of a demon or the attributes of a God.

Could we see this hidden war field, would it not be grand? What were the plains of Marathon, the pass of Thermopylæ, or Cannæ paved with golden rings, compared to it?

Let us for a moment imagine the scene. Not the moment of struggle, but the pause that succeeds. The angels of good have triumphed, and though the plumage of their wings may droop, they are white and dazzling so as no "fuller of earth could whiten them." The moonlight of peace rests upon the battle field, where evil passions lie wounded and trampled under feet. Strains of victorious music float in the air; but it comes from those who have triumphed in the conflict and entered into rest, those who behold the conflict from afar. It is so still, that one can almost hear the trees of Paradise rustle in the ambrosial gales of heaven.

Is this poetry? Is it sacrilege? If so, forgive me, thou great Inspirer of thought,—"my spirit would fain not wander from thee."

CHAPTER VI.

The life of a school-girl presents but few salient points to arrest the interest. It is true, every day had its history, and every rising and setting sun found something added to the volume of my life. But there seems so little to describe! I could go on for ever, giving utterance to thoughts that used to crowd in my young brain, thoughts that would startle as well as amuse,—but I fear they might become monotonous to the reader.

I had become a hard student. My mother wished me to fit myself for a teacher. It was enough.

It was not, however, without many struggles. I had acquired this submission to her wishes. Must I forever be a slave to hours? Must I weave for others the chain whose daily restraint chafed and galled my free, impatient spirit? Must I bear the awful burden of authority, that unlovely appendage to youth? Must I voluntarily assume duties to which the task of the criminal that tramps, tramps day after day the revolving tread-mill, seems light; for that is mere physical labor and monotony, not the wear and tear of mind, heart, and soul?

"What else can you do, my child?" asked my mother.

"I could sew."

My mother smiled and shook her head.

"Your skill does not lie in handicraft," she said, "that would never do."

"I could toil as a servant. I would far rather do it."

I had worked myself up to a belief in my own sincerity when I said this, but had any tongue but mine suggested the idea, how would my aspiring blood have burned with indignation.

"It is the most honorable path to independence a friendless young girl can choose,—almost the only one," said my mother, suppressing a deep sigh.

"Oh, mother! I am not friendless. How can I be, with you and Peggy?"

"But we are not immortal, my child. Every day loosens my frail hold of earthly things, and even Peggy's strong arm will in time grow weak. Your young strength will then be *her* stay and support."

"Oh, mother! as if I could live when you are taken from me! What do I live for, but you? What have I on earth but thee? Other children have father and mother, and brothers and sisters, and friends. If one is taken from them, they have others left to love and care for them, but I have nobody in the wide world but you. I could not, would not live without you."

I spoke with passionate earnestness. Life without my mother! The very thought was death! I looked in her pale, beautiful face. It was more than pale,—it was wan—it was sickly. There was a purplish shadow under her soft, dark eyes, which I had not observed before, and her figure looked thin and drooping. I gazed into the sad, loving depths of her eyes, till mine were blinded with tears, when throwing my arms across her lap, I laid my face upon them, and wept and sobbed as if the doom of the motherless were already mine.

"Grief does not kill, my Gabriella," she said, tenderly caressing me. "It is astonishing how much the human heart can bear without breaking. Sorrow may dry up, drop by drop, the fountain of life, but it is generally the work of years. The heart lives, though every source of joy be dead,—lives without one well-spring of happiness to quench its burning thirst,—lives in the midst of desolation, darkness, and despair. Oh, my Gabriella," she continued, with a burst of feeling that swept over her with irresistible power, and bowed her as before a stormy gust, "would to God that we might die together,—that the same almighty mandate would free us both from this prison-house of sorrow and of sin. I have prayed for resignation,—I have prayed for faith; but, O my God! I am rebellious, I am weak, I have suffered and struggled so long."

She spoke in a tone of physical as well as menial agony. I was looking up in her face, and it seemed as if a dark shadow rolled over it. I sprang to my feet and screamed. Peggy, who was already on the threshold, caught her as she fell forward, and laid her on the bed as if she were a little child. She was in a fainting fit. I had seen her before in these deathlike swoons, but never had I watched with such shuddering dread to see the dawn of awakening life break upon her face. I stood at her pillow scarcely less pale and cold than herself.

"This is all your doings, Miss Gabriella," muttered Peggy, while busily engaged in the task of restoration. "If you don't want to kill your mother, you must keep out of your tantrums. What's the use of going on so, I wonder,—and what's the use of my watching her as carefully as if she was made of glass, when you come like a young hurricane and break her into atoms. There,—go away and keep quiet. Let her be till she gets over this turn. I know exactly what's best for her."

She spoke with authority, and I obeyed as if the voice of a superior were addressing me. I obeyed,—but not till I had seen the hue of returning life steal over the marble pallor of her cheek. I wandered into the garden, but the narrow paths, the precise formed beds, the homely aspect of vegetable nature, filled me with a strange loathing. I felt suffocated, oppressed,—I jumped over the railing and plunged into the woods,—the wild, ample woods,—my home,—my wealth,—my God-granted inheritance. I sat down under the oaks, and fixed my eyes upwards on the mighty dome that seemed resting on the strong forest trees. I heard nothing but the soft rustling of the leaves,—I saw nothing but the lonely magnificence of nature.

Here I became calm. It seemed a matter of perfect indifference to me then what I did, or what became of me,—whether I was henceforth to be a teacher, a seamstress, or a servant. Every consideration was swallowed in one,—every fear lost in one absorbing dread. I had but one prayer,—"Let my mother live, or let me die with her!"

Poverty offered no privation, toil no weariness, suffering no pang, compared to the one great evil which my imagination grasped with firm and desperate clench.

Three years had passed since I had lain a weeping child under the shadow of the oaks, smarting from the lash of derision, burning with shame, shrinking with humiliation. I was now fifteen years old,—at that age when youth turns trembling from the dizzy verge of childhood to a mother's guardian arms, a mother's sheltering heart. How weak, how puerile now seemed the emotions, which three years ago had worn such a majestic semblance.

I was but a foolish child then,—what was I now? A child still, but somewhat wiser, not more worldly wise. I knew no more of the world, of what is called the world, than I did of those golden cities seen through the cloud-vistas of sunset. It seemed as grand, as remote, and as inaccessible.

At this moment I turned my gaze towards the distant cloud-turrets gleaming above, walls on which chariots and horsemen of fire seemed passing and repassing, and I was conscious of but one deep, earnest thought,—"my mother!"

One prayer, sole and agonizing, trembled on my lips:—

"Take her not from me, O my God! I will drink the cup of poverty and humiliation to the dregs if thou wilt, without a murmur, but spare, O spare my mother!"

God did spare her for a little while. The dark hands on the dial-plate of destiny once moved back at the mighty breath of prayer.

CHAPTER VII.

"Gabriella,—is it you? How glad I am to see you!"

That clear, distinct, ringing voice!—I knew it well, though a year had passed since I had heard its sound. The three years which made me, as I said before, a *wiser child*, had matured my champion, the boy of fifteen, into a youth of eighteen, a collegian of great promise and signal endowments. I felt very sorry when he left the academy, for he had been my steadfast friend and defender, and a great assistant in my scholastic tasks. But after he entered a college, I felt as if there were a great gulf between us, never more to be passed over. I had very superb ideas of collegians. I had seen them during their holidays, which they frequently came into the country to spend, dashing through the streets like the wild huntsmen, on horses that struck fire as they flew along. I had seen them lounging in the streets, with long, wild hair, and corsair visages and Byronian collars, and imagined them a most formidable race of beings. I did not know that these were the *scape-goats* of their class, suspended for rebellion, or expelled for greater offences,—that having lost their character as students, they were resolved to distinguish themselves as dandies, the lowest ambition a son of Adam's race can feel. It is true, I did not dream that Richard Clyde could be transformed into their image, but I thought some marvellous change must take place, which would henceforth render him as much a stranger to me as though we had never met.

Now, when I heard the clear, glad accents of his voice, so natural, so unchanged, I looked up with a glance of delighted recognition into the young student's manly face. My first sensation was pleasure, the pleasure which congenial youth inspires, my next shame, for the homeliness of my occupation. I was standing by a beautiful bubbling spring, at the foot of a little hill near my mother's cottage. The welling spring, the rock over which it gushed, the trees which bent their branches over the fountain to guard it from the sunbeams, the sweet music the falling waters,—all these were romantic and picturesque. I might imagine myself "a nymph, a naiad, or a grace." Or, had I carried a pitcher in my hand, I might have thought myself another Rebecca, and poised on my shoulder the not ungraceful burden. But I was dipping water from the spring, in a tin pail, of a broad, clumsy, unclassic form,—too heavy for the shoulder, and extremely difficult to carry in the hand, in consequence of the small, wiry handle. In my confusion I dropped the pail, which went gaily floating to the opposite side of the spring, entirely out of my reach. The strong, bubbling current bore it upward, and it danced and sparkled and turned its sides of mimic silver, first one way and then the other, as if rejoicing in its liberty.

Richard laughed, his old merry laugh, and jumping on the rock over which the waters were leaping, caught the pail, and waved it as a trophy over his head. Then stooping down he filled it to the brim, gave one spring to the spot where I stood, whirled the bucket upside down and set it down on the grass without spilling a drop.

"That is too large and heavy for you to carry, Gabriella," said he. "Look at the palm of your hand, there is quite a red groove there made by that iron handle."

"Never mind," I answered, twisting my handkerchief carelessly round the tingling palm, "I must get used to it. Peggy is sick and there is no one to carry water now but myself. When she is well, she will never let me do any thing of the kind."

"You should not," said he, decidedly. "You are not strong enough,—you must get another servant. —I will inquire in the village myself this morning, and send you one."

"O no, my mother would never consent to a stranger coming into the family. Besides, no one could take Peggy's place. She is less a servant than a friend."

I turned away to hide the tears that I could not keep back. Peggy's illness, though not of an alarming character, showed that even her iron constitution was not exempt from the ills which flesh is heir to,—that the strong pillar on which we leaned so trustingly *could* vibrate and shake, and what would become of us if it were prostrated to the earth; the lonely column of fidelity and truth, to which we clung so adhesively; the sheet anchor which had kept us from sinking beneath the waves of adversity? I had scarcely realized Peggy's mortality before, she seemed so strong, so energetic, so untiring. I would as soon have thought of the sun's being weary in its mighty task as of Peggy's strong arm waxing weak. I felt very sad, and the meeting with Richard Clyde, which had excited a momentary joy, now deepened my sadness. He looked so bright, so prosperous, so full of hope and life. He was no longer the school-boy whom I could meet on equal terms, but the student entered on a public career of honor and distinction,—the son of ambition, whose gaze was already fixed on the distant hill-tops of fame. There was nothing in his countenance or manner that gave this impression, but my own morbid sensitiveness. The dawning feelings of womanhood made me blush for the plainness and childishness of my dress, and then I was ashamed of my shame, and blushed the more deeply.

"I am glad to see you again," I said, stooping to raise my brimming pail,—"I suppose I must not call you Richard now."

"Yes, indeed, I hope and trust none of my old friends will begin to Mr. Clyde me for a long time to come, and least, I mean most of all, you, Gabriella. We were always such exceedingly good friends, you know. But don't be in such a hurry, I have a thousand questions to ask, a thousand things to tell."

"I should love to hear them all, Richard, but I cannot keep my mother waiting."

Before I could get hold of the handle of the pail, he had seized it and was swinging it along with

as much ease as if he had a bunch of roses in his hand. We ascended the little hill together, he talking all the time, in a spirited, joyous manner, laughing at his awkwardness as he stumbled against a rolling stone, wishing he was a school-boy again in the old academy, whose golden vane was once an object of such awe and admonition in his eyes.

"By the way, Gabriella," he asked, changing from subject to subject with marvellous rapidity, "do you ever write poetry now?"

"I have given that up, as one of the follies of my childhood, one of the dreams of my youth."

"Really, you must be a very venerable person,—you talk of the youthful follies you have discarded, the dreams from which you have awakened, as if you were a real centenarian. I wonder if there are not some incipient wrinkles on your face."

He looked at me earnestly, saucily; and I involuntarily put up my hands, as if to hide the traces of care his imagination was drawing.

"I really do feel old sometimes," said I, smiling at the mock scrutiny of his gaze, "and it is well I do. You know I am going to be a teacher, and youth will be my greatest objection."

"No, no, I do not want you to be a teacher. You were not born for one. You will not be happy as one,—you are too impulsive, too sensitive, too poetic in your temperament. You are the last person in the world who ought to think of such a vocation."

"Would you advise me, then, to be a hewer of wood and a drawer of water, in preference?"

"I would advise you to continue your studies, to read, write poetry, ramble about the woods and commune with nature, as you so love to do, and not think of assuming the duties of a woman, while you are yet nothing but a child. Oh! it is the most melancholy thing in the world to me, to see a person trying to get beyond their years. You must not do it, Gabriella. I wish I could make you stop *thinking* for one year. I do not like to see a cheek as young as yours pale with overmuch thought. Do you know you are getting very like your mother?"

"My mother!" I exclaimed, with a glow of pleasure at the fancied resemblance, "why, she is the most beautiful person I have yet seen,—there is, there can be no likeness."

"But there is, though. You speak as if you thought yourself quite ugly. I wonder if you do. Ugly and old. Strange self-estimation for a pretty girl of fifteen!"

"I suppose you learn to flatter in college," said I, "but I do not care about being flattered, I assure you."

"You are very much mistaken if you think I am trying to flatter you. I may do so a year or two hence if I chance to meet you in company, but here, in this rural solitude, with the very element of truth in my hand, I could not deceive, if I were the most accomplished courtier in the world."

We had reached the top of the green acclivity which we bad been ascending, I fear with somewhat tardy steps. We could see the road through an opening in the trees,—a road little travelled, but leading to the central street of the town. The unusual sound of carriage wheels made me turn my head in that direction, and a simultaneous exclamation of Richard's fixed my attention.

A very elegant carriage, drawn by a pair of large shining bay horses was rolling along with aristocratic slowness. The silver-plated harness glittered so in the sun, it at first dazzled my eyes, so that I could discern nothing distinctly. Then I saw the figures of two ladies seated on the back seat in light, airy dresses, and of two gentlemen on horseback, riding behind. I had but a glimpse of all this, for the carriage rolled on. The riders disappeared; but, as a flash of lightning reveals to us glimpses of the cloud cities of heaven which we remember long after the electric gates are closed, so the vision remained on my memory, and had I never again beheld the youthful form nearest to us, I should remember it still. It was that of a young girl, with very fair flaxen hair, curling in profuse ringlets on each side of her face, which was exquisitely fair, and lighted up with a soft rosiness like the dawning of morning. A blue scarf, of the color of her eyes, floated over her shoulders and fluttered from the window of the carriage. As I gazed on this bright apparition, Richard, to my astonishment, lifted his hat from his brow and bowed low to the smiling stranger, who returned the salutation with graceful ease. The lady on the opposite side was hidden by the fair-haired girl, and both were soon hidden by the thick branches that curtained the road.

"The Linwoods!" said Richard, glancing merrily at the tin pail, which shone so conspicuously bright in the sunshine. "You must have heard of them?"

"Never."

"Not heard of the new-comers! Haven't you heard that Mrs. Linwood has purchased the famous old Grandison Place, that has stood so long in solitary grandeur, had it fitted up in modern style, and taken possession of it for a country residence? Is it possible that you are such a little nun, that you have heard nothing of this?"

"I go nowhere; no one comes to see us; I might as well be a nun."

"But at school?"

"I have not been since last autumn. But that fair, beautiful young lady, is she a daughter of Mrs. Linwood?"

"She is,—Edith Linwood. Rather a romantic name, is it not? Do you think her beautiful?"

"The loveliest creature I ever looked upon. I should be quite miserable if I thought I never should look upon her again. And you know her,—she bowed to you. How sorry I am she should see you performing such an humble office for a little rustic like me!"

"She will think none the worse of me for it. If she did, I should despise her. But she is no heartless belle,—Edith Linwood is not. She is an angel of goodness and sweetness, if all they say of her be true. I do not know her very well. She has a brother with whom I am slightly acquainted, and through him I have been introduced into the family. Mrs. Linwood is a noble, excellent woman,—I wish you knew her. I wish you knew Edith,—I wish you knew them all. They would appreciate you. I am sure they would."

"*I* know them!" I exclaimed, glancing at our lowly cottage, my simple dress, and contrasting them mentally with the lordly dwelling and costly apparel of these favorites of nature and of fortune. "They appreciate *me*!"

"I suppose you think Edith Linwood the most enviable of human beings. Rich, lovely, with the power of gratifying every wish, and of dispensing every good, she would gladly exchange this moment with you, and dip water from yon bubbling spring."

"Impossible!" I cried. "How can she help being happy?"

"She does seem happy, but she is lame, and her health is very delicate. She cannot walk one step without crutches, on which she swings herself along very lightly and gracefully, it is true; but think you not she would not give all her wealth to be able to walk with your bounding steps, and have your elastic frame?"

"Crutches!" said I, sorrowfully, "why she looked as if she might have wings on her shoulders. It *is* sad."

"She is not an object of pity. You will not think she is when you know her. I only wanted to convince you, that you might be an object of envy to one who seems so enviable to you."

I would gladly have lingered where I was, within the sound of Richard Clyde's frank and cheerful voice, but I thought of poor Peggy thirsting for a cooling draught, and my conscience smote me for being a laggard in my duty. It is true, the scene, which may seem long in description, passed in a very brief space of time, and though Richard said a good many things, he talked very fast, without seeming hurried either.

"I shall see you again at the spring," said he, as he turned from the gate. "You must consider me as the Aquarius of your domestic Zodiac. I should like to be my father's camel-driver, if that were Jacob's well."

I could not help smiling at his gay nonsense,—his presence had been so brightening, so comforting. I had gone down to the spring sad and desponding. I returned with a countenance so lighted up, a color so heightened, that my mother looked at me with surprise.

As soon as I had ministered to Peggy, who seemed mortified and ashamed because of her sickness, and distressed beyond measure at being waited upon. I told my mother of my interview with Richard, of his kindness in carrying the water, the vision of the splendid carriage, of its beautiful occupants, the fitting up of the old Grandison Place, and all that Richard had related to me.

She listened with a troubled countenance. "Surely, young Clyde will not be so inconsiderate, so officious, as to induce those ladies to visit us?"

"No, indeed, mother. He is not officious. He knows you would not like to see them. He would not think of such a thing."

"No, no," I repeated to myself, as I exerted myself bravely in my new offices, as nurse and housekeeper, "there is no danger of that fair creature seeking out this little obscure spot. She will probably ask Richard Clyde who the little country girl was, whose water-pail he was so gallantly carrying, and I know he will speak kindly of me, though he will laugh at being caught in such an awkward predicament. Perhaps to amuse her, he will tell her of my flight from the academy and the scenes which resulted, and she will ask him to show her the poem, rendered so immortal. Then merrily will her silver laughter ring through the lofty hall. I have wandered all over Grandison Place when it was a deserted mansion. No one saw me, for it is far back from the street, all embosomed in shade, and it reminded me of some old castle with its turreted roof and winding galleries. I wonder how it looks now." I was falling into one of my old-fashioned dreams, when a moan from Peggy wakened me, and I sprang to her bedside with renewed alarm.

CHAPTER VIII.

Yes, Peggy was very sick; but she would not acknowledge it. It was nothing but a violent headache,—a sudden cold; she would be up and doing in the morning. The doctor! No, indeed, she would have nothing to do with doctors. She had never taken a dose of medicine in her life, and never would, of her own freewill. Sage tea was worth all the pills and nostrums in the world. On the faith of her repeated assertions, that she felt a great deal better and would be quite well in the morning, we slept, my mother and myself, leaving the lamp dimly burning by the solemn hour-glass.

About midnight we were awakened by the wild ravings of delirious agony,—those sounds so fearful in themselves, so awful in the silence and darkness of night, so indescribably awful in the solitude of our lonely dwelling.

Peggy had struggled with disease like "the strong man prepared to run a race," but it had now seized her with giant grasp, and she lay helpless and writhing, with the fiery fluid burning in her veins, sending dark, red flashes to her cheeks and brow. Her eyes had a fierce, lurid glare, and she tossed her head from side to side on the pillow with the wild restlessness of an imprisoned animal.

"Good God!" cried my mother, looking as white as the sheets, and trembling all over as in an ague-fit. "What shall we do? She will die unless a doctor can see her. Oh, my child, what can we do? It is dreadful to be alone in the woods, when sickness and death are in the house."

"*I* will go for the doctor, mother, if you are not afraid to stay alone with Peggy," cried I, in hurried accents, wrapping a shawl round me as I spoke.

My mother wrung her hands.

"Oh! this is terrible," she exclaimed. "How dim and dark it looks abroad. I cannot let you go alone, at midnight. It cannot be less than a mile to Dr. Harlowe's. No, no; I cannot let you go."

"And Peggy must die, then. *She* must die who has served us so faithfully, and lived alone for us! Oh, mother, let me go I will fly on the wings of the wind. You will hardly miss me before I return. I am not afraid of the darkness. I am not afraid of the lonely woods. I only fear leaving you alone with her."

"Go," said my mother, in a faint voice. "God will protect you. I feel that He will, my good, brave Gabriella."

I kissed her white cheek with passionate tenderness, cast a glance of anguish on Peggy's fearfully altered face, then ran out into the chill, dark midnight. At first I could scarcely discern the sandy path I had so often trodden, for no moon lighted up the gloom of the hour, and even the stars glimmered faintly through a grey and cloudy atmosphere. As I hurried along, the wind came sighing through the trees with such inexpressible sadness, it seemed whispering mournfully of the dark secrets of nature. Then it deepened into a dull, roaring sound, like the murmurs of the ocean tide; but even as I went on the melancholy wind pursued me like an invisible spirit, winding around me its chill, embracing arms.

I seemed the only living thing in the cold, illimitable night. A thick horror brooded over me. The sky was a mighty pall, sweeping down with heavy cloud-fringes, the earth a wide grave. I did not fear, that is, I feared not man, or beast or ghost, but an unspeakable awe and dread was upon me. I dreaded the great God, whose presence filled with insupportable grandeur the lonely night. My heart was hard as granite. *I* could not have prayed, had I known that Peggy's life would be given in answer to my prayer. I could not say, "Our Father, who art in heaven," as I had so often done at my mother's knee, in the sweet, childlike spirit of filial love and submission. My Father's face was hidden, and behind the thick clouds of darkness I saw a stern, vindictive Being, to whom the smoke of human suffering was more acceptable than frankincense and myrrh.

I compared myself wandering alone in darkness and sorrow, on such an awful errand, to the fair, smiling being cradled in wealth, then doubtless sleeping in her bed of down, watched by attending menials. Oh! rebel that I was, did I not need the chastening discipline, never exerted but in wisdom and in love?

Before I knew it, I was at Dr. Harlowe's door. All was dark and still. The house was of brick, and it loomed up gloriously as I approached. It seemed to frown repulsively with its beetling eaves, as I lifted the knocker and let it fall with startling force. In a moment I heard footsteps moving and saw a light glimmering through the blinds. He was at home, then,—I had accomplished my mission. It was no matter if I died, since Peggy might be saved. I really thought I was going to die, I felt so dull and faint and breathless. I sunk down on the stone steps, just as the door was opened by Dr. Harlowe himself, whom I had seen, but never addressed before. Placing his left hand above his eyes, he looked out, in search of the messenger who had roused him from his slumber. I tried to rise, but was too much exhausted. I could scarcely make my errand understood. I had run a mile without stopping, and now I *had* stopped, my limbs seemed turned into lead and my head to ice.

"My poor child!" said the doctor, in the kindest manner imaginable. "You should not have come yourself at this hour. It was hardly safe. Why,—you have run yourself completely out of breath. Come in, while they are putting my horse in the buggy. I must give *you* some medicine before we start."

He stooped down and almost lifted me from the step where I was seated, and led me into what

appeared to me quite a sumptuous apartment, being handsomely carpeted and having long crimson curtains to the windows. He made me sit down on a sofa, while he went to a closet, and pouring out a generous glass of wine, insisted upon my drinking it. I obeyed him mechanically, for life seemed glowing in the ruddy fluid. It was. It came back in warmth to my chilled and sinking heart. I felt it stealing like a gentle fire through my whole system,—burning gently, steadily on my cheek, and kindling into light my heavy and tear-dimmed eyes. It was the first glass I had ever tasted, and it ran like electricity through my veins. Had the doctor been aware of my previous abstinence, he might not have thought it safe to have offered me the brimming glass. Had I reflected one moment I should have swallowed it less eagerly; but I seemed sinking, sinking into annihilation, when its reviving warmth restored me. I felt as if I had wings, and could fly over the dreary space my weary feet had so lately overcome.

"You feel better, my dear," said the doctor, with a benevolent smile, as he watched the effect of his prescription. "You must not make so dangerous an experiment again as running such a distance at this time of night. Peggy's life is very precious, I dare say, and so is yours. Are you ready to ride? My buggy is not very large, but I think it will accommodate us both. We will see."

Though it was the first time I had ever spoken with Dr. Harlowe, I felt as much confidence in his kindness and benevolence as if I had known him for years. There was something so frank and genial about him, he seemed, like the wine I had been quaffing, warming to the heart. There was barely room for me, slender as I was, for the carriage was constructed for the accommodation of the doctor alone; but I did not feel embarrassed, or as if I were intruding. He drove very rapidly, conversing the whole time in a pleasant, cheering voice.

"Peggy must be a very valuable person," he said, "for you to venture out so bravely in her cause. We must cure her, by all means."

I expatiated on her virtues with all the eloquence of gratitude. Something must have emboldened my shy tongue,—something more than the hope, born of the doctor's heart-reviving words.

"He is come—he is come," I exclaimed, springing from the buggy to the threshold, with the quickness of lightning.

Oh! how dim and sickly and sad every thing appeared in that little chamber! I turned and looked at the doctor, wondering if he had ever entered one so sad before. Peggy lay in an uneasy slumber, her arms thrown above her head, in a wild, uncomfortable attitude. My mother sat leaning against the head of the bed, pale and statue-like, with her hand, white as marble, partly hidden in her dark and loosely braided hair. The doctor glanced at the bed, then at my mother, and his glance riveted on her. Surprise warmed into admiration,—admiration stood checked by reverence. He advanced a few steps into the room, and made her as lowly a bow as if she were an empress. She rose without speaking and motioned me to hand him a chair; but waiving the offered civility, he went up to the side of the bed and laid his fingers quietly on the pulse of his patient. He stood gravely counting the ticking of life's great chronometer, while my mother leaned forward with pale, parted lips, and I gazed upon him as if the issues of life and death were in his hands.

"I wish I had been called sooner," said he, with a slight contraction of the brows, "but we will do all we can to relieve her."

He called for a basin and linen bandage, and taking a lancet from his pocket, held up the sharp, gleaming point to the light. I shuddered, I had never seen any one bled, and it seemed to me an awful operation.

"You will hold the basin," said he, directing me with his calm, benignant eye. "You are a brave girl,—you will not shrink, as some foolish persons do, at the sight of blood. This side, if you please, my dear."

Ashamed to forfeit the confidence he had in my bravery, or rather moral courage, I grasped the basin with both hands, and held it firm, though my lips quivered and my cheek blanched.

Peggy, awakened by the pressure of the bandage, began to rave and struggle, and I feared it would be impossible to subdue her into sufficient quietness; but delirious as she was, there was something in the calm, authoritative tones of Dr. Harlowe's voice, that seemed irresistible. She became still, and lay with her half-closed eyes fixed magnetically on his face. As the dark-red blood spouted into the basin, I started, and would have recoiled had not a strong controlling influence been exerted over me. The gates of life were opened. How easy for life itself to pass away in that deep crimson tide!

"This is the poetry of our profession," said the doctor, binding up the wound with all a woman's gentleness.

Poor Peggy, who could ever associate the idea of poetry with her! I could not help smiling as I looked at her sturdy arm, through whose opaque surface the blue wandering of the veins was vainly sought.

"And now," said he, after giving her a comforting draught, "she will sleep, and *you* must sleep, madam," turning respectfully to my mother; "you have not strength enough to resist fatigue,—your daughter will have two to nurse instead of one, if you do not follow my advice."

"I cannot sleep," replied my mother.

"But you can rest, madam; it is your duty. What did I come here for, but to relieve your cares? Go with your mother, my dear, and after a while you may come back and help me."

"You are very kind, sir," she answered. With a graceful bend of the head she passed from the room, while his eyes followed her with an expression of intense interest.

It is no wonder. Even I, accustomed as I was to watch her every motion, was struck by the exceeding grace of her manner. She did not ask the doctor what he thought of Peggy, though I saw the words trembling on her lips. She dared not do it.

From that night the seclusion of our cottage home was broken up. Disease had entered and swept down the barriers of circumstance curiosity had so long respected. We felt the drawings of that golden chain of sympathy which binds together the great family of mankind.

Peggy's disease was a fever, of a peculiar and malignant character. It was the first case which occurred; but it spread through the town, so that scarcely a family was exempt from its ravages. Several died after a few days' sickness, and it was said purplish spots appeared after death, making ghostly contrast with its livid pallor. The alarm and terror of the community rendered it difficult to obtain nurses for the sick; but, thanks to the benevolent exertions of Dr. Harlowe, we were never left alone.

Richard Clyde, too, came every day, and sometimes two or three times a day to the spring, to know what he could do for us. No brother could be kinder. Ah! how brightly, how vividly deeds of kindness stand out on the dark background of sickness and sorrow! I never, never can forget that era of my existence, when the destroying angel seemed winnowing the valley with his terrible wings,—when human life was blown away as chaff before a strong wind. Strange! the sky was as blue and benignant, the air as soft and serene, as if health and joy were revelling in the green-wood shade. The gentle rustling of the foliage, the sweet, glad warbling of the birds, the silver sparkling of the streamlets, and the calm, deep flowing of the distant river, all seemed in strange discordance with the throes of agony, the wail of sorrow, and the knell of death.

It was the first time I had ever been brought face to face with sickness and pain. The constitutional fainting fits of my mother were indicative of weakness, and caused momentary terror; but how different to this mysterious, terrible malady, this direct visitation from the Almighty! Here we could trace no second causes, no imprudence in diet, no exposure to the night air, no predisposing influences. It came sudden and powerful as the bolt of heaven. It came in sunshine and beauty, without herald and warning, whispering in deep, thrilling accents: "Be still, and know that I am God."

CHAPTER IX.

I do not wish to dwell too long on this sad page of my young life, but sad as it is, it is followed by another so dark, I know not whether my trembling hand should attempt to unfold it. Indeed, I fear I have commenced a task I had better have left alone. I know, however, I have scenes to relate full of the wildest romance, and that though what I have written may be childish and commonplace, I have that to relate which will interest, if the development of life's deepest passions have power to do so.

The history of a human heart! a true history of that mystery of mysteries! a description of that city of our God, more magnificent than the streets of the New Jerusalem! This is what I have commenced to write. I will go on.

For nine days Peggy wrestled with the destroying angel. During that time, nineteen funerals had darkened the winding avenue which led to the grave-yard, and she who was first attacked lingered last. It was astonishing how my mother sustained herself during these days and nights of intense anxiety. She seemed unconscious of fatigue, passive, enduring as the marble statue she resembled. She ate nothing,—she did not sleep. I know not what supported her. Dr. Harlowe brought her some of that generous wine which had infused such life into my young veins, and forced her to swallow it, but it never brought any color to her hueless cheeks.

On the morning of the ninth day, Peggy sunk into a deathlike stupor. Her mind had wandered during all her sickness, though most of the time she lay in a deep lethargy, from which nothing could rouse her.

"Go down to the spring and breathe the fresh air," said the doctor; "there should be perfect quiet here,—a few hours will decide her fate."

I went down to the spring, where the twilight shades were gathering. The air came with balmy freshness to my anxious, feverish brow. I scooped up the cold water in the hollow of my hand and bathed my face. I shook my hair over my shoulders, and dashed the water over every disordered tress. I began to breathe more freely. The burning weight, the oppression, the suffocation were passing away, but a dreary sense of misery, of coming desolation remained. I sat down on the long grass, and leaning my head on my clasped hands, watched the drops as they fell from my dropping hair on the mossy rock below.

"Is it not too damp for you here?"

I knew Richard Clyde was by me,—I heard his light footsteps on the sward, but I did not look up.

"It is not as damp as the grave will be," I answered.

"Don't talk so, Gabriella, don't. I cannot bear to hear you. This will be all over soon, and it will be to you like a dark and troubled dream."

"Yes; I know it will be all over soon. We shall all lie in the churchyard together,—Peggy, my mother, and I,—and you will plant a white rose over my mother's grave, will you not? Not over mine. No flowers have bloomed for me in life,—it would be nothing to place them over my sleeping dust."

"Gabriella! You are excited,—you are ill. Give me your hand. I know you have a feverish pulse."

I laid my hand on his, with an involuntary motion. Though it was moist with the drops that had been oozing over it, it had a burning heat. He startled at its touch.

"You are ill,—you are feverish!" he cried. "The close air of that little room has been killing you. I knew it would. You should have gone to Mrs. Linwood's, you and your mother, when she sent for you. Peggy would have been abundantly cared for."

"What, leave her here to die!—her, so good, so faithful, and affectionate, who would have died a thousand times over for us. Oh Richard, how can you speak of such a thing! Peggy is dying now, —I know that she is. I never looked on death, but I saw its shadow on her livid face. Why did Dr. Harlowe send me away? I am not afraid to see her die. Hark! my mother calls me."

I started up, but my head was dizzy, and I should have fallen had not Richard put his arm around me.

"Poor girl," said he, "I wish I had a sister to be with and comfort you. These are dark hours for us all, for we feel the pressure of God Almighty's hand. I do not wonder that you are crushed. You, so young and tender. But bear up, Gabriella. The day-spring will yet dawn, and the shadows fly away."

So he kept talking, soothingly, kindly, keeping me out in the balminess and freshness of the evening, while the fever atmosphere burned within. I knew not how long I sat. I knew not when I returned to the house. I have forgotten that. But I remember standing that night over a still, immovable form, on whose pale, peaceful brow, those purplish spots, of which I had heard in awful whispers, were distinctly visible. The tossing arms were crossed reposingly over the pulseless bosom,—the restless limbs were rigid as stone. I remember seeing my mother, whom they tried to lead into another chamber,—my mother, usually so calm and placid,—throw herself wildly on that humble, fever-blasted form, and cling to it in an agony of despair. It was only by the exertion of main force that she was separated from it and carried to her own apartment. There she fell into one of those deadly fainting fits, from which the faithful, affectionate Peggy had so often brought her back to life.

Never shall I forget that awful night. The cold presence of mortality in its most appalling form, the shadow of my mother's doom that was rolling heavily down upon me with prophetic darkness, the dismal preparations, the hurrying steps echoing so drearily through the midnight gloom; the cold burden of life, the mystery of death, the omnipotence of God, the unfathomableness of Eternity,—all pressed upon me with such a crushing weight, my spirit gasped and fainted beneath the burden.

One moment it seemed that worlds would not tempt me to look again on that shrouded form, so majestic in its dread immobility,—its cold, icy calmness,—then drawn by an awful fascination, I would gaze and gaze as if my straining eyes could penetrate the depths of that abyss, which no sounding line has ever reached.

I saw her laid in her lowly grave. My mother, too, was there. Dr. Harlowe did every thing but command her to remain at home, but she would not stay behind.

"I would follow her to her last home," said she, "if I had to walk barefoot over a path of thorns."

Only one sun rose on her unburied form,—its setting rays fell on a mound of freshly heaved sods, where a little while before was a mournful cavity.

Mrs. Linwood sent her beautiful carriage to take us to the churchyard. Slowly it rolled along behind the shadow of the dark, flapping pall. Very few beside ourselves were present, so great a panic pervaded the community; and very humble was the position Peggy occupied in the world. People wondered at the greatness of our grief, for she was *only* a servant. They did not know all that she was to us,—how could they? Even I dreamed not then of the magnitude of our obligations.

I never shall forget the countenance of my mother as she sat leaning from the carriage windows, for she was too feeble to stand during the burial, while I stood with Dr. Harlowe at the head of the grave. The sun was just sinking behind the blue undulation of the distant hills, and a mellow, golden lustre calmly settled on the level plain around us. It lighted up her pallid features with a kind of unearthly glow, similar to that which rested on the marble monuments gleaming through the weeping willows. Every thing looked as serene and lovely, as green and rejoicing, as if there were no such things as sickness and death in the world.

My mother's eyes wandered slowly over the whole inclosure, shut in by the plain white railing, edged with black,—gleamed on every gray stone, white slab, and green hillock,—rested a moment on me, then turned towards heaven, with such an expression!

"Not yet, my mother, oh, not yet!" I cried aloud in an agony that could not be repressed, clinging to Dr. Harlowe's arm as if every earthly stay and friend were sliding from my grasp. I knew the meaning of that mute, expressive glance. She was measuring her own grave by the side of Peggy's clay cold bed,—she was commending her desolate orphan to the Father of the fatherless, the God of the widow. She knew she would soon be there, and I knew it too. And after the first sharp pang,—after the arrow of conviction fastened in my heart,—I pressed it there with a kind of stern, vindictive joy, triumphing in my capacity of suffering. I wonder if any one ever felt as I did,—I wonder if any worm of the dust ever writhed so impotently under the foot of Almighty God!

O kind and compassionate Father! Now I know thou art kind even in thy chastisements, merciful even in thy judgments, by the bitter chalice I have drained, by all the waves and billows that have gone over me, by anguish, humiliation, repentance, and prayer. Forgive, forgive! for I knew not what I was doing!

From that night my mother never left her bed. The fever spared her, but she wilted like the grass beneath the scythe of the mower. Gone was the unnatural excitement which had sustained her the last nine days; severed the silver cord so long dimmed by secret tears.

Thank heaven! I was not doomed to see her tortured by pain, or raving in delirious agony,—to see those exquisite features distorted by frenzy,—or to hear that low, sweet voice untuned, the key-note of reason lost.

Thank heaven! even death laid its hand gently on one so gentle and so lovely.

CHAPTER X.

I said, death laid its hand gently on one so gentle and so lovely. Week after week she lingered, almost imperceptibly fading, passing away like a soft rolling cloud that melts into the sky. The pestilence had stayed its ravages. The terror, the thick gloom had passed by.

If I looked abroad at sunset, I could see the windows of the village mansions, crimsoned and glowing with the last flames of day; but no light was reflected on our darkened home. It was all in shadow. And at night, when the windows of Grandison Place were all illuminated, glittering off by itself like a great lantern, the traveller could scarcely have caught the glimmering ray of the little lamp dimly burning in our curtained room.

Do you think I was resigned? That because I was dumb, I lay like a lamb before the stroke of the shearer? I will tell you how resigned, how submissive I was. I have read of the tortures of the Inquisition. I have read of one who was chained on his back to the dungeon floor, without the power to move one muscle,—hand and foot, body and limb bound. As he lay thus prone, looking up, ever upwards, he saw a circular knife, slowly descending, swinging like a pendulum, swinging nearer and nearer; and he knew that every breath he drew it came nearer and nearer, and that he *must* feel anon the cold, sharp edge. Yet he lay still, immovable, frozen, waiting, with his glazed eyes fixed on the terrible weapon. Such was *my* resignation—*my* submission.

Friends gathered around the desolate; but they could not avert the descending stroke. Mrs. Linwood came, with her angelic looking daughter, and their presence lighted up, momentarily, our saddened dwelling, as if they had been messengers from heaven,—they were so kind, so sympathizing, so unobtrusive. When Edith first crossed our threshold, she did indeed look like one of those ministering spirits, sent to watch over those who shall be heirs of salvation. She seemed to float forward, light and airy as the down wafted by the summer gale. Her crutches, the ends of which were wrapped with something soft and velvety, so as to muffle their sound, rather added than detracted from the interest and grace of her appearance, so gracefully they sustained her fair, white-robed form, just lifting it above the earth.

A little while before, I should have shrunk with nervous diffidence from the approach of guests like these. I should have contrasted painfully the splendor of their position with the lowliness of our own,—but now, what were wealth or rank or earthly distinctions to me?

I was sitting by my mother's bed, fanning her slumbers, as they entered. Mrs. Linwood walked noiselessly forward, took the fan gently from my hand, and motioned me to resign my seat to her. I did so mechanically, for it seemed she had a right to be there. Then Edith took me by the hand and looked in my face with an expression of such sweet, unaffected sympathy, I turned aside to hide the quick-gushing tears. Not a word was uttered, yet I knew they came to soothe and comfort.

When my mother opened her eyes and saw the face of a stranger bending over her, she started and trembled; but there was something in the mild, Christian countenance of Mrs. Linwood that disarmed her fears, and inspired confidence. The pride which had hitherto repelled the advances of friendship, was all chastened and subdued. Death, the great leveller, had entered the house, and the mountains of human distinction flowed down at his presence.

"I am come to nurse you," said Mrs. Linwood, taking my mother's pale, emaciated hand and pressing it in both her own. "Do not look upon me as a stranger, but as a friend—a sister. You will let me stay, will you not?"

She seemed soliciting a favor, not conferring one.

"Thank you,—bless you!" answered my mother, her large dark eyes fixed with thrilling intensity on her face. Then she added, in a lower voice, glancing towards me, "*she* will not be left friendless, then. You will remember *her* when I am gone."

"Kindly, tenderly, even with a mother's care," replied Mrs. Linwood, tears suffusing her mild eyes, and testifying the sincerity of her words.

My mother laid Mrs. Linwood's hand on her heart, whose languid beating scarcely stirred the linen that covered it; then looking up to heaven, her lips moved in silent prayer. A smile, faint but beautiful, passed over her features, and left its sweetness on her face. From that hour to the death-hour Mrs. Linwood did minister to her, as a loving sister would have done. Edith often accompanied her mother and tried to comfort me, but I was then inaccessible to comfort, as I was deaf to hope. When she stayed away, I missed the soft floating of her airy figure, the pitying glance of her heavenly blue eye; but when she came, I said to myself,

"*Her* mother is not dying. How can she sympathize with me? She is the favorite of Him who is crushing me beneath the iron hand of His wrath."

Thus impious were my thoughts, but no one read them on my pale, drooping brow. Mrs. Linwood praised my filial devotion, my fortitude and heroism. Dr. Harlowe had told her how I had braved the terrors of midnight solitude through the lonely woods, to bring him to a servant's bedside. Richard Clyde had interested her in my behalf. She told me I had many friends for one so young and so retiring. Oh! she little knew how coldly fell the words of praise on the dull ear of despair. I smiled at the thought of needing kindness and protection when *she* was gone. As if it were possible for me to survive my mother!

Had she not herself told me that grief did not kill? But I believed her not.

Do you ask if I felt no curiosity then, about the mystery of my parentage? I had been looking forward to the time when I should be deemed old enough to know my mother's history of which my imagination had woven such a web of mystery and romance,—when I should hear something of that father whose memory was curtained by such an impenetrable veil. But now it mattered not. Had I known that the blood of kings was in my veins, it would not have wakened one throb of ambition, kindled one ray of joy. I cared not for my lineage or kindred. I would not have disturbed the serenity that seemed settling on my mother's departing spirit, by one question relative to her past life, for the wealth of the Indies.

She gave to Mrs. Linwood a manuscript which she had written while I was at school, and which was to have been committed to Peggy's care;—for surely Peggy, the strong, the robust, unwearied Peggy, would survive her, the frail, delicate, and stricken one!

She told me this the night before she died, when at her own request I was left alone with her. I knew it was for the last time, but I had been looking forward steadily to this hour,—looking as I said before, as the iron-bound prisoner to the revolving knife, and like him I was outwardly calm. I knelt beside her and looked on her shadowy form, her white, transparent skin, her dark, still lustrous, though sunken eyes, till it seemed that her spirit, almost disembodied, mingled mysteriously with mine, in earnest of a divine communion.

"I thank God, my Gabriella," she said, laying her hand blessingly on my bowed head, "that you submit to His holy will, in a spirit of childlike submission. I thank Him for raising up such a friend as Mrs. Linwood, when friend and comforter seemed taken from us. Love her, confide in her, be grateful to her, my child. Be grateful to God for sending her to soothe my dying hours with promises of protection and love for you, my darling, my child, my poor orphan Gabriella."

"Oh mother," I cried, "I do not submit,—I cannot,—I cannot! Dreadful thoughts are in my heart—oh, my mother, God is very terrible. Leave me not alone to meet his awful judgments. Put your arms round me, my mother, and let me lie close to your bosom, I will not hurt you, I will lie so gently there. Death cannot separate us, when we cling so close together. Leave me not alone in the world, so cold, so dark, so dreary,—oh, leave me not alone!" Thus I clung to her, in the abandonment of despair, while words rushed unhidden from my lips.

"Oh, my Gabriella, my child, my poor smitten lamb!" she cried, and I felt her heart fluttering against mine like a dying bird. "Sorrow has bereft you of reason,—you know not what you say. Gabriella, it is an awful thing to resist the Almighty God. Submission is the heritage of dust and ashes. *I* have been proud and rebellious, smarting under a sense of unmerited chastisement and wrong. Because man was false, I thought God unjust,—but now, on this dying bed, the illusion of passion is dispelled, and I see Him as He is, longsuffering, compassionate, and indulgent, in all his loving-kindness and tender mercy, strong to deliver and mighty to save. I feel that I have needed all the discipline of sorrow through which I have passed, to bring my proud and troubled soul, a sin-sick, life weary wanderer, to my Father's footstool. What matters now, my Gabriella, that I have trod a thorny path, if it lead to heaven at last? How short the journey,—how long the rest! Oh, beloved child, bow to the hand that smites thee, for the stubborn will *must* be broken. Wait not, like me, till it be ground into dust."

She paused breathless and exhausted, but I answered not. Low sobs came gaspingly from my bosom, on which a mountain of ice seemed freezing.

"If we could die together," she continued, with increasing solemnity, "if I could bear you in these feeble arms to the mercy-seat of God, and know you were safe from temptation, and sorrow, and sin, the bitterness of death would be passed. It is a fearful thing to live, my child, far more fearful than to die,—but life is the trial of faith, and death the victory."

"And now," she added, "before my spirit wings its upward flight, receive my dying injunction. If you live to years of womanhood, and your heart awakens to love,—as, alas, for woman's destiny it will,—then read my life and sad experience, and be warned by my example. Mrs. Linwood is intrusted with the manuscript, blotted with your mother's tears. Oh, Gabriella, by all your love and reverence for the memory of the dead,—by the scarlet dye that can be made white as wool,—by your own hope in a Saviour's mercy, forgive the living,—if living *he* indeed be!"

Her eyes closed as she uttered these words, and a purplish gloom gathered beneath her eyes. The doctor came in and administered ether, which partially revived her. I have never been able to inhale it since, without feeling sick and faint, and recalling the deadly odor of that chamber of mourning.

About daybreak, I heard Dr. Harlowe say in the lowest whisper to Mrs. Linwood that *she* could not live more than one hour. He turned the hour-glass as he spoke. She had collected all the energies of life in that parting interview,—nothing remained but a faint, fluttering, quick-drawn breath.

I sat looking at the hour-glass, counting every gliding sand, till each little, almost invisible particle, instead of dropping into the crystal receptacle, seemed to fall on my naked heart like the mountain rock. O my God! there are only two or three sands left, and my mother's life hangs on the last sinking grain. Some one rises with noiseless steps to turn the glass.

With a shriek that might have arrested the departing spirit, I sprang forward and fell senseless on the floor.

I remember nothing that passed during the day. I was told afterwards, that when I recovered from the fainting fit, the doctor, apprehensive of spasms, gave me a powerful anodyne to quiet my tortured nerves. When I became conscious of what was passing around me, the moon was shining on the bed where I lay, and the shadow of the softly rustling leaves quivering on the counterpane. I was alone, but I heard low, murmuring voices in the next room, and there was a light there more dim and earthly than the pale splendor that enveloped me. I leaned forward on my elbow and looked beyond the open door. The plain white curtains of the bed were looped up on each side, and the festoons swayed heavily in the night air, which made the flame of the lamp dim and wavering. A form reclined on the bed, but the face was *all covered*, though it was a midsummer's night. As I looked, I remembered all, and I rose and glided through the moonlight to the spot where my mother slept. Sustained by unnatural excitement, I seemed borne on air, and as much separated from the body as the spirit so lately divorced from that unbreathing clay; it was the effect of the opiate I had taken, but the pale watchers in the death-chamber shuddered at my unearthly appearance.

"Let there be no light here but light from heaven," said I, extinguishing the fitful lamp-flame; and the room was immediately illuminated with a white, ghostly lustre. Then kneeling by the bed, I folded back the linen sheet, gazed with folded hands, and dry, dilated eyes on the mystery of death. The moon, "that sun of the sleepless," that star of the mourner, shone full on her brow, and I smiled to see how divinely fair, how placid, how angelic she looked. Her dark, shining hair, the long dark lashes that pencilled her white cheek, alone prevented her from seeming a statue of the purest marble, fashioned after some Grecian model. Beauty and youth had come back to her reposing features, and peace and rapture too. A smile, such as no living lips ever wore, lingered round her mouth and softened its mute expression. She was happy. God had given his beloved rest. She was happy. It was not death on which I was gazing; it was life,—the dawn of immortal, of eternal life. Angels were watching around her. I did not see them, but I felt the shadow of their snow-white wings. I felt them fanning my brow and softly lifting the locks that fell darkly against the sheet, so chilly white. Others might have thought it the wind sighing through the leafy lattice-work; but the presence of angels was real to me,—and who can say they were not hovering there?

That scene is past, but its remembrance is undying. The little cottage is inhabited by strangers. The grass grows rank near the brink of the fountain, and the mossy stone once moistened by my tears has rolled down and choked its gushing. My mother sleeps by the side of the faithful Peggy, beneath a willow that weeps over a broken shaft,—fitting monument for a broken heart.

I will not dwell on the desolation of orphanage. It cannot be described. My Maker only knows the bitterness of my grief for days, weeks, even months. But time gradually warms the cold clay over the grave of love; then the grass springs up, and the flowers bloom, and the waste places of life become beautiful with hope, and the wilderness blossoms like the rose.

But oh, my mother! my gentle, longsuffering mother! thou hast never been forgotten. By day and by night, in sunshine and shadow, in joy and in sorrow, thou art with me, a holy spirit, a hallowed memory, a chastening influence, that passeth not away.

CHAPTER XI.

What a change, from the little gray cottage in the woods to the pillared walls of Grandison Place.

This ancestral looking mansion was situated on the brow of a long, winding hill, which commanded a view of the loveliest valley in the world. A bold, sweeping outline of distant hills, here and there swelling into mountains, and crowned with a deeper, mistier blue, divided the rich green of the earth from the azure of the heavens. Far as the eye could reach, it beheld the wildest luxuriance of nature refined and subdued by the hand of cultivation and taste. Man had reverenced the grandeur of the Creator, and made the ploughshare turn aside from the noble shade-tree, and left the streams rejoicing in their margins of verdure; and far off, far away beneath the shadow of the misty blue hills,—of a paler, more leaden hue,—the waters of the great sea seemed ready to roll down on the vale, that lay smiling before it.

Built of native granite, with high massive walls and low turreted roof, Grandison Place rose above the surrounding buildings in castellated majesty. It stood in the centre of a spacious lawn, zoned by a girdle of oaks, beneath whose dense shade the dew sparkled even at noonday. Within this zone was a hedge of cedar, so smooth, with twigs so thickly interwoven, that the gossamer thought it a framework, on which to stretch its transparent web in the morning sun. Near the house the lawn was margined with beds of the rarest and most beautiful flowers, queen roses, and all the fragrant populace of the floral world. But the grandest and most beautiful feature of all was a magnificent elm-tree, standing right in the centre of the green inclosure, toweling upward, sweeping downward, spreading on either side its lordly branches, "from storms a shelter and from heat a shade."

I never saw so noble a tree. I loved it,—I reverenced it. I associated with it the idea of strength and protection. Had I seen the woodman's axe touch its bark, I should have felt as if blood would stream from its venerable trunk. A circular bench with a back formed of boughs woven in checker-work surrounded it, and at twilight the soft sofas in the drawing-room were left vacant for this rustic seat.

Edith loved it, and when she sat there with her crutches leaning against the rough back, whose gray tint subdued the bright lustre of her golden hair, I would throw myself on the grass at her feet and gaze upon her, as the embodiment of human loveliness.

One would suppose that I felt awkward and strange in the midst of such unaccustomed magnificence; but it was not so. It seemed natural and right for me to be there. I trod the soft, rich, velvety carpeting with a step as unembarrassed as when I traversed the grassy lawn. I was as much at home among the splendors of art as the beauties of nature,—both seemed my birthright.

I felt the deepest, most unbounded gratitude for my benefactress; but there was nothing abject in it. I knew that giving did not impoverish her; that the food I ate was not as much to her as the crumbs that fell from my mother's table; that the room I occupied was but one in a suite of elegant apartments; yet this did not diminish my sense of obligation. It lightened it, however, of its oppressive weight.

My room was next to Edith's. The only difference in the furniture was in the color of the hangings. The curtains and bed drapery of mine were pink, hers blue. Both opened into an upper piazza, whose lofty pillars were wreathed with flowering vines, and crowned with Corinthian capitals. Surely my love for the beautiful ought to have been satisfied; and so it was,—but it was long, long before my heart opened to receive its influence. The clods that covered my mother's ashes laid too heavily upon it.

Mrs. Linwood had a great deal of company from the city, which was but a short journey from Grandison Place. As they were mostly transient guests, I saw but little of them. My extreme youth, and deep mourning dress, were sufficient reasons for withdrawing from the family circle when strangers enlarged it. Edith was three years older than myself, and was of course expected to assist her mother in the honors of hospitality. She loved society, moreover, and entered into its innocent pleasures with the delight of a young, genial nature. It was difficult to think of her as a young lady, she was so extremely juvenile in her appearance; and her lameness, by giving her an air of childish dependence, added to the illusion caused by her fair, clustering ringlets and infantine rosiness of complexion. She wanted to bring me forward;—she coaxed, caressed, and playfully threatened, nor desisted till her mother said, with grave tenderness—

"The heart cannot be forced, Edith; Gabriella is but a child, and should be allowed the freedom of a child. The restraints of social life, once assumed, are not easily thrown aside. Let her do just as she pleases."

And so I did; and it pleased me to wander about the lawn; to sit and read under the great elm-tree; to make garlands of myrtle and sweet running vine flowers for Edith's beautiful hair; to walk the piazza, when moonlight silvered the columns and covered with white glory the granite walls, while the fountain of poetry down in the depths of my soul welled and trembled in the heavenly lustre.

It pleased me to sit in the library, or rather to stand and move about there, for at that time I did not like to sit anywhere but on the grass or the oaken bench. The old poets were there in rich binding, all the classics, and the choicest specimens of modern literature. There were light, airy,

movable steps, so as to reach to the topmost shelves, and there I loved to poise myself, like a bird on the spray, peeping into this book and that, gathering here and there a golden grain or sweet scented flower for the garner of thought, or the bower of imagination.

There were statues in niches made to receive them,—the gods and goddesses of Greece and Rome, in their cold, severe beauty, all passionless and pure, in spite of the glowing mythology that called them into existence. There were paintings, too, that became a part of my being, I took them in with such intense, gazing eyes. Indeed, the house was lined with them. I could not walk through a room without stopping to admire some work of genius, some masterpiece of art.

I over-heard Dr. Harlowe say to Mrs. Linwood, that it was a pity I were not at school, I was so very young. As if I were not at school all the time! As if those grand old books were not teachers; those breathing statues, those gorgeous paintings were not teachers; as if the noble edifice itself, with its magnificent surroundings, the billowy heave of the distant mountains, the glimpses of the sublime sea, the fair expanse of the beautiful valley, were not teachers!

Oh! they little knew what lessons I was learning. They little knew how the soul of the silent orphan girl was growing within her,—how her imagination, like flowers, was nourished in stillness and secrecy by the air and the sunshine, the dew and the shower.

I had other teachers, too, in the lonely churchyard; very solemn they were, and gentle too, and I loved their voiceless instructions better than the sounding eloquence of words.

Mr. Regulus thought with Dr. Harlowe, that it was a pity I was not at school. He called to see Mrs. Linwood and asked her to use her influence to induce me to return as a pupil to the academy. She left it to my decision, but I shrunk from the thought of contact with the rude village children. I felt as if I had learned all Mr. Regulus could teach me. I was under greater masters now. Yet I was grateful for the interest he manifested in me. I had no vindictive remembrance of the poem he had so ruthlessly murdered. Innumerable acts of after kindness had obliterated the impression, or rather covered it with a growth of pleasant memories.

"Have you given up entirely the idea of being a teacher yourself?" he asked, in a low voice, "or has the kindness of friends rendered it superfluous? I do not ask from curiosity out a deep interest in your future welfare."

This was a startling question. I had not thought of the subject since I had entered my new home. Why should I think of the drudgery of life, pillowed on the downy couch of luxury and ease? I was forgetting that I was but the recipient of another's bounty,—a guest, but not a child of the household.

Low as was his voice, I knew Mrs. Linwood heard and understood him, for her eyes rested on me with a peculiar expression of anxiety and interest. She did not speak, and I knew not what to utter. A burning glow rose to my cheeks, and my heart fluttered with painful apprehension. It was all a dream, then. That home of affluence was not mine,—it was only the asylum of my first days of orphanage. The maternal tenderness of Mrs. Linwood was nothing more than compassion and Christian charity, and the sisterly affection of the lovely Edith but the overflowing of the milk of human kindness. These were my first, flashing thoughts; then the inherent pride of my nature rose to sustain me. I would never be a willing burden to any one. I would toil day and night, sooner than eat the bread of dependence. It would have been far better to have left me in the humble cottage where they found me, to commence my life of drudgery at once, than to have given me a taste of luxury and affluence, to heighten, by force of contrast, privation and labor.

"I will commence teaching immediately," I answered, trying in vain to speak with firmness, "if you think I am not too young, and a situation can be obtained;" "that is," I added, I fear a little proudly, "if Mrs. Linwood approve."

"It must not be thought of *at present*," she answered, speaking to Mr. Regulus. "Gabriella is too young yet to assume the burden of authority. Her physical powers are still undeveloped. Besides, we shall pass the winter in the metropolis. Next summer we will talk about it."

"They speak of adding a primary department to the academy," said my former master, "which will be under female superintendence. If this *is* done, and she would accept the situation, I think I have influence enough to secure it for her."

"We will see to that hereafter," said Mrs. Linwood; "but of one thing I am assured, if Gabriella ever wishes to assume duties so honorable and so feminine, she would think it a privilege to be under your especial guardianship, and within reach of your experience and counsel."

I tried to speak, and utter an assent to this wise and decided remark, but I could not. I felt the tears gushing into my eyes, and hastily rising, I left the room. I did not go out on the lawn, for I saw Edith's white robes under the trees, and I knew the guests of the city were with her. I ran up stairs to my own apartment, or that which was called mine, and, sitting down in an embrasure of the window, drew aside the rosy damask and gazed around me.

Do not judge me too harshly. I was ungrateful; I knew I was. My heart rose against Mrs. Linwood for her cold decision. I forgot, for the moment, her holy ministrations to my dying mother, her care and protection of me, when left desolate and alone. I forgot that I had no claims on her beyond what her compassion granted. I realized all at once that I was poor and dependent, though basking in the sunshine of wealth.

In justice to myself I must say, that the bitterest tears I then shed were caused by disappointment in Mrs. Linwood's exalted character. I had imagined her "bounty as boundless as the sea, her love as deep." Now the noble proportion of her virtues seemed dwarfed, their luxuriance stinted, and withering too.

While I was thus cheating my benefactress of her fair perfections, she came in with her usual quiet and stilly step, and sat down beside me. The consciousness of what was passing in my mind, made the guilty blood rush warm to my face.

"You have been weeping, Gabriella," she said, in gentle accents; "your feelings are wounded, you think me cold, perhaps unkind."

"Oh, madam, what have I said?"

"Nothing, my dear child, and yet I have read every thing. Your ingenuous countenance expressed on my entrance as plain as words could utter, 'Hate me, for I am an ingrate.'"

"You do, indeed, read very closely."

"Could you look as closely into my heart, Gabriella, were my face as transparent as yours, you would understand at once my apparent coldness as anxiety for your highest good. Did I consult my own pleasure, without regard to that discipline by which the elements of character are wrought into beauty and fitness, I should cherish no wish but to see you ever near me as now, indulging the sweet dreams of youth, only the more fascinating for being shadowed with melancholy. I would save you, if possible, from becoming the victim of a diseased imagination, or too morbid a sensibility."

I looked up, impressed with her calm, earnest tones, and as I listened, conscience upbraided me with injustice and ingratitude.

"There is a period in every young girl's life, my dear Gabriella, when she is in danger of becoming a vain and idle dreamer, when the amusements of childhood have ceased to interest, and the shadow of woman's destiny involves the pleasures of youth. The mind is occupied with vague imaginings, the heart with restless cravings for unknown blessings. With your vivid imagination and deep sensibility, your love of reverie and abstraction, there is great danger of your yielding unconsciously to habits the more fatal in their influence, because apparently as innocent as they are insidious and pernicious. A life of active industry and usefulness is the only safeguard from temptation and sin."

Oh, how every true word she uttered ennobled her in my estimation, while it humbled myself. Idler that I was in my Father's vineyard, I was holding out my hands for the clustering grapes, whose purple juice is for him who treadeth the wine-press.

"Were my own Edith physically strong," she added, "I would ask no nobler vocation for her than the one suggested to you this day. I should rejoice to see her passing through a discipline so chastening and exalting. I should rejoice to see her exercising the faculties which God has given her for the benefit of her kind. The possession of wealth does not exempt one from the active duties of life, from self-sacrifice, industry and patient continuance in well-doing. The little I have done for you, all that I can do, is but a drop from the fountain, and were it ten times more would never be missed. It is not that I would give less, but I would require more. While I live, this shall ever be your home, where you shall feel a mother's care, protection, and tenderness; but I want you to form habits of self-reliance, independence, and usefulness, which will remain your friends, though other friends should be taken from you."

Dear, excellent Mrs. Linwood! how my proud, rebellious heart melted before her! What resolutions I formed to be always governed by her influence, and guided by her counsels! How vividly her image rises before me, as she then looked, in her customary dress of pale, silver gray, her plain yet graceful lace cap, simply parted hair, and calm, benevolent countenance.

She was the most unpretending of human beings. She moved about the house with a step as stilly as the falling dews. Indeed, such was her walk through life. She seemed born to teach mankind unostentatious charity. Yet, under this mild, calm exterior, she had a strong, controlling will, which all around her felt and acknowledged. From the moment she drew the fan from my hand, at my mother's bedside, to the hour I left her dwelling, she acted upon me with a force powerful as the sun, and as benignant too.

CHAPTER XII.

If I do not pass more rapidly over these early scenes, I shall never finish my book.

Book!—am I writing a book? No, indeed! This is only a record of my heart's life, written at random and carelessly thrown aside, sheet after sheet, sibylline leaves from the great book of fate. The wind may blow them away, a spark consume them. I may myself commit them to the flames. I am tempted to do so at this moment.

I once thought it a glorious thing to be an author,—to touch the electric wire of sentiment, and know that thousands would thrill at the shock,—to speak, and believe that unborn millions would

hear the music of those echoing words,—to possess the wand of the enchanter, the ring of the genii, the magic key to the temple of temples, the pass-word to the universe of mind. I once had such visions as these, but they are passed.

To touch the electric wire, and feel the bolt scathing one's own brain,—to speak, to hear the dreary echo of one's voice return through the desert waste,—to enter the temple and find nothing but ruins and desolation,—to lay a sacrifice on the altar, and see no fire from heaven descend in token of acceptance,—to stand the priestess of a lonely shrine, uttering oracles to the unheeding wind,—is not such too often the doom of those who have looked to fame as their heritage, believing genius their dower?

Heaven save me from such a destiny. Better the daily task, the measured duty, the chained-down spirit, the girdled heart.

A year after Mrs. Linwood pointed out to me the path of duty, I began to walk in it. I have passed the winter in the city, but it was one of deep seclusion to me. I welcomed with rapture our return to the country, and had so far awakened from dream-life, as to prepare myself with steadiness of purpose for the realities of my destiny.

Edith rebelled against her mother's decision. There was no need of such a thing. I was too young, too delicate, too sensitive for so rough a task. There was a plenty of robust country girls to assist Mr. Regulus, if he wanted them to, without depriving her of her companion and sister. She appealed to Dr. Harlowe, in her sweet, bewitching way, which always seemed irresistible; but he only gave her a genial smile, called me "a brave little girl," and bade me "God speed." "I wish Richard Clyde were here," said she, in her own artless, half-childish manner, "I am sure he would be on my side. I wish brother Ernest would come home, he would decide the question. Oh, Gabriella, if you only knew brother Ernest!"

If I have not mentioned this *brother Ernest* before, it is not because I had not heard his name repeated a thousand times. He was the only son and brother of the family, who, having graduated with the first honors at the college of his native State, was completing his education in Germany, at the celebrated University of Gottingen. There was a picture of him in the library, taken just before he left the country, on which I had gazed, till it was to me a living being. It was a dark, fascinating face,—a face half of sunshine and half shadow, a face of mysterious meanings; as different from Edith's as night from morning. It reminded me of the head of Byron, but it expressed deeper sensibility, and the features were even more symmetrically handsome.

Edith, who was as frank and artless as a child, was always talking of her brother, of his brilliant talents, his genius, and peculiarities. She showed me his letters, which were written with extraordinary beauty and power, though the sentiments were somewhat obscured by a transcendental mistiness belonging to the atmosphere he breathed.

"Ernest never was like anybody else," said Edith; "he is the most singular, but the most fascinating of human beings. Oh Gabriella, I long to have him come back, that you may know and admire him."

Though I knew by ten thousand signs that this absent son was the first object of Mrs. Linwood's thoughts, she seldom talked of him to me. She often, when Edith was indulging in her enthusiastic descriptions of him, endeavored to change the conversation and turn my thoughts in other channels.

But why do I speak of Ernest Linwood here? It is premature. I was about to describe a little part of my experience as a village teacher.

Edith had a beautiful little pony, gentle as a lamb, yet very spirited withal, (for lame though she was, she was a graceful and fearless equestrian,) which it was arranged that I should ride every morning, escorted by a servant, who carried the pony back for Edith's use. Dr. Harlowe, who resided near the academy, said I was always to dine at his house, and walk home in the evening. They must not make too much of a fine lady of me. I must exercise, if I would gather the roses of health. Surely no young girl could begin the ordeal of duty under kinder, more favoring auspices.

After the first dreaded morning when Mr. Regulus, tall, stately, and imposing, ushered me into the apartment where I was to preside with delegated authority, led me up a low flight of steps and waved his hand towards a high magisterial arm-chair which was to be my future throne, I felt a degree of self-confidence that surprised and encouraged me. Every thing was so novel, so fresh, it imparted an elasticity to my spirits I had not felt in Mrs. Linwood's luxurious home. Then there was something self-sustaining, inspiring in the consciousness of intellectual exertion and moral courage, in the thought that I was doing some little good in the world, that I was securing the approbation of Mrs. Linwood and of the excellent Dr. Harlowe. The children, who had most of them been my fellow pupils, looked upon Gabriella Lynn, the protégée of the rich Mrs. Linwood, as a different being from Gabriella Lynn of the little gray cottage in the woods. I have no doubt they thought it very grand to ride on that beautiful pony, with its saddle-cloth of blue and silver, and glittering martingale, escorted by a servant too! Had they been disposed to rebel at my authority, they would not have dared to do so, for Mr. Regulus, jealous for my new dignity, watched over it with an eagle eye.

Where were the chains, whose prophetic clanking had chilled my misgiving heart? They were transformed to flowery garlands, of daily renewing fragrance and bloom. My desk was literally covered with blossoms while their season lasted, and little fairy fingers were always twining with

wreaths the dark hair they loved to arrange according to their own juvenile fancies.

My noon hours at Dr. Harlowe's, were pleasant episodes in my daily life. Mrs. Harlowe was an excellent woman. She was called by the villagers "a most superior woman,"—and so she was, if admirable housekeeping and devotion to her husband's interests entitled her to the praise. She was always busy; but the doctor, though he had a wide sweep of practice in the surrounding country, always seemed at leisure. There was something so cheerful, so encouraging about him, despondency fled from his presence and gave place to hope.

I love to recall this era of my life. If I have known deeper happiness, more exalted raptures, they were dearly purchased by the sacrifice of the peace, the salubrity of mind I then enjoyed. I had a little room of my own there, where I was as much at home as I was at Mrs. Linwood's. There was a place for my bonnet and parasol, a shelf for my books, a low rocking-chair placed at the pleasantest window for me; and, knowing Mrs. Harlowe's methodical habits, I was always careful to leave every thing, as I found it, in Quaker-like order. This was the smallest return I could make for her hospitality, and she appreciated it far beyond its merits. The good doctor, with all his virtues, tried the patience of his wife sometimes beyond its limits, by his excessive carelessness. He *would* forget to hang his hat in the hall, and toss it on the bright, polished mahogany table. He *would* forget to use the scraper by the steps, or the mat by the door, and leave tracks on the clean floor or nice carpet. These little things really worried her; I could see they did. She never said any thing; but she would get up, take up the hat, brush the table with her handkerchief, and hang the hat in its right place, or send the house-girl with the broom after his disfiguring tracks.

"Pardon me, my dear," he would say with imperturbable good-nature,—"really, I am too forgetful. I must have a self-regulating machine attached to my movements,—a portable duster and hat-catcher. But, the blessed freedom of home. It constitutes half its joy. Dear me! I would not exchange the privilege of doing as I please for the emperorship of the celestial realms."

But, pleasant as were my noon rests, my homeward walks were pleasanter still. The dream-girl, after being awake for long hours to the practical duties of life, loved to ramble alone, till she felt herself involved in the soft haziness of thought, which was to the soul what the blue mistiness was to the distant hills. I could wander then alone to the churchyard, and yield myself unmolested to the sacred influences of memory. Do you remember my asking Richard Clyde to plant a white rose by my mother's grave? He had done so, soon after her burial, and now, when rather more than a year had passed, it was putting forth fair buds and blossoms, and breathing of renovation over the ruins of life. I never saw this rose-tree without blessing the hand which planted it; and I loved to sit on the waving grass and listen to the soft summer wind stealing through it, rustling among the dry blades and whispering with the green ones.

There was one sentence that fell from my mother's dying lips which ever came to me in the sighs of the gale, fraught with mournful mystery. "Because man was *false*, I dared to think God was unjust." And had she not adjured me by every precious and every solemn consideration, "to forgive the *living*, if living *he* indeed was?"

I knew these words referred to my father; and what a history of wrong and sorrow was left for my imagination to fill up! Living!—my father living! Oh! there is no grave so deep as that dug by the hand of neglect or desertion! He had been dead to my mother,—he had been dead to me. I shuddered at the thought of breathing the same vital element. He who had broken a mother's heart must be a fiend, worthy of eternal abhorrence.

"If you live to years of womanhood," said my expiring mother, "and your heart awakens to love, as alas for woman's destiny it will, then read my life's sad experience, and be warned by my example."

Sad prophetess! Death has consecrated thy prediction, but it is yet unfulfilled. When will womanhood commence, on whose horizon the morning star of love is to rise in clouded lustre?

Surely I am invested with a woman's dignity, in that great arm-chair, behind the green-covered desk. I feel very much like a blown rose, surrounded by the rose-bud garland of childhood. Yet Dr. Harlowe calls me "little girl," and Mr. Regulus "my child," when the pupils are not by; then it is "Miss Gabriella." They forget that I am sixteen, and that I have grown taller and more womanly in the last year; but the awakening heart has not yet throbbed at its dawning destiny, the day-star of love has not risen on its slumbers.

CHAPTER XIII.

"I wish you had a vacation too," said Richard Clyde, as we ascended together the winding hill.

"Then we should not have these pleasant walks," I answered.

"Why not?"

"Why, I should not be returning from school at this hour every day, and you would not happen to overtake me as you do now."

"How do you know it is accident, Gabriella? How do you know but I wander about the woods, a

restless ghost, till glad ringing voices chiming together, announce that you are free, and that I am at liberty to play guardian and knight, as I did three or four years ago?"

"Because you would not waste your time so foolishly, and because I do not need a guardian now. I am in authority, you know, and no one molests or makes me afraid."

"Nevertheless, you need a guardian more than ever, and I shall remain true to my boyish allegiance."

Richard always had a gay, dashing way of talking, and his residence in college had certainly not subdued the gay spirit of chivalry that sparkled in his eye. He had grown much taller since I had seen him last, his face was more intellectual and altogether improved, and his dress was elegantly, though not foppishly, fashionable. He was an exceedingly agreeable companion. Even when I was most shy and sensitive, I felt at ease with him. When I say that I looked upon him something as an elder brother, I mean what I express,—not the sickly affectation with which young girls sometimes strive to hide a deeper feeling,—I remembered his steady school-boy friendship, his sympathy in the dark days of anguish and despair, and more than all, the rose, the sacred rose he had planted at my mother's grave.

I thanked him for this, with a choking voice and a moistened eye.

"Do not thank me," said he; "I had a mother once,—she, too, is gone. The world may contain for us many friends, but never but one mother, Gabriella. I was only ten years old when mine was taken from me, but her influence is around me still, a safeguard and a blessing."

Words so full of feeling and reverence were more impressive falling from lips usually sparkling with gaiety and wit. We walked in silence up the gradual ascent, till we came to a fine old elm, branching out by the way-side, and we paused to rest under its boughs. As we did so, we turned towards the valley we were leaving behind, and beheld it stretching, a magnificent panorama, to the east and the west, the north and the south, wearing every shade of green, from the deep, rich hue of the stately corn to the brighter emerald of the oat fields, and the dazzling verdure of the pasture-land; and over all this glowing landscape the golden glory of approaching sunset hung like a royal canopy, whose purple fringes rested on the distant mountains.

"How beautiful!" I exclaimed with enthusiasm.

"How beautiful!" he echoed with equal fervor.

"You are but mocking my words, Richard,—you are not looking at the enchanting prospect."

"Yes, I am,—a very enchanting one."

"How foolish!" I cried, for I could not but understand the emphasis of his smiling glance.

"Why am I more foolish in admiring one beautiful prospect than you another, Gabriella? You solicited my admiration for one charming view, while my eyes were riveted on another. If we are both sincere, we are equally wise."

"But it seems so unnecessary to take the pains to compliment me, when you know me so well, and when I know myself so well too."

"I doubt your self-knowledge very much. I do not believe, in the first place, that you are aware how wonderfully you are improved. You do not look the same girl you did a year ago. You have grown taller, fairer, brighter, Gabriella. I did not expect to see this, when I heard you had shut yourself up in the academy again, under the shadow of old Regulus's beetling brows."

"I am sure he is not old, Richard; he is in the very prime of manhood."

"Well, Professor Regulus, then. We boys have a habit of speaking of our teachers in this way. I know it is a bad one, but we all fall into it. All our college professors have a metaphorical name, with the venerable epithet attached to it, which you condemn.

"I do not like it at all; it sounds so disrespectful, and, pardon me for saying it, even coarse."

"You have a great respect for Mr. Regulus."

"I have; he is one of my best friends."

"I dare say he is; I should like to be in his place. You have another great friend, old Dr. Harlowe."

"There, again. Why, Dr. Harlowe is almost young, at least very far from being old. He is one of the finest looking men I ever saw, and one of the best. You college students must be a very presuming set of young men."

I spoke gravely, for I was really vexed that any one whom I esteemed as much as I did Richard, should adopt the vulgarisms he once despised.

"We *are* a barbarous, rude set," he answered with redeeming frankness. "We show exactly what a savage man is and would ever be, without the refining influence of women. If it were not for our vacations, we would soon get beyond the reach of civilization. Be not angry with my roughness, most gentle Gabriella. Pass over it your smoothing touch, and it shall have the polish of marble, without its coldness."

We had resumed our walk, and the granite walls of Grandison Place began to loom up above the surrounding shade.

"That is a noble mansion," said he. "How admirably such a residence must harmonize with your high, romantic thoughts. But there is one thing that impresses me with wonder,—that Mrs. Linwood, so rich, so liberal too, with only one daughter, should allow you, her adopted child, to devote your young hours to the drudgery of teaching. It seems so unnecessary, so inconsistent with her usual munificence of action."

The glow of wounded pride warmed my cheek. I had become happy in my vocation, but I could not bear to hear it depreciated, nor the motives of my benefactress misunderstood and misrepresented.

"Mrs. Linwood is as wise as she is kind," I answered, hastily. "It is my happiness and good she consults, not her own pleasure. Giving does not impoverish either her ample purse or her generous heart. She knows my nature, knows that I could not bear the stagnation of a life of luxurious ease."

"Edith can,—why not you?"

"We are so different. She was born for the position she occupies. She is one of the lilies of the valley, that toil not, neither do they spin, yet they fulfil a lovely mission. Do not try to make me discontented with a lot, so full of blessings, Richard. Surely no orphan girl was ever more tenderly cherished, more abundantly cared for."

"Discontented!" he exclaimed, "heaven forbid! I must be a wretched blunderer. I am saying something wrong all the time, with a heart full of most excellent intentions. Discontented! no, indeed; I have only the unfortunate habit of speaking before I think. I shall grow wiser as I grow older, I trust."

He reached up to a branch that bent over the way-side, and breaking it off, began to strip it of its green leaves and scatter them in the path.

"You do not think me angry, Richard?" I asked, catching some of the leaves, before they fell to the ground. "I once felt all that you express; and I was doubly wrong; I was guilty of ingratitude, you only of thoughtlessness."

"When does Mrs. Linwood expect her son?" he asked abruptly.

"Next summer, I believe; I do not exactly know."

"He will take strong hold of your poetic imagination. There is something 'grand, gloomy, and peculiar' about him; a mystery of reserve, which oft amounts to haughtiness. I am but very little acquainted with him, and probably never shall be. Should we chance to meet in society, we would be two parallel lines, never uniting, however near we might approach. Besides, he is a number of years older than myself."

"I suppose you call him old Mr. Linwood," said I, laughing.

We had now entered the gate, and met Mrs. Linwood and Edith walking in the avenue, if Edith could be said to walk, borne on as she was by her softly falling crutches. She looked so exceedingly lovely, I wondered that Richard did not burst forth in expressions of irrepressible admiration. I was never weary of gazing on her beauty. Even after an absence of a few hours, it dawned upon me with new lustre, like that of the rising day. I wondered that any one ever looked at any one else in her presence. As for myself, I felt annihilated by her dazzling fairness, as the little star is absorbed by the resplendent moon.

Strange, all beautiful as she was she did not attract, as one would suppose, the admiration of the other sex. Perhaps there was something cold and shadowy in the ethereality of her loveliness, a want of sympathy with man's more earthly, passionate nature. It is very certain, the beauty which woman most admires often falls coldly on the gaze of man. Edith had the face of an angel; but hers was not the darkening eye and changing cheek that "pale passion loves." Did the sons of God come down to earth, as they did in olden time, to woo the daughters of men, they might have sought her as their bride. She was not cold, however; she was not passionless. She had a woman's heart, formed to enshrine an idol of clay, believing it imperishable as its own love.

Mrs. Linwood gave Richard a cordial greeting. I had an unaccountable fear that she would not be pleased that he escorted me home so frequently, though this was the first time he had accompanied me to the lawn. She urged him to remain and pass the evening, or rather asked him, for he required no urging. I am sure it must have been a happy one to him. Edith played upon her harp, which had been newly strung. She seemed the very personification of one of Ossian's blue-eyed maids, with her white, rising hands, and long, floating locks.

I was passionately fond of music, and had my talent been early cultivated I would doubtless have excelled. I cared not much about the piano, but there was inspiration in the very sight of a harp. In imagination I was Corinna, improvising the impassioned strains of Italy, or a Sappho, breathing out my soul, like the dying swan, in strains of thrilling melody. Edith was a St. Cecilia. Had my hand swept the chords, the hearts of mortals would have vibrated at the touch; she touched the divine string, and "called angels down."

When I retired that night and saw the reflection of myself full length, in the large pier-glass,

between the rosy folds of the sweeping damask, I could not help recalling what Richard Clyde had said of my personal improvement. Was he sincere, when with apparent enthusiasm he had applied to me the epithet, *beautiful*? No, he could not be; and yet his eyes had emphasized the language of his lips.

I was not vain. Few young girls ever thought less of their personal appearance. I lived so much in the world within, that I gave but little heed to the fashion of my outward form. It seemed so poor an expression of the glowing heart, the heaven-born soul.

For the first time I looked upon myself with reference to the eyes of others, and I tried to imagine the youthful figure on which I gazed as belonging to another, and not myself. Were the outlines softened by the dark-flowing sable, classic and graceful? Was there beauty in the oval cheek, now wearing the warm bloom of the brunette, or the dark, long-lashed eye, which drooped with the burden of unuttered thoughts?

As I asked myself these questions, I smiled at my folly; and as the image smiled back upon the original, there was such a light, such a glow, such a living soul passed before me, that for one moment a triumphant consciousness swelled my bosom, a new revelation beamed on my understanding,—the consciousness of woman's hitherto unknown power,—the revelation of woman's destiny.

And connected with this, there came the remembrance of that haunting face in the library, which I had only seen on canvas, but which was to me a breathing reality,—that face which, even on the cold, silent wall, had no repose; but dark, restless, and impassioned, was either a history of past disappointment, or a prophecy of future suffering.

The moment of triumph was brief. A pale shadow seemed to flit behind me and dim the bright image reflected in the mirror. It wore the sad, yet lovely lineaments of my departed mother.

O how vain were youth and beauty, if thus they faded and vanished away! How mournful was love thus wedded to sorrow! how mysterious the nature in which they were united!

A shower of tears washed away the vain emotions I blushed to have felt. But I could not be as though I had never known them. I could not recall the guileless simplicity of childhood, its sweet unconsciousness and contentment, in the present joy.

O foolish, foolish Gabriella! Art thou no longer a child?

CHAPTER XIV.

Mr. Regulus still called me "child." We had quite a scene in the academy one day after the school was dismissed, and I was preparing as usual to return home.

"Will you give me a few moments' conversation, Miss Gabriella?" said he, clearing his throat with one of those hems which once sounded so awful. He looked awkward and disconcerted, while my face flushed with trepidation. Had I been guilty of any omitted duty or committed offence? Had I suffered an error on the blackboard to pass unnoticed, or allowed a mistake in grammar to be unconnected? What *had* I done?

I stood nervously pulling the fingers of my gloves, waiting for him to commence the conversation he had sought. Another hem!—then he moved the inkstand about a foot further from him, for he was standing close to his desk, as if to gather round him every imposing circumstance, then he took up the ruler and measured it with his eye, run his finger along the edge, as if it were of razor sharpness.

"Is he going to punish me?" thought I. "It looks ominous."

I would not assist him by one word; but maintaining a provoking silence, took up a pair of compasses and made a circle on the green cloth that covered the desk.

"Miss Gabriella," at length he said, "you must forgive me for taking the liberty of an old friend. Nothing but the most disinterested regard for your—your reputation—could induce me to mention a subject—so—so very—very peculiar."

"Good Heavens!" I exclaimed, "my reputation, Mr. Regulus?"

I felt the blood bubbling like boiling water, up into my cheek.

"I do not wish to alarm or distress you," he continued, becoming more self-possessed, as my agitation increased. "You know a young girl, left without her natural guardians, especially if she is so unfortunate as to be endowed with those charms which too often attract the shafts of envy and stir up the venom of malice,"—

"Mr. Regulus!" I interrupted, burning with impatience and indignation, "tell me what you mean. Has any one dared to slander me,—and for what?"

"No one would dare to breathe aught of evil against you in my presence," said he, with great dignity; "but the covert whisper may pass from lip to lip, and the meaning glance flash from eye

to eye, when your friend and protector is not near to shield you from aspersion, and vindicate your fame."

"Stop," I exclaimed; "you terrify—you destroy me!"

The room spun round like a top. Every thing looked misty and black. I caught hold of Mr. Regulus's arm to keep me from falling. Foes in ambush, glittering tomahawks, deadly scalping-knives, were less terrible than my dark imaginings.

"Bless me," cried my master, seating me in his great arm-chair and fanning me with an atlas which he caught from his desk, "I did not mean to frighten you, my child. I wanted to advise, to counsel you, to *prevent* misconstruction and unkind remark. My motives are pure, indeed they are; you believe they are, do you not?"

"Certainly I do," I answered, passing my hand over my eyes, to clear away the dark specks that still floated over them; "but if you have any regard for my feelings, speak at once, plainly and openly. I will be grateful for any advice prompted by kindness, and expressed without mystery."

"I only thought," said he, becoming again visibly embarrassed, "that I would suggest the propriety of your not permitting young Clyde to accompany you home so often. The extraordinary interest he took in you as a boy, renders his present attentions more liable to remark. A young girl in your situation, my child, cannot be too particular, too much on her guard. College boys are wild fellows. They are not safe companions for innocence and simplicity like yours."

"And is this all?" I asked, drawing a long breath, and feeling as if Mont Blanc had rolled from my breast.

"It is."

"And you have heard no invidious remarks?"

"Not yet, Gabriella, but—"

"My dear master," said I, rising with a joyous spring from my chair. "I thank you from the bottom of my heart for your anxious care of my good name. But I am sure Mrs. Linwood would not have sanctioned an impropriety. I have always felt towards Richard as I imagine I would towards a brother, were I so blest as to have one. He has made my lonely walks very pleasant by his lively and intelligent conversation. Still, I do not care to have him accompany me so often. I would rather that he would not. I will tell him so. I dare say you are right, Mr. Regulus; I know you are. I know so little of the world, I may offend its rules without being aware of it."

I felt so unspeakably relieved, so happy that the mountain of slander which my imagination had piled up was reduced to an *anticipated* molehill, that my spirits rebounded even to gaiety. I laughed at the sight of my torn glove, for I had actually pulled off the fingers by my nervous twitches.

"I thought you were going to apply the spatula. I feared you thought me guilty of writing another poem, Mr. Regulus; what else could make you look so formidable?"

"Ah! Gabriella, let bygones be bygones. I was very harsh, very disagreeable then. I wonder you have ever forgiven me; I have never forgiven myself. I know not how it is, but it seems to me that a softening change has come over me. I feel more tenderly towards the young beings committed to my care, more indulgence for the weaknesses and errors of my kind. I did not mind, then, trampling on a flower, if it sprung up in my path; now I would stoop down and inhale its fragrance, and bless my Maker for shedding beauty and sweetness to gladden my way. The perception of the beautiful grows and strengthens in me. The love of nature, a new-born flower, blooms in my heart, and diffuses a sweet balminess unknown before. Even poetry, my child—do not laugh at me—has begun to unfold its mystic beauties to my imagination. I was reading the other evening that charming paraphrase of the nineteenth Psalm: 'The spacious firmament on high,' and I was exceedingly struck with its melodious rhythm; and when I looked up afterwards to the starry heavens, to the moon walking in her brightness, to the blue and boundless ether, they seemed to bend over me in love, to come nearer than they had ever done before. I could hear the whisper of that divine voice, which is heard in the rustling of the forest trees, the gurgling of the winding stream, and the rush of the mountain cataract; and every day," he added, with solemnity, "I love man more, because God has made him my brother."

He paused, and his countenance glowed with the fervor of his feelings. With an involuntary expression of reverence and tenderness, I held out my hand and exclaimed,—

"My dear master—"

"You forgive me, then," taking my hand in both his, and burying it in his large palms; "you do not think me officious and overbearing?"

"O no, sir, I have nothing to forgive, but much to be grateful for; thank you, I must go, for I have a long walk to take—*alone*."

With an emphasis on the last word I bade him adieu, ran down the steps, and went on musing so deeply on my singular interview with Mr. Regulus, that I attempted to walk through a tree by the way-side. A merry laugh rang close to my ear, and Richard Clyde sprang over the fence right before me.

"It should have opened and imprisoned you, as a truant dryad," said he. "Of what *are* you thinking, Gabriella, that you forget the impenetrability of matter, the opacity of bark and the incapability of flesh and blood to cleave asunder the ligneous fibres which oppose it, as the sonorous Johnson would have observed on a similar occasion."

"I was thinking of you, Richard," I answered with resolute frankness.

"Of me!" he exclaimed, while his eyes sparkled with animated pleasure. "Oh, walk through all the trees of Grandison Place, if you will honor me with one passing thought."

"You know you have always been like a brother to me, Richard."

"I don't know exactly how a brother feels. You have taken my fraternal regard for granted, but I am sure I have never professed any."

"Pardon me, if I have believed actions more expressive than words. I shall never commit a similar error."

With deeply wounded and indignant feelings, I walked rapidly on, without deigning to look at one so heartless and capricious. Mr. Regulus was right. He was not a proper companion. I would never allow him to walk with me again.

"Are you not familiar enough with my light, mocking way, Gabriella?" he cried, keeping pace with my accelerated steps. "Do not you know me well enough to understand when I am serious and when jesting? I have never professed fraternal regard, because I know a brother cannot feel half the—the interest for you that I do. I thought you knew it,—I dare not say more,—I cannot say less."

"No, no, do not say any more," said I, shrinking with indefinable dread; "I do not want any professions. I meant not to call them forth. If I alluded to you as a brother, it was because I wished to speak to you with the frankness of a sister. It is better that you should not walk with me from school,—it is not proper,—people will make remarks."

"Well, let them make them,—who cares?"

"I care, a great deal. I will not be the subject of village gossip."

"Who put this idea in your head, Gabriella? I know it did not originate there. You are too artless, too unsuspicious. Oh! I know," he added, with a heightened color and a raised tone, "you have been kept after school; you have had a lecture on propriety; you cannot deny it."

"I neither deny nor affirm any thing. It makes no difference who suggested it. My own judgment tells me it is right."

"The old fellow is jealous," said he with a laugh of derision, "but he cannot control my movements. The road is wide enough for us both, and the world is wider still."

"How can you say any thing so absurd and ridiculous?" I exclaimed; and vexed as I was, I could not help laughing at his preposterous suggestion.

"Because I know it is the truth. But I really thought you above the fear of village gossip, Gabriella. Why, it is more idle than the passing wind, lighter than the down of the gossamer. I thought you had a noble independence of character, incapable of being moved by a whiff of breath, a puff of empty air."

"I trust I have sufficient independence to do what is right and sufficient prudence to avoid, if possible, the imputation of wrong," I replied, with grave earnestness.

"Oh! upright judge!—oh! excellent young sage!" exclaimed Richard, with mock reverence. "Wisdom becometh thee so well, I shall be tempted to quarrel hereafter with thy smiles. But seriously, Gabriella, I crave permission to walk courteously home with you this evening, for it is the last of my vacation. To-morrow I leave you, and it will be months before we meet again."

"I might have spared you and myself this foolish scene, then," said I, deeply mortified at its result. "I have incurred your ridicule, perhaps your contempt, in vain. We might have parted friends, at least."

"No, by heavens! Gabriella, not friends; we must be something more, or less than friends. I did not think to say this now, but I can hold it back no longer. And why should I? 'All my faults perchance thou knowest.' As was the boy, as is the youth, so most likely will be the man. No! if you love me, Gabriella,—if I may look forward to the day when I shall be to you friend, brother, guardian, lover, all in one,—I shall have such a motive for excellence, such a spring to ambition, that I will show the world the pattern of a man, such as they never saw before."

"I wish you had not said this," I answered, averting from his bright and earnest eye my confused and troubled glance. "We should be so much happier as friends. We are so young, too. It will be time enough years hence to talk of such things."

"Too young to love! We are in the very spring-time of our life,—the season of blossoms and fragrance, music and love,—oh, daughter of poetry! is it you who utter such a thought? Would you wait for the sultry summer, the dry autumn, to cultivate the morning flower of Paradise?"

"I did not dream you had so much hidden romance," said I, smiling at his metaphorical language,

and endeavoring to turn the conversation in a new channel. "I thought you mocked at sentiment and poetic raptures."

"Love works miracles, Gabriella. You do not answer. You evade the subject on which all my life's future depends. Is there no chord in your heart that vibrates in harmony with mine? Are there no memories associated with the oak trees of the wood, the mossy stone at the fountain, the sacred rose of the grave, propitious to my early and ever-growing love?"

He spoke with a depth of feeling of which I had never thought him possessed. Sincerity and truth dignified every look and tone. Yes! there were undying memories, now wakened in all their strength, of the youthful champion of my injured rights, the sympathizing companion of my darkest hours; the friend, who stood by me when other friends were unknown. There was many a responsive chord that thrilled at his voice, and there was another note, a sweet triumphant note never struck before. The new-born consciousness of woman's power, the joy of being beloved, the regal sense of newly acquired dominion swelled in my bosom and flashed from my eye. But *the master-chord was silent*. I knew, I felt even then, that there was a golden string, down in the very depths of my heart, too deep for his hand to touch.

I felt grieved and glad. Grieved that I could not give a full response to his generous offering,—glad that I had capacities of loving, he, with all his excellences, could never fill. I tried to tell him what I felt, to express friendship, gratitude, and esteem; but he would not hear me,—he would not let me go on.

"No, no; say nothing now," said he impetuously. "I have been premature. You do not know your own heart. You do love me,—you will love me. You must not, you shall not deny me the privilege of hope. I will maintain the vantage ground on which I stand,—first friend, first lover, and even Ernest Linwood cannot drive me from it."

"Ernest Linwood!" I exclaimed, startled and indignant. "You know he can never be any thing to me. You know my immeasurable obligations to his mother. His name shall be sacred from levity."

"It is. He is the last person whom I would lightly name. He has brilliant talents and a splendid position; but woe to the woman who places her happiness in his keeping. He confides in no one,—so the world describes him,—is jealous and suspicious even in friendship;—what would he be in love?"

"I know not. I care not,—only for his mother's and Edith's sake. Again I say, he is nothing to me. Richard, you trouble me very much by your strange way of talking. You have no idea how you have made my head ache. Please speak of common subjects, for I would not meet Mrs. Linwood so troubled, so agitated, for any consideration. See how beautiful the sunlight falls is the lawn! How graceful that white cloud floats down the golden west! As Wilson says:—

> 'Even in its very motion there is rest.'"

"Yes! the sunlight is very beautiful, and the cloud is very graceful, and you are beautiful and graceful in your dawning coquetry, the more so because you know it not. Well—obedience to-day, reward to-morrow, Gabriella. That was one of my old copies at the academy."

"I remember another, which was a favorite of Mr. Regulus—

> 'To-morrow never yet
> On any human being rose and set.'"

A few more light repartees, and we were at Mrs. Linwood's gate.

"You will not come in?" said I, half asserting, half interrogating.

"To be sure I will. Edith promised me some of her angelic harp music. I come like Saul to have the evil spirit of discontent subdued by its divine influence."

Richard was a favorite of Mrs. Linwood. Whether it was that by a woman's intuition she discovered the state of feeling existing between us, or whether it was his approaching departure, she was especially kind to him this evening; she expressed a more than usual interest in his future prospects.

"This is your last year in college," I heard her say to him. "In a few months you will feel the dignity and responsibility of manhood. You will come out from the seclusion of college life into the wide, wide world, and of its myriad paths, so intricate, yet so trodden, you must choose one. You are looking forward now, eagerly, impatiently, but then you will pause and tremble. I pity the young man when he first girds himself for the real duties of life. The change from thought to action, from dreams to realities, from hope to fruition or *disappointment*, is so sudden, so great, he requires the wisdom which is only bought by experience, the strength gained only by exercise. But it is well," she added, with great expression, "it is well as it is. If youth could command the experience of age, it would lose the enthusiasm and zeal necessary for the conception of great designs; it would lose the brightness, the energy of hope, and nothing would be attempted, because every thing would be thought in vain. I did not mean to give you an essay," she said, smiling at her own earnestness, "but a young friend on the threshold of manhood is deeply interesting to me. I feel constrained to give him my best counsels, my fervent prayers."

"Thank you, dear Madam, a thousand times," he answered his countenance lighted up with

grateful pleasure; "you do not know what inspiration there is in the conviction that we are cared for by the pure and the good. Selfish as we are, there are few of us who strive to excel for ourselves alone. We must feel that there are some hearts, who bear us in remembrance, who will exult in our successes, and be made happier by our virtues."

He forgot himself, and though he addressed Mrs. Linwood, his eye sought mine, while uttering the closing words. I was foolish enough to blush at his glance, and still more at the placid, intelligent smile of Mrs. Linwood. It seemed to say,

"I understand it all; it is all right, just as it should be. There is no danger of Richard's being forgotten."

I was provoked by *her* smile, *his* glance, and my own foolish blush. As for him, he really did seem inspired. He talked of the profession he had chosen as the noblest and the best, a profession which had commanded the most exalted talents and most magnificent geniuses in the world. He was not holy enough for the ministry; he had too great reverence and regard for human life to be a physician; but he believed nature had created him for a lawyer, for that much abused, yet glorious being, an honest lawyer.

I suppose I must have been nervous, in consequence of the exciting scenes through which I had passed, but there was something in his florid eloquence, animated gestures, and evident desire to make a grand impression, that strangely affected my risibles; I had always thought him so natural before. I tried to keep from laughing; I compressed my lips, and turning my head, looked steadily from the window, but a sudden stammering, then a pause, showed that my unconquerable rudeness was observed. I was sobered at once, but dared not look round, lest I should meet Mrs. Linwood's reproving glance. He soon after asked Edith for a parting song, and while listening to her sweet voice, as it mingled with the breezy strains of the harp, my excited spirit recovered its equilibrium. I thought with regret and pain, of the levity, so unwonted in me, which had wounded a heart so frank and true, and found as much difficulty in keeping back my tears, as a moment before I had done my laughter.

As soon as Edith had finished her song, he rose to take leave. He came to me last, to the little recess in the window where I stood, and extended his hand as he had done to Mrs. Linwood and Edith. He looked hurt rather than angry, disappointed rather than sad.

"Forgive me," said I, in a low voice; "I value your friendship too much to lose it without an effort."

The tears were in my eyes; I could not help it. I was sorry, for they expressed far more than I meant to convey. I knew it at once by the altered, beaming expression of his countenance.

"Give me smiles or tears, dear Gabriella," he answered, in the same undertone; "only do not forget me, only think of me as I wish to be remembered."

He pressed my hand warmly, energetically, while uttering these words; then, without giving me time to reply, bowed again to Mrs. Linwood and left the room.

"A very fine, promising young man," said Mrs. Linwood, with emphasis.

"A most intelligent, agreeable companion," added the gentle Edith, looking smilingly at me, as if expecting me to say something.

"Very," responded I, in a constrained manner.

"Is that all?" she asked, laying her soft, white hand on my shoulders, and looking archly in my face; "is that all, Gabriella?"

"Indeed, you are mistaken," said I, hastily; "he is nothing more,—and yet I am wrong to say that,—he has been,—he is like a brother to me, Edith, and never will be any thing more."

"Oh, these brother friends!" she exclaimed, with a burst of musical laughter, "how very near they seem! But wait, Gabriella, till you see *my* brother,—he is one to boast of."

"Edith!" said her mother. Edith turned her blue eyes from me to her mother, with a look of innocent surprise. The tone seemed intended to check her,—yet what had she said?

"You should not raise expectations in Gabriella which will not be realized," observed Mrs. Linwood, in that quiet tone of hers which had so much power. "Ernest, however dear he may be to us as a son and brother, has peculiar traits which sometimes repel the admiration of strangers. His impenetrable reserve chills the warmth of enthusiasm, while the fitfulness of his morals produces constant inquietude. He was born under a clouded star, and the horoscope of his destiny is darkened by its influence."

"I love him better for his lights and shadows," said Edith, "he keeps one always thinking of him."

"When would this shadowy, flashing being appear, who kept one always thinking of him?"

CHAPTER XV.

As I had made an engagement with Mr. Regulus for one year, I remained with Dr. Harlowe's

family during the winter months, while Mrs. Linwood and Edith returned to the city.

The only novelty of that wintry season was the first correspondence of my life. Could any thing prove more strikingly my isolated position in the world than this single fact? It was quite an era in my existence when I received Mrs. Linwood's and Edith's first letters; and when I answered them, it seemed to me my heart was flowing out in a gushing stream of expression, that had long sought vent. I knew they must have smiled at my exuberance of language, for the young enthusiast always luxuriates under epistolary influences. I had another correspondent, a very unexpected one, Richard Clyde, who, sanctioned by Mrs. Linwood, begged permission to write to me as a *friend*. How could I refuse, when Mrs. Linwood said it would be a source of intellectual improvement as well as pleasure? These letters occupied much of my leisure time, and were escape-pipes to an imagination of the high-pressure kind. My old love of rhyming, too, rose from the ashes of former humiliation, and I wove many a garland of poesy, though no one but myself inhaled their fragrance or admired their bloom.

> "As down in the sunless retreats of the ocean,
> Sweet flowers are springing no mortal can see,—"

So in the solitude of my chamber, in the loneliness of my heart, in the breathing stillness of the night, blossomed the moon-born flowers of poesy, to beautify and gladden my youth.

Thus glided away the last tranquil season of my life. As was one day, so was the next. Mrs. Harlowe's clock-work virtues, which never run down, the doctor's agreeable carelessness and imperturbable good-humor, the exceeding kindness of Mr. Regulus, who grew so gentle, that he almost seemed melancholy,—all continued the same. In reading, writing, thinking, feeling, hoping, reaching forward to an uncertain future, the season of fireside enjoyments and comforts passed,—spring,—summer. Mrs. Linwood and Edith returned, and I was once more installed in that charming apartment, amid whose rosy decorations "I seemed," as Edith said, "a fairy queen." I walked once more in the moon-lighted colonnade, in the shadow of the granite walls, and felt that I was born to be there.

One evening as I returned home, I saw Edith coming through the lawn to meet me, so rapidly that she seemed borne on wings,—her white drapery fell in such full folds over her crutches it entirely concealed them, and they made no sound on the soft, thick grass. Her face was perfectly radiant.

"Oh, Gabriella," she exclaimed, "he is coming,—brother is coming home,—he will be here in less than a week,—oh! I am so happy!"

And the sweet, affectionate creature leaned her head on my shoulder, and actually sobbed in the fulness of her joy. My own heart palpitated with strange emotions, with mingled curiosity, eagerness, and dread.

"Dear Edith," I cried, putting my arms around her, and kissing her fair, infantine cheek, "I rejoice with you,—I could envy you if I dared. What a blessing it must be to have a brother capable of inspiring so much love!"

"He shall be your brother too, Gabriella! For, are you not my sister? and of course he must be your brother. Come, let us sit down under the dear old elm and talk about him, for my heart is so full that I can speak and think of nothing else."

"And now," added she, as we sat under the kingly canopy of verdure,—on a carpet of living velvet,—"let me tell you why I love Ernest so very, very dearly. My father died when I was a little child, a little feeble child, a cripple as well as an invalid. Ernest is four years older than myself, and though when I was a little child he was but a very young boy, he always seemed a protector and guardian to me. He never cared about play like other children, loving his book better than any thing else, but willing to leave even that to amuse and gratify me. Oh! I used to suffer so much, so dreadfully,—I could not lie down, I could not sit up without pain,—no medicine would give me any relief. Hour after hour would Ernest hold me in his arms, and carry me about in the open air, never owning he was weary while he could give me one moment's ease. No one thought I would live beyond childhood, and I have no doubt many believed that death would be a blessing to the poor, crippled child. They did not know how dear life was to me in spite of all my sufferings; for had I always been well, I never should have known those tender, cherishing cares which have filled my heart with so much love. It is so sweet to be petted and caressed as I have been!"

"It did not need sickness and suffering to make *you* beloved, Edith," I cried, twisting my fingers in her soft, golden curls. "Who could help loving you and wishing to caress you?"

"Yes it did, Gabriella; my Heavenly Father knew that it did, or He would never have laid upon me His chastening hand. Sickness and pain have been my only chastisements, and they are all past. I am not very strong, but I am well; and though a cripple, my wooden feet serve me wonderfully well. I am so used to them now, they seem a part of myself."

"I can never think of you as walking," I said, taking one of the crutches that leaned against the tree. The part which fitted under the arm was covered with a cushion of blue velvet, and the rosewood staff was mounted with silver. "You manage these so gracefully, one scarcely misses your feet."

"But Ernest, dear Ernest," interrupted she, "let us talk of him. You must not be influenced too much by my mother's words. She adores him, but her standard of perfection is so exalted few can

attain it. The very excess of her love makes her alive to his defects. She knows your vivid imagination, and fears my lavish praises will lead you to expect a being of super-human excellence. Oh, another thing I wanted to tell you. The uncle, for whom he was named, has died and left him a splendid fortune, which he did not need very much, you know. Had it not been for this circumstance, he would not have come back till autumn; and now he will be here in a week,—in less than a week. Oh, Gabriella, Grandison Place must shine for its master's welcome."

Another splendid fortune added to his own! Further and further still, seemed he removed from me. But what difference did it make? Why did I think of him in reference to myself? How dared I do it, foolish and presumptuous girl! Then, he was seven years older than myself. How mature! He would probably look upon me as a little girl; and if he granted me the honors of womanhood, the student of Gottingen, the heir of two great fortunes would scarcely notice the village teacher, save as the orphan protégée of his mother.

I did not indulge these thoughts. I repelled them, for they were selfish and uncomfortable. If every one recorded their thoughts as I do, would they not, like me, pray for the blotting angel's tears?

In one week! How soon!

Mrs. Linwood, quiet and serene as she was, participated in Edith's joyful excitement. She departed from her usual reliance on the subject, and checked not Edith's glowing warmth.

In a family so wealthy, a dwelling so abounding in all the elegancies and luxuries of life, the coming of a prince would not have occasioned any necessary disturbance. The chamber of the son and brother had been long prepared, but now the fastidious eye of affection discovered many deficiencies. The pictures must be changed in position; some wanted more, some less light; the curtains were too heavy, the flower vases too gorgeous.

"Does he mind these things much?" I ventured to ask.

"He likes to see every thing round him elegant and classic," replied Edith; "he has the most fastidious taste in the world. I am so glad, Gabriella, that you are pretty, that you are really classically beautiful, for he will think so much more of you for being so. He ought not, perhaps; but one cannot help having a fine taste. He cannot abide any thing coarse or unrefined."

"He will not think of me at all, I am sure he will not," I answered, while a vivid blush of pleasure at her sweet flattery stole over my cheek.

CHAPTER XVI.

It was my office to gather and arrange the flowers, to adorn the mansion, in consequence of Edith's lameness. This I did every morning while they were sparkling with dew and the fragrance of night still imprisoned in their folded petals. I delighted in the task; but now I could not help feeling unusual solicitude about my floral mission. I rose earlier than usual, and made fearful havoc in the garden and the green-house. My apron dripped with blossoms every step I took, and the carpet was literally strewed with flowers. The fairest and sweetest were selected for the room *not yet occupied*; and though one day after another passed away and he came not, the scent of the blossoms lingered in the apartment, and diffusing in it an atmosphere of home love, prepared it for the wanderer's return.

Every afternoon the carriage was sent to the depot, which was several miles from Grandison Place, to meet the traveller, and again and again it returned empty.

"Let us go ourselves," said Mrs. Linwood, beginning to be restless and anxious. And they went—she and Edith. Though it was Saturday and I was free, I did not accompany them, for I felt that a stranger to him should not "intermeddle with their joy."

Partaking of the restlessness of baffled expectation, I could not fix my mind on any occupation. I seated myself in the window recess and began to read, but my eyes were constantly wandering to the road, watching for the dust cloud that would roll before the advancing carriage. Dissatisfied with myself, I strolled out on the lawn, and seating myself on the rustic bench with my back to the gate, resolutely fastened my eyes to the pages I had been vainly fluttering.

Shall I tell how foolish I had been? Though I said to myself a hundred times, "he will not look at me, or notice me at all," I had taken unusual pains with my dress, which though still characterized with the simplicity of mourning, was relieved of its severity of outline. A fall of lace softened the bands of the neck and arms, which were embellished by a necklace and bracelets, which I valued more than any earthly possession. They were the gift of Mrs. Linwood, who, having won from the grave a portion of my mother's beautiful dark hair, had it wrought with exquisite skill, and set in massy gold, as memorials of love stronger than death. Thus doubly precious, I cherished them as holy amulets, made sacred by the living as well as the dead. Edith had woven in my hair some scarlet geraniums, my favorite flower. Though not very elaborately adorned, I had an impression I was looking my best, and I could not help thinking while I sat half veiled by foliage, half gilded by light, how romantic it would be, if a magnificent stranger should suddenly approach and as suddenly draw back, on seeing my dark, waving hair, instead of the

golden locks of Edith. I became so absorbed in painting this little scene, which enlarged and glowed under the pencil of imagination, that I did not hear the opening of the gate or footsteps crossing the lawn. I thought a shadow passed over the sunshine. The figure of a stranger stood between me and the glowing west. I started up with an irrepressible exclamation. I knew, at the first glance, that it was Ernest Linwood, the living embodiment of that haunting image, so long drawn on my youthful fancy. I should have known him in the farthest isles of the ocean, from the painting in the library, the descriptions of Edith, and the sketches of my own imagination. His complexion had the pale, transparent darkness of eastern climes, and his eye a kind of shadowy splendor, impossible to describe, but which reminded me at once of his mother's similitude of the "clouded star." He was not above the common height of man, yet he gave me an impression of power and dignity, such as mere physical force could never inspire.

"Is this Grandison Place? my home?" he asked, lifting his hat with gentlemanly grace from his brows. His voice, too, had that cultivated, well-modulated tone, which always marks the gentleman.

"It is, sir," I answered, trying to speak without embarrassment. "Mr. Linwood, I presume."

I thought I had made a mistake in his name, it sounded so strange. I had never heard him called any thing but Ernest Linwood, and Mr. Linwood had such a stiff, formal sound, I was quite disgusted with it.

He again bowed, and looked impatiently towards the house.

"I saw a young female and thought it might be my sister, or I should not have intruded. Shall I find her,—shall I find my mother within?"

"They have gone to meet you,—they have been looking for you these many days; I know not how you have missed them."

"By coming another road. I jumped from the carriage and walked on, too impatient to wait its slow motions in ascending the hill. And they have gone to meet me. They really wish to see me back again!"

He spoke with deep feeling. The home thoughts and affections of years thrilled from his tone. This seemed one of those self-evident truths, that required no confirmation, and I made no answer. I wondered if I ought to ask him to walk in,—him, the master and the heir; whether I should ask him to take a seat on the oaken settee, where he could watch the carriage, ascending the winding hill.

"Do not let me disturb you," he said, looking at me with a questioning, penetrating glance, then added, "am I guilty of the rudeness of not recognizing a former acquaintance, who has passed from childhood to youth, during my years of absence?"

"No, sir," I answered, again wondering if politeness required me to introduce myself. "I am a stranger to you, though for two years your mother's home has been mine. My name is Lynn,—Gabriella Lynn."

I was vexed with myself for this awkward introduction. I did not know what I ought to say, and painful blushes dyed my cheeks. I would not have mentioned my name at all, only, if his mother and sister delayed their coming, he might feel awkward himself, from not knowing what to call me.

"My mother's protégée!" said he, his countenance lightening as he spoke. "Edith has mentioned you in her letters; but I expected to see a little girl, not the young lady, whom I find presiding genius here."

My self-respect was gratified that he did not look upon me as a child, and there was something so graceful and unostentatious in his air and manner, my self-possession came back without an effort to recall it.

"Will you walk in?" I asked, now convinced it was right.

"Thank you; I am so weary of the confinement of the carriage, I like the freedom of the open air. I like this rich, velvet grass. How beautiful, how magnificent!" he exclaimed, his eye taking in the wide sweep of landscape, here and there darkened with shade, and at intervals literally blazing with the crimson sunlight,—then sweeping on over the swelling mountains, so grand in their purple drapery and golden crowns. "How exquisitely beautiful! My mother could not have selected a lovelier spot,—and these old granite walls! how antique, how classic they are!"

He turned and examined them, with a pleased yet criticizing eye. He walked up and down the velvet lawn with a firm, yet restless step, stopping occasionally to measure with his glance the towering oaks and the gigantic elm. I began to be uneasy at the protracted absence of Mrs. Linwood, and kept my eyes fixed upon the road, whose dark, rich, slatish-colored surface, seen winding through green margins, resembled a stream of deep water, it was so smooth and uniform. I knew how full must be the heart of the traveller. I did not wish to interrupt his meditations even by a look.

We saw it coming,—the family carriage. I saw his pale cheek flush at my joyous exclamation. He moved rapidly towards the gate, while I ran into the house, up stairs and into my own room, that I might not intrude on moments too sacred for curiosity.

In a little while, I could hear the sound of their mingling voices coming up the long flight of marble steps, across the wide piazza, and then they came soft and muffled from the drawing-room below. At first, forgetful of self, I sympathized in their joy. I rejoiced for my benefactress, I rejoiced for the tender and affectionate Edith. But after sitting there a long time alone, and of course forgotten in the rapture of this family reunion, thoughts of self began to steal over and chill the ardor of my sympathetic emotions. I could not help feeling myself a mote in the dazzling sunshine of their happiness. I could not help experiencing, in all its bitterness, the isolation of my own destiny. I remembered the lamentation of the aged and solitary Indian, "that not a drop of his blood flowed in the veins of a living being." So it was with me. To my knowledge, I had not a living relative. Friends were kind,—some were more than kind; but oh! there are capacities for love friends can never fill. There are niches in the temple of the heart made for household gods, and if they are left vacant, no other images, though of the splendor of the Grecian statuary, can remove its desolation. *Deep calleth unto deep*, and when no answer cometh, the waves beat against the lonely strand and murmur themselves away.

I tried to check all selfish, repining feelings. I tried to keep from envying Edith, but I could not.

"O that I, too, had a brother!"

Was the cry of my craving heart, and it would not be stilled. I wiped away tear after tear, resolving each should be the last, but the fountain was full, and every heaving sigh made it overflow.

At length I heard the sound of Edith's crutches on the stairs, faint and muffled, but I knew it from all other sounds. She could mount and descend the stairs as lightly as a bird, in spite of her infirmity.

"Ah! truant!" she cried, as she opened the door, "you need not think to hide yourself here all night; we want you to come and help us to be happy, for I am so happy I know not what to do."

Her eyes sparkled most brilliantly through those drops of joy, as different to the tears I had been shedding as the morning dew is to December's wintry rain.

"But what are you doing, Gabriella?" she added, sitting down beside me and drawing my hand from my eyes. "In tears! I have been almost crying my eyes out; but you do not look happy. I thought you loved me so well, you would feel happy because I am so. Do you not?"

"You will hate me for my selfishness, dear Edith. I did think of you for a long time, and rejoice in your happiness. Then I began to think how lonely and unconnected I am, and I have been wicked enough to envy your treasures of affection for ever denied to me. I felt as if there was no one to love me in the wide world. But you have remembered me, Edith, even in the depth of your joy, ingrate that I am. Forgive me," said I, passing my arms round her beautiful white neck. "I will try to be good after this."

She kissed me, and told me to bathe my eyes and come right down, her mother said I must. Ernest had inquired what had become of me, and he would think it strange if I hid myself in this way.

"And you have seen him, Gabriella," she cried, and her tongue ran glibly while I plunged my face in a basin of cold water, ashamed of the traces of selfish sorrow. "You have seen my own dear brother Ernest. And only think of your getting the first glimpse of him! What *did* you think of him? What *do* you think of him now? Is he not handsome? Is there not something very striking, very attractive about him? Is he not different from any one you ever saw before?"

"There *is* something very striking in his appearance," I answered, smiling at the number and rapidity of her questions, "but I was so disconcerted, so foolish, I hardly dared to look him in the face. Has he changed since you saw him last?"

"Not much,—rather paler, I think; but perhaps it is only fatigue, or the languor following intense excitement. I feel myself as if all my strength were gone. I cannot describe my sensations when I saw him standing in the open gateway. I let mamma get out first. I thought it was her right to receive the first embrace of welcome; but when he turned to me, I threw myself on his neck, discarding my crutches, and clung to him, just as I used to do when a little, helpless, suffering child. And would you believe it, Gabriella? he actually shed tears. I did not expect so much sensibility. I feared the world had hardened him,—but it has not. Make haste and come down with me. I long to look at him again. Here, let me put back this scarlet geranium. You do not know how pretty it looks. Brother said—no—I will not tell you what he said. Yes, I will. He said he had no idea the charming young girl, with such a classic face and aristocratic bearing, was mother's little protégée."

"You asked him, Edith, I know you did."

"Supposing I did,—there was no harm in it. Come, I want you to see mamma; she looks so young and handsome. Joy is such a beautifier."

"I think it is," said I, as I gazed at *her* star-bright eyes and blush-rose cheeks. We entered the drawing-room together, where Ernest was seated on the sofa by his mother, with her hand clasped in his. Edith was right,—she did look younger and handsomer than I had ever seen her. She was usually pale and her face was calm. Now a breeze had stirred the waters, and the sunshine quivered on the rippling surface.

They rose as we entered, and came forward to meet us. My old trepidation returned. Would Mrs. Linwood introduce me,—and if she did, in what manner? Would there be any thing in her air or countenance to imply that I was a dependent on her bounty, rather than an adopted daughter of the household? Hush,—these proud whispers. Listen, how kindly she speaks.

"My dear Gabriella, this is my son, Ernest. You know it already, and he knows that you are the child of my adoption. Nevertheless, I must introduce you to each other."

Surprised and touched by the maternal kindness of her manner, (I ought not to have been surprised, for she was always kind,) I looked up, and I know that gratitude and sensibility passed from my heart to my eyes.

"I must claim the privilege of an adopted brother," said he, extending his hand, and I thought he smiled. Perhaps I was mistaken. His countenance had a way of suddenly lighting up, which I learned to compare to sunshine breaking through clouds. The hand in which he took mine was so white, so delicately moulded, it looked as if it might have belonged to a woman,—but he was a student, the heir of wealth, not the son of labor, the inheritor of the primeval curse. It is a trifle to mention,—the hand of an intellectual man,—but I had been so accustomed to the large, muscular fingers of Mr. Regulus, which seemed formed to wield the weapon of authority, that I could not but notice the contrast.

How pleasantly, how delightfully the evening passed away! I sat in my favorite recess, half shaded by the light drapery of the window; while Ernest took a seat at his mother's side, and Edith occupied a low ottoman at his feet. One arm was thrown across his lap, and her eyes were lifted to his face with an expression of the most idolizing affection. And all the while he was talking, his hand passed caressingly over her fair flaxen hair, or lingered amidst its glistering ringlets. It was a beautiful picture of sisterly and fraternal love,—the fairest I had ever seen. The fairest! it was the first, the only one. I had never realized before the exceeding beauty and holiness of this tender tie. As I looked upon Edith in her graceful, endearing attitude, so expressive of dependence and love, many a sentence descriptive of a brother's tenderness floated up to the surface of memory. I remembered part of a beautiful hymn,—

"Fair mansions in my Father's house
For all his children wait;
And I, your elder *brother* go,
To open wide the gate."

The Saviour of mankind called himself our brother,—stamping with the seal of divinity the dear relationship.

I had imagined I felt for Richard Clyde a sister's regard. No, no! Cold were my sentiments to those that beamed in Edith's upturned eyes.

Ernest described his travels, his life abroad, and dwelt on the peculiarities of German character, its high, imaginative traits, its mysticism and superstition, till his tongue warmed into enthusiasm,—and *one* of his hearers at least felt the inspiration of his eloquence. His mother had said he was reserved! I began to think I did not know the right meaning of the word. If he paused and seemed about to relapse into silence, Edith would draw a long breath, as if she had just been inhaling some exhilarating gas, and exclaim,—

"Oh! do go on, brother; it is so long since we have heard you talk; it is such a luxury to hear a person talk, who really *says* something."

"I never care about talking, unless I do have something to *say*," he answered, "but I think I have monopolized attention long enough. As a guest, I have a right to be entertained. Have you forgotten my love for music, Edith?"

"O no! I remember all your favorite airs, and have played them a thousand times at least. Do you wish to hear me now?"

"Certainly, I do; I have heard nothing so sweet as your voice, dear Edith, since I heard your last parting song."

He rose and moved the harp forward, and seated her at the instrument.

"Does not Miss Lynn play?" he asked, running his fingers carelessly over the glittering strings.

"Who is Miss Lynn?" repeated Edith, with a look of inquiry.

I laughed at her surprise and my own. It was the first time I had ever heard myself called so, and I looked round involuntarily to see who and where "Miss Lynn" was.

"Oh, Gabriella!" cried Edith, "I did not know whom you meant. I assure you, brother, there is no Miss Lynn here; it is Gabriella—*our Gabriella*—that is her name; you must not call her by any other."

"I shall be happy to avail myself of the privilege of uttering so charming a name. Does Miss Gabriella play?"

"No, no, that is not right yet, Ernest; you must drop the Miss. Do not answer him, Gabriella, till he knows his lesson better."

"Does Gabriella play?"

The name came gravely and melodiously from his tongue. The distance between us seemed wonderfully diminished by the mere breathing my Christian name.

"I do not," I answered, "but my love of music amounts to a passion. I am never so happy as when listening to Edith's voice and harp."

"She has never taken lessons," said Edith; "if she had, she would have made a splendid musician, I am confident she would. Dear mother, when we go to the city next winter, Gabriella must go with us, and she must have music-masters, and we will play and sing together. She has taught in that old academy long enough, I am sure she has."

"I think Gabriella has been taking some very important lessons herself, while teaching in the old academy, which chances to be quite new, at least her part of it," answered Mrs. Linwood; "but I have no intention of suffering her to remain there too long; she has borne the discipline admirably."

As I turned a grateful glance to Mrs. Linwood, my heart throbbing with delight at the prospect of emancipation, I met the eyes, the earnest, perusing eyes of her son. I drew back further into the shadow of the curtain, but the risen moon was shining upon my face, and silvering the lace drapery that floated round me. Edith whispered something to her brother, glancing towards me her smiling eyes, then sweeping her fingers lightly over the harp-strings, began one of the songs that Ernest loved.

Sweetly as she always sang, I had never heard her sing so sweetly before. It seemed indeed "Joy's ecstatic trial," so airily her fingers sparkled over the chords, so clearly and cheerily she warbled each animated note.

"I know you love sad songs best, Ernest, but I cannot sing them to-night," she said, pushing the instrument from her.

"There is a little German air, which I think I may recollect," said he, drawing the harp towards him.

"You, Ernest!" cried Edith and his mother in the same breath, "you play on the harp!"

He smiled at their astonishment.

"I took lessons while in Germany. A fellow-student taught me,—a glorious musician, and a native of the land of music,—Italy. There, the very atmosphere breathes of harmony."

The very first note he called forth, I felt a master's touch was on the chords, and leaning forward I held my breath to listen. The strains rose rich and murmuring like an ocean breeze, then died away soft as wave falls on wave in the moonlight night. He sang a simple, pathetic air, with such deep feeling, such tender, passionate emotion, that tears involuntarily moistened my eyes. All the slumbering music of my being responded. It was thus *I* could sing,—*I* could play,—I knew I could. And when he rose and resumed his seat by his mother, I could scarcely restrain myself from touching the same chords,—the chords still quivering from his magic hand.

"O brother!" exclaimed Edith, "what a charming surprise! I never heard any thing so thrillingly sweet! You do not know how happy you have made me. One more,—only one more,—Ernest."

"You forget your brother is from a long and weary journey, Edith, and we have many an evening before us, I trust, of domestic joy like this," said Mrs. Linwood, ringing for the night-lamps. "To-morrow is the hallowed rest-day of the Lord, and our hearts, so long restless from expectation, will feel the grateful calm of assured happiness. One who returns after a long journey to the bosom of home, in health and safety, has peculiar calls for gratitude and praise. He should bless the God of the traveller for having given his angels charge concerning him, and shielding him from unknown dangers. You feel all this, my son."

She looked at him with an anxious, questioning glance. She feared that the mysticism of Germany might have obscured the brightness of his Christian faith.

"I *am* grateful, my mother," he answered with deep seriousness, "grateful to God for the blessings of this hour. This has been one of the happiest evenings of my life. Surely it is worth years of absence to be welcomed to such a home, and by such pure, loving hearts,—hearts in which I can trust without hypocrisy and without guile."

"Believe all hearts true, my son, till you prove them false."

"Faith is a gift of heaven, not an act of human will," he replied. Then I remembered what Richard Clyde had said of him, and I thought of it again when alone in my chamber.

Edith peeped in through the door that divided our rooms.

"Have we not had a charming evening?" she asked.

"Yes, *very*," I answered.

"How fond you are of that little adverb *very*," she exclaimed with a laugh; "you make it sound so expressively. Well, is not Ernest very interesting?"

"Very."

"The most interesting person you ever saw?"

"You question me too closely, Edith. It will not do for me to speak as extravagantly as you do. I am not his sister, and the praise that falls so sweetly from your tongue, would sound bold and inappropriate from mine. I never knew before how strong a sister's love could be, Edith. Surely you can never feel a stronger passion."

"Never," she cried earnestly, and coming in, she sat down on the side of the bed and unbound the ribbon from her slender waist. "The misfortune that has set me apart from my youthful companions will prevent me from indulging in the dreams of love. I know my mother does not wish me to marry, and I have never thought of the possibility of leaving her. I would not dare to give this frail frame and too tenderly indulged heart into the keeping of one who could never, never bestow the love, the boundless love, which has surrounded me from infancy, like the firmament of heaven. I have been sought in marriage more than once, it might be for reputed wealth or for imagined charms; but when I compared my would-be lovers to Ernest, they faded into such utter insignificance, I could scarcely pardon their presumption. I do not think he has ever loved himself. I do not think he has ever seen one worthy of his love. I believe it would kill me, Gabriella, to know that he loved another better than myself."

For the first time I thought Edith selfish, and that she carried the romance of sisterly affection too far.

"You wish him, then, to be an old bachelor!" said I, smiling.

"Oh! don't apply to him such a horrid name. I did not think of that. Good night, darling. Mamma would scold me, if she knew I was up talking nonsense, instead of being in bed and asleep, like a good, obedient child." She kissed me and retired but it was long before I fell asleep.

CHAPTER XVII.

The next morning, as I was coming up the steps with my white muslin apron fall of gathered flowers, I met Ernest Linwood. I was always an early riser. Dear, faithful Peggy had taught me this rural habit, and I have reason to bless her for it.

"I see where you get your roses," said he; I knew he did not mean the roses in my apron, and those to which he alluded grew brighter as he spoke.

"Am I indebted to you for the beautiful flowers in my own apartment?" he asked, as he turned back and entered the house with me, "or was it Edith's sisterly hand placed them there?"

"Are you pleased with them?" I said, with a childish delight. It seemed to me a great thing that he had noticed them at all. "As Edith is lame, she indulges me in carrying out her own sweet tastes. I assure you I esteem it an inestimable privilege."

"You love flowers, then?"

"O yes, passionately. I have almost an idolatrous love for them."

"And does it not make you sad to see them wither away, in spite of your passionate love?"

"Yes, but others bloom in their stead. 'T is but a change from blossom to blossom."

"You deceive yourself," he said, and there was something chilling in his tone, "it is not love you feel for them, for that is unchangeable, and admits but one object."

"I was not speaking of human love," I answered, busily arranging the flowers in their vases, in which I had already placed some icy cold water. He walked up and down the room, stopping occasionally to observe the process, and making some passing remark. I was astonished at finding myself so much at ease. I suppose the awe he inspired, like the fear of ghosts, subsided at the dawning of morning. There was something so exhilarating in the pure fresh air, in the dewy brightness of the hour, in the exercise of roaming through a wilderness of sweets, that my spirits were too elastic to be held down. He seemed to take an interest in watching me, and even altered the position of some white roses, which he said wanted a shading of green.

"And what are these beautiful clusters laid aside for?" he asked, taking up some which I had deposited on the table.

"I thought," I answered, after a slight hesitation, "that Edith would like them for your room."

"Then it is only to please Edith you place them there, not to please yourself?"

"I should not dare to do it to please myself," I hastily replied.

I thought I must have said something wrong, for he turned away with a peculiar smile. I colored with vexation, and was glad that Edith came in to divert his attention from me.

Nothing could be more gentle and affectionate than his greeting. He went up and kissed her, as if

she were a little child, put his arm round her, and taking one of her crutches, made her lean on him for support. I understood something of the secret of her idolatry.

Where was the impenetrable reserve of which his mother had spoken?

I had not yet seen him in society. As he talked with Edith, his head slightly bent and his profile turned towards me, I could look at him unobserved, and I was struck even more than the evening before with the transparent paleness of his complexion. Dark, delicate, and smooth as alabaster, it gave an air of extreme refinement and sensibility to his face, without detracting from its manliness or intellectual power. It was a face to peruse, to study, to think of,—it was a baffling, haunting face. Hieroglyphics of thought were there, too mysterious for the common eye to interpret. It was a dark lantern, flashing light before it, itself all in shadow.

"It is a shame that you must leave us, Gabriella," said Edith, when after breakfast her pony was brought to the door. "Ernest," added she, turning to him, "I am *so* glad you are come. You must persuade mamma to lay her commands on Gabriella, and not permit her to make such a slave of herself. I feel guilty to be at home doing nothing and she toiling six long hours."

"It is Gabriella's own choice," cried Mrs. Linwood, a slight flush crossing her cheek. "Is it not, my child?"

"Your wisdom guided my choice, dear madam," I answered, "and I thank you for it."

"It would seem more natural to think of Miss—of Gabriella—as a pupil, than a teacher," observed Ernest, "if youth is the criterion by which we judge."

"I am seventeen—in my eighteenth year," said I eagerly, urged by an unaccountable desire that he should not think me too young.

"A very grave and reverend age!" said he sarcastically.

I thought Mrs. Linwood looked unusually serious, and fearing I had said something wrong, I hastened to depart. Dearly as I loved my benefactress, it was not "that perfect love which casteth out fear." As her benevolence was warm, her justice was inflexible. Hers was the kind hand, but the firm nerves that could sustain a friend, while the knife of the surgeon entered the quivering flesh. She shrunk not from inflicting pain, if it was for another's good; but if she wounded with one hand, she strewed balm with the other. Her influence was strong, controlling, almost irresistible. Like the sunshine that forced the wind-blown traveller to throw aside his cloak, the warmth of her kindness penetrated, but it also *compelled*.

I had a growing conviction that though she called me her adopted child, she did not wish me to presume upon her kindness so far as to look upon her son in the familiar light of a brother. There was no fear of my transgressing her wishes in this respect. I had already lost my dread,—my awe was melting away, but I could no more approach him with familiarity than if fourfold bars of gold surrounded him. I had another conviction, that she encouraged and wished me to return the attachment of Richard Clyde. Her urgent advice had induced me to accept the proffered correspondence with him,—a compliance which I afterwards bitterly regretted. He professed to write only as a *friend*, according to the bond, but amid the evergreen wreath of friendship, he concealed the glowing flowers of love. He was to return home in a few weeks. The commencement was approaching, which was to liberate him from scholastic fetters and crown him with the honors of manhood.

"Why," thought I, "should Richard make me dread his return, when I would gladly welcome him with joy? Why in wishing to be more than a friend, does he make me desire that he should be less? And now Ernest Linwood is come back, of whom he so strangely warned me, methinks I dread him more than ever."

Mrs. Linwood would attend the commencement. I had heard her tell Richard so. I had heard her repeat her intention since her son's return. *He*, of course, would feel interested in meeting his old class mates and friends. They would all feel interested in seeing and hearing how Richard Clyde sustained his proud distinction.

"Gabriella, especially," said Edith with a smile, which, sweet as it was, I thought extremely silly. I blushed with vexation, when Ernest, lifting his grave eyes from his book, asked who was Richard Clyde.

"You have seen him when he was quite a youth," answered his mother, "but have probably forgotten him. He is a young man of great promise, and has been awarded the first honors of his class. I feel a deep interest in him for his own sake, and moreover I am indebted to him for my introduction to our own Gabriella."

"Indeed!" repeated her son, and glancing towards me, his countenance lighted up with a sudden look of intelligence.

Why need Mrs. Linwood have said that? Why need she have associated him so intimately and significantly with me? And why could I not keep down the rising crimson, which might be attributed to another source than embarrassment? I opened my lips to deny any interest in Richard beyond that of friendly acquaintanceship; but Mrs. Linwood's mild, serene, yet resolute eyes, beat mine down and choked my eager utterance.

Her eyes said as clearly as words could say, "what matters it to my son, how little or how great

an interest you feel in Richard Clyde or any other person?"

"You must accompany us, Gabriella," she said, with great kindness. "You have never witnessed this gathering of the literati of our State, and I know of no one who would enjoy it more. It will be quite an intellectual banquet."

"I thank you, but I cannot accept the invitation," I answered, suppressing a sigh, not of disappointment at the necessity of refusal, but of mortification at the inference that would probably be drawn from this conversation. "My vacation does not begin till afterwards."

"I think I can intercede with Mr. Regulus to release you," said Mrs. Linwood.

"Thank you,—I do not wish to go,—indeed I would much rather not, unless," I added, fearful I had spoken too energetically, "you have an urgent desire that I should."

"I wish very much to make you happy, and I think you would enjoy far more than you now anticipate. But there is time enough to decide. There will be a fortnight hence."

"But the dresses, mamma," cried Edith; "you know she will need new dresses if she goes, and they will require some time to prepare."

"As Gabriella will not *come out*, as it is called, till next winter," replied Mrs. Linwood, "it is not a matter of so much consequence as you imagine. Simplicity is much more charming than ornament in the dress of a very young girl."

"I agree with you, mother," observed Ernest, without lifting his eyes from his book, "especially where artificial ornaments are superfluous."

"I did not think you were listening to our remarks about dress," said Edith. "This is something quite new, brother."

"I am *not* listening, and yet I hear. So be very careful not to betray yourself in my presence. But perhaps I had better retire to the library, then you can discuss with more freedom the mysteries of the toilet and the fascinations of dress."

"No,—no. We have nothing to say that you may not hear;" but he rose and withdrew. Did he mean to imply that "artificial ornaments would be superfluous" to me? No,—it was only a general remark, and it would be vanity of vanities to apply it to myself.

"I want you to do one thing to gratify me, dear Gabriella," continued Edith. "Please lay aside your mourning and assume a more cheerful garb. You have worn it two long years. Only think how long! It will be so refreshing to see you in white or delicate colors."

I looked down at my mourning garments, and all the sorrow typified by their dark hue rolled back upon my heart. The awful scenes they commemorated,—the throes of agony which rent away life from the strong, the slow wasting of the feeble, the solemnity of death, the gloom of the grave, the anguish of bereavement, the abandonment of desolation that followed,—all came back. I lived them all over in one passing moment.

"I never, never wish to lay aside the badges of mourning," I exclaimed; and, covering my face with my handkerchief, tears gushed unrestrainedly. "I shall never cease to mourn for my mother."

"I did not mean to grieve you, Gabriella," cried Edith, putting her arms round me with sympathizing tenderness. "I thought time had softened your anguish, and that you could bear to speak of it now."

"And so she ought," said Mrs. Linwood, in a tone of mild rebuke. "Time is God's ministering angel, commissioned to bind up the wounds of sorrow and to heal the bleeding heart. The same natural law which bids flowers to spring up and adorn the grave-sod causes the blossoms of hope to bloom again in the bosom of bereavement. Memory should be immortal, but mourning should last but a season."

"I meant that I never should forget her," I cried, my tears flowing gently under her subduing accents. "Dear Mrs. Linwood, you have made it impossible for me always to mourn. Yet there are times, when her remembrance comes over me with such a power that I am borne down by it to the level of my first deep anguish. These are not frequent now. I some times fear there is danger of my being too happy after sustaining such a loss."

"Beware, my dear child, of cherishing the morbid sensibility which believes happiness inconsistent with the remembrance of departed friends. Life to your mother, since your recollection of her, was a sad boon. As she possessed the faith, and died the death of the Christian, you are authorized to believe that she now possesses an exceeding and eternal weight of glory. Can you take in the grandeur of the idea,—*a weight of glory*? Contrast it with the burden of care under which you saw her crushed, and you will then be willing to exchange mourning for the oil of joy, and the spirit of heaviness for the garment of praise."

"I *am* willing, dear Mrs. Linwood, my kindest friend, my second mother. I will in all things be guided by your counsel and moulded by your will. No, oh no, I would not for worlds rob my mother of the glorious inheritance purchased by a Saviour's blood. But tell me one thing,—must we all pass through tribulation before entering the kingdom of heaven? Must we all travel with bleeding feet the thorny path of suffering, before being admitted into the presence of God?"

"The Bible must answer you, my child. Do you remember, in the apocalyptic vision, when it was asked, 'What are these, which are arrayed in white robes? and whence come they?' It was answered, 'These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.'"

"Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple; and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them."

I remembered them well.

"Go on," I said, "that is not all."

"They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat."

She paused, and her voice became tremulous from deep emotion.

"One verse more," I cried, "only one."

"For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters; and God shall wipe all tears from their eyes."

There was silence for a few moments. All words seemed vain and sacrilegious after this sublimest language of revelation.

At length I said,—

"Let me wear white, the livery of my mother, in heaven. 'T is a sin to mourn for her whose tears the hand of God has wiped away."

CHAPTER XVIII.

One week, and another week passed by, and every evening was as charming as the first of the return of Ernest Linwood. In that fortnight were compressed the social and intellectual joys of a lifetime. Music, reading, and conversation filled the measure of the evening hours. Such music, such reading, and such conversation as I never heard before. I had been accustomed to read aloud a great deal to my own dear mother, to Mrs. Linwood, and to my young pupils also, and I had reason to think I could read remarkably well; but I could not read like Ernest,—I never heard any one that could. He infused his own soul into the soul of the author, and brought out his deepest meanings. When he read poetry I sat like one entranced, bound by the double spell of genius and music. Mrs. Linwood could sew; Edith could sew or net, but I could do nothing but listen. I could feel the blood tingling to my finger ends, the veins throbbing in my temples, and the color coming and going in my cheek.

"You love poetry," said he once, pausing, and arresting my fascinated glance.

"Love it," I exclaimed, sighing in the fulness of delight, "it is the passion of my soul."

"You have three passions, music, flowers, and poetry," said he, with a smile that seemed to mock the extravagance of my language, "which is the regal one, the passion of passions?"

"I can hardly imagine the existence of one without the other," I answered, "their harmony is so entire; flowers are silent poetry, and poetry is written music."

"And music?" he asked.

"Is the breath of heaven, the language of angels. As the voice of Echo lingered in the woods, where she loved to wander, when her beauteous frame had vanished, so music remains to show the angel nature we have lost."

I blushed at having said so much, but the triune passion warmed my soul.

"Gabriella is a poetess herself," said Edith, "and may well speak of the magic of numbers. She has a portfolio, filled with papers written, like Ezekiel's scroll, within and without. I wish you would let me get it, Gabriella,—do."

"Impossible!" I answered, "I never wrote but one poem for exhibition, and the experience of that hour was sufficient for a lifetime."

"You were but a child then, Gabriella. Mr. Regulus would give it a very different reception now, I know he would," said Edith.

"If it is a child's story, will you not relate it?" asked Ernest; "you have excited my curiosity."

"Curiosity, brother, I thought you possessed none."

"Interest is a better word. If I understand aright, the buddings of Gabriella's genius met with an untimely blight."

I know not how it was, but I felt in an exceedingly ingenuous mood, and I related this episode in

my childish history without reserve. I touched lightly on the championship of Richard Clyde, but I was obliged to introduce it. I had forgotten that he was associated with the narration, or I should have been silent.

"This youthful knight, and the hero of commencement day are one, then," observed Ernest. "He is a fortunate youth, with the myrtle and the laurel both entwining his brows; you must be proud of your champion."

"I am *grateful* to him," I replied, resolved to make a bold effort to remove the impression I knew he had received. Mrs. Linwood was not present, or I could not have spoken as I did. "He defended me because he thought I was oppressed; he befriended me because my friends were few. He has the generous spirit of chivalry which cannot see wrong without seeking to redress it, or suffering without wishing to relieve it. I am under unspeakable obligations to him, for he it was who spoke kindly of the obscure little girl to your mother and sister, and obtained for me the priceless blessing of their love."

"I dare say *they* feel very grateful to him, likewise," said he, in a tone of genuine feeling. "I acknowledge *my* share of the obligation. But is he so disinterested as to claim no recompense, or does he find that chivalry, like goodness, is its own exceeding great reward?"

"I thought I regarded him as a brother, till now Edith has convinced me I am mistaken."

"How so?" he asked, with so peculiar an expression, I forgot what I was going to say.

"How so?" he repeated, while Edith leaned towards him and laid her hand on his.

"By showing me how strong and fervent a sister's love can be."

His eyes flashed; they looked like fountains of light, full to overflowing. His arm involuntarily encircled Edith, and a smile, beautiful as a woman's, curled his lips.

"How he does love her!" thought I; "strong indeed must be the counter charm, that can rival hers."

I had never seen his spirits so light as they were the remainder of the evening. They rose even to gaiety; and again I wondered what had become of the reserve and moodiness whose dark shadow had preceded his approach.

"We are so happy now," said Edith, when we were alone, "I dread the interruption of company. Ernest does not care for it, and if it be of an uncongenial kind, he wraps himself in a mantle of reserve, that neither sun nor wind can unfold. After commencement, our house will be overflowing with city friends. They will return with us, and we shall not probably be alone again for the whole summer."

She sighed at the anticipation, and I echoed the sound. I was somebody now; but what a nobody I should dwindle into, in comparison with the daughters of wealth and fashion who would gather at Grandison Place!

"Ernest must like you very much, Gabriella, or he would not show the interest he does in all that concerns you. You do not know what a compliment he pays you, because you have not seen him in company with other young girls. I have sometimes felt quite distressed at his indifference when they have been my guests. He has such a contempt for affectation and display, that he cannot entirely conceal it. He is not apt to express his opinion of any one, but there are indirect ways of discovering it. I found him this morning in the library, standing before that beautiful picture of the Italian flower girl, which you admire so much. He was so absorbed, that he did not perceive my entrance, till I stole behind him and laid my hand on his shoulder. 'Do you not see a likeness?' he asked. 'To whom?' 'To Gabriella.' 'To Gabriella!' I repeated. 'Yes, it is like her, but I never observed it before.' 'A very striking resemblance,' he said, 'only she has more mind in her face.'"

"That enchanting picture like me!" I exclaimed, "impossible! There is, there can be no likeness. It is nothing but association. He knows I am the flower-girl of the house, and that is the reason he thought of me."

I tried to speak with indifference, but my voice trembled with delight.

The next morning, when I came in from the garden, all laden with flowers, an irresistible impulse drew me to the library. It was very early. The hush of repose still lingered over the household, and that particular apartment, in which the silent eloquence of books, paintings, and statues hung like a solemn spell, seemed in such deep quietude, I started at the light echo of my own footsteps.

I stole with guilty consciousness towards the picture, in whose lineaments the fastidious eye of Ernest Linwood had traced a similitude to mine. They were all engraven on my memory, but now they possessed a new fascination; and I stood before it, gazing into the soft, dark depths of the eyes, in which innocent mildness and bashful tenderness were mingled like the *clare-obscure* of an Italian moonlight; gazing on the dawning smile that seemed to play over the beautiful and glowing lips, and the bright, rich, dark hair, so carelessly, gracefully arranged you could almost see the balmy breezes of her native clime rustling amid the silken tresses; on the charming contour of the head and neck, slightly turned as if about to look back and give a parting glance at the garden she had reluctantly quitted.

As I thus stood, with my hands loaded with blossoms, a flower basket suspended from my arm, and a straw hat such as shepherdesses wear, on my head,—my garden costume,—involuntarily imitating the attitude of the lovely flower girl, the door, which had been left ajar, silently opened, and Ernest Linwood entered.

Had I been detected in the act of stealing or counterfeiting money, I could not have felt more intense shame. He knew what brought me there. I saw it in his penetrating eye, his half-suppressed smile; and, ready to sink with mortification, I covered my face with the roses I held in my hands.

"Do you admire the picture?" he asked, advancing to where I stood; "do you perceive the resemblance?"

I shook my head without answering; I was too much disconcerted to speak. What would he think of my despicable vanity, my more than childish foolishness?

"I am glad to see we have congenial tastes," he said, with a smile in his voice. "I came on purpose to gaze on that charming representation of youth and innocence, without dreaming that its original was by it."

"Original!" I repeated. "Surely you do mock me,—'t is but a fancy sketch,—and in nought but youth and flowers resembles me."

"We cannot see ourselves, and it is well we cannot. The image reflected from the mirror is but a cold, faint shadow of the living, breathing soul. But why this deep confusion,—that averted face and downcast eye? Have I offended by my intrusion? Do you wish me to withdraw, and yield to you the privilege of solitary admiration?"

"It is I who am the intruder," I answered, looking wistfully towards the door, through which I was tempted to rush at once. "I thought you had not risen,—I thought,—I came"—

"And why did you come at this hour, Gabriella? and what has caused such excessive embarrassment? Will you not be ingenuous enough to tell me?"

"I will," answered I, calmed by the gentle composure of his manner, "if you will assert that you do not know already."

"I do not *know*, but I can *imagine*. Edith has betrayed my admiration of that picture. You came to justify my taste, and to establish beyond a doubt the truth of the likeness."

"No, indeed! I did not; I cannot explain the impulse which led me hither. I only wish I had resisted it as I ought."

I suppose I must have looked quite miserable, from the efforts he made to restore my self-complacency. He took the basket from my arm and placed it on the table, moved a chair forward for me, and another for himself, as if preparing for a morning *tête à tête*.

"What would Mrs. Linwood say, if she saw me here at this early hour alone with her son?" thought I, obeying his motion, and tossing my hat on the light stairs that were winding up behind me. I did not fell the possibility of declining the interview, for there was a power about him which overmastered without their knowing it the will of others.

"If you knew how much more pleasing is the innocent shame and artless sensibility you manifest, than the ease and assurance of the practised worldling, you would not blush for the impulse which drew you hither. To the sated taste and weary eye, simplicity and truth are refreshing as the spring-time of nature after its dreary winter. The cheek that blushes, the eye that moistens, and the heart that palpitates, are sureties of indwelling purity and candor. What a pity that they are as evanescent as the bloom of these flowers and the fragrance they exhale! You have never been in what is called the great world?"

"Never. I passed one winter in Boston; but I was in deep mourning and did not go into society. Besides, your mother thought me too young. It was more than a year ago."

"You will be considered old enough this winter. Do you not look forward with eager anticipations and bright hopes to the realization of youth's golden dreams?"

"I as often look forward with dread as hope. I am told they who see much of the world, lose their faith in human virtue, their belief in sincerity, their implicit trust in what seems good and fair. All the pleasures of the world would not be an equivalent for the loss of these."

"And do you possess all these now?"

"I think I do. I am sure I ought. I have never yet been deceived. I should doubt that the setting sun would rise again, as soon as the truth of those who have professed to love me. Your mother, Edith—and"—

"Richard Clyde," he added, with a smile, and that truth-searching glance which often brought unbidden words to my lips.

"Yes; I have perfect reliance in his friendship."

"And in his love," he added; "why not finish the sentence?"

"Because I have no right to betray his confidence,—even supposing your assertion to be true. I have spoken of the only feeling, whose existence I am willing to admit, and even that was drawn from me. What if *I* turn inquisitor?" said I, suddenly emboldened to look in his face. "Have *you*, who have seen so much more of life, experienced the chilling influences which you deprecate for me?"

"I am naturally suspicious and distrustful," he answered. "Have you never been told so?"

"If I have, it required your own assertion to make me believe it."

"Do you not see the shadow on my brow? It has been there since my cradle hours. It was born with me, and is a part of myself,—just as much as the shadow I cast upon the sunshine. I can no more remove it than I could the thunder-cloud from Jehovah's arch."

I trembled at the strength of his language, and it seemed as if the shadow were stealing over my own soul. His employment was prophetic. He was pulling the rose-leaves from my basket, and scattering them unconsciously on the floor.

"See what I have done," said he, looking down on the wreck.

"So the roses of confidence are scattered and destroyed by the cruel hand of mistrust," cried I, stooping to gather the fallen petals.

"Let them be," said he, sadly, "you cannot restore them."

"I know it; but I can remove the ruins."

I was quite distressed at the turn the conversation had taken. I could not bear to think that one to whom the Creator had been so bountiful of his gifts, should appreciate so little the blessings given. He, to talk of shadows, in the blazing noonday of fortune; to pant with thirst, when wave swelling after wave of pure crystal water wooed with refreshing coolness his meeting lips.

Oh, starver in the midst of God's plenty! think of the wretched sons of famine, and be wise.

"You must have a strange power over me," said he, rising and walking to one of the alcoves, in which the books were arranged. "Seldom indeed do I allude to my own individuality. Forget it. I have been very happy lately. My soul, like a high mountain, lifts itself into the sunshine, leaving the vapors and clouds rolling below. I have been breathing an atmosphere pure and fresh as the world's first morning, redolent with the fragrance of Eden's virgin blossoms."

He paused a moment, then approaching his own portrait, glanced from it to the flower girl, and back again from the flower girl to his own image.

"Clouds and sunshine," he exclaimed, "flowers and thorns; such is the union nature loves. And is it not well? Clouds temper the dazzle of the sunbeams,—thorns protect the tender flowers. Have you read many of these books?" he asked, with a sudden transition.

"A great many," I answered, unspeakably relieved to hear him resume his natural tone and manner; "too many for my mind's good."

"How so? These are all select works,—golden sheaves of knowledge, gathered from the chaff and bound by the reaping hand."

"I mean that I cannot read with moderation. My rapid eye takes in more than my judgment can criticize or my memory retain. That is one reason why I like to hear another read. Sound does not travel with the rapidity of light, and then the echo lingers in the ear."

"Yes. It is charming when the eye of one and the ear of another dwell in sympathy on the same inspiring sentiments; when the reader, glowing with enthusiasm, turns from the page before him to a living page, printed by the hand of God, in fair, divine characters. It is like looking from the shining heavens to a clear, crystallized stream, and seeing its glories reflected there, and our own image likewise, tremulously bright."

"Oh!" thought I, "how many times have I thus listened; but has he ever thus read?"

I wish I could recollect all the conversation of the morning,—it was so rich and varied. I sat, unconscious of the fading flowers and the passing moments; unconscious of the faint vibration of that *deep, under chord*, which breathes in low, passionate strains, life's tender and pathetic mirror.

"I am glad you like this room," he continued. "Here you can sit, queen of the past, surrounded by beings more glorious than those that walk the earth or dwell in air or sea. You travel not, yet the wonders of earth's various climes are around and about you. Buried cities are exhumed at your bidding, and their dim palaces glitter once more with burning gold. And here, above all the Eleusinian mysteries of the human heart are laid bare, without the necessity of revealing your own. But I am detaining you too long. Your languid blossoms reproach me. When you come here again, do not forget that we have here thought and felt in unison."

Just as he was leaving the library, Mrs. Linwood entered. She started on seeing him, and her eye rested on me with an anxious, troubled look.

"You are become an early riser, my son," she said.

"You encourage so excellent a habit, do you not, my mother?"

"Certainly; but it seems to me a walk in the fresh morning air would be more health-giving than a seat within walls, damp with the mould of antiquity."

"We have brought the dewy morning within doors," said he; while I, gathering flowers, basket, and hat, waited for Mrs. Linwood to move, that I might leave the room. She stood between me and the threshold, and for the first time I noticed in her face a resemblance to her son. It might be because a slight cloud rested on her brow.

"You will not have time to arrange your flowers this morning," she gravely observed to me. "It is almost the breakfast hour, and you are still in your garden costume."

My eyes bowed beneath her mildly rebuking glance, and the fear of her displeasure chilled the warm rapture which had left its glow upon my cheek.

"Let me assist you," he cried, in an animated tone. "It was I who encroached on your time, and must bear the blame, if blame indeed there be. There is a homely proverb, that 'many hands make light work.' Come, let us prove its truth."

I thought Mrs. Linwood sighed, as he followed me into the drawing-room, and with quick, graceful fingers, made ample amends for the negligence be had caused. His light, careless manner restored me to ease, and at breakfast Mrs. Linwood's countenance wore its usual expression of calm benevolence.

Had I done wrong? I had sought no clandestine interview. Why should I? It was foolish to wish to look at the beautiful flower girl; but it was a natural, innocent wish, born of something purer and better than vanity and self-love.

CHAPTER XIX.

I lingered after school was dismissed, to ask permission of Mr. Regulus to attend the commencement. It was Mrs. Linwood's wish, and of course a law to me.

"Will you release me one week before the session closes?" I asked, "Mrs. Linwood does not wish to leave me behind, but I do not care much to go."

"Of course I will release you, my child, but it will seem as if the flower season were past when you are gone. I wonder now, how I ever taught without your assistance. I wonder what I shall do when you leave me?"

"Mrs. Linwood wished me to say to you," said I, quite touched by his kind, affectionate manner, "that she does not wish me to renew our engagement. She will take me to town next winter, satisfied for the present with the discipline I have experienced under your guardian care."

"So soon!" he exclaimed, "I was not prepared for this."

"So soon, Mr. Regulus? I have been with you one long year."

"It may have seemed long to you, but it has been short as a dream to me. A very pleasant time has it been, too pleasant to last."

He took up his dark, formidable ferula, and leaned his forehead thoughtfully upon it.

"And it has been pleasant to me, Mr. Regulus. I dreaded it very much at first, but every step I have taken in the path of instruction has been made smooth and green beneath my feet. No dull, lagging hour has dragged me backward in my daily duties. The dear children have been good and affectionate, and you, my dear master, have crowned me with loving kindness from day to day. How shall I convince you of my gratitude, and what return can I make for your even parental care?"

I spoke earnestly, for my heart was in my words. His unvarying gentleness and tenderness to me, (since that one fiery shower that converted for a time the Castalian fountain into a Dead Sea,) had won my sincere and deep regard. He had seemed lately rather more reserved than usual, and I valued still more his undisguised expressions of interest and affection.

"You owe me nothing," said he, and I could not help noticing an unwonted trepidation in his manner, and on one sallow cheek a deep flush was spreading. "Long years of kindness, tenfold to mine, could not atone for the harshness and injustice of which I was once guilty. You will go into the world and blush like Waller's rose, to be so admired. You will be surrounded by new friends, new lovers, and look back to these walls as to a prison-house, and to me, as the grim jailer of your youth."

"No indeed, Mr. Regulus; you wrong yourself and me. Memory will hang many a sweet garland on these classic walls, and will turn gratefully to you, as the benefactor of my childhood, the mentor of my growing years."

My voice choked. A strange dread took possession of me, he looked so agitated, so little like himself. His hand trembled so that it dropped the ruler, that powerful hand, in whose strong

grasp I had seen the pale delinquent writhe in terror. I hardly know what I dreaded, but the air seemed thick and oppressive, and I longed to escape into the open sunshine.

"Gabriella, my child," said he, "wait one moment. I did not think it would require so much courage to confess so much weakness. I have been indulging in dreams so wild, yet so sweet, that I fear to breathe them, knowing that I must wake to the cold realities of life. I know not how it is, but you have twined yourself about my heart so gradually, so gently, but so strongly, that I cannot separate you from it. A young and fragrant vine, you have covered it with beauty and freshness. You have diffused within it an atmosphere of spring. You thought the cold mathematician, the stern philosopher could not feel, but I tell thee, child, we are the very ones that *can* and *do* feel. There is as much difference between our love and the boyish passion which passes for love, as there is between the flash of the glowworm and the welding heat that fuses bars of steel. Oh! Gabriella, do not laugh at this confession, or deem it lightly made. I hope nothing,—I ask nothing; and yet if you could,—if you would trust your orphan youth to my keeping, I would guard it as the most sacred trust God ever gave to man."

He paused from intense emotion, and wiped the drops of perspiration from his forehead, while I stood ready to sink with shame and sorrow. No glow of triumph, no elation of grateful vanity warmed my heart, or exalted my pride. I felt humbled, depressed. Where I had been accustomed to look up with respect, I could not bear to look down in pity, it was so strange, so unexpected. I was stunned, bewildered. The mountain had lost its crown,—it had fallen in an avalanche at my feet.

"Oh, Mr. Regulus!" said I, when I at last liberated my imprisoned voice, "you honor me too much. I never dreamed of such a,—such a distinction. I am not worthy of it,—indeed I am not. It makes me very unhappy to think of your cherishing such feelings for me, who have looked up to you so long with so much veneration and respect. I will always esteem and revere you, dear Mr. Regulus,—always think of you with gratitude and affection; but do not, I entreat you, ever allude again to any other sentiment. You do not know how very miserable it makes me."

I tried to express myself in the gentlest manner possible, but the poor man had lost all command of his feelings. He had confined them in his breast so long, that the moment he released them, they swelled and rose like the genius liberated from the chest of the fisherman, and refused to return to the prison-house they had quitted. His brows contracted, his lips quivered, and turning aside with a spasmodic gesture, he covered his face with his handkerchief.

I could not bear this,—it quite broke my heart. I felt as remorseful as if every tear he was hiding was a drop of blood. Walking hastily to him, and laying my hand on his arm, I exclaimed,—

"Don't, my dear master!" and burst into tears myself.

How foolish we must have appeared to a bystander, who knew the cause of our tears,—one weeping that he loved too well, the other that she could not love in return. How ridiculous to an uninterested person would that tall, awkward, grave man seem, in love with a young girl so much his junior, so childlike and so unconscious of the influence she had acquired.

"How foolish this is!" cried he, as if participating in these sentiments. Then removing the handkerchief from his face, he ran his fingers vigorously through his hair, till it stood up frantically round his brow, drew the sleeves of his coat strenuously over his wrists, and straightening himself to his tall height, seemed resolved to be a man once more. I smiled afterwards, when I recollected his figure; but I did not then,—thank heaven, I did not smile then,—I would not have done it for "the crown the Bourbons lost."

Anxious to close a scene so painful, I approached the door though with a lingering, hesitating step. I wanted to say something, but knew not what to utter.

"You will let me be your friend still," said he, taking my hand in both his. "You will not think worse of me, for a weakness which has so much to excuse it. And, Gabriella, my dear child, should the time ever come, when you need a friend and counsellor, should the sky so bright now be darkened with clouds, remember there is one who would willingly die to save you from sorrow or evil. Will you remember this?"

"Oh, Mr. Regulus, how could I forget it?"

"There are those younger and more attractive," he continued, "who may profess more, and yet feel less. I would not, however, be unjust. God save me from the meanness of envy, the baseness of jealousy. I fear I did not do justice to young Clyde, when I warned you of his attentions. I believe he is a highly honorable young man. Ernest Linwood,"—he paused, and his shaded eyes sought mine, with a glance of penetrating power,—"is, I am told, a man of rare and fascinating qualities. He is rich beyond his need, and will occupy a splendid position in the social world. His mother will probably have very exalted views with regard to the connections he may form. Forgive me if I am trespassing on forbidden ground. I did not mean,—I have no right,"—

He stopped, for my confusion was contagious. My face crimsoned, even my fingers were suffused with the rosy hue of shame. Nor was it shame alone. Indignation mingled with it its deeper dye.

"If you suppose, Mr. Regulus," said I, in a wounded and excited tone, "that *I* have any aspirations, that would conflict with Mrs. Linwood's ambitious views, you wrong me very much. Oh! if I thought that he, that she, that you, or anybody in the world could believe such a thing"—

I could not utter another word. I remembered Mrs. Linwood's countenance when she entered the library. I remembered many things, which might corroborate my fears.

"You are as guileless as the unweaned lamb, Gabriella, and long, long may you remain so," he answered, with a gentleness that disarmed my anger. "Mine was an unprompted suggestion, about as wise, I perceive, as my remarks usually are. I am a sad blunderer. May heaven pardon the pain I have caused, for the sake of my pure intentions. I do not believe it possible for a designing thought to enter your mind, or a feeling to find admittance into your heart, that angels might not cherish. But you are so young and inexperienced, so unsuspecting and confiding;—but no matter, God bless you, and keep you forever under his most holy guardianship!"

Wringing my hand so hard that it ached long afterwards, he turned away, and descended the steps more rapidly than he had ever done before. In his excitement he forgot his hat, and was pursuing his way bareheaded, through the sunny atmosphere.

"He must not go through town in that way, for the boys to laugh at him," thought I, catching up his hat and running to the door.

"Mr. Regulus!" I cried, waving it above my head, to attract his attention.

He started, turned, saw the hat, run his fingers through his long hair, smiled, and came back. I met him more than half way.

"I did not know that I had left my head, as well as my heart behind," said he, with a sickly effort to be facetious; "thank you, God bless you once again."

With another iron pressure of my aching hand, he dashed his hat on his lion-like head and left me.

I walked home as one in a dream, wondering if this interview were real or ideal; wondering if the juice of the milk-white flower, "made purple by love's wand," had been squeezed by fairy fingers into the eyes of my preceptor, in his slumbering hours, to cause this strange passion; wondering why the spirit of love, like the summer wind, stealing softly through the whispering boughs, breathes where it listeth, and we cannot tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth; and wondering most of all if—but I cannot describe the thoughts that drifted through my mind, vague and changing as the clouds that went hurrying after each other over the deep blue ether.

CHAPTER XX.

Commencement day!—a day of feverish anxiety and excitement to the young student, who is to step forth before the public eye, a candidate for the laurels of fame;—a day of weariness and stiffness to the dignified professors, obliged to sit hour after hour, listening to the florid eloquence whose luxuriance they have in vain attempted to prune, or trying to listen while the spirit yawns and stretches itself to its drowsy length;—a day of intense interest to the young maiden, who sees among the youthful band of aspirants one who is the "bright particular star" round which her pure and trembling hopes revolve.

It was a day of excitement to me, for every thing was novel, and therefore interesting. It was the first time I had ever been in a dense crowd, and I felt the electric fluid, always collected where the great heart of humanity is throbbing, thrilling in my veins, and ready to flash at the master-stroke of eloquence. I was dazzled by the brilliant display of beauty and fashion that lighted up the classic walls as with living sunbeams. Such clusters of mimic blossoms and flowing ringlets wreathed together round fair, blooming faces; such a cloud of soft, airy drapery floating over lithe figures, swaying forward like light boughs agitated by the wind; such a fluttering of snowy fans, making the cool, pleasant sound of rain drops pattering among April leaves; such bright eager eyes, turned at every sounding step towards the open door,—I had never looked upon the like before. I sat in a dream of delight, without thinking that it might be thought vulgar to *appear* delighted, and still more to express undisguised admiration.

I dared not look to the platform, where the faculty and students were arranged in imposing ranks, for there was one pair of familiar, sparkling eyes, that were sure to beat mine back with their steadfast gaze. I did not like this persevering scrutiny, for I was sure it would attract the attention of others, and then draw it on myself. He had grown taller, Richard Clyde had, since I had seen him, his countenance was more manly, his manner more polished. He had been with us the evening before, but the room was crowded with company, and I was careful not to give him a moment's opportunity of speaking to me alone. But I read too well in his sincere and earnest eyes, that time had wrought no change in the fervor of his feelings, or the constancy of his attachment.

Mrs. Linwood, though surrounded by friends of the most distinguished character, honored him by signal marks of attention. I was proud of him as a friend. Why did he wish to be more?

"What a fine young man Clyde is!" I heard some one remark who sat behind us. "It is said he is the most promising student in the university."

"Yes," was the reply. "I have heard that several wealthy gentlemen in Boston are going to send

him to Europe to complete his education, as his own income will not allow him to incur the expense."

"That is a great compliment," observed the first voice, "and I have no doubt he deserves it. They say, too, that he is betrothed to a young girl in the country, very pretty, but in most indigent circumstances,—an early attachment,—children's romance."

Was it possible that village gossip had reached these venerable walls? But hark to the other voice.

"I have heard so, but they say she has been adopted by a rich lady, whose name I have forgotten. Her own mother was of very mysterious and disreputable character, I am told, whom no one visited or respected. Quite an outcast."

I started as if an arrow had passed through my ears, or rather entered them, for it seemed quivering there. Never before had I heard one sullying word breathed on the spotless snow of my mother's character. Is it strange that the cold, venomous tongue of slander, hissing at my very back, should make me shudder and recoil as if a serpent were there?

A hand touched my shoulder, lightly, gently, but I knew its touch, though never felt but once before. I looked up involuntarily, and met the eyes of Ernest Linwood, who was standing close to the seat I occupied. I did not know he was there. He had wedged the crowd silently, gradually, till he reached the spot he had quitted soon after our entrance, to greet his former class mates. I knew by his countenance that he had heard all, and a sick, deadly feeling came over me. He, to hear my mother's name made a byword and reproach, myself alluded to as the indigent daughter of an outcast,—he, who seemed already lifted as high above me on the eagle wings of fortune, as the eyry of the king-bird is above the nest of the swallow,—it was more than I could bear.

I said I knew by his countenance that he had heard all. I never saw such an expression as his face wore,—such burning indignation, such withering scorn. I trembled to think of the central fires from which such flames darted. As he caught my glance, an instantaneous change came over it. Compassion softened every lineament. Still his eye of power held me down. It said, "be quiet, be calm,—I am near, be not afraid."

"I wish I could get you a glass of water," said he, in a low voice, for I suppose I looked deadly pale; "but it would be impossible I fear in this crowd,—the aisles are impenetrable."

"Thank you," I answered, "there is no need,—but if I could only leave."

I looked despairingly at the masses of living beings on every side, crowding the pews, filling the aisles, standing on the window-sills, on the tops of the pews, leaning from the gallery,—and felt that I was a prisoner. The sultry air of August, confined in the chapel walls, and deprived of its vital principle by so many heaving lungs, weighed oppressively on mine. I could feel behind me the breathing of the lips of slander, and it literally seemed to scorch me. Ernest took my fan from my hand and fanned me without intermission, or I think I must have fainted.

As I sat with downcast eyes, whose drooping lashes were heavy with unshed tears, I saw a glass of water held before me by an unsteady hand. I looked up and saw Richard Clyde, his student's robe of flowing black silk gathered up by his left arm, who had literally forced his way through a triple row of men. We were very near the platform, there being but one row of pews between.

I drank the water eagerly, gratefully. Even before those blistering words were uttered, I had felt as if a glass of cold water would be worth all the gems of the East; now it was life itself.

"Are you ill, Gabriella?" whispered Mrs. Linwood, who with Edith sat directly in front, and whose eyes had watched anxiously the motions of Richard. "Ah! I see this heat is killing you."

"*That is she*, I do believe," hissed the serpent tongue behind me.

"Hush, she may hear you."

All was again still around me, the stillness of the multitudinous sea, for every wave of life heaved restlessly, producing a kind of murmur, like that of rustling leaves in an autumnal forest. Then a sound loud as the thunders of the roaring ocean came rushing on the air. It was the burst of acclamation which greeted Richard Clyde, first in honor though last in time. I bent my ear to listen, but the words blent confusedly together, forming one wave of utterance, that rolled on without leaving one idea behind. I knew he was eloquent, from the enthusiastic applause which occasionally interrupted him, but I had lost the power of perception; and had Demosthenes risen from his grave, it would scarcely have excited in me any emotion.

Was this my introduction to that world,—that great world, of which I had heard and thought and dreamed so much? How soon had my garlands faded,—my fine gold become dim! Could they not have spared me one day, *me*, who had never injured them? And yet they might aim their barbed darts at me. I would not care for that,—oh, no, it was not that. It was the blow that attacked an angel mother's fame. O my mother! could they not spare thee even in thy grave, where the wicked are said to cease from troubling and the weary are at rest? Could they not let thee sleep in peace, thou tempest-tost and weary hearted, even in the dark and narrow house, sacred from the footstep of the living?

Another thundering burst of applause called my spirit from the grass-grown sod, made damp and green by the willow's shade, to the crowded church and the bustle and confusion of life. Then

followed the presentation of the parchment rolls and the ceremonies usual at the winding up of this time-honored day. It all seemed like unmeaning mummery to me. The majestic president, with his little flat black cap, set like a tile on the top of his head, was a man of pasteboard and springs, and even the beautiful figures that lighted up the walls had lost their coloring and life. There was, indeed, a wondrous change, independent of that within my own soul. The excessive heat had wilted these flowers of loveliness and faded their bright hues. Their uncurled ringlets hung dangling down their cheeks, whose roses were heightened to an unbecoming crimson, or withered to a sickly pallor; their gossamer drapery, deprived of its delicate stiffening, flapped like the loose sails of a vessel wet by the spray. Here and there was a blooming maiden, still as fair and cool as if sprinkled with dew, round whom the atmosphere seemed refreshed as by the sparkling of a *jet d'eau*. These, like myself, were novices, who had brought with them the dewy innocence of life's morning hours; but they had not, like me, heard the hissing of the adder among their roses.

"Be calm,—be courageous," said Ernest, in a scarcely audible tone, as bending down he gave the fan into my hand; "the arrow rebounds from an impenetrable surface."

As we turned to leave the church, I felt my hand drawn round the arm of Richard Clyde. How he had cleft the living mass so quickly I could not tell; but he had made his way where an arrow could hardly penetrate. I looked round for Edith,—but Ernest watched over her, like an earthly providence. My backward glance to her prevented my seeing the faces of those who were seated behind me. But what mattered it? They were strangers, and heaven grant that they would ever remain so.

"Are you entirely recovered?" asked Richard, in an anxious tone. "I never saw any one's countenance change so instantaneously as yours. You were as white as your cambric handkerchief. You are not accustomed to such stifling crowds, where we seem plunged in an exhausted receiver."

"I never wish to be in such another," I answered, with emphasis. "I never care to leave home again."

"I am sorry your first impressions should have been so disagreeable,—but I hope you have been interested in some small degree. You do not know what inspiration there was in your presence. At first, I thought I would rather be shot from the cannon's mouth than speak in your hearing; but after the first shock, you were like a fountain of living waters playing on my soul."

Poor Richard! how could I tell him that I had not heard understandingly one sentence that he uttered? or how could I explain the cause of my mental distraction? He had cast his pearls to the wind; his diamonds to the sand.

Mrs. Linwood was a guest of the president, who was an intimate and valued friend. I would have given worlds for a little solitary nook, where I could hide myself from every eye; for a seat beneath the wild oaks that girdled the cottage of my childhood; but the house was thronged with the literati of the State, and wherever I turned I met the gaze of strangers. If I could have seen Mrs. Linwood alone, or Edith alone, and told them how wantonly, how cruelly my feelings had been wounded, it would have relieved the fulness, the oppression of my heart. But that was impossible. Mrs. Linwood's commanding social position, her uncommon and varied powers of conversation, the excellence and dignity of her character, made her the cynosure of the literary circle. Edith, too, from her exquisite loveliness, the sweetness of her disposition, and her personal misfortune, which endeared her to her friends by the tenderness and sympathy it excited, was a universal favorite; and all these attractive qualities in both were gilded and enhanced by the wealth which enabled them to impart, even more than they received. They were at home here,—they were in the midst of friends, whose society was congenial to their tastes, and I resolved, whatever I might suffer, not to mar their enjoyment by my selfish griefs. Ernest had heard all,—perhaps he believed all. He did not know my mother. He had never seen that face of heavenly purity and holy sorrow. Why should he not believe?

One thing I could do. I could excuse myself from dinner and thus secure an hour's quietude. I gave no false plea, when I urged a violent headache as the reason for my seclusion. My temples ached and throbbed as if trying to burst from a metallic band, and the sun rays, though sifted through curtains of folding lace, fell like needle points on my shrinking eyes.

"Poor Gabriella!" said Edith, laying her cool soft hand on my hot brow, "I did not think you were such a tender, green-house plant. I cannot bear to leave you here, when you could enjoy such an intellectual banquet below. Let me stay with you. I fear you are really very ill. How unfortunate!"

"No, no, dear Edith; you must not think of such a thing. Just close those blinds, and give me that fan, and I shall be very comfortable here. If possible let no one come in. If I could sleep, this paroxysm will pass over."

"There, sleep if you can, dear Gabriella, and be bright for the evening party. You knew the dresses mamma gave us for the occasion, both alike. I could not think of wearing mine, unless you were with me,—and you look so charmingly in white!"

Edith had such a sweet, coaxing way with her, she magnetized pain and subdued self-distrust. The mere touch of her gentle hand had allayed the fever of my brain, and one glance of her loving blue eye tempered the anguish of my spirit. She lingered, unwilling to leave me,—drew the blinds together, making a soft twilight amid the glare of day, saturated my handkerchief with cologne

and laid it on my temples, and placing a beautiful bouquet of flowers, an offering to herself, on my pillow, kissed me, and left me.

I watched the sound of her retreating footsteps, or rather of her crutches, till they were no longer heard; then burying my face in my pillow, the sultry anguish of my heart was drenched in tears. Oh! what a relieving shower! It was the thunder-shower of the tropics, not the slow, drizzling rain of colder climes. I wept till the pillow was as wet as the turf on which the heavens have been weeping. I clasped it to my bosom as a shield against invisible foes, but there was no *sympathy* in its downy softness. I sighed for a pillow beneath whose gentle heavings the heart of human kindness beats, I yearned to lay my head on a mother's breast. Yea, cold and breathless as it was now, beneath the clods of the valley, it would still be a sacred resting-place to me. The long pressure of the grave-sods could not crush out the impression of that love, stronger than death, deeper than the grave.

Had the time arrived when I might claim the manuscript, left as a hallowed legacy to the orphan, who had no other inheritance? Had I awakened to the knowledge of woman's destiny to love and suffer? Dare I ask myself this question? Through the morning twilight of my heart, was not a star trembling, whose silver rays would never be quenched, save in the nightshades of death? Was it not time to listen to the warning voice, whose accents, echoing from the tomb, must have the power and grandeur of prophecy? Yes! I would ask Mrs. Linwood for my mother's history, as soon as we returned to Grandison Place; and if I found the shadow of disgrace rested on the memory of her I so loved and worshipped, I would fly to the uttermost parts of the earth, to avoid that searching eye, which, next to the glance of Omnipotence, I would shun in guilt and shame.

"They say!" Who are *they*? who are the cowled monks, the hooded friars who glide with shrouded faces in the procession of life, muttering in an unknown tongue words of mysterious import? Who are *they*? the midnight assassins of reputation, who lurk in the by-lanes of society, with dagger tongues sharpened by invention and envenomed by malice, to draw the blood of innocence, and, hyena-like, banquet on the dead? Who are *they*? They are a multitude no man can number, black-stoled familiars of the inquisition of slander, searching for victims in every city, town, and village, wherever the heart of humanity throbs, or the ashes of mortality find rest.

Oh, coward, coward world—skulkers! Give me the bold brigand, who thunders along the highways with flashing weapon that cuts the sunbeams as well as the shades. Give me the pirate, who *unfurls* the black flag, emblem of his terrible trade, and *shows* the plank which your doomed feet must tread; but save me from the *they-sayers* of society, whose knives are hidden in a velvet sheath, whose bridge of death, is woven of flowers; and who spread, with invisible poison, even the spotless whiteness of the winding-sheet.

CHAPTER XXI.

"Gabriella, awake!"

"Mother, is the day dawning?"

"My child, the sun is near his setting; you have slumbered long."

I dreamed it was my mother's voice that awakened me,—then it seemed the voice of Richard Clyde, and I was lying under the great shadow of the oak, where he had found me years before half drowned in tears.

"Gabriella, my dear,—it is time to dress for the evening."

This time I recognized the accents of Mrs. Linwood, and I rose at once to a sitting position, wondering if it were the rising or the declining day that shone around me. Sleep had left its down on my harassed spirits, and its balm on my aching head. I felt languid, but tranquil; and when Mrs. Linwood affectionately but decidedly urged upon me the necessity of rising and preparing to descend to the drawing-room, I submissively obeyed. She must have seen that I had been in tears, but she made no allusion to them. Her manner was unusually kind and tender; but there was an expression in her serene but commanding eye, that bade me rise superior to the weakness that had subdued me. Had her son spoken of the cause of my emotion?

A few moments after, Edith entered, and her mother rejoined her friends below.

Edith held in her hand a fresh bouquet of the most exquisite green-house plants, among which the scarlet geranium exhibited its glowing blossoms. She held it towards me, turned it like a prism in various directions to catch the changing rays, while its odoriferous breath perfumed the whole apartment.

"I am glad you have another, Edith," I said, looking at the wilted flowers on my pillow. "These have fulfilled their mission most sweetly. I have no doubt they inspired soothing dreams, though I cannot remember them distinctly."

"Oh! these are *yours*," she answered, "sent by a friend who was quite distressed at your absence from the dinner-table. Cannot you guess the donor?"

"It will not require much acuteness," replied I, taking the flowers, and though I could not help

admiring their beauty, and feeling grateful for the attention, a shade of regret clouded their welcome; "I have so few friends it is easy to conjecture who thus administers to my gratification."

"Well, who is it? You do not hazard the utterance of the name."

"No one but Richard Clyde would think of giving me a token like this. They are very, *very* sweet, and yet I wish he had not sent them."

"Ungrateful Gabriella! No one but Richard! A host of common beings melted into one, could not make the equal of the friend who made me the bearer of this charming offering. Is the gift of Ernest greeted with such indifference?"

"Ernest!" I repeated, and the blood bounded in my veins like a stream leaping over a mountain rock. "Is he indeed so kind?"

I bent my head over the beautiful messengers, to hide the joy too deep for words, the gratitude too intense for the gift. As I thus looked down into the heart of the flowers, I caught a glimpse of something white folded among the green leaves. Edith's back was turned as she smoothed the folds of an India muslin dress that lay upon the bed. I drew out the paper with a tremulous hand, and read these few pencilled words:—

"Sweet flower girl of the north! be not cast down. The most noxious wind changes not the purity of marble; neither can an idle breath shake the confidence born of unsullied innocence."

These words pencilled by his own hand, were addressed to *me*. They were embalmed in fragrance and imbedded in bloom, and henceforth they were engraven on tablets on which the hand of man had never before traced a character, which the whole world might not peruse.

Oh, what magic there was in those little words! Slander had lost its sting, and malice its venom, at least for the present hour. I put the talisman in my bosom and the flowers in water,—for *they* might fade.

There was no one in the room but Edith and myself. She sat on the side of the bed, a cloud of white fleecy drapery floating over her lap; a golden arrow, the very last in the day, God's quiver darted through the half-open blinds into the clusters of her fair ringlets. She was the most unaffected of human beings, and yet her every attitude was the perfection of grace, as if she sat as a model to the sculptor. I thought there was a shade of sadness on her brow. Perhaps she had seen me conceal the note, and imagined something clandestine and mysterious between me and her brother, that brother whose exclusive devotion had constituted the chief happiness of her life. Though it was a simple note, and the words were few, intended only to comfort and sustain, they were of such priceless value to me, I could not bear that even Edith's eye should become familiar with its contents. But her love and confidence were too dear to be sacrificed to a refinement of romance.

"Dear Edith," said I, putting the note in her hand, and an arm round her neck, "it was a gift of consolation you brought me;" and then I told her all that I had over-heard, and of the exceeding bitterness of my anguish.

"I know it,—mamma and I both know it,—brother told us. I did not speak of it, for you looked as if you had forgotten it after I came in, and I did not wish you to recall it. You must forget it, indeed you must. Such cruel insinuations can never alienate from you the friends who love you. They rather bind you closer to our hearts. Come, we have no time to lose. You know we must assist each other."

I insisted on being her handmaid first, and lingered over her toilet till she literally escaped from my hands and drew behind the lace curtains like a star behind a cloud. Our dresses were alike, as the generous Edith had willed. They were of the most exquisite India muslin, simply but elegantly decorated with the finest of lace. I had never before been arrayed for an evening party, and as the gauzy fulness of drapery fell so softly and redundantly over the form I had been accustomed to see in the sad-colored robes of mourning, I hardly recognized my own lineaments. There was something so light, so ethereal and graceful in the dress, my spirit caught its airiness and seemed borne upwards as on wings of down. I was about to clasp on my precious necklace and bracelets of hair, when observing Edith's beautiful pearl ornaments, corresponding so well with the delicacy and whiteness of her apparel, I laid them aside, resolving to wear no added decoration but the flowers, consecrated as the gift of Ernest.

"Come here, Gabriella, let me arrange that fall of lace behind," said Edith, extending a beautiful arm, on which the pearl-drops lay like dew on a lily. Both arms passed round my neck, and I found it encircled like her own with pearls. Then turning me round, she clasped first one arm, and then the other with fairy links of pearl, and then she flung a roseate of these ocean flowers round my head, smiling all the time and uttering exclamations of delighted admiration.

"Now don't cry, Gabriella dear. You look so cool—so fair—so like a snowdrop glittering with dew. And don't put your arms round my neck, beautiful as they are, quite so close. You will spoil my lace, darling. You must just wear and keep the pearls for the love of me. Mamma sanctions the gift, so you need have no scruples about accepting them. Remember, now, we must have no more *diamonds*, not one, though of the purest water and sparkling in heaven's own setting."

What could I say, in answer to such abounding kindness? In spite of her prohibition the diamonds would mingle with the pearls; but the sunbeams shone on them both.

What a day had this been to me! It seemed as if I had lived years in the short space of a few hours. I had never felt so utterly miserable, not even over my mother's new made grave. I had never felt so supremely happy,—so buoyant with hope and joy. The flowers of Ernest, the pearls of Edith, came to me with a message as gladdening as that which waked the silver harp-strings of the morning stars. I did not, I dared not misunderstand the meaning of the first. They were sent as balm to a wounded spirit; as breathers of hope to the ear of despair; but it was *his* hand that administered the balm; *his* spirit that inspired the strain.

"How radiant you look, Gabriella!" exclaimed Edith, her sweet blue eyes resting on me with affectionate delight. "I am so glad to see you come out of the cloud. Now you justify our *pride* as well as our affection."

"But I—but all of us look so earthly at your side, Edith"—

"Hush! flatterer—and yet, who would not prefer the beauty of earth, to the cold idealism of spirit loveliness? I have never sought the admiration of men. If I look lovely in the eyes of Ernest, it is all I desire. Perhaps all would not believe me; but you will. I yield you the empire of every heart but his. There, I would not willingly occupy the *second* place. A strange kind of jealousy, Gabriella; but I am just so weak."

She smiled, nay even laughed,—called herself very weak, very foolish, but said she could not help it. She believed she was the most selfish of human beings, and feared that this was the right hand to be cut off, the right eye to be plucked out. I was pained to hear her talk in this way; for I thought if any one ever gained the heart of Ernest, it would be dearly purchased by the sacrifice of Edith's friendship. But it was only a jesting way of expressing her exceeding love, after all. She was not selfish; she was all that was disinterested and kind.

I followed her down stairs into a blaze of light, that at first dazzled and bewildered me. The chandeliers with their myriad pendants of glittering crystal emitted thousands of brilliant coruscations, like wintry boughs loaded with icicles and sparkling in a noonday sun. While through the open windows, the departing twilight mingled its soft duskiness with the splendors of the mimic day.

Ernest Linwood and Richard Clyde were standing near the entrance of the door to greet us. The former immediately advanced and gave me his arm, and Richard walked by the side of Edith. I heard him sigh as they fell behind us, and my heart echoed the sound. Yet how could he sigh with Edith at his side? As I walked through the illuminated drawing-room, escorted by one on whom the eyes of the fashionable world were eagerly bent, I could not help being conscious of the glances that darted on me from every direction. Ernest Linwood was the loadstar of the scene, and whoever he distinguished by his attention must be conspicuous by association. I felt this, but no embarrassment agitated my step or dyed my cheek with blushes. The deep waters were stirred, stirred to their inmost depths, but the surface was calm and unruffled. Mrs. Linwood was at the head of the room, the centre of an intellectual circle. She was dressed, as usual, in silver gray; but the texture of her dress was the richest satin, shaded by blonde. The effect was that of a cloud with a silver lining, and surely it was a fitting attire for one who knew how to give brightness to the darkest shadows of life.

As we approached her, her countenance lighted up with pride and pleasure. I saw she was gratified by my appearance; that she was not ashamed of her protégée. Yet as we came nearer, I observed an expression of the most tender anxiety, approaching to sadness, come over her brow. How proud she was of her son! She looked upon him with a glance that would have been idolatry, had not God said, "Thou shalt not make unto thyself idols, for I am a jealous God."

She took my hand, and I saw her eye follow the soft tracery of pearl-flowers that enwreathed neck, arms, and brow. She knew who had thus adorned me, and her approving smile sanctioned the gifts.

"I rejoice to see you look so well, my dear child," she said, "I feared you might lose the enjoyment of the evening; but I see no one who has a brighter prospect before them now."

She introduced me to the friends who surrounded her, and wished to give me a seat near her; but Ernest resisted the movement, and with a smiling bow passed on.

"I am not disposed to release you quite so soon," said he, passing out into the piazza. "I see very plainly that if I relinquish my position it will not be easy to secure it again. I am delighted. I am charmed, Gabriella, to see that you have the firmness to resist, as well as the sensibility to feel. I am delighted, too, to see you in the only livery youth and innocence should wear in a festal scene like this. I abhor the gaudy tinselry which loads the devotees of fashion, indicative of false tastes and false principles; but white and pearls remind me of every thing pure and holy in nature. In the Bible we read of the white robes of angels and saints. Who ever dreamed of clothing them, in imagination, in dark or party-colored garments? In mythology, the graces, the nymphs, and the muses are represented in snowy garments. In spotless white the bride is led to the marriage shrine, and in white she is prepared for the last sublime espousals. Do you know," added he, suddenly changing the theme, as if conscious he was touching upon something too solemn, "why I selected the scarlet geranium for one of the blossoms of your bouquet? The first time I saw you, it glowed in the darkness of your hair like coral in the ocean's heart."

While he was speaking he broke a sprig from the bouquet and placed it in a wave of my hair, behind the band of pearls.

"Earth and ocean bring you their tribute," said he, and "heaven too," he added; for as we passed by the pillars, a moon-beam glided in and laid its silver touch on my brow.

"It is Edith's hand that thus adorned me," I answered, unwilling he should believe I had been consulting my own ambitious taste. "Had I been left to myself, I should have sought no ornament but these beautiful flowers, doubly precious for the feelings of kindness and compassion that consecrated their mission."

"Compassion, Gabriella! I should as soon think of compassionating the star that shines brightest in the van of night. Compassion looks down; kindness implies an equal ground; admiration looks up with the gaze of the astronomer and the worship of the devotee."

"You forget I am but a simple, village rustic. Such exaggerated compliments would suit better the brilliant dames of the city. I would rather a thousand times you would say, 'Gabriella, I do feel kindly towards you,' than utter any thing so formal, and apparently so insincere."

I was really hurt. I thought he was mocking my credulity, or measuring the height and depth of my girlish vanity. I did not want to be compared to a star, a lone and distant star, nor to think of him as an astronomer gazing up at me with telescopic eye. My heart was overflowing with gentle, natural thoughts. I wanted human sympathy, not cold and glittering compliments.

"And do you expect to hear the language of nature here, with the buzz of empty tongues and the echo of unmeaning laughs in the ear; where, if a word of sentiment were over-heard, it would be bandied from lip to lip with hollow mockery? Come with me into the garden, where the flowers blush in their folded leaves, beneath the love-light of yon gentle moon, where the stilly dews whisper sweet thoughts to the listening heart, and I will tell you what I have learned in Grandison Place, under the elm tree's shade, by the flower girl in the library, and from a thousand sources of which you have never dreamed."

He took the hand which rested lightly on his arm, and drawing it closer to his side led the way to the steps of the piazza. I had dreamed of a moment like this in the golden reveries of romance, and imagined it a foretaste of heaven, but now I trembled and hesitated like the fearful fluttering spirit before the opening gates of paradise. I dared not yield to the almost irresistible temptation. No figures were gliding along the solitary paths, no steps were brushing away the dew-stars that had fallen from the sky. We should be alone in the moonlight solitude; but the thoughts of Mrs. Linwood and of Edith would find us out.

"No, no!" I cried, shrinking from the gentle force that urged me forward; "do not ask me now. It would be better to remain where we are. Do you not think so?"

"Certainly, if you wish it," he said, and his voice had an altered tone, like that of a sweet instrument suddenly untuned; "but there is only one *now*, for those who fear to trust me, Gabriella."

"To trust *you*,—oh you cannot, do not misunderstand me thus!"

"Why else do you shrink, as if I were leading you to a path of thorns instead of one margined with flowers?"

"I fear the observations of the world, since the bitter lesson of the morning."

"Your fear! You attach more value to the passing remarks of strangers, than the feelings of one who was beginning to believe he had found one pure votary of nature and of truth. It is well. I have monopolized your attention too long."

Calmly and coldly he spoke, and the warm light of his eye went out like lightning, leaving the cloud gloom behind it. I was about to ask him to lead me back to his mother, in a tone as cold and altered as his own, when I saw her approaching us with a lady whom I had observed at the chapel; for her large, black eyes seemed magnetizing me, whenever I met their gaze. She was tall, beyond the usual height of her sex, finely formed, firm and compact as a marble pillar. A brow of bold expansion, features of the Roman contour, clearly cut and delicately marked; an expression of recklessness, independence, and self-reliance were the most striking characteristics of the young lady, whom Mrs. Linwood introduced as Miss Melville, the daughter of an early friend of hers.

"Miss Margaret Melville," she repeated, looking at her son, who stood, leaning with an air of stately indifference against a pillar of the piazza. I had withdrawn my hand from his arm, and felt as if the breadth of the frozen ocean was between us.

"Does Mr. Ernest Linwood forget his old friend so easily?" she asked, in a clear, ringing voice, extending a fair ungloved hand. "Do you not remember Madge Wildfire, or Meg the Dauntless, as the students used to call me? Or have I become so civilized and polished that you do not recognize me?"

"I did not indeed," said he, receiving the offered hand with more grace than eagerness, "but it is not so much the fault of *my* memory, as the marvellous change in yourself. I must not say improvement, as that would imply that there was a time when you were susceptible of it."

"You may say just what you please, for I like frankness and straightforwardness as well as I ever did; better,—a great deal better, for I know its value more. And you, Ernest, I cannot call you any thing else, you are another and yet the same. The same stately, statue-like being I used to try in

vain to teaze and torment. It seems so long since we have met, I expected to have seen you quite bent and hoary with age. Do tell me something of your transatlantic experience."

While she was speaking in that peculiar tone of voice which reminded one of a distant clarion, Richard Clyde came to me on the other side, and seeing that she wished to engage the conversation of Ernest, which she probably thought I had engrossed too long, I took the offered arm of Richard and returned to the drawing-room. Seeing a table covered with engravings, I directed our steps there, that subjects of conversation might be suggested independent of ourselves.

"How exquisite these are!" I exclaimed, taking up the first within my reach and expatiating on its beauties, without really comprehending one with my preoccupied and distant thoughts. "These Italian landscapes are always charming."

"I believe that is a picture of the Boston Common," said he, smiling at my mistake; "but surely no Italian landscape can boast of such magnificent trees and such breadth of verdure. It is a whole casket of emeralds set in the granite heart of a great city. And see in the centre that pure, sparkling diamond, sending out such rays of coolness and delight,—I wonder you did not recognize it."

"I have seen it only in winter, when the trees exhibited their wintry dreariness, and little boys were skating on the diamond surface of that frozen water. It looked very different then."

"Mr. Linwood could explain these engravings," said he, drawing forward some which indeed represented Italian ruins, grand and ivy mantled, where the owl might well assert her solitary domain. "He has two great advantages, an eye enlightened by travel, and a taste fastidious by nature."

"I do not admire fastidiousness," I answered; "I do not like to have defects pointed out to me, which my own ignorance does not discover. There is more pleasure in imagining beauties than in finding out faults."

"Will you think it a presuming question, a too inquisitive one," he said, holding up an engraving between himself and the light, "if I ask your candid opinion of Mr. Linwood? Is the world right in the character it has given? Has he all the peculiarities and fascinations it ascribes to him?"

He spoke in a careless manner, or rather tried to do so, but his eye burned with intense emotion. Had he asked me this question a short time previous, conscious blushes would have dyed my cheeks, for a "murderous guilt shows not itself more soon," than the feelings I attempt to conceal; but my sensibility had been wounded, my pride roused, and my heart chilled. I had discovered within myself a spirit which, like the ocean bark, rises with the rising wave.

"If Mr. Linwood *had* faults," I answered, and I could not help smiling at the attempted composure and real perturbation of his manner, "I would not speak of them. Peculiarities he may have, for they are inseparable from genius,—fascinations"—here their remembrance was too strong for my assumed indifference, and my sacred love of truth compelled me to utter,—"fascinations he certainly possesses."

"In what do they consist?" he asked. "Beyond an extremely gentlemanly exterior, I do not perceive any peculiar claims to admiration."

Hurt as I had been by Ernest's altered manner, I was disposed to do justice to his merits, and the more Richard seemed desirous to depreciate him, the more I was willing to exalt him. If he was capable of the meanness of envy, I was resolved to punish him. I did him injustice. He was not envious, but jealous; and it is impossible for jealousy and justice ever to go hand in hand.

"In what do they consist?" I repeated. At that moment I saw him through the window, standing just where I had left him, leaning with folded arms against the pillar, with the moonlight shining gloriously on his brow. Miss Melville stood near him, talking with great animation, emphasizing her words with quick, decided gesticulation, while he seemed a passive listener. I had seen handsomer gentlemen, perhaps,—but never one so perfectly elegant and refined in appearance. The pale transparency of his complexion had the purity and delicacy of alabaster without its whiteness, seen by that clear, silvery light.

"In what do they consist? In powers of conversation as rich as they are varied, in versatility of talents, in rare cultivation of mind and polish of manner. Let me see. I must give you a complete inventory of his accomplishments. He reads most charmingly, plays superbly, and sings divinely. Would you know his virtues? He is a most devoted son, a paragon of brothers, and a miracle of a host."

I believe there is a dash of coquetry in every woman's nature. There must have been in mine, or I could not have gone on, watching the red thermometer in Richard's cheek, rising higher and higher, though what I said was truth, unembellished by imagination. It was what they *who run might read*. I did not speak of those more subtle traits which, were invisible to the common eye, those characters which, like invisible writing, are brought out by a warm and glowing element.

"I am glad to hear you speak so openly in his praise," said Richard, with a brightening countenance; "even if I deserved such a tribute, I should not wish to know that you had paid it to me. I would prize more one silent glance, one conscious blush, than the most labored eulogium the most eloquent lips could utter."

"But I do praise you very much," I answered; "ask Mrs. Linwood, and Edith, and Mr. Regulus. Ask Mr. Linwood himself."

"Never speak of me to *him*, Gabriella. Let my feelings be *sacred*, if they are lonely. You know your power; use it gently, exert it kindly."

The smile of assumed gaiety faded from my lips, as his grave, earnest, sincere accents went down into my soul. Could I trifle even for a moment with an affection so true and constant?

Oh, wayward and unappreciating heart! Why could I not return this love, which might have made me so happy? Why was there no spirit-echo to *his* voice; no quickened pulsations at the sound of *his* coming footsteps?

"This is no place, Richard, to talk of ourselves, or I would try to convince you that I am incapable of speaking lightly of your feelings, or betraying them to a human being, even to Mrs. Linwood; but let us speak of something else now. Do you not feel very happy that you are free,—no more a slave to hours or rules; free to come and go, when and where you please, with the whole earth to roam in,

"Heart within and God o'erhead?"

"No! I am sad. After being at anchor so long, to be suddenly set drifting, to be the sport of the winds of destiny, the cable chain of habit and association broken, one feels dizzy and bewildered. I never knew till now how strong the classmate bond of union is, how sacred the brotherhood, how binding the tie. We, who have been treading the same path for four long years, must now diverge, east, west, north, and south, the great cardinal points of life. In all human probability we shall never all meet again, till the mysterious problem of our destiny is solved."

He paused, impressed by the solemnity of this idea, then added, in his natural, animated manner.

"There is one hope, Gabriella, to which I have looked forward as the sheet-anchor of my soul; if that fails me, I do not care what becomes of me. Sometimes it has burned so brightly, it has been my morning and evening star, my rising, but unsetting sun. To-night the star is dim. Clouds of doubt and apprehension gather over it. Gabriella,—I cannot live in this suspense, and yet I could not bear the confirmation of my fears. Better to doubt than to despair."

"Richard, why will you persist in talking of what cannot be explained here? Shall we not meet hereafter, and have abundant opportunities for conversation, free and uninterrupted? Look around, and see how differently other people are conversing. How lightly and carelessly their words come and go, mingled with merry laughter! Edith is at the piano. Let us go where we can listen, we cannot do it here."

"I *am* very selfish!" said he, yielding to my suggestion. "I have promised my classmates to introduce them to you. I see some of them, bending reproachful glances this way. I must redeem my character, so as not to incur disgrace in the parting hour."

Then followed introductions pressing on each other, till I was weary of hearing my own name, Miss Lynn. I never did like to be called Miss. Still it was an unspeakable relief to me, to be released from the necessity of repressing the feelings of others, and guarding my own. It was a relief to hear those unmeaning sayings which are the current coin of society, and to utter without effort the first light thought that came floating on the surface. The rest of the evening I was surrounded by strangers, and the most exacting vanity might have been satisfied with the incense I received. I knew that the protection of Mrs. Linwood gave a *prestige* to me that would not otherwise have been mine, but I could not help perceiving that Edith, the heiress, all lovely as she was, was not half as much courted and admired as the *daughter of the outcast*. I was too young, too much of a novice, not to be pleased with the attention I attracted; but when the heart is awakened, vanity has but little power. It is a cold, vapory conceit, that vanishes before the inner warmth and light, which, like the sun in the firmament, "shineth brighter and brighter to the perfect day."

After Edith retired from the instrument there was a buzz, and a sensation, and Miss Melville, or Meg the Dauntless, as I could not help mentally calling her, was escorted to the piano by Ernest. What a contrast she presented to the soft, retiring, ethereal Edith, whose every motion suggested the idea of music! Though her arm was linked in that of Ernest, she walked independently of him, dashing through the company with a brave, military air, and taking a seat as if a flourish of trumpets had heralded her approach. At first I was startled by the loud crash of the keys, as she threw her hands upon them with all her force, laughing at the wild dissonance of the sound; but as she continued, harmony, if not sweetness, rose out of the chaos. She evidently understood the science of music, and enjoyed it too. She did not sing, and while she was playing the most brilliant polkas, waltzes, and variations with the most wonderful execution, she talked and laughed with those around the instrument, or looked round the apartment, and nodded to this one and that, her great black eyes flashing like chain lightning. Her playing seemed to have a magical effect. No one could keep their feet still. Even the dignified president patted his, marking the measure of her prancing fingers. I could have danced wildly myself, for I never heard any thing so inspiring to the animal spirits as those wizard strains. Every countenance was lighted with animation, save one, and that was Ernest's. He stood immovable, pale, cold, and self-involved, like a being from another sphere. I remembered how differently he looked when he wooed me to the garden's moonlight walks, and how the warm and gentle thoughts that then beamed in his eyes seemed frozen and dead, and I wondered if they were extinguished forever.

"How stupid!" exclaimed Miss Melville, suddenly stopping, and turning round on the pivot of the music stool till she commanded a full view of the drawing-room. "I thought you would all be dancing by this time. There is no use in playing to such inanimate mortals. And you," said she, suddenly turning to Ernest, "you remind me of the prince, the enchanted prince in the Arabian Nights, only he was half marble, you are a whole statue. You do not like music. I pity you."

"I have my own peculiar tastes," he answered quietly; "some nerves are more delicately strung than others."

"Do you imply that *my* playing is too loud for delicate nerves? Why, that is nothing to what I can do. That is my company music. When I am at home I give full scope to my powers."

"We are perfectly satisfied with the specimen we have heard," said he, smiling; how could he help it? and every one laughed, none more heartily than the gay musician herself. I never heard such a laugh before, so merry, so contagious; such a rich, round, ringing laugh; dying away one moment, then bursting out again in such a chorus!

All at once she fixed her eyes on me, and starting up, came directly to me, planting her tall, finely formed, firm-set figure in the midst of the group around me.

"Come, *you* must play and sing too. I have no doubt your style will suit Mr. Linwood's delicate nerves."

"I never play," I answered.

"Nor sing?"

"Only at home."

"You have a face of music, I am sure."

"Thank you. I have a heart to appreciate it; that is a great gift."

"But why don't you sing and play? How do you expect to pass current in society, without being able to hang on the instrument as I do, or creep over it with mouselike fingers as most young ladies do? I suppose you are very learned—very accomplished? How many languages do you speak?"

"Only two at present," I answered, excessively amused by her eccentricity, and falling into her vein with a facility that quite surprised myself. "I generally find the English tongue sufficient to express my ideas."

"I suppose one of the two is German. You will be considered a mere nobody here, if you do not understand German. It is the fashion; the paroxysm; German literature, German taste, and German transcendentalism; I have tried them all, but they will not do for me. I must have sunshine and open air. I must see where I am going, and understand what I am doing. I abhor mysticism, as I do deceit. Are you frank, Miss Gabriella? You have such a pretty name, I shall take the liberty of using it. Lynn is too short; it sounds like an abbreviation of Linwood."

"If you mean by frankness, a disposition to tell all I think and feel, I am not frank," I answered, without noticing her last remark, which created a smile in others.

"You do not like to hear people express *all* their thoughts, good, bad, or indifferent?"

"Indeed I do not. I like to have them winnowed before they are uttered."

"Then you will not like *me*, and I am sorry for it. I have taken an amazing fancy to you. Never mind; I shall take you by storm when we get to Grandison Place. Do you know I am going home with you? Are you not delighted?"

She burst into one of her great, rich laughs, at the sight of my dismayed countenance. I really felt annihilated at the thought. There was something so overpowering, so redundant about her, I expected to be weighed down,—overshadowed. She going to Grandison Place! Alas, what a transformation there would be! Adieu to the quiet walks, the evening readings, the morning flower gatherings; adieu to sentiment and tranquillity, to poetry and romance. Why had Mrs. Linwood invited so strange a guest? Perhaps she was self-invited.

"I tell you what I am going for," she said, bending her face to mine and speaking in a whisper that sounded like a whistle in my ear; "I am going to animate that man of stone. Why have not you done it, juxtaposited as you are? You do not make use of the fire-arms with which nature has supplied you. If I had such a pair of eyes, I would slay like David my tens of thousands every day."

"The difficulty would be in finding victims," I answered. "The inhabitants of the town where I reside do not number more than two or three thousand."

"Oh! I would make it populous. I would draw worshippers from the four points of the earth,—and yet it would be a greater triumph to subdue one proud, hitherto impregnable heart."

Her eyes flashed like gunpowder as she uttered this, *sotto voce* it is true, but still loud enough to be heard half across the room.

"Goodby," she suddenly exclaimed, "they are beckoning me; I must go; try to like me, precious creature; I shall be quite miserable if you do not."

Then passing her arm round me, an arm firm, polished, and white as ivory, she gave me a loud, emphatic kiss, laughed, and left me almost as much confused as if one of the other sex had taken the same liberty.

"Is she," thought I, "a young man in disguise?"

CHAPTER XXII.

What am I writing?

Sometimes I throw down the pen, saying to myself, "it is all folly, all verbiage. There is a history within worth perusing, but I cannot bring it forth to light. I turn over page after page with the fingers of thought. I see characters glowing or darkened with passion,—lines alternately bright and shadowy, distinct and obscure, and it seems an easy thing to make a transcript of these for the outward world."

Easy! it requires the recording angel's pen to register the history of the human heart. "The thoughts that breathe, the thoughts that burn," how can they be expressed? The mere act of clothing them in words makes them grow cold and dull. The molten gold, the fused iron hardens and chills in the forming mould.

Easy! "Oh yes," the critic says, "it is an easy thing to write; only follow nature, and you cannot err." But nature is as broad as the universe, as high as the heavens, and as deep as the seas. It is but a small portion we can condense even on hundreds of pages of foolscap paper. If that portion be of love, the cold philosopher turns away in disdain and talks of romantic maids and moonstruck boys, as if the subject were fit alone for them. And yet love is the great motive principle of nature, the burning sun of the social system. Blot it out, and every other feeling and passion would sink in the darkness of eternal night. Byron's awful dream would be realized,—darkness would indeed be the universe. They who praise a writer for omitting love from the page which purports to be a record of life, would praise God for creating a world, over whose sunless realms no warmth or light was diffused, (if such a creation were possible,)—a world without flowers or music, without hope or joy.

But as the sun is only an emanation from the first great fountain of light and glory, so love is but an effluence from the eternal source of love divine.

"Bright effluence of bright essence increate." And woe to her, who, forgetting this heavenly union, bathes her heart in the earthly stream, without seeking the living spring whence it flows; who worships the fire-ray that falls upon the altar, without giving glory to him from whom it descended. The stream will become a stagnant pool, exhaling pestilence and death; the fire-ray will kindle a devouring flame, destroying the altar, with the gift and the heart a *burning bush*, that will blaze forever without consuming.

Whither am I wandering?

Imagine me now, in a very different scene to the president's illuminated drawing-room. Instead of the wild buzzing of mingling voices, I hear the mournful sighing of the breeze through the weeping grave trees; and ever and anon there comes a soft, stealing sound through the long, swaying grass, like the tread of invisible feet. I am alone with my mother's spirit. The manuscript, that is to reveal the mystery of my parentage, is in my hand. The hour is come, when without violating the commands of the dead, I may claim it as my own, and remove the hermetic seal which death has stamped. Where else could I read it? My own room, once so serenely quiet, was no longer a sanctuary,—for Margaret Melville dashed through the house, swinging open the doors as abruptly as a March wind, and her laugh filled every nook and corner of the capacious mansion. How could I unseal the sacred history of my mother's sorrows within the sound of that loud, echoing ha, ha?

I could not; so I stole away to a spot, where sacred silence has set up its everlasting throne. The sun had not yet gone down, but the shadows of the willows lengthened on the grass. I sat at the foot of the grave leaning against a marble slab, and unsealed, with cold and trembling hands, my mother's *heart*, for so that manuscript seemed to me.

At first I could not see the lines, for my tears rained down so fast they threatened to obliterate the delicate characters; but after repeated efforts I acquired composure enough to read the following brief and thrilling history. It was the opening of the sixth seal of my life. The stars of hope fell, as a fig-tree casteth her untimely figs when she is shaken by a mighty wind, and the heaven of my happiness departed as a scroll when it is rolled together, and the mountains and islands of human trust were moved out of their places.

MY MOTHER'S HISTORY.

"Gabriella, before your eyes shall rest on these pages, mine will be closed in the slumbers of death. Let not your heart be troubled, my only beloved, at the record of wrongs which no longer corrode; of sorrows which are all past away. 'In my Father's house are many mansions,' and one of them is prepared for me. It is my Saviour's promise, and I believe it as firmly as if I saw the golden streets of the New Jerusalem, where that heavenly mansion is built.

"Weep not, then, my child, my orphan darling, over a past which cannot be recalled; let not its shadow rest too darkly upon you,—if there is joy in the present, be grateful; if there is hope in the future, rejoice.

"You have often asked me to tell you where I lived when I was a little child; whether my home was a gray cottage like ours, in the woods; and whether I had a mother whom I loved as dearly as you loved me. I have told you that my first feeble life-wail mingled with her dying groan, and you wondered how one could live without a mother's love.

"I was born in that rugged fortress, whose embattled walls are washed by the majestic Bay of Chesapeake. My father held a captain's commission in the army, and was stationed for many years at this magnificent, insulated bulwark. My father, at the time of my mother's death, was a young and gallant officer, and I was his only child. It is not strange that he should marry again; for the grief of man seldom survives the allotted period of mourning, and it was natural that he should select a gay and brilliant woman, for the second choice is generally a striking contrast to the first. My mother, I am told, was one of those gentle, dove-like, pensive beings, who nestled in her husband's heart, and knew no world beyond. My step-mother loved the world and its pleasures better than husband, children, and home. She had children of her own, who were more the objects of her pride than her love. Every day, they were dressed for exhibition, petted and caressed, and then sent back to the nursery, where they could not interfere with the pleasures of their fashionable mamma. Could I expect those tender cares which the yearning heart of childhood craves, as its daily sustenance? She was not harsh or despotic, but careless and indifferent. She did not care for me; and provided I kept out of her way, she was willing I should amuse myself in the best manner I pleased. My father was kind and caressing, when he had leisure to indulge his parental sensibilities; but he could not sympathize in my childish joys and sorrows, for I dared not confide them to him. He was a man, and, moreover, there was something in the gilded pomp of his martial dress, that inspired too much awe for childish familiarity. I used to gaze at him, when he appeared on military parade, as if he were one of the demi-gods of the ancient world. He had an erect and warlike bearing, a proud, firm step, and his gold epaulette with its glittering tassels flashing in the sunbeams, his crimson sash contrasting so splendidly with the military blue, his shining sword and waving plume,—all impressed me with a grandeur that was overpowering. It dazzled my eye, but did not warm my young heart.

"As I grew older, I exhibited a remarkable love of reading, and as no one took the trouble to direct my tastes, I seized every book which came within my reach and devoured it, with the avidity of a hungry and unoccupied mind. My father was a gentleman of pure and elegant taste, and had he dreamed that I was exposed, without guardianship, to dangerous influences, he would have shielded and warned me. But he believed the care of children under twelve years of age devolved on their mother, and he was always engrossed with the duties of a profession which he passionately loved, or the society of his brother officers, usually so fascinating and convivial.

"I used to take my book, which was generally some wild, impassioned romance, and wandering to the ramparts, seat myself by the shining pyramids of cannon-balls; and while the blue waves of the Chesapeake rolled in murmuring music by, or, lashed by the ocean wind, heaved in foaming billows, roaring against the walls, I yielded myself to the wizard spell of genius and passion. The officers as they passed would try to break the enchantment by gay and sportive words, but all in vain. I have sat there, drenched by the salt sea-spray, and knew it not. I was called the little bookworm, the prodigy, the *dream-girl*, a name you have inherited, my darling Gabriella; and my father seemed proud of the reputation I had established. But while my imagination was preternaturally developed, my heart was slumbering, and my soul unconscious of life's great aim.

"Thus unguarded by precept, unguided by example, I was sent from home to a boarding-school, where I acquired the usual education and accomplishments obtained at fashionable female seminaries. During my absence from home, my two step-sisters, who were thought too young to accompany me, and my infant step-brother, died in the space of one week, smitten by that destroying angel of childhood, the scarlet fever.

"I had been at school two years when I made my first visit home. My step-mother was then in the weeds of mourning, and of course excluded herself in a measure from gay society; but I marvelled that sorrow had not impaired the bloom of her cheek, or quenched the sparkle of her cold, bright eye. Her heart was not buried in the grave of her children,—it belonged to the world, to which she panted to return.

"But my father mourned. There was a shadow on his manly brow, which I had never seen before. I was, now, his only child, the representative of his once beloved Rosalie, and the pure, fond love of his early years revived again in me. I look back upon those two months, when I basked in the sunshine of parental tenderness for the first, the *only* time, as a portion of my life most dear and holy. I sighed when I thought of the years when we had been comparatively so far apart, and my heart grew to his with tender adhesiveness and growing love. The affections, which my worldly step-mother had chilled and repressed, and which the death of his other children had blighted, were now all mine, renovated and warmed.

"Oh, Gabriella! very precious is a father's love. It is an emblem of the love of God for the dependent beings he has created; so kind, so protecting, so strong, and yet so tender! Would to God, my poor, defrauded child, you could have known what this God-resembling love is,—but your orphanage has been the most sad, the most dreary,—the most unhallowed. Almighty Father of the universe, have mercy on my child! Protect and bless her when this wasting, broken heart no longer beats; when the frail shield of a mother's love is taken from her, and she is left *alone*

—*alone—alone*. Oh! my God, have pity—have pity! Forsake her not!"

The paper was blistered with the tears of the writer. I dropped it on the grave, unable to go on. I cast myself on the grass-covered mould, and pressed it to my bosom, as if there was vitality in the cold clods.

"Oh, my mother!" I exclaimed, and strange and dreary sounded my voice in that breathing stillness. "Has God heard thy prayers? Will he hear the cries of the fatherless? Will he have pity on my forsaken youth?"

I would have given worlds to have realized that this mighty God was near; that he indeed cared with a father's love for the orphan mourner, committed in faith to his all-embracing arms. But I still worshipped him as far-off, enthroned on high, in the heaven of heavens, which cannot contain the full glory of his presence. I saw him on the burning mountain, in the midst of thunder and lightning and smoke,—a God of consuming fire, before whose breath earthly joys and hopes withered and dried, like blossoms cast into the furnace.

But did not God once hide his face of love from his own begotten Son? And shall not the *eloi, eloi, lama sabachthani* of the forsaken heart sometimes ascend amid the woes and trials and wrongs of life, from the great mountain of human misery, the smoking Sinai, whose clouded summit quakes with the footsteps of Deity?

CHAPTER XXIII.

I again resumed the manuscript, trembling for the revelations which it might make.

"Never again," wrote my mother, "did I behold my noble, gallant father. His death was sudden, as if shot down in the battle field, without one warning weakness or pain. In the green summer of his days he fell, and long did my heart vibrate from the shock. How desolate to me was the home to which I returned! The household fire was indeed extinguished. The household god laid low. I saw at one glance that in my breast alone his memory was enshrined; that there alone was sacred incense burning. Mrs. Lynn, (I will speak of her by her name hereafter,) though only one year had passed since his death, was assuming those light, coquettish airs which accord as little with the robes of widowhood as the hues of the rainbow or the garlands of spring.

"I saw with exquisite pain and shame, that she looked upon me as a rival of her maturer charms, and gladly yielded to my wish for retirement. She always spoke of me as 'the child,' the 'little bookworm,' impressing upon the minds of all the idea of my extreme juvenility. I *was* young; but I had arrived to years of womanhood, and my stature equalled hers.

"I will pass on to the scene which decided my destiny. I do not wish to swell the volume of my life. Let it be brief as it is sad.

"Very near the fortress is another rocky bulwark, rising out of the waves in stern and rugged majesty, known by the peculiar name of the Rip-Raps. It is the work of man, who paved the ocean bed with rocks, and conceived the design of a lofty castle, from whose battlements the star-spangled banner should wave, and whose massy turrets should perpetuate the honors of Carolina's most gifted son. The design was grand, but has never been completed. It has, however, finished apartments, which form a kind of summer hotel, where many statesmen often resort, that they may lay down, for a while, the burden of care, and breathe an atmosphere pure from political corruption, and cool from party zeal and strife.

"At the time of which I speak the chief magistrate of the nation sought refuge there for a short while, from the oppressive responsibilities of his exalted station, and regardless of his wish for retirement, or rather irresistibly impelled to pay honors to one whose brows were wreathed with the soldier's laurel as well as the statesman's crown, every one sought his rocky and wave-washed retreat.

"Mrs. Lynn joined a party of ladies, who, escorted by officers, went over in barges to be introduced to the gallant veteran. The martial spirit of my father throbbed high in my bosom, and I longed to behold one, whom he would have delighted to honor. Mrs. Lynn did not urge me, but there were others who supplied her deficiency, and convinced me I was not considered an intruder. Among the gentlemen who composed our party was a stranger, by the name of St. James, to whom Mrs. Lynn paid the most exclusive attention. She was still in the bloom of womanhood, and though far from being beautiful, was showy and attractive. All the embellishments of dress were called into requisition to enhance the charms of nature, and to produce the illusion of youth. She always sought the admiration of strangers, and Mr. St. James was sufficiently distinguished in appearance to render him worthy of her fascinations. I merely noticed that he had a fine person, a graceful air, and a musical voice; then casting my eyes on the sea-green waters, over which our light barge was bounding, I did not lift them again till we were near the dark gray rocks of the Rip-Raps, and I beheld on the brink of the stone steps we were to ascend, a tall and stately form, whose foam-white locks were rustling in the breeze of ocean. There he stood, like the statue of liberty, throned on a granite cliff, with waves rolling below and sunbeams resting on his brow.

"As we stepped from the barge and ascended the rugged steps, the chieftain bent his warlike

figure and drew us to the platform with all the grace and gallantry of youth. As I was the youngest of the party, he received me with the most endearing familiarity. I almost thought he was going to kiss me, so close he brought his bronzed cheek to mine.

"'God bless you, my child!' said he, taking both hands in his and looking earnestly in my face. 'I knew your father well. He was a gallant officer,—a noble, honest man. Peace to his ashes! The soldier fills an honored grave.'

"This tribute to my father's memory filled my eyes with tears, while my cheek glowed with gratified pride. I was proud that I was a soldier's daughter, proud to hear his praise from the lips of valor and of rank.

"I had brought a beautiful bouquet of flowers as a girlish offering to the veteran. I had been thinking of something pretty and poetical to say when I presented it, but the words died on my lips, and I extended it in silence with the trembling hand of diffidence.

"'Now,' said he, with a benignant smile, turning the flowers round and round, as if admiring them all, 'I am the envy of every young man present. They would all exchange the laurels of the soldier for the blossoms gathered by the hand of beauty.'

"'Let me have the privilege of holding them for you, sir, while we remain,' said Mr. St. James, with a courtly grace consistent with the name he bore, and they were submitted with equal courtesy to his keeping.

"These are trifles to relate, my Gabriella, but they had an influence on my life and yours. They laid the foundation of a dislike and jealousy in the mind of my step-mother, that embittered all our future intercourse. 'The child' was distinguished, not only by the hero who was the lion of the scene, but by the stranger she was resolved to charm, and her usually bright countenance was clouded with malice and discontent. Forgetful of politeness, she hurried away those who came in the same barge with herself, anxious to see me immured once more in the walls of the Fort.

"After our distinguished host had bidden farewell to his elder guests, whom he accompanied to the steps, he turned to me with a look so benign and affectionate I never shall forget it, and stooping, kissed my forehead.

"'As your father's friend, and your country's father, dear child, permit me'—he said, then giving my hand to St. James, who was waiting to assist me into the barge, bowed a dignified adieu.

"'You do indeed make us envy you, sir,' cried St. James, as he stood with uncovered head in the centre of the boat, while it glided from the walls, and holding up the bouquet which he had had the boldness to retain.

"The statesman smiled and shook his snow-crowned head, and there he stood, long after we receded from the rocks, his tall, erect figure defined on the dark blue sky.

"I never saw that noble form again. The brave old soldier died a soldier of the Cross, and fills a Christian's grave. He sleeps in death, embosomed in the quiet shades he loved best in life.

> 'And Honor comes, a pilgrim gray,
> To deck the turf that wraps his clay.'

"I did not think of paying this tribute to his memory; but that scene was so indelibly stamped on my mind, I could not help delineating it. It was then and there I first beheld your father.

"The barge was rowed by eight soldiers, dressed in uniform, and their oars all dipped and flashed with simultaneous motion. Nothing could be more harmoniously beautiful; but the restless spirit of Mrs. Lynn suggested a change.

"'Raise the sail,' she exclaimed, 'this is too monotonous. I prefer it a thousand times to rowing.'

"'I beg, I entreat, madam,' cried I, unable to repress my apprehensions, 'do not have it done now. I am very foolish, but I cannot help it, indeed I cannot.'

"I was not accustomed to the water as she was, having been absent so long; and even when a child, I had an unconquerable dread of sailing. She knew this, and it prompted her suggestion.

"'Affectation of fear may be pardoned in a *child*, Rosalie,' said she, with a sarcastic smile, 'but it is nevertheless very unbecoming.'

"'Do not indulge one apprehension,' exclaimed St. James, stepping over one of the seats and sitting down at my side. 'I am one of the best sailors in the world. *Non timui—Cæsarem vehis.* Give the sails to the winds, boys. I will make them my vassals.'

"His eyes beamed with conscious power, as the white sheet unrolled and swelled gracefully in the breeze. It was strange, all my fears were gone, and I felt as serene a confidence as if his vaunting words were true. The strong will, the magic smile were acting on me like a spell, and I yielded unresistingly to their influence.

"Mrs. Lynn would gladly have revoked her commands, since they had called forth such an expression of interest for me; but the boat swept on with triumphant speed, and even I participated in the exhilaration of its motion. Just before we reached the shore, Mrs. Lynn bent forward and took the flowers from the hand of St. James before he was aware of her design.

"'Is that mignonette which is so oppressively fragrant?' she asked, lifting the bouquet to her nose. She was seated near the side of the barge, and her head was gracefully inclined. Whether from accident or design, I think it was the latter, the flowers dropped into the river.

"In the flashing of an eye-glance, St. James leaped over the boat side, seized the flowers, held them up in triumph over his head, and swam to the shore. He stood there with dripping garments and smiling lips as we landed, while the paleness of terror still blanched my face, and its agitation palpitated in my heart.

"'I must deny myself the pleasure of escorting you to the threshold,' said he, glancing at me, while he shook the brine-drops from his arms. His head had not been submerged. He had held that royally above the waves. 'But,' added he, with graceful gallantry, 'I have rescued a trophy which I had silently vowed to guard with my life;—a treasure doubly consecrated by the touch of valor and the hand of beauty.'

"'Well,' exclaimed Mrs. Lynn, as soon as we were at home, tossing her bonnet disdainfully on the sofa, 'if I ever was disgusted with boldness and affectation I have been to-day. But one thing let me tell you, Miss Rosalie, if you cannot learn more propriety of manners, if you make such sickening efforts to attract the attention of strangers, I will never allow you to go in public, at least in company with me.'

"I was perfectly thunderstruck. She had never given such an exhibition of temper before. I had always thought her cold and selfish, but she seemed to have a careless good-nature, which did not prepare me for this ebullition of passion. I did not reflect that this was the first time I had clashed with her interests,—that inordinate vanity is the parent of envy, hatred, and all uncharitableness.

"I did not attempt to reply, but hastily turned to leave the room. She had been my father's wife, and the sacredness of *his* name shielded her from disrespect.

"'Stop, Miss,' she cried, 'and hear what I have to say. If Mr. St. James calls this evening, you are not to make your appearance. He was only making sport of your childishness to-day, and cares no more for you than the sands of the sea-shore. He is no company for you, I assure you. He is a gentleman of the world, and has no taste for the bread and butter misses just let loose from a boarding-school. Do you hear me?'

"'I do, madam.'

"'Do you mean to obey?'

"'I do, madam.'

"I will not attempt to describe my feelings that night as I sat alone in my room, and heard the voice of St. James mingling with my step-mother's, which was modulated to its sweetest, most seductive tone. The desolateness of my future life spread out before me. A home without love! Oh, what dreariness! Oh, what iciness! Had my father lived, how different it would have been. I thought of the happy vacation, when he opened his warm heart and took me in, and then I wept to think how cold the world seemed since he had left it.

"It was a midsummer's night, and all the windows were open to admit the sea-born breeze. They were open, but bars of gauze wire were put up at the windows and doors to exclude the mosquitos. A very small balcony opened out of my room, where I usually sat listening to the inspiring strains of the band, that, marching on the ramparts, sent their rich, thrilling notes in rolling echoes over the moonlight waves.

"It was playing now, that martial band, and the bay was one sheet of burning silver. I had never seen it look so resplendently beautiful, and I could not help thinking that beneath that gently rippling glory, there was peace for the sad and persecuted heart. As I sat there leaning on the railing, gazing into the shining depths of ocean, St. James passed. It was very early in the evening. Why had he left so soon? He started, paused, turned, and approached the balcony.

"'Why are you so cruel as to refuse to see me, after showing such knightly devotion to your cause?' he asked, leaning on the side of the balcony and looking earnestly in my face, on which the tear-drops were still glittering.

"'I have not refused,' I answered hastily, 'but do not wait to talk with me now. Mrs. Lynn would be much displeased; she would consider it very improper. I pray you not to think me rude, but indeed I must retire.'

"I rose in an agony of terror, lest my step-mother should hear his voice, and wreak her wrath on me.

"'Fear not,' he cried, catching my hand and detaining me. 'She is engaged with company, who will not hasten away as I have done. I will not stay long, nor utter one syllable that is not in harmony with the holy tranquillity of the hour. I am a stranger in name, but is there not something that tells you I was born to be your friend? I know there is,—I see it in your ingenuous, confiding eye. Only answer me one question,—Was it your *own will*, or the will of another that governed your actions to-night?'

"'The will of another,' I answered. 'Let that be a sufficient reason for urging your departure. If I am forbidden to see you in the parlor, I shall certainly be upbraided for speaking with you here.'

"It was very imprudent in me to speak so freely of my step-mother's conduct. No questions of his should have drawn from me such an assertion. But I was so young and inexperienced, and I had been goaded almost to madness by her stinging rebukes. It was natural that I should wish to vindicate myself from the charge of rudeness her misrepresentations would bring against me.

"'I find you in sadness and tears,' said he, in a low, gentle tone; so low it scarcely rose above the murmuring waves. 'They should not be the companions of beauty and youth. Let me be your friend,—let me teach you how to banish them.'

"'No, no,' I cried, frightened at my own boldness in continuing the conversation so long. 'You are not my friend, or you would not expose me to censure. Indeed you are not.'

"'I am gone; but tell me one thing,—you are not a prisoner?'

"'O no; heaven forbid.'

"'You walk on the ramparts.'

"'Sometimes.'

"'Adieu,—we shall meet again.'

"He was gone, and sweetly lingered in my ear the echo of his gently persuasive voice. He had vanished like the bark that had just glided along the waters, and like that had left a wake of brightness behind.

"I could not sleep. Excitement kept me wakeful and restless. I heard the measured tread of the sentinel walking his 'lonely round,' and it did not sound louder than the beating of my own heart. Hark! a soft, breezy sound steals up just beneath my window. It is the vibration of the guitar,—a deeptoned, melodious voice accompanies it. It is the voice of St. James. He sings, and the strains fall upon the stilly night, soft as the silver dew.

"Gabriella, I told you with my dying lips never to unseal this manuscript till you were awakened to woman's destiny,—*love*. If you do not sympathize with my emotions, lay it down, my child, the hour is not yet come. If you have never heard a voice, whose faintest tones sink into the lowest depths of your soul,—if you have never met a glance, whose lightning rays penetrate to the innermost recesses of the heart, reseal these pages. The feelings with which you cannot sympathize will seem weakness and folly, and a daughter must not scorn a mother's bosom record.

"Remember how lonely, how unfriended I was. The only eye that had beamed on me with love was closed in death, the only living person on whom I had any claims was cruel and unkind. Blame me not that I listened to a stranger's accents, that I received his image into my heart, that I enthroned it there, and paid homage to the kingly guest.

"It is in vain to linger thus. I met him again and again. I learned to measure time and space by one line—where he *was*, and where he was *not*. I learned to bear harshness, jeering, and wrong, because a door of escape was opened, and the roses of paradise seemed blushing beyond. I suffered him to be my friend—lover—husband."

I dropped the manuscript that I might clasp my hands in an ecstasy of gratitude—

"My God,—I thank thee!" I exclaimed, sinking on my knees, and repeating the emphatic words: "*friend—lover-husband*." "God of my mother, forgive my dark misgivings."

Now I could look up. Now I could hold the paper with a firm hand. There was nothing in store that I could not bear to hear, no misfortune I had not courage to meet. Alas! alas!

CHAPTER XXIV.

"Yes," continued my mother; "we were married within heaven dedicated walls by a man of God, and the blessing of the holy, blessed, and glorious Trinity was pronounced upon our union. Remember this, my dearly beloved child, remember that in the bosom of the church, surrounded by all the solemnities of religion, with the golden ring, the uttered vow, and on bended knee, I was wedded to Henry Gabriel St. James.

"My step-mother refused to be present. She had sufficient regard to the world's opinion to plead indisposition as an excuse; but it was a false one. She never forgave me for winning the love of the man whom she had herself resolved to charm, and from the hour of our introduction to the day of my marriage, my life was clouded by the gloom of her ill temper.

"We immediately departed for New York, where St. James resided, and our bridal home was adorned with all the elegancies which classic taste could select, and prodigal love lavish upon its idol. I was happy then, beyond the dream of imagination. St. James was the fondest, the kindest, the tenderest—O my God! must I add—the falsest of human beings? I did not love him then—I worshipped, I adored him. I have told you that my childish imagination was fed by wild, impassioned romances, and I had made to myself an ideal image, round which, like the maid of France, I hung the garlands of fancy, and knelt before its shrine.

"Whatever has been my after fate, I have known the felicity of loving in all its length and breadth and strength. And he, too, loved me passionately, devotedly. Strong indeed must have been the love that triumphed over principle, honor, and truth, that broke the most sacred of human ties, and dared the vengeance of retributive Heaven.

"St. James was an artist. He was not dependent entirely on his genius for his subsistence, though his fortune was not large enough to enable him to live in splendid indolence. He had been in Europe for the last few years, wandering amid the ruins of Italy, studying the grand old masters, summering in the valleys of Switzerland, beneath the shadow of its mountain heights, and polishing his bold, masterly sketches among the elegant artists of Paris.

"With what rapture I listened to his glowing descriptions of foreign lands, and what beautiful castles we built where we were to dwell together in the golden clime of Italy or the sunny bowers of France!

"At length, my Gabriella, you were given to my arms, and the deep, pure fountain of a mother's love welled in my youthful bosom. But my life was wellnigh a sacrifice to yours. For weeks it hung trembling on a thread slender and weak as the gossamer's web. St. James watched over me, as none but guardian angels could watch, and I had another faithful and devoted nurse, our good and matchless Peggy. To her unsleeping vigilance, her strong heart and untiring arm, I owe in a great measure the restoration of my health, or rather the preservation of my life; my health was never entirely renovated.

"When you were about five or six months old, St. James came to me with a troubled countenance. He was summoned away, very unexpectedly. He would probably be obliged to go as far as Texas before his return; he might be absent a month. Business of a perplexing nature, which it was impossible to explain then, called him from me, but he would shorten as much as possible the days of absence which would be dreary and joyless to him. I was overwhelmed with grief at the thought of his leaving me; my nerves were still weak, and I wept in all the abandonment of sorrow. I feared for him the dangers that beset the path of the traveller—sickness, death; but I feared not for his honor or truth. I relied upon his integrity, as I did upon the promises of the Holy Scriptures. I did hot urge him to explain the motives of his departure, satisfied that they were just and honorable.

"Oh! little did I think,—when he clasped me in a parting embrace when he committed us both so tenderly and solemnly to the guardianship of our Heavenly Father,—little did I think I should so soon seek to rend him from my heart as a vile, accursed monster; that I should shrink from the memory of his embraces as from the coils of the serpent, the fangs of the wolf. God in his mercy veils the future, or who could bear the burden of coming woe!

"A few days after his departure, as I was seated in the nursery, watching your innocent witcheries as you lay cradled in the lap of Peggy, I was told a lady wished to see me. It was too early an hour for fashionable calls, and I went into the parlor expecting to meet one of those ministering spirits, who go about on errands of mercy, seeking the aid of the rich for the wants of the poor.

"A lady was standing with her back to the door, seemingly occupied in gazing at a picture over the mantel-piece, an exquisite painting of St. James. Her figure was slight and graceful, and she struck me at once as having a foreign air. She turned round at my entrance, exhibiting a pale and agitated countenance; a countenance which though not beautiful, was painfully interesting. She had a soft olive complexion, and a full melancholy black eye, surcharged with tears.

"I motioned her to a seat, for I could not speak. Her agitation was contagious, and I waited in silent trepidation to learn the mystery of her emotion.

"'Forgave me this intrusion,' said she, in hesitating accents; 'you look so young, so innocent, so lovely, my heart misgives me. I cannot, I dare not.'

"She spoke in French, a language of which I was mistress, and I recognized at once the land of her birth. She paused, as if unable to proceed, while I sat, pale and cold as marble, wondering what awful revelation she would, but dared not make. Had she come to tell me of my husband's death,—was my first agonized thought, and I faintly articulated,—

"'My husband!'

"'*Your* husband! Poor, deluded young creature. Alas! alas! I can forgive him for deserting me, but not for deceiving and destroying you.'

"I started to my feet with a galvanic spring. My veins tingled as if fire were running through them, and my hair rose, startling with electric horror. I grasped her arm with a force she might have felt through covering steel, and looking her steadfastly in the face, exclaimed,—

"'He *is* my husband; mine in the face of God and man. He is *my* husband, and the father of my child. I will proclaim it in the face of earth and heaven. I will proclaim it till my dying day. How dare you come to me with slanders so vile, false, unprincipled woman?'

"She recoiled a few steps from me, and held up her deprecating hands.

"'Have pity upon me, for I am very wretched,' she cried; 'were it not for my child I would die in silence and despair, rather than rouse you from your fatal dream, but I cannot see him robbed of

his rights. I cannot see another usurping the name and place he was born to fill. Madam,' continued she, discarding her supplicating tone, and speaking with dignity and force, 'I am no false, unprincipled woman, inventing tales which I cannot corroborate. I am a wife, as pure in heart, as upright in purpose as you can be,—a mother as tender. Forsaken by him whom in spite of my wrongs I still too fondly love, I have left my native land, crossed the ocean's breadth, come a stranger to a strange country, that I might appeal to you for redress, and tell you that if you still persist in calling him your own, it will be in defiance of the laws of man and the canons of the living God.'

"As she thus went on, her passions became roused, and flashed and darkened in her face with alternations so quick they mocked the sight. She spoke with the rapid tongue and impressive gesticulation of her country, and God's truth was stamped on every word. I felt it,—I knew it. She was no base, lying impostor. She was a wronged and suffering woman;—and he,—the idol of my soul,—the friend, lover, *husband* of my youth,—no, no! he could not be a villain! She was mad,—ha, ha,—she was mad! Bursting into a wild, hysteric laugh, I sunk back on the sofa, repeating,—

"'Poor thing, she is mad! I wonder I did not know it sooner.'

"'No, madam, I am not mad,' she cried, in calmer tones; 'I sometimes wish I were. I am in the full possession of my reason, as I can abundantly prove. But little more than three years since, I was married to Gabriel Henry St. James, in Paris, my native city, and here is the certificate which proves the truth of my assertion.'

"Taking a paper from her pocket-book, she held it towards me, so that I could read the writing, still retaining it in her own hand. I did not blame her,—oh, no! I should have done the same. I saw, what seemed blazing in fire, the names of Henry Gabriel St. James and Therésa Josephine La Fontaine united in marriage by the usual formula of the church.

"I did not attempt to snatch it from her, or to destroy the fatal paper. I gazed upon it till the characters swelled out like black chords, and writhed in snaky convolutions.

"'Do you recognize this?' she asked, taking from her bosom a gold case, and touching a spring. It flew open and revealed the handsome features of St. James, beaming with the same expression as when I first beheld him, an expression I remembered but too well. She turned it in the case, and I saw written on the back in gold letters, 'For my beloved wife, Therésa Josephine.'

"It was enough. The certificate might be a forgery, her tale a lie; but this all but breathing picture, these indubitable words, were proofs of blasting power. Cold, icy shiverings ran through my frame,—a cold, benumbing weight pressed down my heart,—a black abyss opened before me,—the earth heaved and gave way beneath me. With a shriek that seemed to breathe out my life, I fell forward at the feet of her whom I had so guiltlessly wronged."

Thus far had I read, with clenching teeth and rigid limbs, and brow on which chill, deadly drops were slowly gathering, when my mother's shriek seemed suddenly to ring in my ears,—the knell of a broken heart, a ruined frame,—and I sprang up and looked wildly round me. Where was I? Who was I?

Were the heavens turned to brass and the sun to blood, or was yon saffron belt the gold of declining day,—yon crimson globe, the sun rolling through a hazy, sultry atmosphere? What meant that long green mound stretching at my side, that broken shaft, twined with the cypress vine? I clasped both hands over my temples, as these questions drifted through my mind, then bending my knees, I sunk lower and lower, till my head rested on the grave. I was conscious of but one wish—to stay there and die. The bolt of indelible disgrace quivered in my heart; why should I wish to live?

CHAPTER XXV.

I did not become insensible, but I was dead to surrounding objects, dead to the present, dead to the future. The past, the terrible, the inexorable past, was upon me, trampling me, grinding me with iron heel, into the dust of the grave. I could not move, for its nightmare weight crushed me. I could not see, for its blackness shrouded me; nor hear, for its shrieks deafened me. Had I remained long in that awful condition, I should have become a maniac.

"Gabriella!" said a voice, which at any other moment would have wakened a thrill of rapture, "Gabriella, speak,—look up. Why do you do this? Why will you not speak? Do you not hear me?"

I did try to speak, but my tongue seemed frozen. I did try to lift my head, but in vain.

Ernest Linwood, for it was he, knelt down by me, and putting his arms round me, raised me from the ground, without any volition of my own. I know not what state I was in. I was perfectly conscious; but had no more power over the movement of a muscle than if I were dead. My eyes were closed, and my head drooped on his breast, as he raised me, bowed by its own weight. I was in a kind of conscious catalepsy. He was alarmed, terrified. As he afterwards told me, he really

believed me dead, and clasping me to him with an energy of which he was not aware, adjured me in the most tender and passionate manner to speak and tell him that I lived.

"Gabriella, my flower-girl, my darling!" he cried, pressing my cheek with those pure, despairing kisses with which love hallows death. Had I indeed passed the boundaries of life, for my spirit alone was conscious of caresses, whose remembrance thrilled through my being.

The reaction was instantaneous. The chilled blood grew warm and rushed through every vein with wild rapidity. Then I became physically conscious, and glowing with confusion I raised myself from my reclining position, and attempted to look up into the face of Ernest. But I could not do it. Contending emotions deprived me of the power of self-command.

"This is madness, Gabriella! This is suicide!" he exclaimed, lifting me from the grave, and still supporting me with his arm. "Why do you come here to nurse a grief so far beyond the limits of reason and religion? Why do you give your friends such exquisite pain, yourself such unnecessary misery?"

"Do not reproach me," I cried. "You know not what cause I have for anguish and despair."

"Despair, Gabriella! You cannot know the meaning of that word. Despair belongs to guilt, and even that is not hopeless. And why do you come to this lone place of graves to weep, as if human sympathy were denied to your sorrows? Is not my mother kind,—is not Edith tender and affectionate? Am not I worthy to be trusted, as a friend,—a protector,—a redresser; and if need be, an avenger of wrongs?"

"My own wrongs I might reveal; but those of the dead are sacred," I answered, stooping down and gathering up the manuscript, which was half concealed in the long, damp grass. "But do not think me ungrateful. What I owe to your mother and Edith words can never tell. In every prayer I breathe to heaven I shall call down blessings on their head. And you too,—you have been more than kind. I never can forget it."

"If it be not too presumptuous, I will unite your name with theirs, and pray that God may bless you, now and ever more."

"This will never do," said he, drawing me forcibly from the mournful place. "You *must* confide in my mother, Gabriella. A dark secret is a plague spot in the heart. Confide in my mother. It is due to her maternal love and guardianship. And beware of believing that any thing independent *of yourself* can alienate her affections. Can you walk? If it were not for leaving you alone, I would go and return with the carriage."

"Oh, yes; I am quite well and strong again."

"Then lean on me, Gabriella. Shrink not from an arm which would gladly protect you from every danger and every wrong. Let us hasten, lest I utter words which I would not for worlds associate with a scene so cold and sad. Not where the shadow of death falls—no—not here."

He hurried me through the gate, and then paused.

"Rest here a moment," said he, "and recover your composure. We may meet with those who would wonder to see you thus, with your hair wildly flowing, your scarf loose and disordered."

"Thank you," I exclaimed, my thoughts coming to the surface, and resting there with shame. I had forgotten that my bonnet was in my hand, that my comb had fallen, leaving my hair loose and dishevelled. Gathering up its length, and twisting it in thick folds around my head, I confined it with my bonnet, and smoothing my thin scarf, I took his arm in silence, and walked on through the purple gloom of twilight that deepened before us. Slight shivers ran through my frame. The dampness of the grave-yard clung to me, and the night dews were beginning to fall.

"Are you cold, Gabriella?" he asked, folding my light mantle more closely round me. "You are not sufficiently protected from the dewy air. You are weary and chill. You do not lean on me. You do not confide in me."

"In whom should I confide, then? Without father, brother, or protector, in whom should I confide, if ungrateful and untrusting I turn from you?"

As I said this, I suffered my arm to rest more firmly on his, for my steps were indeed weary, and we were now ascending the hill. My heart was deeply touched by his kindness, and the involuntary ejaculations he uttered, the involuntary caresses he bestowed, when he believed me perfectly unconscious, were treasured sacredly there. We were now by the large elm-tree that shaded the way-side, beneath whose boughs I had so often paused to gaze on the valley below. Without speaking, he led me to this resting-place, and we both looked back, as wayfarers are wont to do when they stop in an ascending path.

Calmly the shadows rested on the landscape, softly yet darkly they rolled down the slope of the neighboring hills and the distant mountains. In thin curlings, the gray smoke floated upwards and lay slumberously among the fleecy clouds. Here and there a mansion, lifted above the rest, shed from its glowing windows the reflection of departing day. Bright on the dusky gold of the west the evening-star shone and throbbed, like a pure love-thought in the heart of night; and, dimly glimmering above the horizon, the giant pen seemed writing the Mene Tekel of my clouded destiny on the palace walls of heaven.

As we thus stood, lifted above the valley, involved in shadows, silent and alone, I could hear the beating of my heart, louder and louder in the breathing stillness.

"Gabriella!" said Ernest, in a low voice, and that *master-chord* which no hand but his had touched, thrilled at the sound. "If the spot on which we stand were a desert island, and the valley stretching around us the wide waste of ocean, and we the only beings in the solitude of nature, with your hand thus clasped in mine, and my heart thus throbbing near, with a love so strong, so deep, it would be to you in place of the whole world beside,—tell me, could you be happy?"

"I could," was the low, irresistible answer; and my soul, like an illuminated temple, flashed with inward light. I covered my eyes to keep in the dazzling rays. I forgot the sad history of wrongs and disgrace which I had just been perusing;—I forgot that such words had breathed into my mother's ear, and that she believed them. I only remembered that Ernest Linwood loved me, and *that* love surrounded me with a luminous atmosphere, in which joy and hope fluttered their heavenly wings.

How slight a thing will change the current of thought! I caught a glimpse of the granite walls of Grandison Place, and darkened by the shades, they seemed to frown upon me with their high turret and lofty colonnade, so ancestral and imposing. Then I remembered Mrs. Linwood and Edith,—then I remembered my mother, my *father*, and all the light went out in my heart.

"I had forgotten,—oh, how much I had forgotten," I cried, endeavoring to release myself from the arm that only tightened its hold. "Your mother never would forgive my presumption if she thought,—if she knew."

"My mother loves you; but even if she did not, I am free to act, free to choose, as every man should be. I love and *revere* my mother, but there is a passion stronger than filial love and reverence, which goes on conquering and to conquer. She will not, she cannot oppose me."

"But Edith, dear Edith, who loves you so devotedly! She will hate me if I dare to supplant her."

"A sister never can be supplanted,—and least of all such a sister as Edith, Gabriella. If you do not feel that love so expands, so enlarges the heart, that it makes room for all the angels in heaven, you could not share my island home."

"If you knew all,—if I could tell you all," I cried,—and again I felt the barbed anguish that prostrated me at the grave,—"and you *shall* know,—your generous love demands this confidence. When your mother has read the history of my parentage, I will place it in your hands; though my mother's character is as exalted and spotless as your own, there is a cloud over my name that will for ever rest upon it. Knowing *that*, you cannot, you will not wish to unite your noble, brilliant destiny with mine. This hour will be remembered as a dream, a bright, but fleeting dream."

"What do I care for the past?" he exclaimed, detaining me as I endeavored to move on. "Talk not of a clouded name. Will not mine absorb it? What shaft of malice can pierce you, with my arm as a defence, and my bosom as a shield? Gabriella, it is you that I love, not the dead and buried past. You are the representative of all present joy and hope. I ask for nothing but your love,—your exclusive, boundless love,—a love that will be ready to sacrifice every thing but innocence and integrity for me,—that will cling to me in woe as in weal, in shame as in honor, in death as in life. Such is the love I give; and such I ask in return. Is it mine? Tell me not of opposing barriers; only tell me what your heart this moment dictates; forgetful of the past, regardless of the future? Is this love mine?"

"It is," I answered, looking up through fast-falling tears. "Why will you wring this confession from me, when you only know it too well?"

"One question more, Gabriella, for your truth-telling lips to answer. Is this love only given in *return*? Did it not spring spontaneously forth from the warmth and purity of your own heart, without waiting the avowal of mine? Gratitude is not love. It is *stone*, not bread, to a spirit as exacting as mine."

Again the truth was forced from me by his unconquerable will,—a will that opened the secret valves of thought, and rolled away the rock from the fountain of feeling. Even then I felt the despotism as well as the strength of his love.

I cannot, I dare not, repeat all that he uttered. It would be deemed too extravagant, too high-wrought. And so it was. Let woman tremble rather than exult, when she is the object of a passion so intense. The devotion of her whole being cannot satisfy its inordinate demands. Though the flame of the sacrifice ascend to heaven, it still cries, "Bring gifts to the altar,—bring the wine of the banquet,—the incense of the temple,—the fuel of the hearth-stone. Bring all, and still I crave. Give all, I ask for more."

Not then was this warning suggested. To be wildly, passionately loved, was my heart's secret prayer. Life itself would be a willing sacrifice to this devotion. Suspicion that stood sentinel at the door of Faith, Distrust that threw its shadow over the sunshine of truth, and Jealousy, doubting, yet adoring still, would be welcomed as household guests, if the attendants of this impassioned love. Such was the dream of my girlhood.

When we entered the lawn, lights began to glimmer in the house. I trembled at the idea of meeting Mrs. Linwood, or the Amazonian Meg. There was a side door through which I might pass unobserved, and by this ingress I sought my chamber and locked the door. A lamp was burning

on the table. Had I lingered abroad so late? Had the absence of Ernest been observed?

I sat down on the side of the bed, threw off my bonnet and scarf, shook my hair over my shoulders, and pushed it back with both hands from my throbbing temples. I wanted room. Such crowding thoughts, such overflowing emotions, could not be compressed in those four walls. I rose and walked the room back and forth, without fear of being over-heard, on the soft carpet of velvet roses. What revelations had been made known to me since I had quitted that room! How low I had been degraded,—how royally exalted! A child unentitled to her father's name!—a maiden, endowed with a princely heart! I walked as one in a dream, doubting my own identity. But one master thought governed every other.

"He loves me!" I repeated to myself. "Ernest Linwood loves me! Whatever be the future, that present bliss is mine. I have tasted woman's highest, holiest joy,—the joy of loving and being beloved. Sorrow and trial may be mine; but this remembrance will remain, a blessed light through the darkness of time,—'a star on eternity's ocean.'"

As I passed and repassed the double mirror, my reflected figure seemed an apparition gliding by my side, I paused and stood before one of them, and I thought of the time when, first awakened to the consciousness of personal influence, I gazed on my own image. Some writer has said, "that every woman is beautiful when she loves." There certainly is a light, coming up from the enkindled heart, bright as the solar ray, yet pure and soft as moonlight, which throws an illusion over the plainest features and makes them for the moment charming. I saw the flower-girl of the library in the mirror, and then I knew that the artist had intended her as the idealization of Love's image.

And then I remembered the morning when we sat together in the library, and he took the roses from my basket and scattered the leaves at my feet.

CHAPTER XXVI.

A thundering rap at the door startled my meditations. I knew there was but one pair of knuckles in the house capable of beating such a tattoo, and I recoiled from admitting such a boisterous guest.

"Gabriella, Gabriella!" rung a voice through the passage. "Are you asleep? Are you dead? Open the door, pray, or I shall kill myself squeezing in through the key-hole."

With a deep sigh of vexation, I opened the door, and she sprang in with the momentum of a ball hurled by a bat.

"My dear creature!" she exclaimed, catching me round the waist and turning me to the light, "what *have* you been doing? where *have* you been staying? Ill!—tired!—it is all a sham. He need not try to impose on me such a story as that. I never saw you look so brilliantly well. Your cheeks and lips are red like the damask rose, and your eyes,—I never saw such eyes before. Come here and look in the glass. Ill!—ha, ha!"

"I have been ill," I answered, shrinking from her reckless hand, "and I was very tired; I feel better now."

"Yes, I should think you did. You rested long enough by the way, Heaven knows; we saw you climbing the hill at sunset, and the lamps were lighted before you came in. I was going after you, but Mrs. Linwood would not let me. Ah! you have animated the statue, thou modern Pygmaliona. You have turned back into flesh this enchanted man of stone. Tell it in Gath, publish it in Askelon; but the daughters of fashion will mourn, the tribes of the neglected will envy."

"I cannot match you in brilliant speeches, Miss Melville."

"Call me Miss Melville again, if you dare. Call me Madge, or Meg; but as sure as you mount the stilts of ceremony, I will whisk you off at the risk of breaking your neck. Hark! there is the supper bell. Come, just as you are. You never looked so charming. That wild flow of the hair is perfectly bewitching. I don't wonder Mr. Invincible has grounded his weapons, not I. If I were a young man,—ha, ha!"

"I sometimes fear you are," I cried. At this remark she burst into such a wild fit of laughter, I thought she never would cease. It drowned the ringing of the bell, and still kept gushing over afresh.

"Ask Mrs. Linwood to excuse me from supper," said I; "I do not wish any, indeed I do not."

Well, I am not one of the air plants; I must have something more substantial than sentiment, or I should pine with green and yellow hunger, not melancholy. I never cried but once, that I recollect, and that was when a favorite black cat of mine was killed,—maliciously, villanously killed, by an old maid, just because she devoured her favorite Canary. No, with the daughter of Jephthah, I exclaimed,—

> 'Let my memory still be thy pride,
> And forget not I smiled as I died.'

Shutting, or rather slamming the door, she bounded down the stairs with the steps of the chamois.

I had not finished my mother's history, but I had passed the *breakers*. There could be nothing beyond so fearful and wrecking. The remainder was brief, and written at times with a weak and failing hand.

"How long I remained in that deadly swoon," continued the manuscript, "I know not. When I recovered, I was lying on my bed, with Peggy standing on one side and a physician on the other. As soon as I looked up, Peggy burst into tears.

"'Thank God!' she sobbed, 'I thought she was dead.'

"'Hush!' said the doctor; 'let her be kept perfectly quiet. Give her this composing draught, and let no one be admitted to her chamber,—not even her child.'

"Child! it all came back to me. Where was she, that dreadful woman? Starting up in bed, I looked wildly round the room for the haunting phantom,—she was not a reality,—I must have had a terrible dream.

"'Yes!' said the doctor, answering the expression of my countenance, 'you have had a shocking nightmare. Drink this, and you will awake refreshed.'

"Yielding passively, I drank the colorless fluid he offered me, and sinking back on my pillow passed into a deep and tranquil sleep. When I awoke, the silence and darkness of night brooded around me. My mind now was clear as crystal, and every image appeared with startling distinctness. I lay still and calm, revolving what course to pursue; and as I lay and revolved, doubts of the truth of her story grew stronger and stronger. All my husband's love and tenderness rose in remembrance, vindicating his aspersed honor. She had forged the tale,—she had stolen the picture,—she was an impostor and a wretch.

"At morning light, I awakened Peggy, and demanded of her what had occurred during my insensible state, and what had become of the strange woman. Peggy said that the piercing shrieks of the stranger brought her to the parlor, where I lay like a corpse on the carpet, and she kneeling over me, ringing her hands, and uttering unintelligible words.

"'You have killed her,' cried Peggy, pushing back the stranger, and taking me in her strong arms.

"'*Je le sais, mon Dieu, je le sais*,' exclaimed she, lifting her clasped hands to heaven. Peggy did not understand French, but she repeated the words awkwardly enough, yet I could interpret them.

"As they found it impossible to recall me to life, a physician was summoned, and as soon as he came the stranger disappeared.

"'Don't think of her anymore,' said Peggy; 'don't, Mrs. St. James,—I don't believe a word of her story,—she's crazy,—she's a lunatic, you may be sure she is,—she looked stark mad.'

"I tried to believe this assertion, but something told me she was no maniac. I tried to believe her an impostor,—I asserted she was,—but if so, she transcended all the actresses in the world. I could not eat, I could not bear you, my darling Gabriella, to be brought into my presence. Your innocent smiles were daggers to my heart.

"But she came again, Therésa, the avenger,—she came followed by a woman, leading by the hand a beautiful boy.

"Here was proof that needed no confirmation. Every infantine feature bore the similitude of St. James. The eyes, the smile, his miniature self was there. I no longer doubted,—no longer hesitated.

"'Leave me,' I cried, and despair lent me calmness. 'I resign all claims to the name, the fortune, and the affections of him who has so cruelly wronged us. Not for worlds would I remain even one day longer in the home he has desecrated by his crimes. Respect my sorrows, and leave me. You may return to-morrow.'

"'*Oh, juste ciel!*' she exclaimed. '*Je suis trés malheureuse.*'

"Snatching her child in her arms, and raising it as high as her strength could lift it, she called upon God to witness that it was only for his sake she had asserted her legal rights; that, having lost the heart of her husband, all she wished was to die. Then, sinking on her knees before me, she entreated me to forgive her the wretchedness she had caused.

"'*I* forgive *you*?' I cried. 'Alas! it is I should supplicate your forgiveness. I do ask it in the humility of a broken heart. But go—go—if you would not see me die.'

"Terrified at my ghastly countenance, Peggy commanded the nurse to take the child from the room. Therésa followed with lingering steps, casting back upon me a glance of pity and remorse. I never saw her again.

"'And now, Peggy,' said I, 'you are the only friend I have in the wide world. Yet I must leave you. With my child in my arms, I am going forth, like Hagar, into the wilderness of life. I have money enough to save me from immediate want. Heaven will guard the future.'

"'And where will you go?' asked Peggy, passing the back of her hand over her eyes.

"'Alas, I know not. I have no one to counsel me, no one to whom I can turn for assistance or go for shelter. Even my Heavenly Father hideth his face from me.'

"'Oh, Mrs. St. James!'

"'Call me not by that accursed name. Call me Rosalie. It was a dying mother's gift, and they cannot rob me of that.'

"'Miss Rosalie, I will never quit you. There is nobody in the world I love half as well, and if you will let me stay with you, I will wait on you, and take care of the baby all the days of my life.'

"Then she told me how she came from New England to live with a brother, who had since died of consumption, and how she was going back, because she did not like to live in a great city, when the doctor got her to come to nurse me in sickness, and how she had learned to love me so well she could not bear the thoughts of going away from me. She told me, too, how quiet and happy people could live in that part of the country; how they could get along upon almost nothing at all, and be just as private as they pleased, and nobody would pester them or make them afraid.

"She knew exactly how she came to the city, and we could go the same way, only we would wind about a little and not go to the place where she used to live, so that folks need ask no questions or know any thing about us.

"With a childlike dependence, as implicit as your own, and as instinctive, I threw myself on Peggy's strong heart and great common sense. With equal judgment and energy, she arranged every thing for our departure. She had the resolution and fortitude of a man, with the tenderness and fidelity of a woman. I submitted myself entirely to her guidance, saying, 'It was well.' But when I was alone, I clasped you in agony to my bosom, and prostrating myself before the footstool of Jehovah, I prayed for a bolt to strike us, mother and child together, that we might be spared the bitter cup of humiliation and woe. One moment I dared to think of mingling our life blood together in the grave of the suicide; the next, with streaming eyes, I implored forgiveness for the impious thought.

"It is needless to dwell minutely on the circumstances of our departure. We left that beautiful mansion, once the abode of love and happiness, now a dungeon house of despair;—we came to this lone, obscure spot, where I resumed my father's name, and gave it to you. At first, curiosity sought out the melancholy stranger, but Peggy's incommunicativeness and sound judgment baffled its scrutiny. In a little while, we were suffered to remain in the seclusion we desired. Here you have passed from infancy to childhood, from childhood to adolescence, unconscious that a cloud deeper than poverty and obscurity rests upon your youth. I could not bear that my innocent child should blush for a father's villany. I could not bear that her holy confidence in human goodness and truth should be shattered and destroyed. But the day of revelation must come. From the grave, whither I am hastening, my voice shall speak; for the time may come, when a knowledge of your parentage will be indispensable, and concealment be considered a crime.

"Should you hereafter win the love of an honorable and noble heart, (for such are sometimes found,) every honorable and noble feeling will prompt you to candor and truth, with regard to your personal relations. I need not tell you this.

"And now, my darling child, I leave you one solemn dying charge. Should it ever be your lot to meet that guilty, erring father, whose care you have never known, whose name you have never borne, let no vindictive memories rise against him.

"Tell him, I forgave him, as I hope to be forgiven by my Heavenly Father, for all my sins and transgressions, and my idolatrous love of him. Tell him, that now, as life is ebbing slowly away like the sands of the hour-glass, and I can calmly look back upon the past, I bless him for being the means of leading my wandering footsteps to the green fields and still pastures of the great Shepherd of Israel. Had he never prepared for me the bitter cup of sorrow, I had not perchance tasted the purple juice which my Saviour trod the wine-press of God's wrath to obtain. Had not 'lover and friend been taken from me,' I might not have turned to the Friend of sinners; the Divine Love of mankind. Tell him then, oh Gabriella! that I not only forgave, but blessed him with the heart of a woman and the spirit of a Christian.

"I had a dream, a strange, wild dream last night, which I am constrained to relate. I am not superstitious, but its echo lingers in my soul.

"I dreamed that your father was exposed to some mysterious danger, that you alone could avert. That I saw him plunging down into an awful abyss, lower and lower; and that he called on you, Gabriella, to save him, in a voice that might have rent the heavens; and then they seemed to open, and you appeared distant as a star, yet distinct and fair as an angel, slowly descending right over the yawning chasm. You stretched out your arms towards him, and drew him upward as if by an invisible chain. As he rose, the dark abyss was transformed to beds of roses, whose fragrance was so intensely sweet it waked me. It was but a dream, my Gabriella, but it may be that God destined you to fulfil a glorious mission: to lead your erring father back to the God he has forsaken. It may be, that through you, an innocent and injured child, the heart sundered on

earth may be reunited in heaven.

"One more charge, my best beloved. In whatever situation of life you may be placed, remember our boundless obligations to the faithful Peggy, and never, never, be separated from her. Repay to her as far as possible the long, long debt of love and devotion due from us both. She has literally forsaken all to follow me and mine; and if there is a crown laid up in heaven for the true, self-sacrificing heart, that crown will one day be hers.

"The pen falls from my hand. Farewell trembles on my lips. Oh! at this moment I feel the triumph of faith, the glory of religion.

"'Other refuge have I none;
Hangs my helpless soul on *thee*;
Leave, oh, leave me not alone,
Still support and comfort me.'

"Not me alone, O compassionate and blessed Saviour! but the dear, the precious, the only one I leave behind. To thine exceeding love, to the care of a mighty God, the blessed influences of the Holy Spirit, I now commit her. 'Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is naught on earth which I desire beside thee.'"

CHAPTER XXVII.

Edith came in, as usual, before she retired for the night, and expressed affectionate concern for my indisposition; but there was an air of constraint, which I could not help perceiving. My eyes fell before hers, with conscious guilt. For had I not robbed her of that first place in her brother's heart, which she had so long claimed as her inalienable right?

I had one duty to perform, and I resolved to do it before I laid my head on the pillow. With the manuscript in my hand, I sought the chamber of Mrs. Linwood. She sat before a small table, her head resting thoughtfully on her hand, with an open Bible before her. She looked up at my entrance, with a countenance of gentle seriousness, and extended her hand affectionately.

Walking hastily towards her, I knelt at her feet, and laying the manuscript in her lap, burst into tears.

"Oh! Mrs. Linwood," I cried, "will your love and kindness survive the knowledge of all these pages will reveal? Will a mother's virtues cancel the record of a father's guilt? Can you cherish and protect me still?"

She bent over me and took me in her arms, while tears trembled in her eyes.

"I know all, my dear child," she said; "there is nothing new to be revealed. Your mother gave me, on her death-bed, a brief history of her life, and it only increased your claims on my maternal care. Do you think it possible, Gabriella, that I could be so unjust and unkind, as to visit the sins of a father on the head of an innocent and unoffending child? No; believe me, nothing but your own conduct could ever alienate my affections or confidence."

"Teach me to deserve it, dear Mrs. Linwood,—teach me how to prove my love, my gratitude, and veneration."

"By confiding in me as a mother, trusting me as a friend, and seeking me as a guide and counsellor in this most dangerous season of youth and temptation, you are very dear to me, Gabriella. Next to my own son and daughter, I love you, nor do I consider their happiness a more sacred deposit than yours."

"Oh! Mrs. Linwood," I exclaimed, covering my burning face with my hands, and again bowing it on her lap—"Ask me anything,—and nothing shall be held back—I cannot—I dare not—perhaps I ought not—"

"Tell me that my son loves you?"

I started and trembled; but as soon as the words passed her lips I gathered courage to meet whatever she might say.

"If it be indeed so," I answered, "should not the revelation come from him, rather than me?"

"There needs no formal declaration. I have seen it, known it, even before yourselves were conscious of its existence—this all engrossing passion. Before my son's return I foresaw it, with the prescience of maternal love. I knew your young, imaginative heart would find its ideal in him, and that his fastidious taste and sensitive, reserved nature would be charmed by your simplicity, freshness, and genius. I knew it, and yet I could not warn you. For when did youth ever believe the cautions of age, or passion listen to the voice of truth?"

"Warn *me*, madam? Oh, you mean him, not *me*. I never had the presumption to think myself his equal; never sought, never aspired to his love. You believe me, Mrs. Linwood—tell me, you believe me in this?"

"I do, Gabriella. Your heart opened as involuntarily and as inevitably to receive him, as the flower unfolds itself to the noonday sun. It is your destiny; but would to God I could oppose it, that I could substitute for you a happier, if less brilliant lot."

"A happier lot than to be the wife of Ernest? Oh! Mrs. Linwood, Heaven offers nothing to the eye of faith more blissful, more divine."

"Alas! my child, such is always the dream of love like yours, and from such dreams there must be a day of awakening. God never intended their realization in this world. You look up to me with wondering and reproachful glance. You have feared me, Gabriella, feared that I would oppose my son's choice, if it rested on one so lowly as you believe yourself. You are mistaken—I have no right to dictate to him. He is more than of age, has an independent fortune and an independent will. The husband lifts his wife to his own position in society, and his name annihilates hers. The knowledge of your father's character gives me pain, and the possibility of his ever claiming you as his child is a source of deep inquietude,—but it is chiefly for you I tremble, for you I suffer, my beloved Gabriella."

I looked up in consternation and alarm. What invisible sword hung trembling over the future?

"Ernest," she began, then stopping, she raised me from my kneeling attitude, led me to a sofa, and made me seat myself at her side. "Ernest," she continued, holding my hand tenderly in hers, "has many noble and attractive qualities. He is just, generous, and honorable; he is upright, honest, and true; the shadow of deceit never passed over his soul, the stain of a mean action never rested on his conduct. But,"—and her hand involuntarily tightened around mine,—"he has qualities fatal to the peace of those who love him,—fatal to his own happiness; suspicion haunts him like a dark shadow,—jealousy, like a serpent, lies coiled in his heart."

"He has told me all this," I cried, with a sigh of relief,—"but I fear not,—my confidence shall be so entire, there shall be no room for suspicion,—my love so perfect it shall cast out jealousy."

"So I once thought and reasoned in all the glow of youthful enthusiasm, but experience came with its icy touch, and enthusiasm, hope, joy, and love itself faded and died. The dark passions of Ernest are hereditary,—they belong to the blood that flows in his veins,—they are part and lot of his existence,—they are the phantoms that haunted his father's path, and cast their chill shadows over the brief years of my married life. The remembrance of what I have suffered myself, makes me tremble for her who places her happiness in my son's keeping. A woman cannot be happy unless she is trusted."

"Not if she is beloved!" I exclaimed. "It seems to me that love should cover every fault, and jealousy be pardoned without an effort, since it is a proof of the strength and fervor of one's affection. Let me be loved,—I ask no more."

"You love my son, Gabriella?"

"Love him!" I repeated,—"oh that you could look into my heart!"

Blushing at the fervor of my manner, I turned my crimson face from her gaze. Then I remembered that he knew not yet what might place an insurmountable barrier between us, and I entreated Mrs. Linwood to tell him what I wanted courage to relate.

"I will, my child, but it will make no difference with him. His high, chivalrous sense of honor will make the circumstances of your birth but a new claim on his protection,—and his purposes are as immovable as his passions are strong. But let us talk no more to-night. It is late, and you need rest. We will renew the subject when you are more composed—I might say both. I could not give you a greater proof of my interest in your happiness, than the allusion I have made to my past life. Never before have I lifted the curtain from errors which death has sanctified. Let the confidence be sacred. Ernest and Edith must never know that a shadow rested on their father's virtues. Nothing but the hope of saving you from the sufferings which once were mine, could have induced me to rend the veil from the temple of my heart."

"How solemn, how chilling are your words," said I, feeling very faint and sad. "I wish I had not heard them. Do joy and sorrow always thus go hand in hand? In the last few hours I have known the two great extremes of life. I have been plunged into the depths of despair and raised to the summit of hope. I am dizzy and weak by the sudden transition. I will retire, dear madam, for my head feels strangely bewildered."

Mrs. Linwood embraced me with unusual tenderness, kissed me on both cheeks, and accompanied me to the door with a fervent "God bless you!"

CHAPTER XXVIII.

As soon as I reached my chamber, I threw myself on my bed, which seemed to roll beneath me with a billowy motion. Never had I felt so strangely, so wildly. Confused images crowded through my brain. I moved on an undulating surface. Now, it was the swelling and sinking of the blue gray waves of ocean,—then, the heaving green of the churchyard, billows of death, over which the wind blew damp and chill. I had left the lamp unextinguished, where its light reflected the rosy

red of the curtains, and that became a fiery meteor shooting through crimson clouds, and leaving a lurid track behind it.

I sat up in bed; frightened at the wild confusion of my brain, I passed my hands over my eyes to remove the illusion, but in vain. The massy wardrobe changed to the rocky walls of the Rip Raps, and above it I saw the tall form of the white-locked chief. The carpet, with its clusters of mimic flowers, on a pale gray ground, was a waste of waters, covered with roses, among which St. James was swimming and trying to grasp them.

"What is the matter?" I cried, clasping my burning hands. "Am I asleep, and are these images but the visions of a feverish imagination?"

"You dream, my love," answered the low, deep voice of Ernest; "but my mother is coming to awaken you with a cold and icy hand. I have scattered roses over you while you slept, but her blighting touch has withered them."

Thus vision after vision succeeded each other, hurrying along like clouds in a tempestuous sky. I suppose I must have slept at last, but the morning found me in a state of utter exhaustion. Nervous excitement, sitting so long on the damp grass, and lingering out in the dewy evening air, brought on an illness which confined me to my bed many days. Dr. Harlowe threatened to put me in a strait-jacket and send me to a lunatic asylum, if I did not behave better in future.

"I must take you home with me," he said; "our quiet, humdrum mode of life is better for you, after all. Your little rocking chair stands exactly where you used to sit in it. I do not like to see any one else occupy it. I get in disgrace with my wife every day, now you are not by me to hang up my hat and remind me by a glance to shake the dust from my feet. Such a quick pulse as this will never do, my child."

For a week I was kept in a darkened room, and perfect quietude was commanded. The doctor came every day, and sometimes several times a day, with his smiling, sunny countenance, and anxious, affectionate heart. Mrs. Linwood and Edith stole gently in and out, with steps soft as falling snowflakes, and Margaret Melville was not permitted to enter at all. Every morning fresh flowers were laid upon my pillow, which I knew were gathered by the hand of Ernest, and they whispered to me of such sweet things my languid senses *ached* to hear them.

One day, while in this passive, languishing, dreamy condition, having fallen into tranquil slumbers, I was left a few moments alone. I was awakened by a stronger touch than that of Edith's fairy hand.

"Why, how do you do, darling? How do you do?" cried a hearty, gay voice, that echoed like a bugle in the stillness of the room. "The doctor said you were getting well, and I determined I would not be kept out any longer. What in the world do they banish *me* for? I am the best nurse in the universe, strong as a lion, and wakeful as an owl. What do they shut you up in this dark room for?—just to give you the blues!—It is all nonsense. I am going to put back these curtains, and let in some light,—you will become etiolated. I want to see how you look."

Dashing at the curtains, she tossed two of them back as high as she could throw them, letting in a flood of sunshine to my weak and dazzled eyes.

"Don't! don't!" I entreated, getting dreadfully nervous and agitated; "I cannot bear it,—indeed I cannot."

"Yes you can; you will be better in a moment,—it is only coming out of darkness into marvellous light,—a sudden change, that is all. You do look white,—white, delicate, and sweet as a water-lily. I have a great mind to invite Ernest up to see you, you look so interesting. He has been like a distracted man, a wandering Jew, an unlaid ghost, ever since you have been ill. And poor Richard Clyde comes every night to inquire after you, with such a woebegone countenance. And that great, ugly, magnificent creature of a teacher, he has been too,—you certainly are a consequential little lady."

Thus she rattled on, without dreaming of the martyrdom she was inflicting on my weakened nerves.

"I have no doubt you mean to be kind," said I, ready to cry from weakness and irritation; "but if you will only drop the curtains and leave me, I will be so very grateful."

"There—the curtains are down. I am not going to speak another word—I am a perfect lamb—I will bathe your head with cologne, and put you to sleep nicely."

Stepping across the room, as she thought, very softly, but making more noise than Edith would in a week, she seized a bottle of cologne, and coming close to the bedside, bent over me, so that her great, black eyes almost touched mine. Had they been a pair of pistols, I could not have recoiled with greater terror.

"Don't!" again I murmured,—"I am very weak."

"Hush! I am going to put you to sleep."

Pouring the cologne in her hand, till it dripped all over the counterpane and pillow, she deluged my hair, and patted my forehead as she would a colt's that she wanted to stand still. In mute despair I submitted to her *tender mercies*, certain I should die, if some one did not come to my

relief, when the door softly opened, and Mrs. Linwood entered.

"Heaven be praised," thought I,—I had not strength to say it. Tears of weariness and vexation were mingling with the drops with which she had saturated my hair.

"Margaret," said Mrs. Linwood, in a tone of serious displeasure, "what have you been doing? I left her in a sweet sleep, and now I find her wan, tearful, and agitated. You will worry her into a relapse."

"All she needs now is cheerful company, I am sure," she answered demurely; "you all make her so tender and baby-like, she never will have any strength again. I've been as soft as a cooing dove. Dr. Harlowe would have been delighted with me."

"You *must* go, Margaret, indeed you must. *You* may think yourself a dove, but others have a different opinion."

"Going, going, gone!" she cried, giving me a vehement kiss and vanishing.

The consequence of this energetic visit was a relapse; and Dr. Harlowe was as angry as his nature admitted when he learned the cause.

"That wild-cat must not remain here," said he, shaking his head. "She will kill my gentle patient. Where did you find her, Mrs. Linwood? From what menagerie has she broken loose?"

"She is the daughter of an early and very dear friend of mine," replied Mrs. Linwood, smiling; "a very original and independent young lady, I grant she is."

"What in the world did you bring her here for?" asked the doctor bluntly; "I intend to chain her, while my child is sick."

"She wished to make a visit in the country, and I thought her wild good-humor would be a counterpoise to the poetry and romance of Grandison Place."

"You have other more attractive and tractable guests. You will not object to my depriving you for a short time of her. May I invite her home with me?"

"Certainly,—but she will not accept the invitation. She is not acquainted with Mrs. Harlowe."

"That makes no difference,—she will go with me, I am positive."

They conversed in a low tone in one of the window recesses, but I heard what they said; and when Mrs. Linwood afterwards told me that Meg the Dauntless had gone off with the doctor in high glee, I was inexpressibly relieved, for I had conceived an unconquerable terror of her. There was other company in the house, as Edith had prophesied, but in a mansion so large and so admirably arranged, an invalid might be kept perfectly quiet without interfering with the social enjoyment of others.

I was slowly but surely recovering. At night Edith had her harp placed in the upper piazza, and sang and played some of her sweetest and most soothing strains. Another voice, too, mingled at times with the breeze-like swelling of the thrilling chords, and a hand whose master-touch my spirit recognized, swept the trembling strings.

How long it seemed since I had stood with *him* under the shade of the broad elm-tree! With what fluctuating emotions I looked forward to meeting him again!

At length the doctor pronounced me able to go down stairs.

"I am going to keep the wild-cat till you are a little stronger," he said. "She has made herself acquainted with the whole neighborhood, and keeps us in a state of perpetual mirth and excitement. What do you think she has done? She has actually made Mr. Regulus escort her on horseback into the country, and says she is resolved to captivate him."

I could not help laughing at the idea of my tall, awkward master, a knight-errant to this queen of the amazons.

"How would you like to be supplanted by her?" he mischievously asked.

"As an assistant teacher?"

"As an assistant for life. Poor Regulus! he was quite sick during your absence; and when I accused him of being in love, the simple-hearted creature confessed the fact and owned the soft impeachment. I really feel very sorry for him. He has a stupendous heart, and a magnificent brain. You ought to have treated him better. He would be to you a tower of strength in the day of trouble. Little girl, you ought to be proud of such a conquest."

"It filled me with sorrow and shame," I answered, "and had he not himself betrayed the secret, it never would have been known. It seemed too deep a humiliation for one whom I so much respected and revered, to bow a supplicant to me. You do not know how unhappy it made me."

"You must get hardened to these things, Gabriella. As you seem to be quite a dangerous young lady, destined to do great havoc in the world, it will not do to be too sensitive on the subject. But remember, you must not dispose of your heart without consulting me. And at any rate, wait three years longer for your judgment to mature."

The conscious color rose to my cheek. He took my hand, and placed his fingers on my throbbing pulse.

"Too quick, too quick," said he, looking gravely in my face. "This will never do. When I bring the wild-cat back, I mean to carry you off. It will do you good to stay a while with my good, methodical, unromantic wife. I can take you round to visit my patients with me. I have a new buggy, larger than the one in which we had such a famous ride together."

The associations connected with that ride were so sad, I wished he had not mentioned it; yet the conversation had done me good. It kept me from dwelling too exclusively on one engrossing subject.

"Now give me your arm," said the doctor, "and let me have the privilege of escorting you down stairs."

As we descended, he put his arm round me, for I was weaker than he thought I was, and my knees bent under me.

"We doctors ought not to have jealous wives, my dear, ought we? My dear, good woman has not one particle of jealousy in her composition. She never looks after my heart; but keeps a wonderfully sharp eye on my head and feet. A very sensible person, Mrs. Harlowe is."

There was intentional kindness in this apparent levity. He saw I was agitated, and wished to divert my thoughts. Perhaps he read more deeply than I imagined, for those who seem to glance lightly on the surface of feeling only, often penetrate to its depths.

The drawing-room was divided by folding doors, which were seldom closed, and in the four corners of each division were crimson lounges, of luxurious and graceful form. Company generally gathered in the front part, but the backroom was equally pleasant, as it opened into the flower-garden through a balcony shaded by vines.

"Come in here, and rest awhile," said the doctor, leading me into the back parlor; "it will be a pleasant surprise to Mrs. Linwood. I did not tell her I was going to bring you down."

As we entered, I saw Ernest Linwood half reclining on a lounge with a book in his hand, which hung listlessly at his side. As he looked up, his pale face lighted suddenly and brilliantly as burning gas. He rose, threw down his book, came hastily forward, took my hand, and drawing it from the doctor's arm, twined it round his own.

"How well you look!" he exclaimed. "Dr. Harlowe, we owe you ten thousand thanks."

"This is a strange way of showing it," said the doctor, looking round him with a comical expression, "to deprive me of my companion, and leave me as lonely as Simon Stylites on the top of his pillar."

Mrs. Linwood and Edith, who had seen our entrance, came forward and congratulated me on my convalescence. It was the first time I had ever been ill, and the pleasure of being released from durance was like that of a weary child let loose from school. I was grateful and happy. The assurance I received from the first glance of Ernest, that what his mother had promised to reveal had made no change in his feelings; that the love, which I had almost begun to think an illusion of my own brain, was a real existing passion, filled me with unspeakable joy. The warnings of Mrs. Linwood had no power to weaken my faith and hope. Had she not told me that *her* love had died? I felt that mine was immortal.

The impression made by my mother's sad history was still too fresh and deep, and too much of the languor of indisposition still clung to me to admit of my being gay; but it was pleasant to hear the cheerful laugh and lively conversation, showing that the tide of social life ran clear and high. Several new guests had arrived, whom I had not seen before, to whom I was introduced; but as Dr. Harlowe commanded me to be a good girl and remain quietly in a corner, a passing introduction limited the intercourse of the evening.

Just as the doctor was taking leave, a loud, merry ha, ha! came leaping up the steps, followed by the amazonian form of Madge Wildfire, leaning on the arm of Mr. Regulus.

"Angels and ministers of grace defend us!" exclaimed Ernest.

"Shade of Esculapius!" cried the doctor, recoiling from the threshold.

"Glad to see me? I know you are. Taken you all by storm. Found this gentleman wandering like a troubled spirit by the way-side, and pressed him into service. I shall make a gallant knight of him yet, My dear soul!" she cried, spying me out and rushing towards me, "I am so glad to see you here, escaped from the ruthless hands of the doctor. I never saw such a despot in my life, except *one*;" here she looked laughingly and defiantly at Ernest,—"he would out-Nero Nero himself, if he had the opportunity."

"If I were the autocrat of Russia I would certainly exercise the right of banishment," he answered quietly.

During this sportive encounter, Mr. Regulus came up to greet me. I had not seen him since our memorable interview in the academy, and his sallow face glowed with embarrassment. I rose to meet him, anxious to show him every mark of respect and esteem. I asked him to take a seat on the sofa by me, and ventured to congratulate him on the exceedingly entertaining acquaintance

he had made.

"A very extraordinary young lady," he cried, "amazingly merry, and somewhat bold. I had not the most remote idea of coming here, when I left home; but suddenly I found her arm linked in mine, and was told that I must escort her *nolens volens*."

"Indeed! I thought you came to inquire after my health, and was feeling *so* grateful!"

"I did not know I should have the pleasure of seeing *you*, and I did not hope you would welcome me with so much cordiality. I have made many inquiries after you; indeed, I have scarcely thought of any thing else since you were ill. You look pale, Gabriella. Are you sure you are quite well, my child?"

The old endearing epithet! It touched me.

"I do not feel strong enough to move Mount Atlas, but well enough to enjoy the society of my friends. I never appreciated it so highly before."

"You have no idea how I miss you," he said, taking my fan and drawing his thumb over it, as if he were feeling the edge of his ferula. "The season of summer lingers, but the flowers no longer bloom for me. The birds sing, but their notes have lost their melody. My perception of the beautiful has grown dim, but the remembrance of it can never fade. I never knew before what the pleasures of memory truly were."

"I recollect a copy you once set me, Mr. Regulus,—'Sweet is the memory of absent friends,'—I thought it such a charming one!"

"Do you remember that?" he asked, with a delighted countenance.

"Yes! I remember all the copies you ever set me. Teachers should be very careful what sentiments they write, for they are never forgotten. Don't you recollect how all the pupils once laughed at a mistake in punctuation of mine? The copy was, 'Hate not, but pity the wicked, as well as the poor.' As the line was not quite filled, you added *Gabriella*, after making a full period. I forgot the stop and wrote, 'Hate not, but pity the wicked, as well as the poor Gabriella.' The ridicule of the scholars taught me the importance of punctuation. Our mistakes are our best lessons, after all."

"And do you remember these trifles?" he repeated. "How strange! It shows you have the heart of a child still. I love to hear you recall them."

"I could fill a volume with these reminiscences. I believe I will write one, one of these days, and you shall be the hero."

A merry altercation at the door attracted our attention. Dr. Harlowe was endeavoring to persuade Madge to go back with him, but she strenuously refused.

"I never could stay more than ten days at a time in one place in my life. Besides, I have worn out my welcome, I know I have. Your house is not new. It jars too much when I walk. I saw Mrs. Harlowe looking ruefully at some cracked glass and china, and then at me, as much as to say, 'It is all your doings, you young romp.'"

"Very likely," cried the doctor, laughing heartily, "but it only makes me more anxious to secure you. You are a safety-valve in the house. All my misdemeanors escape unreproved in the presence of your superior recklessness."

I never saw any one enjoy a jest more than Dr. Harlowe. He really liked the dashing and untamable Madge. He was fond of young companions; and though his wife was such a *superior woman*, and such an incomparable housekeeper, there was nothing very exhilarating about her.

"I can't go," said Madge; "I must stay and take care of Gabriella."

"If you play any of your wild pranks on her again," said the doctor, "it were better for you that you had never been born."

With this threat he departed; and it seemed as if a dozen people had been added to the household in the person of the dauntless Meg. I never saw any one with such a flow of animal spirits, with so much oxygen in their composition. I should think the vital principle in such a constitution would burn out sooner than in others, like a flame fed by alcohol. She was older than myself, and yet had no more apparent reflection than a child of five years old. It was impossible to make her angry. The gravest rebuke, the most cutting sarcasm, were received with a merry twinkle of the eye or a rich swell of laughter. She was bold, masculine, wild, and free, and I feared her as much as I would the wild-cat, after whom the doctor had christened her,—yet there was something about her that I liked. It was probably the interest she professed in me, which must have been genuine. It was impossible for her to affect any thing.

Who would dream of any one sporting with such a man as Mr. Regulus? Yet she treated him exactly as if he were a great boy. He had paid us his parting salutations, and was half-way down the steps before she was aware of his intended departure.

"You are not going so soon, indeed you are not," she exclaimed, running after him, seizing his hat, and setting it jauntily on her own head. Her abundant hair prevented it from falling over her face. "I brought you here to stay all the evening; and stay you must and shall. What do you want

to go back to your musty old bachelor's room for, when there is such delightful company here?"

Taking hold of his arm and whirling him briskly round, she led him back into the parlor, laughing and triumphant.

She looked so saucy, so jaunty, so full of nerve and adventure, with the large hat pitched on one side of her head, I could not help saying,—

"What a pity she were not a man!"

Mr. Regulus did not appear as awkward as might be supposed. There was a latent spark of fun and frolic in his large brain, to which her wild hand applied the match; and though I know he felt the disappointment of his affections sorely, deeply, he yielded himself to her assault with tolerable grace and readiness.

Supper was always an unceremonious meal, sent round on waiters, from a round table in the back parlor, at which Mrs. Linwood presided. Gentlemen took their cups standing or walking, just as it happened; and ladies, too, though they were generally seated. Ernest drew a light table to the lounge where I sat; and sitting by me, said, as I was an invalid, I should be peculiarly favored.

"Methinks she is not the only favored one," said the sweet voice of Edith, as she floated near.

"There is room for you, dear Edith," said I, moving closer to the arm of the sofa, and leaving a space for her between us.

"Room on the sofa, Edith," added he, moving towards me, and making a space for her on his right, "and tenfold room in my heart."

He took her hand and drew her down to his side.

"This is as it should be," he said, looking from one to the other with a radiant countenance. "Thus would I ever bind to my heart the two loveliest, dearest, best."

Edith bent her head, and kissed the hand which held hers. As she looked up I saw that her eyes were glistening.

"What would mamma say?" she asked, trying to conceal her emotion. "Surely there can be none dearer and better than she is."

"Nay, Edith," said he, passing his arm tenderly round her waist; "you might as well say, if I singled out two bright, especial stars from the firmament, that I did not think the moon fair or excellent. The love I bear my mother is so exalted by reverence, it stands apart by itself like the queen of night, serene and holy, moving in a distinct and lofty sphere. There is one glory of the sun, Edith, and another glory of the moon, and one star differeth from another in glory. Yet they are all glorious in themselves, and all proclaim the goodness and glory of the Creator."

"I have heard it said," observed Edith, in a low, tremulous tone, "that when love takes possession of the heart, the natural affections have comparatively little strength; that it is to them as is the ocean to its tributaries. I know nothing of it by experience, nor do I wish to, if it has power to diminish the filial and sisterly tenderness which constitutes my chief joy."

"My dear Edith, it is not so. Every pure and generous affection expands the heart, and gives it new capacities for loving. Have you not heard of heaven,—'the more angels the more room?' So it is with the human heart. It is elastic, and enlarges with every lawful claimant to be admitted into its sanctuary. It is true there is a love which admits of no rivalry;" here his eye turned involuntarily to me, "which enshrines but one object, which dwells in the inner temple, the angel of angels. But other affections do not become weaker in consequence of its strength. We may not see the fire-flame burn as brightly when the sun shines upon it, but the flame is burning still."

"Gabriella does not speak," said Edith, with an incredulous wave of her golden locks. "Tell me, Gabriella, are his words true?"

"I am not a very good metaphysician," I answered, "but I should think the heart very narrow, that could accommodate only those whom Nature placed in it. It seems to me but a refined species of selfishness."

The color crimsoned on Edith's fair cheek. I had forgotten what she had said to me of her own exclusive affection. I sympathized so entirely in his sentiments, expressed with such beautiful enthusiasm, I forgot every thing else. The moment I had spoken, memory rebuked my transient oblivion. She must believe it an intentional sarcasm. How could I be so careless of the feelings of one so gentle and so kind?

"I know *I* am selfish," she said. "I have told you my weakness,—sin it may be,—and I deserve the reproach."

"You cannot think I meant it as such. You know I could not. I had forgotten what I have heard you previously utter. I was thinking only of the present. Forgive me, Edith, for being so thoughtless and impulsive; for being so selfish myself."

"I am wrong," said Edith, ingenuously. "I suppose conscience applied the words. Brother, you, who are the cause of the offence, must make my peace."

"It is already made," answered I, holding out my hand to meet hers; "if you acquit me of

intentional wrong, I ask no more."

As our hands united before him, he clasped them both in one of his own.

"A triune band," said he, earnestly, "that never must be broken. Edith, Gabriella, remember this. Love each other now, love each other forever, even as I love ye both."

I was sensitive and childish from recent indisposition, or I should have had more self-control. I could not prevent the tears from rushing to my eyes and stealing down my cheeks. As we were sitting by ourselves, in a part of the room less brilliantly lighted than the rest, and as we all conversed in a low voice, this little scene was not conspicuous, though it might have possibly been observed.

Those in the front room seemed exceedingly merry. Madge had placed a table before herself and Mr. Regulus, in imitation of Ernest, and had piled his plate with quantities of cake, as high as a pyramid. A gay group surrounded the table, that seemed floating on a tide of laughter; or rather making an eddy, in 'which their spirits were whirling.'

As soon as supper was over, she told Mr. Regulus to lead her to the piano, as she was literally dying to play. There was no instrument at Dr. Harlowe's but a jew's-harp, and the tongue of that was broken. As she seated herself at the piano, Mr. Regulus reached forward and took up a violin which was lying upon it.

"Do you play?" she asked eagerly.

"I used to play a good deal when a boy, but that was a long time ago," he answered, drawing the bow across the strings with no unskilful hand.

"Delightful, charming!" she exclaimed. "Can you play '*Come, haste to the wedding*?'"

He replied by giving the inspiring air, which she accompanied in her wild, exciting manner, laughing and shaking her head with irrepressible glee. I was astonished to see my dignified tutor thus lending himself for the amusement of the evening. I should have thought as soon of Jupiter playing a dancing tune, as Mr. Regulus. But he not only played well, he seemed to enjoy it. I was prepared now, to see him on the floor dancing with Madge, though I sincerely hoped he would not permit himself to be exhibited in that manner. Madge was resolved upon this triumph, and called loudly to Edith to come and take her place at the instrument, and play the liveliest waltz in the universe for her and Mr. Regulus.

"Thank you, Miss Melville," said he, laying down his violin and resuming his usual grave and dignified manner, "I am no dancing bear."

"Come, Mr. Regulus, I have no doubt you dance as charmingly as you play. Besides, you would not be so ungallant as to refuse a lady's request."

"Not a *lady-like* request," he answered, with a shrewd cast of the eye under his beetling brows.

This sarcasm was received with acclamation; but Meg lifted her brow as dauntless as ever and laughed as loudly.

I began to feel weary of mirth in which I could not sympathize. Mrs. Linwood came to me, and saying I looked pale and wan, insisted upon my retiring. To this I gladly assented. The little misunderstanding between Edith and myself weighed heavily on my spirits, and I longed to be alone.

Just as we were crossing the hall of entrance, Richard Clyde came in. He greeted me with so much feeling, such earnest, unaffected pleasure, yet a pleasure so chastened by sensibility, I realized, perhaps for the first time, the value of the heart I had rejected.

"You have been ill, Gabriella," said he, retaining for a moment the hand he had taken. "You look pale and languid. You do not know how much your friends have suffered on your account, or how grateful they feel for your convalesence."

"I did not think I was of so much consequence," I replied. "It is well to be sick now and then, so as to be able to appreciate the kindness of friends."

"You must suffer us to go now, Richard," said Mrs. Linwood moving towards the staircase; "you will find merry company in the parlor ready to entertain you. As Gabriella is no longer a prisoner, you will have future opportunities of seeing her."

"I must embrace them soon," said he, sadly. "I expect to leave this place before long,—my friends, and my country."

"You, Richard?" I exclaimed. Then I remembered the remarks I had heard on commencement day, of his being sent to Europe to complete his education. I regretted to lose the champion of my childhood, the friend of my youth, and my countenance expressed my emotion.

"I have a great deal to say to you, Gabriella," said he, in a low tone. "May I see you to-morrow?"

"Certainly,—that is, I think, I hope so." A glance that flashed on me from the doorway arrested my stammering tongue. Ernest was standing there, observing the interview, and the dark passion of which his mother had warned me clouded his brow. Snatching my hand from Richard, I bade him a hasty good-night, and ascended the stairs, with a prophetic heart.

Yet, while I felt the shadow on his brow stealing darkly over me, I repeated to myself,—

"The keenest pangs the wretched find,
Are rapture to the dreary void,
The leafless desert of the mind,
The waste of feelings unemployed."

CHAPTER XXIX.

The interview with Richard Clyde the next day, was a painfully agitating one. I had no conception till then, how closely and strongly love and hope had twined their fibres round him; or how hard would be the task of rending them from him. Why could I not appreciate the value of his frank, noble, and confiding nature? It may be because we had been children together, and that familiarity was unfavorable to the growth of love in one of my poetic nature. I *must* look up. The cloud crowned cliff did not appall my high-reaching eye.

"I shall not see you again, Gabriella," said he, as he wrung my hand in parting. "I shall not see you again before my departure,—I would not for worlds renew the anguish of this moment. I do not reproach you,—you have never deceived me. My own hopes have been building a bridge of flowers over a dark abyss. But, by the Heaven that hears me, Gabriella, the keenest pang I now experience is not for my own loss, it is the dread I feel for you."

"Not one word more, Richard, if you love me. I have been tender of your feelings,—respect mine. There is but one thing on earth I prize more than your friendship. Let me cherish that for the sacred memory of *auld lang syne*."

"Farewell, then, Gabriella, best and only beloved! May the hand wither that ever falls too heavily on that trusting heart, should we never meet again!"

He drew me suddenly closely to him, kissed me passionately, and was gone.

"Had you confided in me fully," said Mrs. Linwood, in speaking to me afterwards of Richard, "I should never have advised a correspondence which must have strengthened his attachment. Having the highest opinion of his principles and disposition, and believing you regarded him with modest affection, I urged this intercourse as a binding link between you. You must have perceived my wishes on this subject."

"If I have erred, it was from mistaken delicacy. I thought I had no right to betray an unreturned affection. It was not from a want of confidence in you."

"If you could have loved Richard, it would have been well for you, my dear Gabriella; but I know the heart admits of no coercion, and least of all a heart like yours. I no longer warn, for it is in vain; but I would counsel and instruct. If you *do* become the wife of my son, you will assume a responsibility as sacred as it is deep. Not alone for your happiness do I tremble, O Gabriella,—I fear,—I dread, for him."

"Oh! Mrs. Linwood, when I love him so exclusively, so devotedly; when I feel that I must love him forever—"

"It is the very exclusiveness and strength of your devotion that I fear. You will love him too well for your *own* peace,—too well for *his* good. Far better is a rational, steadfast attachment, that neither rises above the worth of the object, nor sinks below it, than the two great extremes, idolatry and indifference. The first is a violation of the commands of God,—the last, of the rights of man. Remember, my child, that it is not by the exhibition of idolatrous affection, that a wife secures a husband's happiness. It is by patient *continuance* in well-doing, that she works out the salvation of her wedded peace. Sit down by me, Gabriella; draw up your work-table; for one can listen best when their hands are busy. I have a great deal that I wish to say, and I cannot talk as well with your eyes bent so earnestly on me."

I obeyed her without trepidation. I felt the need of her guiding counsels, and resolved to lay them up in my heart, and make them the rule and guide of my life.

"When a young girl marries a man whom she has been taught to believe perfection," continued Mrs. Linwood, "and after marriage discovers her golden idol to be an image of wood and clay, she may be permitted to sit down and weep a while over her vanished dreams. But when she *knows* the imperfections of him she loves; when she *knows* they are of a nature to try, as with seven-fold heat, the strength and purity of her affection; when with this conviction she breathes her wedded vows, she has no right to upbraid him. She has walked with open eyes into the furnace, and she must not shrink from the flames. She must fold over her woman's heart the wings of an angel. She must look up to God, and be silent."

"When innocent of blame, surely she should defend herself from accusation," cried I.

"Certainly,—in the spirit of gentleness and Christian love. But she must not murmur; she must not complain. But it is not the accusation that admits of defence, the arrow that flies at noonday, that is most to be feared. It is the cold, inscrutable glance, the chilled and altered manner, the

suspicion that walketh in darkness,—it is these that try the strength of woman's love, and gnaw with slow but certain tooth the cable-chain that holds the anchor of her fidelity. These are the evil spirits which prayer and fasting alone can cast out. They may fly before the uplifted eye and bended knee, but never before the flash of anger or the word of recrimination."

"What a solemn view you give me of married life!" I exclaimed, while the work dropped from my hands. "What fearful responsibilities you place before me,—I tremble, I dare not meet them."

"It is not too late,—the irrevocable vow is not yet breathed,—the path is not yet entered. If the mere description of duties makes you turn pale with dread, what will the reality be? I do not seek to terrify, but to convince. I received you as a precious charge from a dying mother, and I vowed over her grave to love, protect, and cherish you, as my own daughter. I saw the peculiar dangers to which you were liable from your ardent genius and exquisite sensibility, and I suffered you to pass through a discipline which my wealth made unnecessary, and which you have nobly borne. I did not wish my son to love you, not because you were the child of obscurity, but because I had constituted myself the guardian of your happiness, and I feared it would be endangered by a union with him. How dear is your happiness to me,—how holy I deem the charge I have assumed,—you may know by my telling you this. Never mother idolized a son as I do Ernest. He is precious as my heart's best blood,—he is the one idol that comes between me and my God. My love is more intense for the anxiety I feel on his account. If I could have prevented his loving;—but how could I, in the constant presence of an object so formed to inspire all the romance of love? I knew the serpent slept in the bottom of the fountain, and when the waters were stirred it would wake and uncoil. Gabriella!" she added, turning towards me, taking both hands in hers, and looking me in the face with her clear, eloquent, dark gray eyes, "you may be the angel commissioned by Providence to work out the earthly salvation of my son, to walk with him through the fiery furnace, to guard him in the lion's den, which his own passions may create. If to the love that hopeth all, the faith that believeth all, you add the charity that *endureth* all, miracles may follow an influence so exalted, and, I say it with reverence, so divine."

It is impossible to give but a faint idea of the power of Mrs. Linwood's language and manner. There was no vehemence, no gesticulation. Her eye did not flash or sparkle; it burned with a steady, penetrating light. Her voice did not rise in tone, but it gave utterance to her words in a full, deep stream of thought, inexhaustible and clear. I have heard it said that she talked "like a book," and so she did,—like the book of heavenly wisdom. Her sentiments were "apples of gold in pictures of silver," and worthy to be enshrined in a diamond casket.

As I listened, I caught a portion of her sublime spirit, and felt equal to the duties which I had a short time before recoiled from contemplating.

"I am very young and inexperienced," I answered, "and too apt to be governed by the impulses of the present moment. I dare not promise what I may be too weak to perform; but dearest madam, all that a feeble girl, strengthened and inspired by love, and leaning humbly on an Almighty arm, can do, I pledge myself to do. In looking forward to the future, I have thought almost exclusively of being ever near the one beloved object, living in the sunshine of his smile, and drinking in the music of his voice. Life seemed an elysian dream, from which care and sorrow must be for ever banished. You have roused me to nobler views, and given existence a nobler aim. I blush for my selfishness. I will henceforth think less of being happy myself, than of making others happy; less of *happiness* than *duty*; and every sacrifice that principle requires shall be made light, as well as holy, by love."

"Only cherish such feelings, my child," said Mrs. Linwood, warmly embracing me, "and you will be the daughter of my choice, as well as my adoption. My blessing, and the blessing of approving God, will be yours. The woman, who limits her ambition to the triumphs of beauty and the influence of personal fascination, receives the retribution of her folly and her sin in the coldness and alienation of her husband, and the indifference, if not the contempt of the world. She, whose highest aim is intellectual power, will make her home like the eyrie of the eagle, lofty, but bleak. While she, whose affections alone are the foundation of her happiness, will find that the nest of the dove, though pleasant and downy in the sunshine, will furnish no shelter from the fierce storms and tempestuous winds of life."

"Oh, Mrs. Linwood! Is domestic happiness a houseless wanderer? Has it no home on earth?"

"Yes, my love, in the heart of the woman whose highest aim is the glory of God,—whose next, the excellence and happiness of her husband; who considers her talents, her affections, and her beauty as gifts from the Almighty hand, for whose use she must one day render an account; whose heart is a censer where holy incense is constantly ascending, perfuming and sanctifying the atmosphere of home. Such is the woman who pleaseth the Lord. Such, I trust, will be my beloved Gabriella."

By conversations like these, almost daily renewed, did this admirable, high-minded, and God-fearing woman endeavor to prepare me for the exalted position to which love had raised me. This was a happy period of my life. The absence of Richard Clyde, though a source of regret, was a great blessing, as it removed the most prominent object of jealousy from Ernest's path. An occasional cloud, a sudden coldness, and an unaccountable reserve, sometimes reminded me of the dangerous passion whose shadow too often follows the footsteps of love. But in the retirement of rural life, surrounded by the sweet, pure influences of nature, the best elements of character were called into exercise.

The friends whom Mrs. Linwood gathered around her were not the idle devotees of fashion,—the parasites of wealth; but intelligent, literary people, whose society was a source of improvement as well as pleasure. Sometimes, circumstances of commanding character forced her to receive as guests those whom her judgment would never have selected, as in the case of Madge Wildfire; but in general it was a distinction to be invited to Grandison Place, whose elegant hospitalities were the boast of the town to which it belonged.

The only drawback to my happiness was the pensiveness that hung like a soft cloud over the spirits of Edith. She was still kind and affectionate to me; but the sweet unreserve of former intercourse was gone. I had come between her and her brother's heart. I was the shadow on her dial of flowers, that made their bloom wither. I never walked with Ernest alone without fearing to give her pain. I never sat with him on the seat beneath the elm, in the starry eventide, or at moonlight's hour, without feeling that she followed us in secret with a saddened glance.

At first, whenever he came to me to walk with him, I would say,—

"Wait till I go for Edith."

"Very well," he would answer, "if there is nothing in your heart that pleads for a nearer communion than that which we enjoy in the presence of others, a dearer interchange of thought and feeling, let Edith, let the whole world come."

"It is for her sake, not mine, I speak,—I cannot bear the soft reproach of her loving eye!"

"A sister's affection must not be too exacting," was the reply. "All that the fondest brother can bestow, I give to Edith; but there are gifts she may not share,—an inner temple she cannot enter, —reserved alone for you. Come, the flowers are wasting their fragrance, the stars their lustre!"

How could I plead for Edith, after being silenced by such arguments? And how could I tell her that I had interceded for her in vain? I never imagined before that a sister's love could be *jealous*; but the same hereditary passion which was transmitted to his bosom through a father's blood, reigned in hers, though in a gentler form.

Every one who has studied human nature must have observed predominant family traits, as marked as the attributes of different trees and blossoms,—traits which, descending from parent to children, individualize them from the great family of mankind. In some, pride towers and spreads like the great grove tree of India, the branches taking root and forming trunks which put forth a wealth of foliage, rank and unhealthy. In others, obstinacy plants itself like a rock, which the winds and waves of opinion cannot move. In a few, jealousy coils itself with lengthening fold, which, like the serpent that wrapped itself round Laocoon and his sons, makes parents and children its unhappy victims.

And so it is with the virtues, which, thanks be to God, who setteth the solitary in families, are also hereditary. How often do we hear it said,—"She is lovely, charitable, and pious,—so was her mother before her;" "He is an upright and honorable man,—he came from a noble stock." "That youth has a sacred love of truth,—it is his best inheritance,—his father's word was equivalent to his bond."

If this be true, it shows the duty of parents in an awfully commanding manner. Let them rend out the eye that gives dark and distorted views of God and man. Let them cut off the hand that offends and the foot that errs, rather than entail on others evils, which all eternity cannot remedy. Better transmit to posterity the blinded eye, the maimed and halting foot, that knows the narrow path to eternal life, than the dark passions that desolate earth, and unfit the soul for the joys of heaven.

CHAPTER XXX.

I have now arrived at a period in my life, at which the novelist would pause,—believing the history of woman ceases to interest as soon as an accepted lover and consenting friends appear ready to usher the heroine into the temple of Hymen. But there is a *life within life*, which is never revealed till it is intertwined with another's. In the depth of the heart there is a lower deep, which is never sounded save by the hand that wears the *wedding-ring*. There is a talisman in its golden circle, more powerful than those worn by the genii of the East.

I love to linger among the beautiful shades of Grandison Place, to wander over its velvet lawn, its gravel walks, its winding avenues, to gaze on the lovely valley its height commanded whether in the intense lights and strong shadows of downward day, or the paler splendor and deeper shadows of moonlit night. I love those girdling mountains,—grand winding stairs of heaven—on which my spirit has so often climbed, then stepping to the clouds, looked through their "golden vistas" into the mysteries of the upper world.

O thou charming home of my youth what associations cluster round thee! Thy noble trees rustle their green leaves in the breezes of memory. Thy moonlight walks are trodden by invisible footsteps. Would I had never left thee, Paradise of my heart! Would I had never tasted the fruit of the tree of knowledge, which, though golden to the eye, turns to ashes on the lips!

When Ernest urged me to appoint a period for our marriage, I was startled—alarmed. I thought not of hastening to my destiny quite so soon. I was too young. I must wait at least two years before assuming the responsibilities of a wife.

"Two years!—two centuries!" he exclaimed. "Why should we wait? I have wealth, which woos you to enjoy it. I have arrived at the fulness of manhood, and you are in the rosetime of your life. Why should we wait? For circumstances to divide,—for time to chill,—or death to destroy? No, no; when you gave me your heart, you gave me yourself; and I claim you as my own, without formal scruples or unnecessary delay."

Mrs. Linwood exerted all her eloquence with her son to induce him to defer the union at least one year, till I had seen something of the world,—till I was better acquainted with my own heart.

"Yes! wait till she loses the freshness and simplicity that won me,—the sweetness and ingenuousness that enchained me!" he cried impetuously. "Wait till she has been flattered and spoiled by a vain and deceiving world; till she learns to prize the admiration of many better than the true love of one; till she becomes that tinsel thing my soul abhors, a false and worldly woman. No! give her to me now," he added, clasping me to his heart with irresistible tenderness and passion. "Give her to me now, in the bloom of her innocence, the flower of her youth, and I will enshrine her in my heart as in a crystal vase, which they must break to harm her."

The strong love and the strong will united were not to be opposed. Mrs. Linwood was forced to yield; and when once her consent was given, mine was supposed to be granted. She wished the wedding to be consummated in the city, in a style consistent with his splendid fortune, and then our rank in society; and therefore proposed the first month in winter, when they usually took possession of their habitation in town.

He objected to this with all the earnestness of which he was master. It was sacrilege, he said, to call in a gazing world, to make a mockery of the holiest feelings of the heart, and to crush under an icy mountain of ceremony the spontaneous flowers of nature and of love. He detested fashionable crowds on any occasion, and most of all on this. Let it be at Grandison Place, the cradle of his love, in the glorious time of the harvest-moon, that mellow, golden season, when the earth wraps herself as the

> "Sacred bride of heaven,
> Worthy the passion of a God."

So entirely did I harmonize with him in his preference for Grandison Place, that I was willing the time should be anticipated, for the sake of the retirement and tranquillity secured.

Madge Wildfire had returned to the city, declaring that lovers were the most selfish and insipid people in the world,—that she was tired of flirting with Ursa Major, as she called Mr. Regulus,—tired of teazing Dr. Harlowe,—tired of the country and of herself.

The night before she left, she came to me in quite a subdued mood.

"I am really sorry you are going to be married," she cried. "If I were you, I would not put on chains before I had tasted the sweets of liberty. Only think, you have not come out yet, as the protégée of the rich, the aristocratic Mrs. Linwood. What a sensation you would make in Boston next winter if you had sense enough to preserve your freedom. Ernest Linwood knows well enough what he is about, when he hastens the wedding so vehemently. He knows, if you once go into the world, you will be surrounded by admirers who may eclipse and supplant him. But I tell thee one thing, my dear creature, you will have no chance to shine as a belle, as the wife of Ernest. If he does not prove a second Bluebeard, my name is not Meg the Dauntless."

"I detest a married belle," I answered with warmth. "The woman who aims at such a distinction is false, heartless, and unprincipled. I would bless the watching love that shielded me from a name so odious."

"It is a mighty fine thing to be loved, I suppose," said Meg with a resounding laugh, "but I know nothing about it and never shall. Mamma and Mrs. Linwood are great friends, you know, or have been; and mamma thought it would be wondrous fine for young Miss Hopeful to captivate Mr. Splendidus. But he did not *take*. I did not suit his delicate nerves. Well, I wish you joy, my precious soul. He loves you, there is no doubt of that. He never sees, never looks at any one else. If you speak, he is all ear; if you move, all eye. I wonder how it will be a year hence,—ha, ha!"

Her laugh grated on my nerves, but I concealed the irritation it caused, for it was useless to be angry with Meg. She must have had a heart, for she was a woman, but the avenue to it was impervious. It was still an untravelled wilderness, and bold must be the explorer who dared to penetrate its luxuriant depths.

Circumstances connected with the property bequeathed by his uncle, made it indispensable that Ernest should be in New York the coming winter; and he made arrangements to pass our first bridal season in the great empire city. He wrote to a friend resident there, to engage a house and have it furnished for our reception.

"For never," said he, "will I carry bride of mine, to make her home in a fashionable hotel. I would as soon plunge her in the roaring vortex on Norway's coast."

"And must we be separated from your mother and Edith?" I asked, trembling at the thought of being removed from Mrs. Linwood's maternal counsels and cares; "will they not share our bridal home?"

"I would have the early days of our married life sacred even from their participation," he answered, with that eloquence of the eye which no woman's heart could resist. "I would have my wife learn to rely on me alone for happiness;—to find in my boundless devotion, my unutterable love, an equivalent for all she is called upon to resign. If she cannot consent to this, no spark from heaven has kindled the flame of the altar; the sacrifice is cold, and unworthy of acceptance."

"For myself, I ask nothing, wish for nothing but your companionship," I answered, with the fervor of truth and youth, "but I was thinking of them, whom I shall rob of a son and brother so inexpressibly dear."

"We shall meet next summer in these lovely shades. We shall all be happy together once more. In the mean time, all the elegancies and luxuries that love can imagine and wealth supply shall be yours,—

> "Nay, dearest, nay, if thou wouldst have me paint
> The home to which, if love fulfils its prayers,
> This hand would lead thee, listen,"—

And taking me by the hand, he led me out into the beautiful avenue in which we had so often wandered, and continued, in the words of that charming play which he had read aloud in the early days of our acquaintance, with a thrilling expression which none but himself could give—

> "We'll have no friends
> That are not lovers; no ambition, save
> To excel them all in love; we'll read no books
> That are not tales of love; that we may smile
> To think how poorly eloquence of words
> Translates the poetry of hearts like ours!
> And when night comes, amidst the breathless heavens,
> We'll guess what star shall be our home when love
> Becomes immortal; while the perfumed light
> Steals through the mists of alabaster lamps,
> And every air be heavy with the sighs
> Of orange groves, and music from sweet lutes,
> And murmurs of low fountains, that gush forth
> I' the midst of roses!"

"Dost thou like the picture?"

How could I help answering, in the words of the impassioned Pauline,—

"Was ever young imaginative girl wooed in strains of sweeter romance?"

Was there ever a fairer prospect of felicity, if love, pure, intense love, constitutes the happiness of wedded life?

I will not swell these pages by describing the village wonder and gossip, when it was known that the orphan girl of the old gray cottage was exalted to so splendid a destiny; nor the congratulations of friends; the delight and exultation of Dr. Harlowe, who said he had discovered it all by my pulse long before; nor the deeply interesting and characteristic scene with Mr. Regulus; nor the parting interview with Mrs. Linwood and Edith.

Yes, I will give a brief sketch of the last hour spent with Edith, the night before the wedding. We were to be married in the morning, and immediately commence our bridal journey.

Edith had never alluded to her own feelings respecting her brother's marriage, since the evening of the only misunderstanding we ever had in our sisterly intercourse; and it was a subject I could not introduce. The delicate, gauzy reserve in which she enfolded herself was as impenetrable to me as an ancient warrior's armor.

Now, when the whole household was wrapped in silence, and the lamps extinguished, and I sat in my night robe in the recess of the window, she came and sat down beside me. We could see each other's faces by the silver starlight It glittered on the tear drops in the eyes of both. I put my arms around her, and, laying my head on her bosom, poured out all the love, gratitude, and affection with which my full heart was burdened.

"Forgive me, my beloved Gabriella," she cried, "my apparent coldness and estrangement. On my knees I have asked forgiveness of my heavenly Father. With my arms round your neck, and your heart next mine, I ask forgiveness of you. Try not to think less of me for the indulgence of a too selfish and exacting spirit, but remember me as the poor little cripple, who for years found her brother's arm her strength and her stay, and learned to look up to him as the representative of Providence, as the protecting angel of her life. Only make him happy, my own dear sister, and I will yield him, not to your stronger, but your equal love. His only fault is loving you too well, in depreciating too much his own transcendent powers. You cannot help being happy with *him*, with a being so noble and refined. If he ever wounds you by suspicion and jealousy, bear all, and

forgive all, for the sake of his exceeding love,—for my sake, Gabriella, and for the sake of the dear Redeemer who died for love of you."

Dear, lovely, angelic Edith! noble, inestimable Mrs. Linwood!—dearly beloved home of my orphan years,—grave of my mother, farewell!

Farewell!—the bride of Ernest must not, cannot weep.

CHAPTER XXXI.

The early portion of my married life was more like a dream of heaven than a reality of earth. All, and *more* than I had ever imagined of wedded happiness, I realized. The intimate and constant companionship of such a being as Ernest, so intellectual, so refined, so highly gifted, so loving and impassioned, was a privilege beyond the common destiny of women. A hundred times I said to myself in the exultant consciousness of joy,—

"How little his mother knows him! The jealousy of the lover has yielded to the perfect confidence of the husband. Our hearts are now too closely entwined for the shadow of a cloud to pass between them. He says himself, that it would be impossible ever to doubt a love so pure and so entire as mine."

Our home was as retired as it was possible to be in the heart of a great metropolis. It was near one of those beautiful parks which in summer give such an aspect of life and purity to surrounding objects, with their grassy lawns, graceful shade trees, and fountains of silvery brightness playing in the sunshine, and diffusing such a cool, delicious atmosphere, in the midst of heat, dust, and confusion. In winter, even, these parks give inexpressible relief to the eye, and freedom to the mind, that shrinks from the compression of high brick walls, and longs for a more expanded view of the heavens than can be obtained through turreted roofs, that seem to meet as they tower.

It made but little difference to me now, for my heaven was within. The external world, of which I believed myself wholly independent, seemed but a shell enclosing the richness and fragrance of our love. The luxuries and elegancies of my own home were prized chiefly as proofs of Ernest's watchful and generous love.

The friend to whom he had written to prepare a residence, was fortunate in securing one which he believed exactly suited to his fastidious and classic taste. A gentleman of fortune had just completed and furnished an elegant establishment, when unexpected circumstances compelled him to leave his country to be absent several years.

I do not think Ernest would have fitted up our bridal home in so showy and magnificent a style; but his love for the beautiful and graceful was gratified, and he was pleased with my enthusiastic admiration and delight.

I sometimes imagined myself in an enchanted palace, when wandering through the splendid suite of apartments adorned with such oriental luxury. The gentleman whose taste had presided over the building of the mansion, had travelled all over Europe, and passed several years in the East. He had brought home with him the richest and rarest models of Eastern architecture, and fashioned his own mansion after them. Ernest had not purchased it, for the owner was not willing to sell; he was anxious, however, to secure occupants who would appreciate its elegance, and guard it from injury.

Ah! little did I think when eating my bread and milk from the china bowl bordered by flowers, when a silver spoon seemed something grand and massy in the midst of general poverty, that I should ever be the mistress of such a magnificent mansion. I had thought Grandison Place luxuriously elegant; but what was it compared to this? How shall I begin to describe it? or shall I describe it at all? I always like myself to know how to localize a friend, to know their surroundings and realities, and all that fills up the picture of their life. A friend! Have I made friends of my readers? I trust there are some who have followed the history of Gabriella Lynn with sufficient interest, to wish to learn something of her experience of the married life.

Come, then, with me, and I will devote this chapter to a palace, which might indeed fulfil the prayers of the most princely love.

This beautiful apartment, adorned with paintings and statues of the most exquisite workmanship, is a reception room, from which you enter the parlor and find yourself winding through fluted pillars of ingrained marble, from the centre of which curtains of blue and silver, sweeping back and wreathing the columns, form an arch beneath which queens might be proud to walk. The walls are glittering with silver and blue, and all the decorations of the apartment exhibit the same beautiful union. The ceiling above is painted in fresco, where cherubs, lovely as the dream of love, spread their wings of silvery tinted azure and draw their fairy bows.

Passing through this glittering colonnade into a kind of airy room, you pause on the threshold, imagining yourself in a fairy grotto. We will suppose it moonlight; for it was by moonlight I first beheld this enchanting scene. We arrived at night, and Ernest conducted me himself through a home which appeared to me more like a dream of the imagination than a creation of man. I saw

that *he* was surprised; that he was unprepared for such elaborate splendor. He had told his friend to spare no expense; but he was not aware that any one had introduced such Asiatic magnificence into our cities. I believe I will describe my own first impressions, instead of anticipating yours.

The mellowness of autumn still lingered in the atmosphere,—for the season of the harvest-moon is the most beautiful in the world. The glorious orb illumined the fairy grotto with a radiance as intense as the noonday sun's. It clothed the polished whiteness of the marble statues with a drapery of silver, sparkled on the fountain's tossing wreaths, converted the spray that rose from the bosom of the marble basin below into a delicate web of silver lace-work, and its beams, reflected from walls of looking-glass, multiplied, to apparent infinity, fountains, statues, trees, and flowers, till my dazzled eyes could scarcely distinguish the shadow from the substance. The air was perfumed with the delicious odor of tropic blossoms, and filled with the sweet murmurs of the gushing fountain.

"Oh! how beautiful! how enchanting!" I exclaimed, in an ecstasy of admiration. "This must be ideal. Reality never presented any thing so brilliant, so exquisite as this. Oh, Ernest, surely this is a place to dream of, not a home to live in?"

"It does, indeed," he answered, "transcend my expectations; but if it pleases your eye, Gabriella, it cannot go beyond my wishes."

"Oh yes, it delights my eye, but my heart asked nothing but you. I fear you will never know how well I love you, in the midst of such regal splendor. If you ever doubt me, Ernest, take me to that island home you once described, and you will there learn that on you, and you alone, I rely for happiness."

He believed me. I knew he did; for he drew me to his bosom, and amid a thousand endearing protestations, told me he did not believe it possible ever to doubt a love, which irradiated me at that moment, as the moon did the Fairy Grotto.

He led me around the marble basin that received the waters of the fountain, and which was margined by sea-shells, from which luxuriant flowers were gushing, and explained the beautiful figures standing so white, so "coldly sweet, so deadly fair," in the still and solemn moonlight. I knew the history of each statue as he named them, but I questioned him, that I might have the delight of hearing his charming and poetic descriptions.

"Is this a daughter of Danaus?" I asked, stopping before a young and exquisitely lovely female, holding up to the fountain an urn, through whose perforated bottom the waters seemed eternally dripping.

"It is."

"Is it Hypermestra, the only one of all the fifty who had a woman's heart, punished by her father for rescuing her husband from the awful doom which her obedient sisters so cruelly inflicted on theirs."

"I believe it is one of the savage forty-nine, who were condemned by the judges of the infernal regions to fill bottomless vessels with water, through the unending days of eternity. She does not look much like a bride of blood, does she, with that face of softly flowing contour, and eye of patient anguish? I suppose filial obedience was considered a more divine virtue than love, or the artist would not thus have beautified and idealized one of the most revolting characters in mythology. I do not like to dwell on this image. It represents woman in too detestable a light. May we not be pardoned for want of implicit faith in her angelic nature, when such examples are recorded of her perfidy and heartlessness?"

"But she is a fabulous being, Ernest."

"Fables have their origin in truth, my Gabriella. Cannot you judge, by the shadow, of the form that casts it? The mythology of Greece and Rome shows what estimate was placed on human character at the time it was written. The attributes of men and women were ascribed to gods and goddesses, and by their virtues and crimes we may judge of the moral tone of ancient society. Had there been no perfidious wives, the daughters of Danaus had never been born of the poet's brain, and embodied by the sculptor's hand. Had woman always been as true as she is fair, Venus had never risen from the foam of imagination, or floated down the tide of time in her dove-drawn car, giving to mankind an image of beauty and frailty that is difficult for him to separate, so closely are they intertwined."

"Yes," said I, reproachfully, "and had woman never been forsaken and betrayed, we should never have heard of the fair, deserted Ariadne, or the beautiful and avenging Medea. Had man never been false to his vows, we should never have been told of the jealous anger of Juno, or the poisoned garment prepared by the hapless Dejarnira. Ah! this is lovely!"

"Do you not recognize a similitude to the flower-girl of the library? This is Flora herself, whose marble hands are dripping with flowers, and whose lips, white and voiceless as they are, are wearing the sweetness and freshness of eternal youth. Do you not trace a resemblance to yourself in those pure and graceful features, which, even in marble, breathe the eloquence of love? How charmingly the moonbeams play upon her brow! how lovingly they linger on her neck of snow!"

He paused, while the murmurs of the fountain seemed to swell to supply the music of his voice. Then he passed on to a lovely Bachanter with ivy and vine wreaths on her clustering locks, to a Hebe catching crystal drops instead of nectar in her lifted cup; and then we turned and looked at all these classic figures reflected in the mural mirrors and at the myriad fountains tossing their glittering wreaths, and at the myriad basins receiving the cooling showers.

"I only regret," said Ernest, "that I had not designed all this expressly for your enjoyment; that the taste of another furnished the banquet at which your senses are now revelling."

"But I owe it all to you. You might as well sigh to be the sculptor of the statues, the Creator of the flowers. Believe me, I am sufficiently grateful. My heart could not bear a greater burden of gratitude."

"Gratitude!" he repeated, "Gabriella, as you value my love, never speak to me of gratitude. It is the last feeling I wish to inspire. It may be felt for a benefactor, a superior, but not a lover and a husband."

"But when all these characters are combined in one, what language can we use to express the full, abounding heart? Methinks mine cannot contain, even now, the emotions that swell it almost to suffocation, I am not worthy of so much happiness. It is greater than I can bear."

I leaned my head on his shoulder, and tears and smiles mingling together relieved the oppression of my grateful, blissful heart. I really felt too happy. The intensity of my joy was painful, from its excess.

"This is yours," said he, as we afterwards stood in an apartment whose vaulted ceiling, formed of ground crystal and lighted above by gas, resembled the softest lustre of moonlight. The hangings of the beds and windows were of the richest azure-colored satin, fringed with silver, which seemed the livery of the mansion.

"And this is yours," he added, lifting a damask curtain, which fell over a charming little recess that opened into a beautiful flower bed. "This is a kiosk, where you can sit in the moonlight and make garlands of poetry, which Regulus cannot wither."

"How came you so familiar with the mysteries of this enchanted palace? Is it not novel to you, as well as to me?"

"Do you not recollect that I left you at the hotel for a short time, after our arrival? I accompanied my friend hither, and received from him the clue to these magic apartments. This is a bathing-room," said he, opening one, where a marble bath and ewer, and every luxurious appliance reminded one of Eastern luxury. Even the air had a soft languor in it, as if perfumed breaths had mingled there.

"I should like to see the former mistress of this palace," said I, gazing round with a bewildered smile; "she was probably some magnificent Eastern sultana who reclined under that royal canopy, and received sherbet from the hands of kneeling slaves. She little dreamed of the rustic successor who would tread her marble halls, and revel in the luxuries prepared for her."

"She was a very elegant and intellectual woman, I am told," replied Ernest, "who accompanied her husband in his travels, and assisted him in every enterprise, by the energy of her mind and the constancy of her heart, and whose exquisite taste directed the formation of this graceful structure. She painted the frescos on the ceiling of the boudoir, and that richly tinted picture of an Italian sunset is the work of her hand. This house and its decorations are not as costly as many others in this city, but it has such an air of Asiatic magnificence it produces an illusion on the eye. I wish, myself, it was not quite so showy, but it makes such a charming contrast to the simplicity and freshness of your character I cannot wish it otherwise."

"I fear I shall be spoiled. I shall imagine myself one of those dark-eyed houris, who dwell in the bowers of paradise and welcome the souls of the brave."

"That is no inappropriate comparison," said he; "but you must not believe me an Eastern satrap, Gabriella, who dares not enter his wife's apartment without seeing the signal of admittance at the door. Here is another room opening into this; and pressing a spring, a part of the dividing walls slid back, revealing an apartment of similar dimensions, and furnished with equal elegance.

"This," added he, "was arranged by the master of the mansion for his own accommodation. Here is his library, which seems a mass of burnished gold, from the splendid binding of the books. By certain secret springs the light can be so graduated in this room, that you can vary it from the softest twilight to the full blaze of day."

"The Arabian Nights dramatized!" I exclaimed. "I fear we are walking over trap-doors, whose secret mouths are ready to yawn on the unsuspecting victim."

"Beware then, Gabriella,—I may be one of the genii, whose terrible power no mortal can evade, who can read the thoughts of the heart as easily as the printed page. How would you like to be perused so closely?"

"Would that you could read every thought of my heart, Ernest, every emotion of my soul, then you would know, what words can never express,—the height and depth of my love and devotion—I will not *say* gratitude—since you reject and disown it,—but that I must ever feel. Can I ever forget the generosity, the magnanimity, which, overlooking the cloud upon my birth, has made me the

sharer of your princely destiny, the mistress of a home like this?"

"You do not care for it, only as the expression of my affection; I am sure you do not," he repeated, and his dark gray eye seemed to read the inmost depths of thought.

"Oh, no! a cottage or a palace would be alike to me, provided you are near me. It seems to me now as if I should awake in the morning, and find I had been in a dream. I am not sure that you have not a magic ring on your finger that produces this illusion."

But the morning sunbeams flashed on the softly murmuring fountain, on the white polished forms of the Grecian myths, on the trailing luxuriance of the tropic blossoms. They glanced in on the glittering drapery that wreathed the marble columns, and lighted the crystal dome over my head with a mild, subdued radiance.

A boudoir which I had not seen the evening before elicited my morning admiration,—it was furnished with such exquisite elegance, and contained so many specimens of the fine arts. Two rosewood cabinets, inlaid with pearl, were filled with *chefs-d'[oe]uvres* from the hands of masters, collected in the old world. They were locked; but through the glass doors I could gaze and admire, and make them all my own. An elegant escritoire was open on the table, the only thing with which I could associate the idea of utility. Yes, there was a harp, that seemed supported by a marble cherub,—a most magnificent instrument. I sighed to think it was useless to me; but Ernest's hand would steal music from its silent strings.

And now behold me installed as mistress of this luxurious mansion, an utter stranger in the heart of a great metropolis!

It was now that I understood the reserve of Ernest's character. It was impossible that we should remain altogether strangers, living in a style which wealth only could sanction. Mr. Harland, the gentleman with whom Ernest had corresponded, moved in the circles of fashion and distinction, and he introduced his friends and acquaintances, being himself a frequent and agreeable visitor. Ernest received our guest with elegance and politeness,—these attributes were inseparable from himself,—but there was a coldness and reserve that seemed to forbid all approach to intimacy. Fearful of displeasing him, I repressed the natural frankness and social warmth of my nature, and I am sure our visitors often departed, chilled and disappointed. The parlor was lined with mirrors, and I could not turn without seeing myself reflected on every side; and not only myself, but an eye that watched my every movement, and an ear that drank in my every word. How could I feel at ease, or do justice to those powers of pleasing with which nature may have gifted me?

Sometimes, though very seldom, Ernest was not present; and then my spirits rebounded from this unnatural constraint, and I laughed and talked like other people. The youthful brightness of my feelings flashed forth, and I forgot that a *clouded star* presided over my young life.

CHAPTER XXXII.

I would not give the impression that, at this time, I felt hurt at the coldness and reserve of Ernest, as exhibited in society. I was fearful of displeasing him by showing too much pleasure in what did not appear to interest him; but when the door was closed on the departing guest and he exclaimed,—

"Thank heaven! we are once more alone!"

I could not help echoing the sentiment which brought us so close to each other, and rejoiced with him that formality and restraint no longer interfered with the freedom of love and the joys of home. He never appeared so illumined with intellect, so glowing with feeling, as in moments like these; and I was flattered that a mind so brilliant, and a heart so warm, reserved their brightness and their warmth for me. If he was happy with me, and me only, how supremely blest should I be, with a companion so intellectual and fascinating! If Edith were but near, so that I could say to her occasionally, "How happy I am!" if Mrs. Linwood were with me to know that nothing had yet arisen to disturb the heaven of our wedded happiness; if excellent Dr. Harlowe could only call in once in a while, with his pleasant words and genial smiles; or kindly feeling, awkward Mr. Regulus, I should not have a wish ungratified.

It is true I sometimes wished I had something to do, but we had supernumerary servants, and if I found any employment it must have been similar to that of Jack the bean-boy, who poured his beans on the floor and then picked them up again. I was fond of sewing. But the wardrobe of a young bride is generally too well supplied; at least mine was, to admit of much exercise with the needle. I was passionately fond of reading, and of hearing Ernest read; and many an hour every day was devoted to books. But the mind, like the body, can digest only a certain quantity of food, and is oppressed by an excessive portion.

Had Ernest welcomed society, our superb parlor would have been thronged with nightly guests; but he put up bars of ceremony against such intrusion; polished silver they were, it is true, but they were felt to be heavy and strong. He never visited himself, that is, socially. He paid formal calls, as he would an inevitable tax, rejoicing when the wearisome task was over; out beyond the limits of ceremony he could not be persuaded to pass.

Gradually our evening visitors became few,—the cold season advanced, the fountain ceased to play in the grotto, and the beautiful flowers were inclosed in the green-house.

Our rooms were warmed by furnaces below, which diffused a summer temperature through the house. In mine, the heat came up through an exquisite Etruscan vase, covered with flowers, which seemed to emit odor as well as warmth, and threw the illusion of spring over the dullness and gloom of winter. But I missed the glowing hearth of Mrs. Linwood, the brightness and heartiness of her winter fireside.

I never shall forget how I started with horror, when I was conscious of a feeling of *ennui*, even in the presence of Ernest. It was not possible I should be weary of the joys of heaven, if I were capable of sighing in my own Eden bower. I tried to banish the impression; it WOULD return, and with it self-reproach and shame.

If Ernest had not been lifted by wealth above the necessity of exertion; had he been obliged to exercise the talents with which he was so liberally endowed for his own support and the benefit of mankind; had he some profession which compelled him to mingle in the world, till the too exquisite edge of his sensibilities were blunted by contact with firmer, rougher natures, what a blessing it would have been! With what pride would I have seen him go forth to his daily duties, sure that he was imparting and receiving good. With what rapture would I have welcomed his returning footstep!

Oh! had he been a *poor* man, he would have been a *great* man. He was not obliged to toil, either physically or mentally; and indolence is born of luxury, and morbid sensibility luxuriates in the lap of indolence. Forms of beauty and grandeur wait in the marble quarry for the hand of genius and skill. Ingots of gold sleep in the mine, till the explorer fathoms its depths and brings to light the hidden treasures. Labor is the slave of the lamp of life, who alone keeps its flame from waxing dim. When a child, I looked upon poverty as man's greatest curse; but I now thought differently. To feel that every wish is gratified, every want supplied, is almost as dreary as to indulge the wish, and experience the want, without the means of satisfying the cravings of one or the urgency of the other.

Had Ernest been a poor man, he would not have had time to think unceasingly of me. His mind would have been occupied with sterner thoughts and more exalted cares. But rich as he was, I longed to see him live for something nobler than personal enjoyment, to know that he possessed a higher aim than love for me. I did not feel worthy to fill the capacities of that noble heart. I wanted him to love me less, that I might have something more to desire.

"Of what are you thinking so deeply, sweet wife?" he asked, when I had been unconsciously indulging in a long, deep reverie. "What great subject knits so severely that fair young brow?" he repeated, sitting by me, and taking my hand in his.

I blushed, for my thoughts were making bold excursions.

"I was thinking," I answered, looking bravely in his face, "what a blessed thing it must be to do good, to have the will as well as the power to bless mankind."

"Tell me what scheme of benevolence my little philanthropist is forming. What mighty engine would she set in motion to benefit her species?"

"I was thinking how happy a person must feel, who was able to establish an asylum for the blind or the insane, a hospital for the sick, or a home for the orphan. I was thinking how delightful it would be to go out into the byways of poverty, the abodes of sickness and want, and bid their inmates follow me, where comfort and ease and plenty awaited them. I was thinking, if I were a man, how I would love to be called the friend and benefactor of mankind; but, being a woman, how proud and happy I should be to follow in the footsteps of such a good and glorious being, and hear the blessings bestowed upon his name."

I spoke with earnestness, and my cheeks glowed with enthusiasm. I felt the clasp of his hand tighten as he drew me closer to his side.

"You have been thinking," he said, in his peculiarly grave, melodious accents, "that I am leading a self-indulging, too luxurious life?"

"Not you—not you alone, dearest Ernest; but both of us," I cried, feeling a righteous boldness, I did not dream that I possessed. "Do not the purple and the fine linen of luxury enervate the limbs which they clothe? Is there no starving Lazarus, who may rebuke us hereafter for the sumptuous fare over which we have revelled? I know how generous, how compassionate you are; how ready you are to relieve the sufferings brought before your eye; but how little we witness here! how few opportunities we have of doing good! Ought they not to be sought? May they not be found everywhere in this great thoroughfare of humanity?"

"You shall find my purse as deep as your charities, my lovely monitress," he answered, while his countenance beamed with approbation. "My bounty as boundless as your desires. But, in a great city like this, it is difficult to distinguish between willing degradation and meritorious poverty. You could not go into the squalid dens of want and sin, without soiling the whiteness of your spirit, by familiarity with scenes which I would not have you conscious of passing in the world. There are those who go about as missionaries of good among the lowest dregs of the populace, whom you can employ as agents for your bounty. There are benevolent associations, through which your charities can flow in full and refreshing streams. Remember, I place no limits to your

generosities. As to your magnificent plans of establishing asylums and public institutions for the lame, the halt, and the blind, perhaps my single means might not be able to accomplish them,—delightful as it would be to have an angel following in my footsteps, and binding up the wounds of suffering humanity."

He smiled with radiant good-humor at my Quixotic schemes. Then he told me, that since he had been in the city he had given thousands to the charitable associations which spread in great lifegiving veins through every part of the metropolis.

"You think I am living in vain, my Gabriella," he said, rising and walking the length of the splendid apartment and again returning, "because I do not have my allotted daily task to perform; because I do not go forth, like the lawyer, with a green bag under my arm; like the minister, with a sermon in my pocket; or the doctor, with powders and pills. If necessity imposed such tasks on me, I suppose I should perform them with as good a grace as the rest; but surely it would ill become me to enter the lists with my needier brethren, and take the bread from their desiring lips. Every profession is crowded. Even woman is pressing into the throng, and claiming precedence of man, in the great struggle of life. It seems to me, that it is the duty of those on whom fortune has lavished her gifts, to step aside and give room to others, who are less liberally endowed. We *may* live in luxury; but by so doing, our wealth is scattered among the multitude, the useful arts are encouraged, and much is done for the establishment of that golden mean, which reason and philosophy have so long labored to secure."

As he thus spoke calmly, yet energetically, moving back and forth under the arches of glittering azure, his pale, transparent complexion lighted up glowingly. My eyes followed him with exulting affection. I wondered at the presumption of which I had been guilty. He had been doing good in secret, while I imagined him forgetful of the sacred legacy, left by Christ to the rich. I had wronged him in thought, and I told him so.

"You asked me of what I was thinking," I said, "and you draw my thoughts from me as by magic. I have not told you all. *I* do not sigh for other society; but I fear you will become weary of mine."

"Do we ever weary of moonlight, or the sweet, fresh air of heaven? No, Gabriella; remain just as you are, ingenuous, confiding, and true, and I desire no other companionship. You so entirely fill my heart, there is no room for more. You never have had, never will have a rival. You have a power over me, such as woman seldom, exercises over man. Love, with most men, is the pastime and gladdener of life; with me it is life itself. A fearful responsibility is resting on you, my own, dear bride; but do not tremble. I do not think it is possible for you to deceive me, for you are truth itself. I begin to think you have changed my nature, and inspired me with trust and confidence in all mankind."

I did not make any professions, any promises, in answer to his avowal; but if ever a fervent prayer rose from the human heart, it ascended from mine, that I might prove worthy of this trust, that I might preserve it unblemished, with a constant reference to the eye that cannot be deceived, and the judgment that cannot err.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

The first misfortune of my married life, came in the person of Margaret Melville. She burst into the boudoir one morning like a young tornado, seizing me in her strong arms, and giving me a shower of kisses, before I had time to recover from my astonishment.

Ernest and myself were seated side by side by the escritoire. He was reading,—I was writing to Edith, little dreaming of the interruption at hand.

"My dear creature," she exclaimed, with one of her inimitable ringing laughs, "how *do* you *do*? You didn't think of seeing me, I know you didn't. Where did I come from? I dropped down from the upper regions,—you do not believe that. Well, I came with a party of friends, who wanted me to keep them alive. They are stopping at the Astor House. By the way, my trunks are there,—you may send for them as soon as you please. (Her trunks! she had come for a long visit, then!) There is my bonnet, mantilla, and gloves,—here *I* am, body and soul,—what a glorious lounge,—good old Cr[oe]sus, what a palace you are in,—I never saw any thing so magnificent! Why, this is worth getting married for! If I ever marry, it shall be to a rich man, and one who will let me do just as I please, too."

Ernest in vain endeavored to conceal his vexation at this unexpected innovation on the elegant quietude and romantic seclusion of our home. His countenance expressed it but too plainly, and Margaret, careless as she was, must have observed it. It did not appear to disconcert her, however. She had not waited for an invitation,—she did not trouble herself about a welcome. She had come for her own amusement, and provided that was secured, she cared not for our gratification.

I can hardly explain my own feelings. I always dreaded coming in contact with her rudeness; there was no sympathy in our natures, and yet I experienced a sensation of relief while listening to her bubbling and effervescent nonsense. My mind had been kept on so high a tone, there was a strain, a tension, of which I was hardly conscious till the bowstring was slackened. Besides, she

was associated with the recollections of Grandison Place,—she was a young person of my own sex, and she could talk to me of Mrs. Linwood, and Edith, and the friends of my rural life. So I tried to become reconciled to the visitation, and to do the honors of a hostess with as good a grace as possible.

Ernest took refuge in the library from her wild rattling, and then she poured into my ear the idle gossip she had heard the evening before.

"It never will do," she cried, catching a pair of scissors from my work-box, and twirling them on the ends of her fingers at the imminent risk of their flying into my eyes,—"you must put a stop to this Darby and Joan way of living,—you will be the byword of the fashionable world,—I heard several gentlemen talking about you last night. They said your husband was so exclusive and jealous he would not let the sun look upon you if he could help it,—that he had the house lighted through the roof, so that no one could peep at you through the windows. Oh! I cannot repeat half the ridiculous things they said, but I am sure your ears must have burned from the compliments they paid you, at least those who have had the good-luck to catch a glimpse of your face. They all agreed that Ernest was a frightful ogre, who ought to be put in a boiling cauldron, for immuring you so closely,—I am going to tell him so."

"Don't, Margaret, don't! If you have any regard for my feelings, don't, I entreat you, ever repeat one word of this unmeaning gossip to him. He is so peculiarly sensitive, he would shrink still more from social intercourse. What a shame it is to talk of him in this manner. I am sure I have as much liberty as I wish. He is ready to gratify every desire of my heart He has made me the happiest of human beings."

"Oh! I know all that, of course. Who would not be happy in such a palace as this?"

"It is not the splendor with which he has surrounded me," I answered, gravely, "but the love which is my earthly Providence, which constitutes my felicity. You may tell these *busy idlers*, who are so interested in my domestic happiness, that I thank my husband for excluding me from companions so inferior to himself,—so incapable of appreciating the purity and elevation of his character."

"Well, my precious soul, don't be angry with them. You are a jewel of a wife, and I dare say he is a diamond of a husband; but you cannot stop peoples' tongues. They *will* talk when folks set themselves up as exclusives. But let me tell you one thing, my pretty creature!—I am not going to be shut up in a cage while I am here, I assure you. I am determined to see all the lions; go to all fashionable places of amusement, all attractive exhibitions, theatres, concerts, panoramas, every thing that promises the least particle of enjoyment. I shall parade Broadway, frequent Stewart's marble palace, and make myself the belle of the city. And you are to go with me, my dear,—for am I not your guest, and are you not bound to minister to my gratification? As for your ogre, he may go or stay, just as he pleases. There will be plenty who will be glad enough to take his place."

I did not expect that she would have the audacity to say this to Ernest; but she did. I had never asked him to take me to places of public amusement, because I knew he did not wish it. Sometimes, when I saw in the morning papers that a celebrated actor was to appear in a fine drama, my heart throbbed with momentary desire, and my lips opened to express it. But delicacy and pride always restrained its expression. I waited for him to say,—

"Gabriella, would you like to go?"

The morning after her arrival she ransacked the papers, and fastening on the column devoted to amusements, read its contents aloud, to the evident annoyance of Ernest.

"Niblo's Garden, the inimitable Ravels—*La Fête champétre*,—dancing on the tight-rope, etc. Yes, that's it. We will go there to-night, Gabriella. I have been dying to see the Ravels. Cousin Ernest,—you did not know that you were my cousin, did you?—but you are. Our mothers have been climbing the genealogical tree, and discovered our collateral branches. Cousin Ernest, go and get us tickets before the best seats are secured. What an unpromising countenance! Never mind. Mr. Harland said he would be only too happy to attend Gabriella and myself to any place of amusement or party of pleasure. You are not obliged to go, unless you choose. Is he, Gabriella?"

"I certainly should not think of going without him," I answered, vexed to discover how much I really wished to go.

"But you wish to go,—you know you do. Poor, dear little soul! You have never been anywhere,—you have seen nothing,—you live as close and demure as a church mouse,—while this man-monster, who has nothing in the universe to do, from morning till night, but wait upon you and contribute to your gratification, keeps you at home, like a bird in a cage, just to look at and admire. It is too selfish. If *you* will not tell him so, *I* will. He shall hear the truth from somebody."

"Margaret!" I said, frightened at the pale anger of Ernest's countenance.

"You dare not look me in the face and say that you do not wish to go, Gabriella? You know you dare not."

"I desire nothing contrary to my husband's wishes."

"You are a little simpleton, then,—and I don't care what people say. It is a sin to encourage him in

such selfishness and despotism."

She laughed, but her lips curled with scorn.

Ernest took up a pearl paper-cutter from the table, and bent it, till it broke like glass in his fingers. He did not know what he was doing. Madge only laughed the louder. She enjoyed his anger and my trepidation.

"A pretty thing to make a scene of!" she exclaimed. "Here I come all the way from Boston to make you a visit,—expecting you would do every thing to make me happy, as other folks do, when friends visit them. I propose a quiet, respectable amusement, in my own frank, go-ahead way,—and lo!—my lord frowns, and my lady trembles, and both, occupied in watching each other's emotions, forget they have a guest to entertain, as well as a friend to gratify."

"You might wait till I have refused to accompany you, Miss Melville," said Ernest, in a cold, calm voice. "You know me incapable of such rudeness. But I cannot allow even a lady to make such unpardonable allusions to my domestic feelings and conduct. If a man cannot find a sanctuary from insult in his own home, he may well bar his doors against intrusion, and if he has the spirit of a man, he will."

"She is only jesting," said I, with a beseeching glance. "You know Madge of old,—she never says any thing she really thinks. How can you be excited by any remarks of hers?"

"Cousin Ernest," cried Madge, while the *laughing devil* in her great black eyes tried to shrink into a hiding-place, "have you not manliness to forgive me, when the rash humor which my mother gave me makes me forgetful?"

She held out her hand with an ardent desire for reconciliation. She found she had a spirit to contend with, stronger than she imagined; and for the moment she was subdued.

"Not your mother, Margaret," replied Ernest, taking the offered hand with a better grace than I anticipated. "She is gentle and womanly, like my own. I know not whence you derived your wickedness."

"It is all original. I claim the sole credit of it. Father and mother both saints. I am a moral tangent, flying off between them. Well, we are friends again; are we not?"

"We are at peace," he answered. "You know the conditions, now; and I trust will respect them."

"We are all going to Niblo's," she cried eagerly; "that is one condition."

"Certainly," he answered; and he could not help smiling at the adroitness with which she changed positions with him.

"Will you really like to go, Gabriella?" he asked, turning to me; and his countenance beamed with all its wonted tenderness.

"Oh, yes, indeed I will. I am sure it will be delightful."

"And have you ever desired to partake of pleasures, without telling me of your wishes?"

"I do not know that I can call the transient emotion I have felt, a desire," I answered; blushing that I had ever cherished thoughts which I was unwilling to disclose. "I believe curiosity is natural to youth and inexperience."

"Perfect love casteth out fear, Gabriella. You must promise to tell me every wish of your heart; and be assured, if consistent with reason, it shall be gratified."

Delighted at so pleasant a termination to so inauspicious a beginning, I looked forward to the evening's entertainment with bright and elastic spirits. Once, as my eye rested on the fragments of pearl, I sighed to think how easily the pearls of sensibility, as well as all the frail and delicate treasures of life, might be crushed by the hand of passion.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

I was surprised, when I found myself in a lofty dome, brilliantly illuminated by gas, instead of the ample flower-garden my imagination had described. I hardly know what idea I had formed; but I expected to be seated in the open air, in the midst of blossoming plants, and singing birds, and trees, on whose branches variegated lamps were burning. Ernest smiled when I told him of my disappointment.

"So it is with the illusions of life," said he. "They all pass away. The garden which you passed before the entrance, has given its name to the place; and even that, the encroaching steps of business will trample on."

Mr. Harland escorted Meg, who was in exuberant spirits, and as usual attracted the public gaze by her dashing and reckless demeanor. Conspicuous, from her superior height, her large, roving black eyes, and her opera cloak of brilliant cherry color, I felt sheltered from observation in her vicinity, and hoped that Ernest would find I could mingle in public scenes without drawing any

peculiar attention. Indeed, I was so absorbed by the graceful and expressive pantomime, the novelty and variety of the scenic decorations, that I thought not where I was, or who I was. To city dwellers, a description of these would be as unnecessary as uninteresting; but perhaps some young country girl, as inexperienced as myself in fashionable amusements, may like to follow my glowing impressions.

One scene I remember, which had on me the effect of enchantment.

The stage represented one of those rural fêtes, where the peasantry of France gather on the village green, to mingle in the exhilarating dance. An aged couple came forward, hand in hand, in coarse grey overcoats, wooden sabots, and flapped hats, fastened by gray handkerchiefs under their chins. Two tight ropes were stretched parallel to each other, about eight or ten feet above the stage, and extended over the parquette. A light ladder rested against them, on each side. The aged couple tottered to the ladder, and attempted to ascend; but, at the first step, they fell and rolled on the ground.

"Poor creatures!" said I, trembling for their safety. "Why will they make such a ridiculous attempt? Why will not some of the bystanders prevent them, instead of urging them with such exulting shouts?"

"They deserve to suffer for their folly," answered Ernest, laughing. "Age should not ape the agility of youth. Perhaps they will do better than you anticipate."

After repeated attempts and failures, they stood, balancing themselves painfully on the ropes, clinging to each other's hands, and apparently trembling with terror.

"They *will* fall!" I exclaimed, catching hold of Ernest's arm, and covering my eyes. "I cannot bear to look at them. There! how dreadfully they stagger."

Again I covered my eyes, resolved to shut out the catastrophe of their broken necks and mangled limbs,—when thunders of acclamation shook the house; and, looking up, I beheld a transformation that seemed supernatural. The old great-coats, clumsy sabots, and hats, were scattered to the ground; and two youthful figures, glittering in white and silver, light and graceful as "feathered Mercuries," stood, hand in hand, poised on one foot, on the tight-drawn ropes. They danced. I never realized before the music of motion. Now, they floated downwards like softly rolling clouds; then vaulted upwards like two white-winged birds, with sunbeams shining on their plumage. A bright, fearless smile illumined their countenances; their dark, waving locks shone in the dazzling light.

Ernest seemed to enjoy my rapture. "I take more pleasure," he said, "watching your vivid emotions, than in witnessing this wonderfully graceful exhibition. What a perfect child of nature you are, Gabriella. You should thank me for keeping you somewhat aloof from the fascinations of the world. It is only in the shade, that the dew remains on the flower."

I do not think one glance of mine had wandered from the stage, save to meet the eye of Ernest. We sat in the second row of boxes, about half-way distant from the stage and the centre. I knew that every seat was crowded, but I did not observe the occupants. Meg, who cared as much about the audience as the performers, kept her opera-glass busy in gazing on those who were remote, and her own bold, magnificent eyes in examining those in her vicinity.

"Gabriella!" she whispered, "do look at that gentleman in the next box, one seat in advance of us. He has been gazing at you for an hour steadily. Do you know him?"

I shook my head, and made a motion, enjoining silence. I did not think Ernest had heard her, and I did not wish his attention directed towards an impertinence of this kind. It would make him angry, and he seemed to have enjoyed the evening.

"Why don't you look?" again whispered Meg. "He may leave the box. He is certainly trying to magnetize you."

Impelled by growing curiosity, I glanced in the direction she indicated, and met the unreceding gaze of a pair of dark, intense eyes, that seemed to burn in their sockets. Their owner was a gentleman, who appeared about forty years of age, of a very striking figure, and features originally handsome, but wearing the unmistakable stamp of dissipation. I blushed at his bold and steadfast scrutiny, and drew involuntarily nearer to Ernest. Ernest observed his undaunted stare, and his brows contracted over his flashing eyes. The gentleman, perceiving this, turned towards the stage, and seemed absorbed in admiration of the graceful and inimitable Ravels.

"Scoundrel!" muttered Ernest, leaning forward so as to interpose a barrier to his insolence.

"Did you speak to me, cousin Ernest?" asked Meg, with affected simplicity.

He made no reply; and as the stranger did not turn again, I became so interested in the performance as to forget his bold ness. During the interlude between the plays, I begged Ernest to get me a glass of water. Meg made the same request of Mr. Harland, and for a short time we were left alone.

The moment the gentlemen had left the box, the stranger rose and stepped into the box behind him, which brought him on a line with us, and close to me, as I was seated next to the partition. I did not look him in the face; but I could not help being conscious of his movements, and of the probing gaze he again fixed on me. I wished I had not asked for the water. I could have borne the

faintness and oppression caused by the odor of the gas better than that dark, unshrinking glance. I dreaded the anger of Ernest on his return. I feared he would openly resent an insolence so publicly and perseveringly displayed. We were side by side, with only the low partition of the boxes between us, so near that I felt his burning breath on my cheek,—a breath in which the strong perfume of orris-root could not overcome the fumes of the narcotic weed. I tried to move nearer Meg, but her back was partially turned to me, in the act of conversing with some gentleman who had just entered the box, and she was planted on her seat firm as a marble statue.

The stranger's hand rested on the partition, and a note fell into my lap.

"Conceal this from your husband," said a low, quick voice, scarcely above a whisper, "or his life shall be the forfeit as well as mine."

As he spoke, he lifted his right hand, exhibiting a miniature in its palm, in golden setting. One moment it flashed on my gaze, then vanished, but that glance was enough. I recognized the lovely features of my mother, though blooming with youth, and beaming with hope and joy.

To snatch up the note and hide it in my bosom, was an act as instinctive as the beating of my heart. It was my father, then, from whose scorching gaze I had been shrinking with such unutterable dread and loathing,—the being whom she had once so idolatrously loved, whom in spite of her wrongs she continued to love,—the being who had destroyed her peace, broken her heart, and laid her in a premature grave—the being whom her dying lips commanded me to forgive, whom her prophetic dream warned me to protect from unknown danger. My father! I had imagined him dead, so many years had elapsed since my mother's flight. I had thought of him as a fabulous being. I dreamed not of encountering him, and if I had, I should have felt secure, for how could he recognize *me*? My father! cold and sick I turned away, shivering with indescribable apprehension. He had destroyed my mother,—he had come to destroy me. That secret note,—that note which I was to conceal, or meet so awful a penalty, seemed to scorch the bosom that throbbed wildly against its folds.

All that I have described occurred in the space of a few moments. Before Ernest returned, the stranger had resumed his seat,—(I cannot, oh, I cannot call him *father*,)—and there was no apparent cause for my unconquerable emotion. Meg, who was laughing and talking with her companions, had observed nothing. The secret was safe, on which I was told two lives depended. Two,—I might say *three*, since one was the life of Ernest.

I attempted to take the glass of water, but my hand shook so I could not hold it. I dared not look in the face of Ernest, lest he should read in mine all that had occurred.

"What is the matter?" he asked, anxiously. "Gabriella, has any thing alarmed you during my absence?"

"The odor of the gas sickens me," I answered, evading the question; "if you are willing, I should like to return home."

"You seem strangely affected in crowds," said he, in an undertone, and bending on me a keen, searching glance. "I remember on commencement day you were similarly agitated."

"I do indeed seem destined to suffer on such occasions," I answered, a sharp pang darting through my heart. I read suspicion in his altered countenance. The flower leaves were beginning to wither. "If Miss Melville is willing, I should like to return."

"What is that you say about going home?" cried Meg, turning quickly round. "What in the world is this, Gabriella? You look as if you had seen a ghost!"

"Whatever she has seen, it is probable you have been equally favored, Miss Melville, since you were together," said Ernest, in the same cold undertone. The orchestra was playing a magnificent overture, there was laughter and merriment around us, so the conversation in our box was not over-heard.

"I!" exclaimed Meg. "I have not seen any thing but one sociable looking neighbor. I should not wonder if his eyes had blistered her face, they have been glowing on her so intensely."

As she raised her voice, the stranger turned his head, and again I met them,—those strange, basilisk eyes. They seemed to drink my heart's blood. It is scarcely metaphorical to say so, for every glance left a cold, deadly feeling behind.

"Come, Gabriella," said Ernest; "if Miss Melville wishes it, she can remain with Mr. Harland. I will send back the carriage for them."

"To be sure I wish it," cried Meg. "They say the best part of the amusement is to come. Gabriella has a poor opinion of my nursing, so I will not cast my pearls away. I am glad *I* have not any nerves, my dear little sensitive plant. It *is* a terrible thing to be too attractive to venture abroad!"

The latter part of the sentence was uttered in a whisper, while suppressed laughter convulsed her frame.

Ernest did not open his lips as he conducted me from the theatre to the carriage, and not a word was spoken during our homeward ride. The rattling of the pavements was a relief to the cold silence. Instead of occupying the same seat with me, Ernest took the one opposite; and as we

passed the street lamps they flashed on his face, and it seemed that of a statue, so cold and impressive it looked. What did he suspect? What had I done to cause this deep displeasure? He knew not of the note which I had concealed, of the words which still hissed in my ears. The bold gaze of the stranger would naturally excite his anger against him, but why should it estrange him from me? I had yet to learn the wiles and the madness of his bosom enemy.

When I took his hand, as he assisted me from the carriage I started, for it was as chill as ice, and the fingers, usually so pliant and gentle in their fold, were inflexible as marble. I thought I should have fallen to the pavement; but exerting all the resolution of which I was mistress, I entered the house, and passed under the dim glitter of the silvery drapery into my own apartment.

I had barely strength to reach the sofa, on which I sunk in a state of utter exhaustion. I feared I was going to faint, and then they would loosen my dress and discover the fatal note.

"Wine!" said I to the chambermaid, who was folding my opera cloak, which I had dropped on the floor; "give me wine. I am faint."

I remembered the red wine which Dr. Harlowe gave me, after my midnight run through the dark woods, and how it infused new life into my sinking frame. Since then I had been afraid to drink it, for the doctor had laughingly assured me, that it had intoxicated, while it sustained. Now, I wanted strength and courage, and it came to me, after swallowing the glowing draught. I lifted my head, and met the cold glance of Ernest without shivering. I dared to speak and ask him the cause of his anger.

"The cause!" repeated he, his eyes kindling with passion. "Who was the bold libertine, before whose unlicensed gaze you blushed and trembled, not with indignation, such as a pure and innocent woman ought to feel; but with the bashful confusion the veteran *roué* delights to behold? Who was this man, whose presence caused you such overpowering emotion, and who exchanged with you glances of such mysterious meaning? Tell me, for I *will* know."

Oh that I had dared to answer, "He is my father. Covered with shame and humiliation, I acknowledge my parentage, which makes me so unworthy to bear your unsullied name. My darkened spirit would hide itself behind a cloud, to escape the villain whom nature disowns and reason abhors." But, unknowing the contents of the mysterious note, unknowing the consequences to himself which might result from its disclosure, remembering the injunction of my dying mother, to be to him a guardian angel in the hour of danger,—I could not save myself from blame by revealing the truth. I could not stain my lips with a falsehood.

"I never saw that man before," I replied. "Most husbands would think modest confusion more becoming in a wife, than the indignation which he usually deems it his own prerogative to exhibit. If I have been insulted, methinks you should wreak your vengeance on the offender, instead of me,—the innocent sufferer. It would be more manly."

"Would you have had me make the theatre a scene of strife and bloodshed?" he exclaimed.

"No! neither would I have you bring warring passions into the peaceful bosom of your own home."

"Is this you?" he cried, looking me sternly and sorrowfully in the face. "Is this the gentle and tender Gabriella, who speaks in such a tone of bitterness and scorn?"

"I did not know that I spoke bitterly!" I exclaimed. "Oh, Ernest, you have roused in me a spirit of resistance I tremble to feel! You madden me by your reproaches! You wrong me by your suspicions! I meant to be gentle and forbearing; but the worm will writhe under the foot that grinds it into dust. Alas! how little we know ourselves!"

With anguish that cannot be described, I clasped my hands tightly over my heart, that ached with intolerable pangs. I had lost him,—lost his love,—lost his confidence. Had I seen him in his grave, I could scarcely have felt more utter desolation.

"I told you what I was," he cried, the pale severity of his countenance changing to the most stormy agitation. "I told you that the cloud which hung over my cradle would follow me to the grave; that suspicion and jealousy were the twin-born phantoms of my soul. Why, then, rash and blind, have you committed your happiness into my keeping? You were warned, and yet you hastened to your doom."

"Because I believed that you loved me; because I loved and trusted, with a love and faith more deep and strong than woman ever knew."

"And I have destroyed them. I knew it would be so. I knew that I would prove a faithless guardian to a charge too dear. Gabriella, I am a wretch,—deserving your hatred and indignation. I have insulted your innocence, by suspicions I should blush to admit. Love, too strong for reason, converts me at times into a madman. I do not ask you to forgive me; but if you could conceive of the agonies I endure, you would pity me, were I your direst foe."

Remorse, sorrow, tenderness, and love, all swept over his countenance, and gave pathos to his voice. I rose and sprang to his arms, that opened to receive me, and I clung to his neck, and wept upon his bosom, till it seemed that my life would dissolve itself in tears. Oh! it seemed that I had leaped over a yawning abyss to reach him, that I had found him just as I was losing him for ever. I was once more in the banqueting-house of joy, and "his banner over me was love."

"Never again, my husband, never close your heart against me. I have no other home, no other refuge, no other world, than your arms."

"You have forgiven me too soon, my Gabriella. You should impose upon me some penalty equal to the offence, if such indeed there be. Oh! most willingly would I cut off the hand so tenderly clasped in yours and cast it into the flames, if by so doing I could destroy the fiend who tempts me to suspect fidelity, worthy of eternal trust. You think I give myself up without a struggle to the demon passion, in whose grasp you have seen me writhing; but you know not, dream not, how I wrestle with it in secret, and what prayers I send up to God for deliverance. It seems impossible now that I should ever doubt, ever wrong you again, and yet I dare not promise. Oh! I dare not promise; for when the whirlwind of passion rises, I know not what I do."

Had I not been conscious that I was concealing something from him, that while he was restoring to me his confidence, I was deceiving him, I should have been perfectly happy in this hour of reconciliation. But as he again and again clasped me to his bosom, and lavished upon me the tenderest caresses, I involuntarily shrunk from the pressure, lest he should feel the note, which seemed to flutter, so quick and loud my heart beat against it.

"We are neither of us fit for the fashionable world, my Gabriella," said he; "we have hearts and souls fitted for a purer, holier atmosphere than the one we now breathe. If we had some 'bright little isle of our own,' where we were safe from jarring contact with ruder natures, remote from the social disturbances which interrupt the harmony of life, where we could live for love and God, then, my Gabriella, I would not envy the angels around the throne. No scene like this to-night would ever mar the heaven of our wedded bliss."

Ernest did not know himself. Even in Crusoe's desert isle, if the print of human footsteps were discovered on the sand, and had he flown to the uttermost parts of the earth, the phantom created by his own diseased imagination would have pursued him like the giant form that haunted from pole to pole the unhappy Frankenstein. Man cannot escape from his own passions; and in solitude their waves beat against his bosom, like the eternal dashing of the tide, scarcely perceived amidst the active sounds of day, but roaring and thundering in the deep stillness of the midnight hour.

"We were happy here before Margaret came," I answered; "happy as it was possible for mortals to be. How strange that she should have come unasked, remain unurged, without dreaming of the possibility of her being otherwise than a welcome guest!"

"There should be laws to prevent households from such intrusions," said Ernest, with warmth. "I consider such persons as great offenders against the peace of society as the midnight robber or the lurking assassin. Margaret Melville cares for nothing but her own gratification. A contemptible love of fun and frolic is the ruling passion of her life. How false, how artificial is that system where there is no redress for encroachments of this kind! Were I to act honestly and as I ought, I should say to her at once, 'leave us,—your presence is intolerable,—there is no more affinity between us than between glass and brass.' But what would my mother say? What would the world say? What would you say, my own dear wife, who desire her departure even as I do myself?"

"I should be very much shocked, of course. If she had the least sensitiveness or delicacy of feeling, she would read all this in your countenance and manners. I often fear she will perceive in mine, the repulsion I cannot help experiencing. For your mother's sake I wish to be kind to Margaret."

"Do you know, Gabriella, she once wished me to think of her as a wife? That was before her character was formed, however,—when its wild, untamable elements revelled in the morning freedom of girlhood, and reason and judgment were not expected to exert their restraining influence. Think of such an union, my flower-girl, my Mimosa. Do I deserve quite so severe a punishment?"

"You would have lived in a perpetual fever of jealousy, or a state of open anarchy. There would have been some memorable scenes in your diary, I am certain."

"Jealousy! The idea of being jealous of such a being as Margaret! The 'rhinoceran bear' might inspire the passion as soon. No, Gabriella, I do not believe I could be jealous of another woman in the world, for I cannot conceive of the possibility of my ever loving another; and the intensity of my love creates a trembling fear, that a treasure so inestimable, so unspeakably dear, may be snatched from my arms. It is not so much distrust of you, as myself. I fear the casket is not worthy of the jewel it enshrines."

"Be just to yourself, Ernest, and then you will be just to all mankind."

"The truth is, Gabriella, I have no self-esteem. A celebrated German phrenologist examined my head, and pronounced it decidedly deficient in the swelling organ of self-appreciation."

He took my hand and placed it on his head, amid his soft, luxuriant dark hair, and it certainly met no elevation. I was not skilled in the science of phrenology, and there might be a defect in the formation of his head; but on his noble brow, it seemed to me that "every God had set its seal," and left the impress of his own divinity.

We started, for the steps of Madge were heard rushing up the marble stairs, and the sound of her laugh swept before her, and pressed against the door like a strong gale.

Oh Madge! that any one should ever have thought of you as the wife of Ernest.

CHAPTER XXXV.

It was not till the next morning that I dared to read the contents of the note. It was in the magnificent bathing-room, on whose retirement no one ever intruded, that I perused these pencilled lines, evidently written with a hasty and agitated hand.

"Can it be that I have found a daughter? Yes! in those lovely features I trace the living semblance of my beloved Rosalie. Where is she, my child? Where is your angel mother, whom I have sought sorrowing so many years? They tell me that you are married,—that it is your husband who watches you with such jealous scrutiny. He must not know who I am. I am a reckless, desperate man. It would be dangerous to us both to meet. Guard my secret as you expect to find your grave peaceful, your eternity free from remorse. When can I see you alone? Where can I meet you? I am in danger, distress,—ruin and death are hanging over me,—I must flee from the city; but I must see you, my child, my sweet, my darling Gabriella. I must learn the fate of my lost Rosalie.

"The curtain falls,—I dare not write more. Walk in the —— Park to-morrow morning at ten o'clock, where I will wait your coming. Come alone,—I ask only a few moments. A father pleads with his child! As you hope for an answer to your dying prayers, come, child of my Rosalie,—child of my own sad heart."

Once,—twice,—thrice I read these lines,—the death-warrant of my wedded peace. How could I resist so solemn an appeal, without violating the commands of a dying mother? How could I meet him, without incurring the displeasure of my husband? What possibility was there of my leaving home alone, when Ernest scarcely ever left me; when, after his return, if he chanced to go out, he always asked me how I had passed the time of his absence? How could I preserve outward composure, with such a secret burning in my heart? A sigh, involuntarily breathed,—a tear, forcing its way beneath the quivering lash, would expose me to suspicion and distress. What could I, should I do? I was alone, now; and I yielded momentarily to an agony of apprehension, that almost drove me mad. On one side, a guilty, ruined parent; on the other, a jealous husband, whose anger was to me a consuming fire. No, no; I could never expose myself again to that. I trembled at the recollection of those pale, inflexible features, and that eye of stormy splendor. The lightning bolt was less terrible and scathing. Yet, to turn a deaf ear to a father's prayer; to disregard a mother's injunction; to incur, perhaps, the guilt of parricide; to hazard the judgments of the Almighty;—how awful the alternative!

I sank down on my knees, and laid my head on the marble slab on which I had been seated. I tried to pray; but hysterical sobs choked my words.

"Have pity upon me, O my heavenly Father!" at length I exclaimed, raising my clasped hands to heaven. "Have pity upon me, and direct me in the right path. Give me courage to do right, and leave the result unto Thee. I float on a stormy current, without pilot or helm. I sink beneath the whelming billows. Help, Lord! or I perish!"

Before I rose from my knees, it seemed as if invisible arms surrounded me,—bearing me up, above the dark and troubled waters. I felt as if God would open a way for me to walk in; and I resolved to leave the event in his hands. Had I applied to an earthly counsellor, with wisdom to direct, they might have told me, that one who had been guilty of the crime my father had committed, had forfeited every claim on a daughter's heart. That I had no right to endanger a husband's happiness, or to sacrifice my own peace, in consequence of his rash demand. No instinctive attraction drew me to this mysterious man. Instead of the yearnings of filial affection, I felt for him an unconquerable repugnance. His letter touched me, but his countenance repelled. His bold, unreceding eye;—not thus should a father gaze upon his child.

Upon what apparent trifles the events of our life sometimes depend! At the breakfast table, Madge suddenly asked what day of the month it was.

Then I remembered that it was the day appointed for a meeting of the ladies composing a benevolent association, of which I had been lately made a member. After the conversation with Ernest, in which I had expressed such an anxiety to do good, he had supplied me bountifully with means, so that my purse was literally overflowing. I had met the society once, and had gone *alone*. The hour of the meeting was *ten*. What a coincidence! Was Providence opening a way in which my doubting feet should walk? When I mentioned the day of the month, I added,

"Our Society for the Relief of Invalid Seamstresses meets this morning. I had forgotten it, till your question reminded me that this was the day."

"Do not your coffers need replenishing, fair Lady Bountiful?" asked Ernest. "This is an association founded on principles which I revere. If any class of females merit the sympathy and kind offices of the generous sisterhood, it is that, whose services are so ill repaid, and whose lives must be one long drawn sigh of weariness and anxiety. Give, my Gabriella, to your heart's content; and if one pale cheek is colored with the glow of hope, one dim eye lighted with joy, something will be added to the sum of human happiness."

Ernest was unusually kind and tender. He watched me as the fond mother does the child, whom

she has perhaps too severely chided. He seemed to wish to atone for the pain he had given, and to assure me by his manner that his confidence was perfectly restored.

"I shall avail myself of your absence," said he, "to pay some of my epistolary debts. They have weighed heavy on my conscience for some time."

"And I," said Madge, "have engaged to spend the day with Miss Haven. You can drop me on the way."

Madge had behaved unusually well during the morning, and did not harass me at the breakfast table, as I feared she would, about the bold stranger at the theatre. Perhaps my pale cheeks spoke too plainly of the sufferings of the evening, and she had a heart after all.

As I went into my room to prepare for going out, my hands trembled so that I could scarcely fasten the ribbons of my bonnet. Every thing seemed to facilitate my filial duty; but the more easy seemed its accomplishment, the more I shrunk from the thought of deceiving Ernest, in this hour of restored tranquillity and abounding love. I loathed the idea of deceiving any one,—but Ernest, my lover, my husband,—how could I beguile his new-born confidence?

He came in, and wrapped me up in my ermine-trimmed cloak, warning me of exposing myself to the morning air, which was of wintry bleakness.

"You must bring back the roses which I have banished from your cheeks," said he, kissing them with a tenderness and gentleness that made my heart ache with anguish. I did not deserve these caresses; and if my purpose were discovered, would they not be the last?

Shuddering, as I asked myself this question, I turned towards him, as if to daguerreotype on my heart every lineament of his striking and expressive face. How beautiful was his countenance this moment, softened by tenderness, so delicately pale, yet so lustrous, like the moonlight night!

"Oh, Ernest!" said I, throwing my arms around him, with a burst of irrepressible emotion, "I am not worthy of the love you bear me, but yet I prize it far more than life. If the hour comes when it is withdrawn from me, I pray Heaven it may be my last."

"It can never be withdrawn, my Gabriella. You may cast it from your bosom, and it may wither, like the flower trampled by the foot of man; but by my own act it never can be destroyed. Nor by yours either, my beloved wife. At this moment I have a trust in you as entire as in heaven itself. I look back with wonder and remorse on the dark delusions to which I have submitted myself. But the spell is broken; the demon laid. Sorrow has had its season; but joy hath come in the morning. Smile, my darling Gabriella, in token of forgiveness and peace."

I tried to smile, but the tears would gather into my eyes.

"Foolish girl!" he cried. A loud laugh rung under the silken arches. Madge stood in the open door, her great black eyes brimming with mirth.

"When you have finished your parting ceremonies," she exclaimed, "I think we had better start. One would think you were going to Kamschatka or Terra del Fuego, instead of Broadway. Oh dear! what a ridiculous thing it is to see people in love with each other, after they are married! Come, Gabriella; you can carry his miniature with you."

As the carriage rolled from the gate, I was so agitated at the thought of the approaching interview I could not speak. Madge rattled away, in her usual light manner; but I did not attempt to answer her. I leaned back in the carriage, revolving the best way of accomplishing my design. After leaving Madge, instead of going to the lady's, at whose house the society met, I ordered the coachman to drive to one of the fashionable stores and leave me.

"Return in an hour," said I, as I left the carriage. "You will find me at Mrs. Brahan's. Drive the horses out to the Battery for exercise, as you usually do."

As I gave these orders, my heart beat so fast I could hardly articulate with distinctness. Yet there was nothing in them to excite suspicion. The horses were high-fed and little used, gay and spirited, and when we shopped or made morning calls, the coachman was in the habit of driving them about, to subdue their fiery speed.

I should make too conspicuous an appearance in the park, in my elegant cloak, trimmed with costly ermine and bonnet shaded with snowy plumes. I would be recognized at once, for the bride of the jealous Ernest was an object of interest and curiosity. To obviate this difficulty, I purchased a large gray shawl, of soft, yielding material, that completely covered my cloak; a thick, green veil, through which my features could not be discerned, and walked with rapid steps through the hurrying crowd that thronged the side-walks towards the —— Park.

It was too early an hour for the usual gathering of children and nurses. Indeed, at this cold, wintry season, the warm nursery was a more comfortable and enticing place.

The park presented a dreary, desolate aspect. No fountain tossed up its silvery waters, falling in rainbows back to earth. The leafless branches of the trees shone coldly in the thin glazing of frostwork and creaked against each other, as the bleak wind whistled through them. Here and there, a ruddy-faced Irish woman, wrapped in a large blanket-shawl, with a coarse straw bonnet blown back from her head, breasted the breeze with a little trotting child, who took half a dozen steps to one of hers, tugging hard at her hand. It was not likely I should meet a fashionable

acquaintance at this early hour; and if I did, I was shrouded from recognition.

I had scarcely passed the revolving gate, before I saw a gentleman approaching from the opposite entrance with rapid and decided steps. He was tall and stately, and had that unmistakable air of high-breeding which, being once acquired, can never be entirely lost. As he came nearer, I could distinguish the features of the stranger; features which, seen by daylight, exhibited still more plainly the stamp of recklessness, dissipation, and vice. They had once been handsome, but alas! alas! was this the man who had captivated the hearts of two lovely women, and then broken them? Where was the fascination which had enthralled alike the youthful Rosalie and the impassioned Therésa? Was this, indeed, the once gallant and long beloved St. James?

"You have come," he exclaimed, eagerly grasping my hand and pressing it in his. "I bless you, my daughter,—and may God forever bless you for listening to a father's prayer!"

"I have come," I answered, in low, trembling accents, for indescribable agitation almost choked my utterance,—"but I can not,—dare not linger. It was cruel in you to bind me to secrecy. Had it not been for the mother,—whose dying words"—

"And is she dead,—the wronged,—the angel Rosalie? How vainly I have sought her,—and thee, my cherub little one! My sufferings have avenged her wrongs."

He turned away, and covered his face with his handkerchief. I saw his breast heave with suppressed sobs. It is an awful thing to see a strong man weep,—especially when the tears are wrung by the agonies of remorse. I felt for him the most intense pity,—the most entire forgiveness,—yet I recoiled from his approach,—I shrunk from the touch of his dry and nervous hand. I felt polluted, degraded, by the contact.

"My mother told me, if I ever met you, to give you not only her forgiveness, but her blessing. She blessed you, for the sufferings that weaned her from earth and chastened her spirit for a holier and happier world. She bade me tell you, that in spite of her wrongs she had never ceased to love you. In obedience to her dying will, I have shown you a daughter's duty so far as to meet you here, and learn what I can do for one placed in the awful circumstances in which you declare yourself to be. Speak quickly and briefly, for on every passing moment the whole happiness of my life hangs trembling."

"Only let me see your face for the few moments we are together, that I may carry its remembrance to my grave,—that face so like your mother's."

"What can I do?" I exclaimed, removing the veil as I spoke,—for there was no one near; and I could not refuse a petition so earnest. "Oh, tell me quickly what I can do. What dreadful doom is impending over you?"

"You are beautiful, my child,—very, very beautiful," said he; while his dark, sunken eyes seemed to burn me with the intensity of their gaze.

"Talk not to me of beauty, at a moment like this!" I exclaimed, stamping my foot in the agony of my impatience. "I cannot, will not stay, unless to aid you. Your presence is awful! for it reminds me of my mother's wrongs,—my own clouded birth."

"I deserve this, and far more," he cried, in tones of the most object humility. "Oh, my child, I am brought very low;—I am a lost and ruined man. Maddened by your mother's desertion, I became reckless,—desperate. I fled from the home another had usurped. I became the prey of villains, who robbed me of my fortune at the gaming table. Another, and another step;—lower and lower still I sunk. I cannot tell you the story of my ruin. Enough, I am lost! The sword of the violated law gleams over my head. Every moment it may fall. I dare not remain another day in this city. I dare not stay in my native land. If I do, yonder dismal Tombs will be my life-long abode."

"Fly, then,—fly this moment," I cried. "What madness! to linger in the midst of danger and disgrace!"

"Alas! my daughter, I am penniless. I had laid aside a large sum, sufficient for the emergency; but a wretch robbed me of all, only two nights since. Humiliating as it is, I must turn beggar to my child. Your husband is a Dives; I, the Lazarus, who am perishing at his gate."

"Ask him. He is noble and generous. He will fill your purse with gold, and aid you to escape. Go to him at once. You know not his princely heart."

"Never! On you alone I depend. I will not ask a favor of man, to save my soul from perdition. Girl! have you no power over the wealth that must be rusting in your coffers? Are you not trusted with the key to your household treasures?"

"Do you think I would take his gold clandestinely?" I asked, glowing with indignation, and recoiling from the expression of his eager, burning eye. We were walking slowly during this exciting conversation; and, cold as it was, the moisture gathered on my brow. "Here is a purse, given me for a holier purpose. Take it, and let me go."

"Thank you,—bless you, my child! but this will only relieve present necessity. It will not carry me in safety to distant climes. Bless you! but take it back, take it back. I can only meet my doom!"

"I *will* go to my husband!" I exclaimed with sudden resolution; "I *will* tell him all, and he, and he alone shall aid you. I will not wrong him by acting without his knowledge. You have no right to

endanger my life-long peace. You have destroyed my mother; must her child too be sacrificed?"

"I see there is but one path of escape," he cried, snatching a pistol from his breast, and turning the muzzle to his heart. "Fool, dolt, idiot that I am! I dreamed of salvation from a daughter's hand, but I have forfeited a father's name, a father's affection. Gabriella, you might save me, but I blame you not. Do not curse me, though I fill a felon's grave;—better that than the dungeon—the scaffold."

"What would you do?" I whispered hoarsely, seizing his arm with spasmodic grasp.

"Die, before I am betrayed."

"I will not betray you; what sum will suffice for your emergency? Name it."

"As many thousands as there are hundreds there," pointing to the purse.

"Good heavens!"

"Gabriella, you must have jewels worth a prince's ransom; you had diamonds last night on your neck and arms that would redeem your father's life. Each gem is but a drop of water in the deep sea of *his* riches. His uncle was a modern Cr[oe]sus, and he, his sole heir."

"How know you this?" I asked.

"Every one knows it. The rich are the cities on the hill-tops, seen afar off. You hesitate,—you tremble. Keep your diamonds,—but remember they will eat like burning coals into your flesh."

Fierce and deadly passions gleamed from his eye. He clenched the pistol so tight that his nails turned of a purplish blue.

No one was near us, to witness a scene so strange and appalling. The thundering sounds of city life were rolling along the great thoroughfare of the metropolis, now rattling, shrill, and startling, then roaring, swelling, and subsiding again, like the distant surf; but around us, there was silence and space. In the brief moment that we stood face to face, my mind was at work with preternatural activity. I remembered that I had a set of diamonds,—the bridal gift of Mrs. Linwood,—a superb and costly set, which I had left a week previous in the hands of the jeweller, that he might remedy a slight defect in the clasps. Those which I wore at the theatre, and which had attracted his insatiate eye, were the gift of Ernest. He had clasped them around my neck and arms, as he was about to lead me to the altar, and hallowed the offering with a bridegroom's kiss. I could have given my heart's blood sooner than the radiant pledge of wedded faith and love.

I could go to the jewellers,—get possession of the diamonds, and thus redeem my guilty parent from impending ruin. Then, the waves of the Atlantic would roll between us, and I would be spared the humiliation and agony of another scene like this. I told him to follow me at a short distance; that I would get the jewels; that he could receive them from me in the street in the midst of the jostling crowd without observation.

"It is the last time," I cried, "the last time I ever act without my husband's knowledge. I have obeyed my mother, I have fulfilled my duty, at the risk of all my soul holds dear. And now, as you hope to meet hereafter her, who, if angels can sorrow, still mourns over your transgressions, quit the dark path you are now treading, and devote your future life to penitence and prayer. Oh! by my mother's wrongs and woes, and by my own, by the mighty power of God and a Saviour's dying love, I entreat you to repent, forsake your sins, and live, live, forever more."

Tears gushed from my eyes and checked my utterance. Oh! how sad, how dreadful, to address a father thus.

"Gabriella!" he exclaimed, "you are an angel. Pray for me, pray for me, thou pure and holy being, and forgive the sins that you say are not beyond the reach of God's mercy, I dare not, not here,—yet for one dear embrace, my child, I would willingly meet the tortures of the prison-house and the scaffold."

I recoiled with horror at the suggestion. I would not have had his arms around me for worlds. I could not call him *father*. I pitied,—wept for him; but I shrunk with loathing from his presence. Dropping my veil over my face, I turned hastily, gained the street, pressed on through the moving mass without looking to the right or left, till I reached the shop where my jewels were deposited,—took them without waiting for explanation or inquiry, hurried back till I met St. James, slipped the casket into his eager hand, and pressed on without uttering a syllable. Never shall I forget the expression of his countenance as he received the casket. The fierce, wild, exulting flash of his dark sunken eye, whose reddish blackness seemed suddenly to ignite and burn like heated iron. There was something demoniac in its glare, and it haunted me in my dreams long, long afterwards.

I did not look back, but hurried on, rejoicing that rapidity of motion was too customary in Broadway to attract attention. Before I arrived at the place of meeting, I wished to divest myself of the shawl which I had used as a disguise; and it was no difficult matter, where poverty is met in all its forms of wretchedness and woe.

"Take this, my good woman," said I, throwing the soft gray covering over the shoulders of a thin, shivering, haggard looking female, on whose face chill penury was written in withering lines. "You are cold and suffering."

"Bless your sweet face. God Almighty bless you!" was wafted to my ears, in tremulous accents,—for I did not stop to meet her look of wonder, gratitude, and ecstasy. I did not deserve her blessing; but the garment sheltered her meagre frame, and she went on her way rejoicing.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

When I entered Mrs. Brahan's drawing-room, I was in a kind of somnambulism,—moving, walking, seeing, yet hardly conscious of what I was doing, or what was passing around me. She was the president of the association, and a very charming woman.

"We feared we were not going to see you this morning," she said, glancing at a French clock, which showed the lateness of the hour; "but we esteem it a privilege to have you with us, even for a short time. We know," she added, with a smile, "what a sacrifice we impose on Mr. Linwood, when we deprive him of your society."

"Yes!" cried a sprightly young lady, with whom I was slightly acquainted, "we all consider it an event, when we can catch a glimpse of Mrs. Linwood. Her appearance at the theatre last night created as great a sensation as would a new constellation in the zodiac."

These allusions to my husband's exclusive devotion brought the color to my cheeks, and the soft, warm air of the room stole soothingly round me. I tried to rouse myself to a consciousness of the present, and apologized for my delay with more ease and composure than I expected.

When the treasurer received the usual funds, I was obliged to throw myself on her leniency.

"I have disposed of my purse since I left home," said I, with a guilty blush, "but I will double my contribution at the next meeting."

"It is no matter," was the reply. "You have already met your responsibilities,—far more than met them,—your reputation for benevolence is already too well established for us to doubt that your will is equal to your power."

Whenever I went into society, I realized the distinction of being the wife of the rich and exclusive Ernest Linwood, the mistress of the oriental palace, as Mrs. Brahan called our dwelling-place. I always found myself flattered and caressed, and perhaps something was owing to personal attraction. I never presumed on the distinction awarded me; never made myself or mine the subjects of conversation, or sought to engross the attention of others. I had always remembered the obscurity of my early life, the cloud upon my birth, not abjectly, but *proudly*. I was too proud to arrogate to myself any credit for the adventitious circumstances which had raised me above the level of others,—too proud of the love that had given the elevation, to exalt myself as worthy of it.

"I think you must be the happiest being in the world, Mrs. Linwood," said the sprightly young lady, who had taken a seat by my side, and who had the brightest, most sparkling countenance I ever saw. "You live in such a beautiful, *beautiful* place, with such an elegant husband, too! What a life of enchantment yours must be! Do you know you are the envy of all the young ladies of the city?"

"I hope not," I answered, trying to respond in the same sportive strain; and every one knows, that when the heart is oppressed by secret anxiety, it is easier to be gay than cheerful. "I hope not; as I might be in danger of being exhaled by some subtle perfume. I have heard of the art of poisoning being brought to such perfection, that it can be communicated by a flower or a ring."

"It must be a very fascinating study," she said, laughingly. "I intend to take lessons, though I think throwing vitriol in the face and marring its beauty, is the most effectual way of removing a rival."

"I thought you were discussing the wants and miseries of the sewing sisterhood," said Mrs. Brahan, coming near us. "What started so horrible a theme?"

"Mr. Linwood's perfections," said the young lady, with a gay smile.

"He has one great fault," observed Mrs. Brahan; "he keeps you too close a prisoner, my dear. I fear he is very selfish. Tell him so from me; for he must not expect to monopolize a jewel formed to adorn and beautify the world."

She spoke sportively, benignantly, without knowing the deep truth of her words. She knew that my husband sought retirement; that I seldom went abroad without him. But she knew not, dreamed not, of the strength of the master-passion that governed his actions.

Gradually the company dispersed. As I came so late, I remained a little behind the rest, attracted by a painting in the back parlor. I suppose I inherited from my father a love of the fine arts; for I never could pass a statue or a picture without pausing to gaze upon it.

This represented a rocky battlement, rising in the midst of the deep blue sea. The silvery glimmer of moonlight shone on the rippling waves; moonlight breaking through dark clouds,—producing the most dazzling contrast of light and shade. A large vessel, in full sail, glided along in the gloom

of the shadows; a little skiff floated on the white-crested, sparkling, shining tide. The flag of our country waved from the rocky tower. I seemed gazing on a familiar scene. Those wave washed battlements; that floating banner; the figures of soldiers marching on the ramparts, with folded arms and measured tread,—all appeared like the embodiment of a dream.

"What does this represent?" I asked.

"Fortress Monroe, on Chesapeake Bay."

"I thought so. Who was the artist?"

"I think his name was St. James. It is on the picture, near the frame. Yes,—Henry Gabriel St. James. What a beautiful name! Poor fellow!—I believe he had a sad fate! Mr. Brahan could tell you something of his history. He purchased this house of him seventeen years ago. What is the matter, Mrs. Linwood?"

I sank on the nearest seat, incapable of supporting myself. I was in the house where I was born,—where my mother passed the brief period of her wedded happiness; whence she was driven, a wronged, despairing woman, with me, an unconscious infant, in her arms. It was my father's glowing sketch on which I was gazing,—that father whom I had so recently met,—a criminal, evading the demands of justice; a man who had lost all his original brightness,—a being of sin and misery.

Mrs. Brahan rang for water; but I did not faint.

"I have taken a long walk this morning," I said, "and your rooms are warm. I feel better, now. And this house belonged to the artist? I feel interested in his story."

"I wish Mr. Brahan were here; but I will tell you all I recollect. It was a long time ago; and what we hear from others of individuals in whom we have no personal interest, is soon forgotten. Do you really feel better? Well, I believe St. James, the artist, was a highly accomplished, gifted man. He was married to a beautiful young wife, and I think had one child. Of course he was supremely happy. It seems he was called away from home very suddenly, was gone a few months, and when he returned, he found his wife and child fled, and a stranger claiming her name and place. I never heard this mystery explained; but it is said, she disappeared as suddenly as she came, while he sought by every means to recover his lost treasure, but in vain. His reason at one time forsook him, and his health declined. At length, unable to remain where every thing reminded him of his departed happiness, he resolved to leave the country and go to foreign climes. Mr. Brahan, who wished to purchase at that time, was pleased with the house,—bought it, and brought me here, a bride. He has altered and improved it a great deal, but many things remain just as they were. You seem interested. There is something mysterious and romantic connected with it. Oh! here is Mr. Brahan himself; he can relate it far better than I can."

After the usual courtesies of meeting, she resumed the subject, and told her husband how much interested I was in the history of the unfortunate artist.

"Ah yes!" cried he; "poor fellow!—he was sore beset. Two women claimed him as wives,—and he lost both. I never heard a clear account of this part of his life; for when I knew him, he was just emerging from insanity, and it was supposed his mind was still clouded. He was very reserved on the subject of his personal misfortunes. I only know it was the loss of the wife whom he acknowledged that unsettled his reason. He was a magnificent looking fellow,—full of genius and feeling. He told me he was going to Italy,—and very likely he died of a broken heart, beneath its sunny and genial skies. He was a fine artist. That picture has inspiration in it. Look at the reflection of the moon in the water. How tremulous it is! You can almost see the silver rippling beneath that gliding boat. He was a man of genius. There is no doubt he was."

"I should like to show Mrs. Linwood the picture which you found in the closet of his studio," said Mrs. Brahan. "Do you know, I think there is a resemblance to herself?"

"So there is," exclaimed Mr. Brahan, as if making a sudden discovery. "Her face has haunted me since I first beheld her, and I have just discovered where I have seen its semblance. If you will walk up stairs, I will show it to you."

Almost mechanically I followed up the winding stairs, so often pressed by the feet now mouldering side by side beneath the dark coffin lid, into the room where my now degraded parent gave form and coloring to the dreams of imagination, or the shadows of memory. The walls were arching, and lighted from above. Mr. Brahan had converted it into a library, and it was literally lined with books on every side but one. Suspended on that, in a massy gilt frame, was a sketch which arrested my gaze, and it had no power to wander. The head alone was finished,—but such a head! I recognized at once my mother's features; not as I had seen them faded by sorrow, but in the soft radiance of love and happiness. They did not wear the rosy brightness of the miniature I had seen in my father's hand, which was probably taken immediately after her marriage. This picture represented her as my imagination pictured her after my birth, when the tender anxieties of the mother softened and subdued the splendor of her girlish beauty; those eyes,—those unforgotten eyes, with their long, curling lashes, and expression of heavenly sweetness,—how they seemed to bend on me,—the child she had so much loved! I longed to kneel before it, to appeal to it, by every holy and endearing epithet,—to reach the cold, unconscious canvas, and cover it with my kisses and my tears. But I could only gaze and gaze, and the strong spell that bound me was mistaken for the ecstasy of admiration, such as

genius only can awaken.

"There is a wonderful resemblance," said Mr. Brahan, breaking the silence. "I shall feel great pride henceforth in saying, I have an admirable likeness of Mrs. Linwood."

"I ought to feel greatly flattered," I answered with a quick drawn breath; "it certainly is very lovely."

"It has the loveliest expression I ever saw in woman's countenance," observed Mr. Brahan. "Perhaps, after making such a remark, I ought not to say, that in that chiefly lies its resemblance to yourself, but it is emphatically so."

"She must be too much accustomed to compliments to mind yours, my dear," said Mrs. Brahan. "I think Mrs. Linwood has the advantage of the picture, for she has the bloom and light of life. No painting can supply these."

"There is something in the perfect repose of a picture," said I, withdrawing my eyes from my mother's seraphic countenance; "something in its serene, unchanging beauty, that is a type of immortality, of the divine rest of the soul. Life is restless, and grows tremulous as we gaze."

"O that that picture were mine!" I unconsciously uttered, as I turned to take a last look on leaving the apartment.

"I do not know that it is mine to give," said Mr. Brahan, "as I found it here after purchasing the house. The one below was presented me by St. James himself. If, however, you will allow me to send it to Mr. Linwood, I really think he has the best right to it, on account of its remarkable resemblance to yourself."

"Oh no, indeed," I exclaimed; "I did not mean, did not think of such a thing. It was a childish way of expressing my admiration of the painting. If you will give me the privilege of sometimes calling to look at it, I shall be greatly indebted."

I hurried down stairs, fearful of committing myself in some way, so as to betray the secret of my birth.

"I wish you would come and see us often, Mrs. Linwood," said Mrs. Brahan, as I bade her adieu. "We are not very fashionable; but if I read your character aright, you will not dislike us on that account. A young person, who is almost a stranger in a great city like this, sometimes feels the want of an older friend. Let me be that friend."

"Thank you, dear madam," I answered, returning the cordial pressure of her hand; "you do not know how deeply I appreciate your proffered friendship, or how happy I shall be to cultivate it."

With many kind and polite expressions, they both accompanied me to the door, and I left them with the conviction that wedded happiness might be perfect after the experience of seventeen years.

When alone in the carriage, I tried to compose my agitated and excited mind. So much had been crowded into the space of a few hours, that it seemed as if days must have passed since I left home. I tried to reconcile what I had *heard* with what I had *seen* of my father; but I could not identify the magnificent artist, the man of genius and of feeling, with the degenerate being from whom I had recoiled one hour ago. Could a long career of guilt and shame thus deface and obliterate that divine and godlike image, in which man was formed? He must have loved my mother. Desperation for her loss had plunged him into the wildest excesses of dissipation. From my soul I pitied him. I would never cease to pray for him, never regret what I had done to save him from ruin, even if my own happiness were wrecked by the act. I had tried to do what was right, and God, who seeth the heart, would forgive me, if wrong was the result.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

Letters from Mrs. Linwood and Edith waited me at home. Their perusal gave me an opportunity to collect my thoughts, and an excuse to talk of them, of Grandison Place, rather than of topics connected with the present. Yet all the time I was reading Mrs. Linwood's expression of trusting affection, I said to myself,—

"What would she say, if she knew I had parted with her splendid gift, unknown to my husband, whose happiness she committed so solemnly to my keeping?"

I told Ernest of the interesting circumstances connected with Mr. Brahan's house, and of the picture of my mother I so longed that I should see. The wish was gratified sooner than I anticipated; for that very evening, it was sent to me by Mr. Brahan, with a very elegant note, in which he asked me to take charge of it till the rightful owner appeared to claim it as his own.

"It *is* like you, Gabriella," said Ernest, gazing with evident admiration on the beauteous semblance; "and it is an exquisite painting too. You must cherish this picture as a proof of your mother's beauty and your father's genius."

I did cherish it, as a household divinity. I almost worshipped it, for though I did not burn before it

frankincense and myrrh, I offered to it the daily incense of memory and love.

As Margaret consented to remain a week with her friend Miss Haven, we were left in quiet possession of our elegant leisure, and Ernest openly rejoiced in her absence. He read aloud to me, played and sung with thrilling melody, and drew out all his powers of fascination for my entertainment. The fear of his discovering my clandestine meeting grew fainter and fainter as day after day passed, without a circumstance arising which would lead to detection.

One evening, Mr. Harland, with several other gentlemen, was with us. Ernest was unusually affable, and of course my spirits rose in proportion. In the course of conversation, Mr. Harland remarked that he had a *bet* for me to decide.

"I cannot consent to be an umpire," said I. "I dislike betting in ladies, and if gentlemen indulge in it, they must refer to their own sex, not ours."

"But it has reference to yourself," he cried, "and you alone *can* decide."

"To me!" I exclaimed, involuntarily glancing at Ernest.

"Yes! A friend of mine insists that he saw you walking in the —— Park, the other morning, with a gentleman, who was too tall for Mr. Linwood. That you wore a gray shawl and green veil, but that your air and figure could not possibly be mistaken. I told him, in the first place, that you never dressed in that style; in the second, that he was too far from you to distinguish you from another; and in the third, that it was impossible you should be seen walking with any gentleman but your husband, as he never gave them an opportunity. As he offered a high wager, and I accepted it, I feel no small interest in the decision."

"Tell your friend, Mr. Harland," exclaimed Ernest, rising from his seat, and turning pale as marble, "that I will not permit my wife's name to be bandied from lip to lip in the public street, nor her movements made a subject for low and vulgar betting."

"Mr. Linwood!" cried Mr. Harland, rising too, with anger flashing from his eyes, "do you apply those remarks to me?"

"I make no application," answered Ernest, with inexpressible haughtiness; "but I again assert, that the freedom taken with my wife's name is unwarrantable, and *shall* not be repeated."

"If Mrs. Linwood considers herself insulted," cried Mr. Harland, "I am ready to offer *her* any apology she may desire. Of one thing she may be assured: no disrespect was intended by the gentleman to whom I allude, and she certainly cannot think that I would forget her claims as a lady, and as the wife of the man whom I had reason to believe my friend."

He spoke the last sentence with strong emphasis, and the blood mounted high in the pale face of Ernest. I could only bow, as Mr. Harland concluded, in acceptance of the apology, for I saw a thunder-cloud darkening over me, and knew it would break in terror over my head.

"I have spoken hastily, Mr. Harland," said Ernest. "If I have said any thing wounding to your feelings, as a gentleman, I recall it. But you may tell your friend, that the next time he asserts that he has seen Mrs. Linwood walking with a stranger, in a public place, when I *know* she was in company with some of the first ladies of the city for benevolent designs, I shall call him to account for such gross misrepresentations."

And I heard this in silence,—without contradiction.

Oh! how must the woman feel who has deceived her husband for a guilty purpose, when I, whose motives were pure and upright, suffered such unutterable anguish in the prospect of detection? If I were hardened enough to deny the assertion,—if I could only have laughed and wondered at the preposterous mistake,—if I could have assumed an air of indifference and composure, my secret might have been safe. But I was a novice in deception; and burning blushes, and pale, cold shadows alternately flitted across my face.

It was impossible to resume the conversation interrupted by a scene so distressing to some, so disagreeable to all. One by one our guests retired, and I was left alone with Ernest.

The chandeliers were glittering overhead, the azure curtains received their light in every sweeping fold, cherubs smiled bewitchingly from the arching ceiling, and roses that looked as if they might have blossomed by "Bendemere's stream," blushed beneath my feet,—yet I would gladly have exchanged all this splendor for a spot in the furthest isle of the ocean, a lone and barren spot, where the dark glance which I *felt*, but did not see, could not penetrate.

I sat with downcast eyes and wildly throbbing heart, trying to summon resolution to meet the trial I saw there was no means of escaping. If he questioned, I must answer. I could not, dared not, utter a falsehood, and evasion would be considered equivalent to it.

He walked back and forth the whole length of the parlor, two or three times, without speaking, then stopped directly in front of me, still silent. Unable to bear the intolerable oppression of my feelings, I started up and attempted to leave the room; but he arrested me by the arm, and his waxen fingers seemed hardened to steel.

"Gabriella!"

His voice sounded so distant, so cold!

"Ernest!"

I raised my eyes, and for a moment we looked each other in the face. There was fascination in his glance, and yet it had the dagger's keenness.

"What is the meaning of what I have just heard? What is the meaning of a report, which I should have regarded as the idle wind, did not your overwhelming confusion establish its truth? Tell me, for I am not a man to be tampered with, as you will find to your cost."

"I cannot answer when addressed in such a tone. Oh, I cannot."

"Gabriella! this is not a moment to trifle. Tell me, without prevarication,—were you, or were you not in the Park, walking with a gentleman, on the morning you left for Mrs. Brahan's? Answer me,—yes, or no."

Had he spoken with gentleness,—had he seemed moved to sorrow as well as indignation, I would have thrown myself at his feet, and deprecated his anger; but my spirit rose in rebellion at the stern despotism of his manner, and nerved itself to resist his coercive will.

Truly is it said, "We know not what manner of spirit we are of."

I little thought how high mine could rebound from the strong pressure which, in anticipation, crushed it to the dust.

I felt firm to endure, strong to resist.

"Ernest! I have done you no wrong," I answered, raising my eyes to his pale, dark countenance. "I have done nothing to merit the displeasure which makes you forget the courtesy of a gentleman, as well as the tenderness of a husband."

"Then it was a false report," he exclaimed,—a ray of light flashing from his clouded eyes,—"you could not look me in the face and speak in that tone unless you were innocent! Why did you not deny it at once?"

"Only listen to me, Ernest," I cried; "only give me a patient, gentle hearing, and I will give you a history, which I am certain will convert your indignation into sympathy, and free me from suspicion or blame."

I armed myself with resolution to tell him all. My father was in all probability far away on the billows of the Atlantic. My disclosures could not affect him now. My promise of secrecy did not extend into the future. I would gladly have withheld from my husband the knowledge of his degradation, for it was humiliating to the child to reveal the parent's shame. Criminal he knew him to be, with regard to my mother, but Ernest had said, when gazing on her picture, he almost forgave the crime which had so much to extenuate it. The gambler, the profligate, the lost, abandoned being, who had thrown himself so abjectly on my compassion: in these characters, the high-minded Ernest would spurn him with withering indignation. Yet as the interview had been observed, and his suspicions excited, it was my duty to make an unreserved confession,—and I did. Conscious of the purity of my motives, and assured that he must eventually acquit me of blame, I told him all, from the note he dropped into my lap at the theatre, to the diamond casket given in parting to his desperate hand. I told him all my struggles, my fears, my agonies,—dwelling most of all on the agony I suffered in being compelled to deceive *him*.

Silently, immovably he heard me, never interrupting me by question or explanation. He had seated himself on a sofa when I began, motioning me to sit down by him, but I drew forward a low footstool and sat at his feet, looking up with the earnestness of truth and the confidence of innocence. Oh! he could not help but acquit me,—he could not help but pity me. I had done him injustice in believing it possible for him to condemn me for an act of filial obedience, involving so much self-sacrifice and anguish. He would clasp me to his bosom,—he would fold me in his arms,—he would call me his "own, darling Gabriella."

A pause,—a chilling pause succeeded the deep-drawn breath with which I closed the confession. Cold, bitter cold, fell that silence on my hoping, trembling, yet glowing heart. He was leaning on his elbow,—his hand covered his brow.

"Ernest," at length I said, "you have heard my explanation. Am I, or am I not, acquitted?"

He started as if from a trance, clasped his hands tightly together, and lifted them above his head,—then springing up, he drew back from me, as if I were a viper coiling at his feet.

"Your father!" he exclaimed with withering scorn. "Your father! The tale is marvellously conceived and admirably related. Do you expect me to believe that that bold libertine, who made you the object of his unrepressed admiration, was your father? Why, that man was not old enough to be your father,—and if ever profligacy was written on a human countenance, its damning lines were traced on his. Your father! Away with a subterfuge so vile and flimsy, a falsehood so wanton and sacrilegious."

Should I live a thousand years, I never could forget the awful shock of that moment, the whirlwind of passion that raged in my bosom. To be accused of *falsehood*, and such a falsehood, by Ernest, after my truthful, impassioned revelation;—it was what I could not, would not bear. My heart seemed a boiling cauldron, whence the hot blood rushed in burning streams to face, neck, and hands. My eyes flashed, my lips quivered with indignation.

"Is it I, your wife, whom you accuse of falsehood?" I exclaimed; "dare you repeat an accusation so vile?"

"Did you not *act* a falsehood, when you so grossly deceived me, by pretending to go on an errand of benevolence, when in reality you were bound to a disgraceful assignation? What veteran *intriguante* ever arranged any thing more coolly, more deliberately? Even if the story of that man's being your father were not false, what trust could I ever repose in one so skilled in deception, so artful, and so perfidious?"

"Ernest, you will rue what you say now, to your dying day; you will rue it at the judgment bar of heaven; you are doing me the cruellest wrong man ever inflicted on woman."

The burning current in my veins was cooling,—a chill, benumbing sense of injustice and injury was settling on every feeling. I looked in his face, and its classic beauty vanished, even its lineaments seemed changed, the illusion of love was passing away; with indescribable horror I felt this; it was like the opening of a deep, dark abyss. Take away my love for Ernest, and what would be left of life? Darkness—despair—annihilation. I thought not, recked not then of his lost love for me; I only dreaded ceasing to love *him*, dreaded that congelation of the heart more terrible than death.

"Where is the note?" he asked suddenly. "Show me the warrant for this secret meeting."

"I destroyed it."

Again a thunder-gust swept over his countenance. I ought to have kept it, I ought to have anticipated a moment like this, but my judgment was obscure by fear.

"You destroyed it!"

"Yes; and well might I dread a disclosure which has brought on a scene so humbling to us both. Let it not continue; you have heard from me nothing but plain and holy truth; I have nothing to say in my defence. Had I acted differently, you yourself would despise and condemn me."

"Had you come to me as you ought to have done, asking my counsel and assistance, I would have met the wretch who sought to beguile you; I would have detected the imposter, if you indeed believed the tale; I would have saved you from the shame of a public exposure, and myself the misery, the tortures of this hour."

"Did he not threaten your life and his own? Did he not appeal to me in the most solemn and awful manner not to betray him?"

"You might have known the man who urged you to deceive your husband to be a villain."

"Alas! alas! I know him to be a villain; and yet he is my father."

"He is not your father! I know he is not. I would swear it before a court of justice. I would swear it before the chancery of the skies!"

"Would to heaven that your words were true. Would to heaven my being were not derived from such a polluted source. But I know too well that he *is* my father; and that he has entailed on me everlasting sorrow. You admit, that if he is an impostor, I was myself deceived. You recall your fearful accusation."

"My God!" he exclaimed, clasping his hands, and looking wildly upwards, "I know not what to believe. I would give worlds, were they mine, for the sweet confidence forever lost! The cloud was passing away from my soul. Sunshine, hope, love, joy, were there. I was wrapped in the dreams of Elysium! Why have you so cruelly awakened me? If you had deceived me once, why not go on; deny the accusation; fool, dupe me,—do any thing but convince me that where I have so blindly worshipped, I have been so treacherously betrayed."

I pitied him,—from the bottom of my soul I pitied him, his countenance expressed such exceeding bitter anguish. I saw that passion obscured his reason; that while under its dominion he was incapable of perceiving the truth. I remembered the warning accents of his mother: "You have no right to complain." I remembered her Christian injunction, "to endure all;" and my own promise, with God's help, to do it. All at once, it seemed as if my guardian angel stood before me, with a countenance of celestial sweetness shaded by sorrow; and I trembled as I gazed. I had bowed my shoulder to the cross; but as soon as the burden galled and oppressed me, I had hurled it from me, exclaiming, "it was greater than I could bear." I *had* deceived, though not betrayed him. I *had* put myself in the power of a villain, and exposed myself to the tongue of slander. I had expected, dreaded his anger; and was it not partly just?

As these thoughts darted through my mind with the swiftness and power of lightning, love returned in all its living warmth, and anguish in proportion to the wound it had received. I was borne down irresistibly by the weight of my emotions. My knees bent under me. I bowed my face on the sofa; and tears, hot and fast as tropic rain, gushed from my eyes. I wept for him even more than myself,—wept for the "dark-spotted flower" twined with the roses of love.

I heard him walking the room with troubled steps; and every step sounded as mournful to me as the earth-fall on the coffin-lid. Their echo was scarcely audible on the soft, yielding carpet; yet they seemed loud and heavy to my excited ear. Then I heard him approach the sofa, and stop, close to the spot where I knelt. My heart almost ceased beating; when he suddenly knelt at my

side, and put his arms around me.

"Gabriella!" said he, "if I have done you wrong, may God forgive me; but I never can forgive myself."

Accents of love issuing from the grave could hardly have been more thrilling or unexpected. I turned, and leaning my head on his shoulder, I felt myself drawn closer and closer to the heart from which I believed myself for ever estranged. I entreated his forgiveness for having deceived him. I told him, for I believed it then, that the purity of the motive did not justify the act; and I promised in the most solemn manner never again, under any circumstances, to bind myself to do any thing unknown to him, or even to act spontaneously without his knowledge. In the rapture of reconciliation, I was willing to give any pledge as a security for love, without realizing that jealousy was a Shylock, exacting the fulfilment of the bond,—the pound of flesh "nearest the heart." Yes, more exacting still, for *he* paused, when forbidden to spill the red life-drops, and dropped the murderous knife.

And Ernest,—with what deep self-abasement he acknowledged the errors into which blind passion had led him. With what anguish he reflected on the disgraceful charge he had brought against me. Yes; even with tears, he owned his injustice and madness, and begged me to forget and forgive.

"What have I done?" he cried, when, after our passionate emotions having subsided, we sat hand in hand, still pale and trembling, but subdued and grateful, like two mariners escaped from wreck, watching the billows roaring back from the shore. "What have I done, that this curse should be entailed upon me? In these paroxysms of madness, I am no more master of myself than the maniac who hurls his desperate hand in the face of Omnipotence. Reason has no power,—love no influence. Dark clouds rush across my mind, shutting out the light of truth. My heart freezes, as in a wintry storm. O, Gabriella! you can have no conception of what I suffer, while I writhe in the tempter's grasp. It is said God never allows man to be tempted beyond his powers of resistance. I dare not question the word of the Most High, but in the hour of temptation I feel like an infant contending with the Philistine giant. But, oh! the joy, the rapture when the paroxysm is past,—when light dawns on the darkness, when warmth comes meltingly over the ice and snow, when reason resumes its sway, and love its empire,—oh! my beloved! it is life renewed—it is a resurrection from the dead,—it is Paradise regained in the heart."

Those who have floated along on a smooth, tranquil tide, clear of the breakers and whirlpools and rocks, or whose bark has lain on stagnant waters, on which a green and murky shade is beginning to gather, with no breeze to fan them or to curl the dull and lifeless pool, will accuse me of exaggeration, and say such scenes never occurred in the actual experience of wedded life; that I am writing a romance, instead of a reality.

I answer them, that I am drawing the sketch as faithfully as the artist, who transfers the living form to the canvas; that as it is scarcely possible to exaggerate the dying agonies of the malefactor transfixed by the dagger, and writhing in protracted tortures, that the painter may immortalize himself by the death-throes on which he is gazing; so the agonies of him,

> "Who doubts, yet does, suspects, yet fondly loves,"

cannot be described in colors too deep and strong. Prometheus bound to the rock, with the beak of the vulture in his bleeding breast, suffering daily renewing pangs, his wounds healed only to be torn open afresh, is an emblem of the victim of that vulture passion, which the word of God declares to be cruel and insatiable as the grave.

No; my pen is too weak to describe either the terrors of the storm or the halcyon peace, the heavenly joy that succeeded. I yielded to the exquisite bliss of reconciliation, without daring to give one glance to the future. I had chosen my destiny. I had said, "Let me be loved,—I ask no more!"

I was loved, even to the madness of idolatry. My prayer was granted. Then let me "lay my hand upon my mouth, and my mouth in the dust." I had rather be the stormy petrel, whose wings dip into ocean's foaming brine, than the swallow nestling under the barn-eaves of the farmer, or in the chimney of the country homestead,—

> "Better to stand the lightning's shock,
> Than moulder piecemeal on the rock."

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

It was fortunate for me that Margaret was absent during this exciting scene. When she returned, she was too much occupied with relating the pleasures she had enjoyed to think of what might have occurred in her absence.

"I am dying with impatience," she cried, "perfectly consuming with curiosity. Here is a letter from my mother, in which she says a gentleman, a particular friend of mine, is coming to the city, and that she has requested him to take charge of me back to Boston. She does not mention his name,

and I have not the most remote idea who he is. She says she is very happy that her wild girl should be escorted by a person of so much dignity and worth. Dignity! I expect he is one of the ex-presidents or wise statesmen, whom Mrs. Linwood has recommended to my patronage. I have a great admiration for great men, large, tall men, men whose heads you can distinguish in a crowd and see in a distant procession. They look as if they could protect one in the day of trouble."

"Do *you* ever think of such a day, Margaret?"

"Sometimes I do. I think more than you give me credit for. I can think more in one minute than you slow folks can in a week. Who can this be? I remember a description I admire very much. It is in some old poem of Scott's, I believe,—

'Bold, firm, and high, his stature tall,'

did something, looked like something, I have forgotten what. I know it was something grand, however."

"You must be thinking of Mr. Regulus," said I, laughing, as memory brought before me some of his inimitable *quackeries*. "He is the tallest gentleman I have ever seen, and though not very graceful, has a very imposing figure, especially in a crowd."

"I think Mr. Regulus one of the finest looking men I ever saw," cried Madge. "He has a head very much like Webster's, and his eyebrows are exactly like his. If he were in a conspicuous station, every one would be raving about his mountainous head and cavernous eyes and majestic figure. He is worth a dozen of *some* people, who shall be nameless. I have no doubt he will be president of the United States, one of these days."

"I never heard you make so sensible a remark, Margaret. I thought you were amusing yourself with my respected teacher. I am glad you appreciate his uncommon merits."

Madge laughed very loud, but she actually blushed. The first symptom of womanhood I had ever seen her exhibit! It was a strange phenomenon, and I marvelled what it could mean.

To my unutterable astonishment and delight, a few evenings after, my quondam preceptor was ushered into the parlor; and strangely looked his tall, large figure in the midst of the oriental lightness and splendor through which it moved. After greeting me with the most heart-felt feeling, and Madge with a half shy, half dignified manner, he gazed around him with the simplicity and wondering admiration of a child. He was probably comparing the beautiful drapery, that seemed like the azure robe of night with its stars of glory gleaming through, with the plain green curtains that shaded the windows of the academy, the graceful and luxurious divan with the high-backed chair which was my village throne.

"Beautiful, charming!" he exclaimed, rubbing his hands slowly and gently. "You remind me of the queen of a fairy palace. I shall not dare to call you my child or little girl again. Scherezade or Fatima will seem more appropriate."

"Oh no, Mr. Regulus! I had rather hear you call me child, than any thing else in the world. It carries me back to the dear old academy, the village green, the elm trees' shade, and all the sweet memories of youth."

"One would think you had a long backward journey to take, from the saddened heights of experience," said Ernest; and there was that indescribable something in his voice and countenance, which I had learned too well to interpret, that told me he was not pleased with my remark. He did not want me to have a memory further back than my first meeting with him,—a hope with which he was not intertwined.

"You may call *me* child, Mr. Regulus, as much as you please," cried Madge, her eyes sparkling with unusual brilliancy. "I wish I were a little school-girl again, privileged to romp as much as I pleased. When I did any thing wrong then, it was always passed over. 'Oh! she's but a child, she will get sobered when she is grown.' Now if I laugh a little louder and longer than other people, they stare and lift up their eyes, and I have no doubt pray for me as a castaway from grace and favor."

"Margaret!" said I, reproachfully.

"There! exactly as I described. Every sportive word I utter, it is Margaret, or Madge, or Meg, in such a grave, rebuking tone!"

"Perhaps it is only when you jest on serious subjects, that you meet a kindly check," observed Mr. Regulus, with grave simplicity; "there are so many legitimate themes of mirth, so many light frameworks, round which the flowers of wit and fancy can twine, it is better to leave the majestic temple of religion, untouched by the hand of levity."

"I did not intend to speak profanely," said Margaret, hastily,—and the color visibly deepened on her cheek; "neither did I know that you were a religious character, Mr. Regulus. I thought you were a very good sort of man, and all that; but I did not think you had so much of the minister about you."

"It is a great pity, Miss Margaret, that interest in religion should be considered a minister's exclusive privilege. But I hope I have not said any thing wounding. It was far from my intention. I

am a sad blunderer, however, as Gabriella knows full well."

I was charmed with my straightforward, simple, and excellent teacher. I had never seen him appear to such advantage. He had on an entirely new suit of the finest black broadcloth, that fitted him quite *à la mode*; a vest of the most dazzling whiteness; and his thick black hair had evidently been under the smoothing hands of a fashionable barber. His head seemed much reduced in size; while his massy, intellectual forehead displayed a bolder sweep of outline, relieved of the shadows that obscured its phrenological beauty.

He had seen Mrs. Linwood and Edith in Boston. They were both well, and looking anxiously forward to the summer reunion at Grandison Place. Dr. Harlowe sent me many characteristic messages,—telling me my little rocking-chair was waiting for me at my favorite window, and that he had not learned to rub his shoes on the mat, or to hang up his hat yet.

"Does he call me the wild-cat, still?" asked Madge.

"I believe so. He told me to say that he had his house repaired, so that you could visit him without endangering Mrs. Harlowe's china."

"The monster! Well, he shall give me a new name, when I see him again. But tell me, Mr. Regulus, who is the very dignified and excellent gentleman whom mamma says is coming to escort me home? I have been expiring with curiosity to know."

"I do not know of any one answering to that description, Miss Margaret," replied Mr. Regulus, blushing, and passing his hands over his knees. "I saw your mother at Mrs. Linwood's; and when she learned I was coming to this city, she said she would be very much obliged to me, if I would take charge of you, on my return."

"Then you did not come on purpose for me, Mr. Regulus," said Madge, with a saucy smile.

"Oh no,—I had business, and a very earnest desire to see my young friend, Gabriella. If I can, however, combine the useful with the agreeable, I shall be very well pleased."

"By the useful, you mean, seeing me safe in my mamma's arms," said Madge, demurely.

"Certainly, Miss Margaret."

Even Ernest laughed at this peculiar compliment; and Madge bit her lips, half in vexation, half in merriment. I hardly knew what to think of Margaret. She was certainly the most eccentric being I ever saw. She, who seemed to care for the opinion of no one,—reckless, defying, and apparently heartless, showed more deference for Mr. Regulus, more solicitude for his attention, than I had ever seen her manifest for another's. Was it possible that this strange, wild girl, was attracted by the pure, unvarnished qualities of this "great grown boy," as Dr. Harlowe called him? It is impossible to account for the fascination which one being exercises over another; and from the days of Desdemona to the present hour, we seldom hear of an approaching marriage, without hearing at the same time some one exclaim, "that it is strange,—most passing strange."

The moment I admitted the possibility of his exercising a secret influence over Madge, I looked upon him with new interest. He had the intense, deep-set eye, which is said to tame the wild beasts of the forest, and perhaps its glance had subdued the animal nature that triumphed over her more ethereal attributes. I hoped most devoutly that my supposition might be true; for genuine affection exalts both the giver and receiver, and opens ten thousand avenues to joy and good.

"You do not look quite so rosy as you did in the country," said he, looking earnestly at me. "The dissipation of a city life does not agree with our wild-wood flowers. They need a purer atmosphere."

"Gabriella is taken very good care of," cried Madge, looking significantly at Ernest. "She is not allowed to hurt herself by dissipation, I assure you."

"Do you imply that she needs a restraining influence to keep her from excess?" asked Ernest. He spoke lightly, but he never spoke without meaning something.

"No, indeed. She is the model wife of the nineteenth century. She is 'wisest, virtuousest, discreetest, best.' Solomon must have seen her with prophetic eye, when he wrote the last chapter of Proverbs."

"Mock praise is the severest censure, Margaret," said I.

"No such thing. I mean every word I say. Show me a young and beautiful wife, almost bride, immuring herself as you do, and never seen in public but clinging to her husband's arm, shrinking from admiration and blushing at a glance, and I will show you another Solomon."

"Though you may speak in ridicule," said Ernest, with a contracted brow, "you have awarded her the most glorious meed woman can receive. The fashion that sanctions a wife in receiving the attentions of any gentleman but her husband, is the most corrupt and demoralizing in the world. It makes wedded vows a mockery, and marriage an unholy and heartless rite."

"Do you expect to revolutionize society?" she asked.

"No; but I expect to keep my wife unspotted from the world."

"I am glad she has so watchful a guardian," said Mr. Regulus, regarding me with his old-fashioned, earnest tenderness. "We hear very flattering accounts," he added, addressing me, "of our young friend, Richard Clyde. He will return next summer, after a year's absence, having acquired as much benefit as most young men do in two or three."

I could not help blushing, for I knew the eyes of Ernest were on me. He could never hear the name of Richard with indifference, and the prospect of his return was far from being a source of pleasure to him. Richard was very dear to me as a friend, and I was proud of his growing honors. Yet I dared not manifest the interest I felt.

Never had I been so supremely happy, as since my reconciliation with Ernest. I felt that he had something to forgive, much to forgive, and that he was magnanimous to do it, considering the weakness with which he struggled. Never had I loved him so entirely, or felt such confidence in my future happiness. Yet the moment the name of Richard Clyde was mentioned, it sounded like a prophecy of evil.

Oh that he would transfer to Edith the affections given to me, and then he could bind Ernest to his heart by the sacred bonds of fraternity!

CHAPTER XXXIX.

The few days which Mr. Regulus passed in the city, were happy ones to me. He had never visited it before; and Ernest showed him more respect and attention than I had seen him bestow on other men. I had never betrayed the *romance* of the academy; and not dreaming that my preceptor had ever been my lover, he tolerated the regard he manifested, believing it partook of the paternal character. Perhaps, had he remained long, he would have considered even this an infringement on his rights; but, to my unspeakable joy, nothing occurred to cloud our domestic horizon during his stay. Once or twice when the name of Richard Clyde was mentioned, I saw the shadow of *coming events* on the brow of Ernest; but it passed away, and the evil day of his return seemed very far off.

I could not regret Margaret's departure. There was so entire a dissimilarity in our characters, and though I have no doubt she cherished for me all the friendship she was capable of feeling, it was of that masculine cast, that I could not help shrinking from its manifestations. Her embraces were so stringent, her kisses so loud and resounding, I could not receive them without embarrassment, though no one but Ernest might be near.

The evening before she left, she was in an unusually gentle mood. We were alone in my chamber, and she actually sat still several moments without speaking. This was something as ominous as the pause that precedes the earth's spasmodic throes. I have not spoken of Margaret's destructive propensities, but they were developed in a most extraordinary manner. She had a habit of seizing hold of every thing she looked at, and if it chanced to be of delicate materials, it often shivered in her grasp. I do not wonder poor Mrs. Harlowe trembled for her glass and china, for scarcely a day passed that her path was not strewed with ruins, whose exquisite fragments betrayed the costly fabric she had destroyed. Now it was a beautiful porcelain vase, which she would have in her hands to examine and admire, then an alabaster statuette or frail crystal ornament. If I dropped a kid glove, she invariably attempted to put it on, and her hand being much larger than mine, she as invariably tore it in shreds. She would laugh, roll up her eyes, and exclaim, "shocking! why this could not be worth anything! I will let it alone next time."

I cannot say but that these daily proofs of carelessness and destructiveness were trials of the temper and constant gratings on the nerves. It was difficult to smile with a frowning heart, for such wanton disregard for the property and feelings of others must pain that nice moral sense which is connected with the great law of self-preservation.

This evening, she seized a beautiful perfume bottle that stood on my toilet, and opening it, spilled it half on her handkerchief, though one drop would fill the whole apartment with richest odor.

"Do not break that bottle, Margaret; it is very beautiful, and Ernest gave it me this very morning."

"Oh! nonsense, I am the most careful creature in the world. Once in a while, to be sure,—but then accidents will happen, you know. O Gabriella I have something to tell you. Mr. Harland wants me to marry him,—ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, you seemed pleased, Margaret. He is an accomplished gentleman, and an agreeable one. Do you like him?"

"No! I liked him very well, till he wanted me to like him better, and now I detest him. He is all froth,—does not know much more than I do myself. No, no,—that will never do."

"Perhaps you like some one else better?" said I, thinking if Margaret was ever caught in the matrimonial noose, it must be a *lasso*, such as are thrown round the neck of the wild horses of the prairies.

"What makes you say that?" she asked, quickly, and my beautiful essence bottle was demolished

by some sudden jerk which brought it in contact with the marble table. "The brittle thing!" she exclaimed, tossing the fragments on the carpet, at the risk of cutting our slippers and wounding our feet. "I would not thank Ernest for such baby trifles,—I was scarcely touching it. What makes you think I like anybody better?"

"I merely asked the question," I answered, closing my work box, and drawing it nearer, so that her depredating fingers could not reach it. She had already destroyed half its contents.

"I do like somebody a great deal better," she said, tossing her hair over her forehead and veiling her eyes; "but if you guessed till doomsday, you could not imagine who it is."

"I pity him, whoever it may be," said I, laughing.

"Why?"

"You are no more fit to be a wife, Madge, than a child of five years old. You have no more thought or consideration, foresight or care."

"I am two years older than you are, notwithstanding."

"I fear if you live to be a hundred, you will never have the qualities necessary to secure your own happiness and that of another in the close, knitting bonds of wedded life."

I spoke more seriously than I intended. I was thinking of Mr. Regulus, and most devoutly hoped for his sake, this wild, nondescript girl would never reach his heart through the medium of his vanity. She certainly paid him the most dangerous kind of flattery, because it was indirect.

"You do not know what a sensible man might make of me," she said, shaking her head. "I really wish,—I do not know—but I sometimes think"—

She stopped and leaned her head on her hand, and her hair fell shadingly over her face.

"What, Margaret? I should like exceedingly to know your inmost thoughts and feelings. You seem to think and feel so little;—and yet, in every woman's heart there must be a fountain,—or else what a desert waste,—what a dreary wilderness it must be."

She did not speak, but put both hands over her face and bent it downwards, while her shoulders moved up and down with a spasmodic motion. I thought she was shaking with suppressed laughter; and though I could not imagine what had excited her mirth, I had known her convulsed by a ridiculous thought of her own, in the midst of general seriousness.

But all at once unmistakable sobs broke forth, and I found she was crying heartily, genuinely,—crying without any self control, with all the abandonment of a child.

"Margaret!" I exclaimed, laying my hand gently on her quivering shoulder, "what is the matter? What can have excited you in this manner? Don't, Madge,—you terrify me."

"I can't help it," she sobbed. "Now I have began, I can't stop. O dear, what a fool I am! There is nothing the matter with me. I don't know what makes me cry; but I can't help it,—I hate myself,—I can't bear myself, and yet I can't change myself. Nobody that I care for will ever love me. I am such a hoyden—such a romp—I disgust every one that comes near me; and yet I can't be gentle and sweet like you, if I die. I used to think because I made everybody laugh, they liked me. People said, 'Oh! there's Madge, she will keep us alive.' And I thought it was a fine thing to be called Wild Madge, and Meg the Dauntless; I begin to hate the names; I begin to blush when I think of myself."

And Margaret lifted her head, and the feelings of lately awakened womanhood crimsoned her cheeks, and streamed from her eyes. I was electrified. What prophet hand had smitten the rock? What power had drawn up the rosy fluid from the Artesian well of her heart?

"My dear Margaret," I cried, "I hail this moment as the dawn of a new life in your soul. Your childhood has lingered long, but the moment you feel that you have the heart of a woman, you will discard the follies of a child. Now you begin to live, when you are conscious of the golden moments you have wasted, the noble capacities you have never yet exerted. Oh Margaret, I feel more and more every day I live, that I was born for something more than the enjoyment of the passing moment,—that life was given for a more exalted purpose than self-gratification, and that as we use or abuse this gift of God we become heirs of glory or of shame."

Margaret listened with a subdued countenance and a long drawn sigh. She strenuously wiped away the traces of her tears, and shook back the hair from her brow, with a resolute motion.

"You despise me—I know you do," she said, gloomily.

"No, indeed," I answered, "I never liked you half as well before; I doubted your sensibility. Now, I see you can feel, and feel acutely. I shall henceforth think of you with interest, and speak of you with tenderness."

"You are the dearest, sweetest creature in the world," she exclaimed, putting both arms around me with unwonted gentleness; "I shall always love you, and will try to remember all you have said to me to-night. We shall meet in the summer, and you shall see, oh yes, you shall see. Dear me—what a fright I have made of myself."

She had risen, and was glancing at herself in the Psyche, which, supported by two charming

Cupids, reflected the figure full length.

"I never will cry again if I can help it," she exclaimed. "These horrid red circles round the eyes,—and my eyes, too, are as red as a rabbit's. The heroines of novels are always said to look lovelier in tears; but you are the only person I ever saw who looked pretty after weeping."

"Did you ever see me weep, Madge?"

"I have noticed more than you think I have,—and believe me, Gabriella, Ernest will have to answer for every tear he draws from those angel eyes of yours."

"Margaret, you know not what you say. Ernest loves me ten thousand times better than I deserve. He lavishes on me a wealth of love that humbles me with a consciousness of my own demerits. His only fault is loving me too well. Never never breathe before Mrs. Linwood or Edith,—before a human being, the sentiment you uttered now. Never repeat the idle gossip you may have heard. If you do speak of us, say that I have known woman's happiest, most blissful lot. And that I would rather be the wife of Ernest one year, than live a life of endless duration with any other."

"It must be a pleasant thing to be loved," said Margaret, and her black eyes flashed through the red shade of tears.

"And to love," I repeated. "It is more blessed to give, than to receive."

A sympathetic chord was touched,—there was music in it. Who ever saw a person weep genuine tears, without feeling the throbbings of humanity,—the drawings of the chain that binds together all the sons and daughters of Adam? If there are such beings, I pity them.

Let them keep as far from me as the two ends of the rainbow are from each other. The breath of the Deity has frozen within them.

CHAPTER XL.

The morning of Margaret's departure, when Mr. Regulus was standing with gloves and hat in hand waiting her readiness, it happened that I was alone in the parlor with him a few moments.

"You will have a pleasant journey," said I. "You will find Margaret an entertaining companion."

"O yes!" he answered, with a slight shrug of the shoulders, "but I fear she will excite too much remark by her wild antics. I do not like to be noticed by strangers."

"She will accommodate herself to your wishes, I know she will. You have great influence over her."

"Me! oh no!" he cried, with equal surprise and simplicity.

"Yes, indeed you have. Talk to her rationally, as if you had confidence in her good-sense, Mr. Regulus, and you will really find some golden wheat buried in the chaff. Talk to her feelingly, as if you appealed to her sensibility, and you may discover springs where you believe no waters flow."

"It is like telling me to search for spring flowers, when the ground is all covered with snow,—to look at the moon shining, when the night is as dark as ebony. But I am thinking of you, Gabriella, more than of her. I rejoice to find you the same artless child of nature that sat at my feet years ago in the green-wood shade. But beautiful as is your palace home, I long to see you again in our lovely valley among the birds and the flowers. I long to see you on the green lawn of Grandison Place."

"I do feel more at home at Grandison Place," I answered. "I would give more for the velvet lawn, the dear old elm, the oaken avenue, than for all the magnificence of this princely mansion."

"But you are happy here, my child?"

"I have realized the brightest dreams of youth."

"God be praised!—and you have forgiven my past folly,—you think of me as preceptor, elder brother, friend."

"My dear master!" I exclaimed, and tears, such as glisten in the eyes of childhood, gathered in mine. I *was* a child again, in my mother's presence, and the shade-trees of the gray cottage seemed rustling around me.

The entrance of Margaret interrupted the conversation. She never appeared to better advantage than in her closely fitting riding dress, which displayed the symmetry of her round and elastic figure. I looked at her with interest, for I had seen those saucy, brilliant eyes suffused with tears, and those red, merry lips quivering with womanly sensibility. I hoped good things of Margaret, and though I could not regret her departure, I thought leniently of her faults, and resolved to forget them.

"Just like Margaret," said I, gathering up the beautiful drapery, on which she had trodden as she left the room, and rent from the shaft that confined its folds. She stopped not to see the mischief

she had done, for she was so accustomed to hear a crash and dash behind her, it is not probable she even noticed it.

"Thank God!" exclaimed Ernest, before the echo of their departing footsteps had died on the ear. "Thank God! we are once more alone."

Mr. Harland had visited us but seldom since the words of passion which might have been followed by a scene of strife, but for woman's restraining presence, had fallen from the lips of Ernest. One evening, he called and asked a private interview with Ernest, and they immediately passed into the library. I saw that his countenance was disturbed, and vague apprehensions filled my mind. I could hear their voices in earnest, excited tones; and though I knew there was no revelation to be made which Ernest had not already heard from me, I felt a conviction amounting to certainty, that this mysterious interview had some connection with my unhappy father, and boded evil to me. Mr. Harland did not probably remain more than an hour, but every moment seemed an hour, drawn out by suspense and apprehension. He reëntered the parlor with Ernest, but left immediately; while Ernest walked silently back and forth, as he always did when agitated, —his brows contracted with stern, intense thought. He was excessively pale, and though his eyes did not emit the lightning glance of passion, they flashed and burned like heated metal.

I dared not ask him the cause of his emotion, I could only watch him with quick-drawn breath, and lips sealed with dread. Suddenly he put his hand in his bosom, and snatching thence the fatal casket I had left in my father's crime-stained hands, he hurled it to the floor, and trampled it under his feet.

"Behold," he cried, with inexpressible bitterness and grief, "my mother's gift, her sacred bridal gift,—desecrated, polluted, lost,—worse than lost! I will not upbraid you. I would spare you the pang I myself endure,—but think of the agonies in which a spirit like mine must writhe, to know that *your* name, that the name of my *wife* is blazoned to the world, associated with that of a vile forger, an abandoned villain, whose crimes are even now blackening the newspapers, and glutting the greedy appetite of slander! O rash, misguided girl! what demon tempted you to such fatal imprudence?"

I sat immovable, frozen, my eyes fixed upon the carpet, my hands as cold as ice, and my lips, as they touched each other, chill as icicles. In moments of sudden anguish I never lost consciousness, as many do, but while my physical powers were crushed, my mind seemed to acquire preternatural sensibility. I suffered as we do in dreams, intensely, exquisitely, when every nerve is unsheathed, and the spirit naked to the dagger's stroke. He stopped as he uttered this impassioned adjuration, and his countenance changed instantaneously as he gazed on mine.

"Cruel, cruel that I am!" he cried, sitting down by me, and wrapping his arms around me; "I did not know what I was saying. I meant to be gentle and forbearing, but strong passion rushed over me like a whirlwind. Forgive me, Gabriella, my darling, forgive me. Let the world say what it will, I know that you are pure and true. I care not for the money,—I care not for the jewels,—but an unspotted name. Oh! where now are the 'liveried angels' that will guard it from pollution?"

As he folded me in his arms, and pressed his cheek to mine, as if striving to infuse into it vital warmth, I felt the electric fluid flowing into my benumbed system. Whatever had occurred, he had not cast me off; and with him to sustain me, I was strong to meet the exigencies of the moment. I looked up in his face, and he read the expression of my soul,—I know he did, for he clasped me closer to him, and the fire of his eyes grew dim,—dim, through glistening tears. And then he told me all my beseeching glances sought. More than a week before, even before that, he had learned that a forgery had been committed in his name, involving a very large sum of money. Liberal rewards had been offered for the discovery of the villain, and that day he had been brought to the city. My diamonds, on whose setting Mrs. Linwood had had my name engraven, were found in his possession. He had not spoken to me of the forgery, not wishing to trouble me, he said, on a subject of such minor importance. It was the publicity given to my name, in association with his, that caused the bitterness of his anguish. And I,—I knew that my father had robbed my husband in the vilest, most insidious manner; that he had drawn upon himself the awful doom of a forger, a dungeon home, a living death.

My father! the man whom my mother had loved. The remembrance of this love, so long-enduring, so much forgiving, hung like a glory round him. It was the halo of a saint encircling the brow of the malefactor.

"Will they not suppose the jewels were stolen?" I asked, with the calmness of desperation. "Surely the world cannot know they were given by me; and though it is painful to be associated with so dark a transaction, I see not, dear Ernest, why my reputation should be clouded by this?"

"Alas! Gabriella,—you were seen by more than one walking with him in the park. You were seen entering the jeweller's shop, and afterwards meeting him in Broadway. Even in the act of giving your shawl to the poor shivering woman, you were watched. You believed yourself unremarked; but the blind man might as well think himself unseen walking in the blaze of noonday, because his own eyes are bound by the fillet of darkness, as *you* expect to pass unnoticed through a gaping throng. Mr. Harland told me of these things, that I might be prepared to repel the arrows of slander which would inevitably be aimed at the bosom of my wife."

"But you told him that it was my father. That it was to save him from destruction I gave them. Oh Ernest, you told him all!"

"I have no right to reveal your secret, Gabriella. If he be indeed your father, let eternal secrecy veil his name. Would you indeed consent that the world should know that it was your father who had committed so dark a crime? Would you, Gabriella?"

"I would far rather be covered with ignominy as a daughter, than disgrace as a wife," I answered, while burning blushes dyed my cheeks at the possibility of the last. "The first will not reflect shame or humiliation on you. You have raised me generously, magnanimously, to your own position; and though the world may say that you yielded to weakness in loving me,—a poor and simple girl.—Nay, nay; I recall my words, Ernest; I will not wrong myself, because clouds and darkness gather round me. You did not *stoop*, or lower yourself, by wedding me. Love made us equal. My proud, aspiring love, looked up; yours bent to meet its worship,—and both united, as the waves of ocean unite, in fulness, depth, and strength,—and, like them, have found their level. Let the world know that I am the daughter of St. James; that, moved by his prayers and intimidated by his threats, I met him and attempted to save him from ruin. They may say that I was rash and imprudent; but they dare not call me guilty. There is a voice in every heart which is not palsied, or deadened, or dumb, that will plead in my defence. The child who endeavors to shield a father from destruction, however low and steeped in sin he may be, cannot be condemned. If I am, I care not; but oh, Ernest, as your wife, let me not suffer reproach,—for your sake, my husband, far more than mine."

As thus I pleaded with all the eloquence and earnestness of my nature, with my hands clasped in his, their firm, close, yet gentle fold grew firmer, closer still; and the cloud passing away from his countenance, it became luminous as I gazed.

"You are right,—you are true," said he, "my dear, my noble Gabriella. Every shadow of a doubt vanishes before the testimony of your unselfish heart. Why did I not see this subject in the same clear, just light? Because my eyes are too often blinded by the mists of passion. Yes! you have pointed out the only way of extrication. The story of your mother's wrongs will not necessarily be exposed; and if it is, the sacred ægis of your filial love will guard it from desecration. We shall not remain here long. Spring will soon return; and in the sweet quietude of rural life, we will forget the tumultuous scenes of this modern Babel. You will not wish to return?"

"No! never, never. That unhappy man! what will be his doom?"

"Probably life-long imprisonment. Had I known who the offender was, I would have prayed the winds and waves to bear him to Icelandic seas, rather than have had his crime published to the world. It is, however, the retribution of heaven; and we must submit."

"It seems so strange," said I, "to think of him alive, whose existence so long seemed to me a blank. When I was a child, I used to indulge in wild dreams about my unknown parent. I pictured him as one of the gods of mythology, veiling his divinity in flesh for the love of the fairest of the daughters of men. The mystery that wrapped his name was, to my imagination, like the cloud mantling the noonday sun. With such views of my lineage, which, though they became subdued as I grew older, were still exaggerated and romantic,—think of the awful plunge into the disgraceful truth. It seems to me that I should have died on my mother's grave, had not your arms of love raised me,—had you not breathed into my ear words that called me back from the cold grasp of death itself. In the brightness of the future I forgot the gloom of the past. Oh! had I supposed that he lived,—that he would come to bring on me public shame and sorrow, and through me, on you, my husband, I never would have exposed you to the sufferings of this night."

And I clung to him with an entireness of confidence, a fulness of gratitude that swelled my heart almost to bursting. His face, beaming with unclouded love and trust, seemed to me as the face of an angel. I cared not for obloquy or shame, since he believed me true. I remembered the words of the tender, the devoted Gertrude:—

"I have been with thee in thine hour
    Of glory and of bliss,
Doubt not its memory's living power
    To strengthen me in this."

But though my mind was buoyed up by the exaltation of my feelings, my physical powers began to droop. I inherited something of my mother's constitutional weakness; and, suddenly as the leaden weight falls when a clock has run down and the machinery ceases to play, a heavy burden of lethargy settled down upon me, and I was weak and helpless as a child. Dull pain throbbed in my brain, as if it were girdled by a hard, tightening band.

It was several days before I left my bed, and more than a week before I quitted my chamber. The recollection of Ernest's tender watchfulness during these days of illness, even now suffuses my eyes with tears. Had I been a dying infant he could not have hung over me with more anxious, unslumbering care. Oh! whatever were his faults, his virtues redeemed them all. Oh! the unfathomable depths of his love! I was then willing to die, so fearful was I of passing out of this heavenly light of home joy into the coldness of doubt, the gloom of suspicion.

Ernest, with all his proneness to exaggerate the importance of my actions, did not do so in reference to this unhappy transaction. Paragraphs were inserted in the papers, in which the initials of my name were inserted in large capitals to attract the gazing eye. The meeting in the

Park, the jewels found in the possession of the forger, the abrupt manner in which they were taken from the jeweller's shop, even the gray shawl and green veil, were minutely described. Ernest had made enemies by the haughty reserve of his manners and the exclusiveness of his habits, and they stabbed him in secret where he was most vulnerable.

A brief sketch of the real circumstances and the causes which led to them, was published in reply. It was written with manly boldness, but guarded delicacy, and rescued my name from the fierce clutch of slander. Then followed glowing eulogiums on the self-sacrificing daughter, the young and beautiful wife, till Ernest's sensitive spirit must have bled over the notoriety given to her, whom he considered as sacred as the priestess of some holy temple, and whose name was scarcely to be mentioned but in prayer.

The only comment he made on them was,—

"My mother and Edith will see these."

"I will write and tell them all," I answered; "it will be too painful to you."

"We will both write," he said; and we did.

"You blame yourself too much," cried he, when he perused my letter.

"You speak too kindly, too leniently of me," said I, after reading his; "yet I am glad and grateful. Your mother will judge me from the facts, and nothing that you or I can say will warp or influence her judgment. She understands so clearly the motives of action,—she reads so closely your character and mine, I feel that her decision will be as righteous as the decree of eternal justice. Oh that I were with her now, for my soul looks to her as an ark of safety. Like the poor weary dove, it longs to repose its drooping wings and fold them in trembling joy on her sheltering breast."

I will not speak of the trial, the condemnation, or the agony I felt, when I learned that my father was doomed to expiate his crime by solitary confinement for ten long years. Could Ernest have averted this fate from him, for my sake he would have done it; but the majesty of the law was supreme, and no individual effort could change its just decree. My affections were not wounded, for I never could recall his image without personal repugnance, but my mother's remembrance was associated with him;—I remembered her dying injunctions,—her prophetic dream. I thought of the heaven which he had forfeited, the God whose commandments he had broken, the Saviour whose mercy he had scorned. I wanted to go to him,—to minister to him in his lonely cell,—to try to rouse him to a sense of his transgressions,—to lead him to the God he had forsaken, the Redeemer he had rejected, the heaven from which my mother seemed stretching her spirit arms to woo him to her embrace.

"My mother dreamed that I drew him from a black abyss," said I to Ernest; "she dreamed that I was the guardian angel of his soul. Let me go to him,—let me fulfil my mission. I shudder when I look around me in these palace walls, and think that a parent groans in yonder dismal tombs."

"*I* will go," replied Ernest; "I will tell him your filial wish, and if I find you can do him good, I will accompany you there."

"I *can* do him good,—I can pity and forgive him,—I can talk to him of my mother, and that will lead him to think of heaven. 'I was sick and in prison and ye came unto me.' Oh, thus our Saviour said, identifying himself with the sons of ignominy and sorrow. Go, and if you find his heart softened by repentance, pour balm and oil into the wounds that sin has made. Go, and let me follow."

CHAPTER XLI.

"And did you see him, Ernest?" I asked, with trembling eagerness.

"I did, Gabriella. I went to him as your representative, without one vindictive, bitter feeling. I proffered kindness, forgiveness, and every comfort the law would permit a condemned criminal to enjoy. They were rejected fiercely, disdainfully,—he rejected them all."

"Alas! and me, Ernest; does he refuse consolation from me?"

"He will not see you. 'I ask no sympathy,' he cried, in hoarse and sullen accents. 'I desire no fellowship; alone I have sinned,—alone I will suffer,—alone I will die.' Weep not, my Gabriella, over this hardened wretch; I do not believe he is your father; I am more and more convinced that he is an impostor."

"But he has my mother's miniature; he recognized me from my resemblance to it; he called me by name; he knew all the circumstances of my infantine life. I would give worlds to believe your assertion, but the curse clings to me. He *is*,—he must be my father."

"Mr. Brahan, who knew your father personally, and who is deeply interested in the disclosures recently made, has visited him also. He says there is a most extraordinary resemblance; and though seventeen years of sinful indulgence leave terrible traces on the outward man, he does

not doubt his identity. But I cannot, will not admit it. Think of him no more, Gabriella; banish him, and every thing connected with this horrible event, from your mind. In other scenes you will recover from the shock occasioned by it; and even now the tongue of rumor is busy with more recent themes. Mr. Brahan will visit him from time to time and, if possible, learn something of the mystery of his life. Whatever is learned will be communicated to me. What! weeping still, my Gabriella?"

"It is dreadful to think of sin and crime in the abstract; but when it comes before us in the person of a father!"

"No more! no more! Dismiss the subject. Let it be henceforth a dark dream, forgotten if possible; or if remembered, be it as a dispensation of Providence, to be borne in silence and submission. Strange as it may seem, all that I have suffered of humiliation and anguish in this *real* trial, cannot be compared to the agony caused by one of my own dark imaginings."

I tried to obey the injunctions of Ernest; but though my lips were silent, it was impossible to check the current of thought, or to obliterate the dark remembrance of the past. My spirits lost their elasticity, the roses on my cheek grew pale.

Spring came, not as in the country, with the rich garniture of living green, clothing hill, valley, and lawn,—the blossoming of flowers,—the warbling of birds,—the music of waters,—and all the beauty, life, and glory of awakening nature. But the fountain played once more in the grotto, the vine-wreaths frolicked again round their graceful shells, the statues looked at their pure faces in the shining mural wall.

I cared not for these. This was not my home. I saw the faces of Mrs. Linwood and Edith in the mirror of memory. I saw the purple hills, the smiling vale, the quiet churchyard, the white, broken shaft, gleaming through the willow boughs, and the moonbeams resting in solemn glory there.

Never shall I forget my emotions when, on quitting the city, I caught a glimpse of that gloomy and stupendous granite pile which looms up in the midst of grandeur and magnificence, an awful monitor to human depravity. Well does it become its chill, funereal name. Shadows deeper than the darkness of the grave hang within its huge Egyptian columns. Corruption more loathsome than the mouldering remains of mortality dwells in those lone and accursed cells. I gazed on the massy walls, as they frowned on the soft blue sky, till their shadow seemed to darken the heavens. I thought of the inmate of one lonely cell; of the sighs and tears, the curses and wailings that had gone up from that abode of shame, despair, and misery; and I wondered why the Almighty did not rend the heavens and come down and bare the red right arm of vengeance over a world so blackened by sin, so stained by crime, and so given up to the dominion of the spirit of evil.

Ernest drew me back from the window of the carriage, that I might not behold this grim fortification against the powers of darkness; but it was not till we had quitted the walls of the metropolis, and inhaled a purer atmosphere, that I began to breathe more freely. The tender green of the fields, the freshness of the atmosphere, the indescribable odor of spring that embalmed the gale, awakened softer, happier thoughts. The footsteps of divine love were visible on the landscape. The voice of God was heard, breathing of mercy, through the cool green boughs.

CHAPTER XLII.

Once more at Grandison Place! Once more on the breezy height which commanded the loveliest valley creation ever formed! Light, bloom, joy came back to eye, cheek, and heart, as I hailed again the scene where the day-spring of love dawned on my life.

"God made the country."

Yes! I felt this truth in every bounding vein. "God made the country,"—with its rich sweep of verdant plains, its blue winding streams, shedding freshness and murmuring music through the smiling fields; its silver dews, its golden sunsets, and all its luxuriance and greenness and bloom. The black shadow of the *Tombs* did not darken this Eden of my youth.

Mrs. Linwood and Edith—I was with them once more. Mrs. Linwood, in her soft twilight robe of silver grey; and Edith, with her wealth of golden locks, and eye of heaven's own azure.

"You must not leave us again," said Mrs. Linwood, as she clasped us both in her maternal arms. "There are but few of us, and we should not be separated. Absence is the shadow of death, and falls coldly on the heart."

She glanced towards Edith, whose beautiful face was paler and thinner than it was wont to be. She had pined for the brother of whom I had robbed her; for the world offered her nothing to fill the void left in the depths of her loving heart. We were all happier together. We cannot give ourselves up to the dominion of an exclusive passion, whatever it may be, without an outrage to nature, which sooner or later revenges the wrong inflicted. With all my romantic love for Ernest, I had often sighed for the companionship of one of my own sex; and now, restored to Edith, whom

I had always regarded a little lower than the angels, I felt that if love was more rapturous than friendship, it was not more divine.

They knew that I had suffered. They had sympathized with me, pitied me,—(if Mrs. Linwood blamed me for imprudence, she never expressed it); and I felt that they loved me better for having passed under the cloud. There was no allusion made to the awful events which were present in the minds of all, on our first reunion. If Mrs. Linwood noticed, that after the glow of excitement faded from my cheek it was paler than it was wont to be, she did not tell me so, but her kiss was more tender, her glance more kind. There was something in her mild, expressive eyes, that I translated thus:—

"Thank God that another hand than Ernest's has stolen the rose from thy cheek of youth. Better, far better to be humbled by a father's crimes, than blighted by a husband's jealousy."

This evening reminded me so much of the first I ever passed with Ernest. He asked Edith for the music of her harp; and I sat in the recess of the window, in the shadow of the curtains, through whose transparent drapery the moonbeams stole in and kissed my brow. Ernest came and sat down beside me, and my hand was clasped in his. As the sweet strains floated round us, they seemed to mingle with the moonlight, and my spirit was borne up on waves of brightness and melody. Always before, when listening to Edith's angelic voice, I had wished for the same enchanting power. I had felt that thus I could sing, I could play, had art developed the gifts of nature, only with deeper passion and sensibility; but now I listened without conscious desire,—passive, happy, willing to receive, without desiring to impart. I felt like the pilgrim who, after a sultry day of weariness, pauses by a cool spring, and, laying himself down beneath its gushing, suffers the stream to flow over him,—till, penetrated by their freshness, his soul seems a fountain of living waters. Oh! the divine rapture of repose, after restlessness and conflict! I had passed the breakers. Henceforth my life would be calm and placid as the beams that illumined the night.

And now I am tempted to lay down the pen. I would not weary thee, friend of my lonely hours, whoever thou art, by a repetition of scenes which show how poor and weak are the strongest human resolutions, when temptations assail and passions rise with the swell and the might of the stormy billows. But if I record weaknesses and errors, such as seldom sadden the annals of domestic life, it is that God may be glorified in the humiliation of man. It is that the light of the sun of righteousness may be seen to arise with healing in his beams, while the mists of error and the clouds of passion are left rolling below.

Yes! We were all happy for a while, and in the midst of such pure, reviving influences, I became blooming and elastic as a mountain maid. Dr. Harlowe was the same kind, genial, warm-hearted friend. Mr. Regulus, the same—no, he was changed,—improved, softened still more than when he surprised me by his graces, in my metropolitan home. He looked several years younger, and a great deal handsomer.

Had Margaret wrought this improvement? Had she indeed supplanted me in my tutor's guileless heart? I inquired of Edith after the wild creature, whom I suspected some secret influence was beginning to tame.

"Oh! you have no idea how Madge is improved, since her visit to you," she answered. "She sometimes talks sensibly for five minutes at a time, and I have actually caught her singing and playing a sentimental air. Mamma says if she were in love with a man of sense and worth, he might make of her a most invaluable character."

"Mr. Regulus, for instance!" said I.

Edith laughed most musically.

"Mr. Regulus in love! that would be a farce."

"I have seen that farce performed," said Dr. Harlowe, who happened to come in at that moment, and caught her last words. "I have seen Mr. Regulus as much in love as—let me see," glancing at me, "as Richard Clyde."

Much as I liked Dr. Harlowe I felt angry with him for an allusion, which always called the cloud to Ernest's brow, and the blush to my cheek.

"Do tell me the object of his romantic passion?" cried Edith, who seemed excessively amused at the idea.

"Am I telling tales out of school?" asked the doctor, looking merrily at me. "Do you not know the young enchantress, who has turned all the heads in our town, not excepting the shoemaker's apprentice and the tailor's journeyman? Poor Mr. Regulus could not escape the fascination. The old story of Beauty and the Beast,—only Beauty was inexorable this time."

"Gabriella!" exclaimed Edith, with unutterable astonishment; "he always called her his child. Who would have believed it? Why, Gabriella, how many victims have your chariot wheels of conquest rolled over?"

"I am afraid if *I* had not been a married man, she would have added me to the number," said the doctor, with much gravity. "I am not certain that Mrs. Harlowe is not jealous, in secret, of my public devotion."

Who would believe that light words like these, carelessly uttered, and forgotten with the breath

that formed them, should rankle like arrows in a breast where reason was enthroned? But it was even so. The allusion to Richard Clyde, the revelation of Mr. Regulus' romantic attachment, even the playful remarks of Dr. Harlowe relative to his wife's jealousy, were gall and wormwood, embittering the feelings of Ernest. He frowned, bit his lip, rose, and walked into the piazza. His mother's eyes followed him with that look which I had so often seen before our marriage, and which I now understood too well. I made an involuntary movement to follow him, but her glance commanded me to remain. The doctor, who was in a merry mood, continued his sportive remarks, without appearing to notice the darkened countenance and absence of Ernest. I talked and smiled too at his good-humored sallies, that he might not perceive my anxious, wounded feelings.

A little while after Mr. Regulus called, and Ernest accompanied him to the parlor door with an air of such freezing coldness, I wonder it did not congeal his warm and unsuspecting heart. And there Ernest stood with folded arms, leaning back against the wall just within the door, stern and silent, casting a dark shadow on my soul. Poor Mr. Regulus,—now he knew he had been my lover, he would scarcely permit him to be my friend.

"Oh!" thought I, blushing to think how moody and strange he must seem to others,—"surely my happiness is based on sand, since the transient breath of others can shake it from its foundation. If it depended on myself, I would guard every look, word, and action, with never sleeping vigilance;—but how can I be secured against the casual sayings of others, words unmeaning as a child's, and as devoid of harm? I might as well make cables of water and walls of foam, as build up a fabric of domestic felicity without confidence as the foundation stone."

As these thoughts arose in my mind, my heart grew hard and rebellious. The golden chain of love clanked and chafed against the bosom it attempted to imprison.

"I will not," I repeated to myself, "alienate from me, by coolness and gloom, the friends who have loved me from my orphan childhood. Let him be morose and dark, if he will; I will not follow his example. I will not be the slave of his mad caprices."

"No," whispered *the angel over my right shoulder*, "but you will be the forbearing, gentle wife, who promised to *endure all*, knowing his infirmity, before you breathed your wedded vows. You are loved beyond the sober reality of common life. Your prayer is granted. You dare not murmur. You have held out your cup for the red wine. There is fire in its glow. You cannot turn it into water now. There is no divine wanderer on earth to reverse the miracle of Cana. 'Peace' is woman's watchword, and heaven's holiest, latest legacy."

As I listened to the angel's whisper, the voices of those around me entered not my ear. I was as far away from them as if pillowed on the clouds, whose silver edges crinkled round the moon.

As soon as our guests had departed, Ernest went up to Edith, and putting his arm round her, drew her to the harp.

"Sing for me, Edith, for my spirit is dark and troubled. You alone have power to soothe it. You are the David of the haunted Saul."

She looked up in his face suddenly, and leaned her head on his shoulder. Perhaps at that moment she felt the joy of being to him all that she had been, before he had known and loved me. He had appealed to her, in the hour of darkness. He had passed me by, as though I were not there. He sat down close to her as she played, so close that her fair ringlets swept against his cheek; and as she sang, she turned towards him with such a loving smile,—such a sweet, happy expression,—just as she used to wear! I always loved to hear Edith sing; but now my spirit did not harmonize with the strains. Again a stinging sense of injustice quickened the pulsations of my heart. Again I asked myself, "What had I done, that he should look coldly on me, pass me with averted eye, and seek consolation from another?"

I could not sit still and listen, for I was left *alone*. I rose and stole from the room,—stole out into the dewy night, under the heavy, drooping shade-boughs, and sat down wearily, leaning my head against the hard, rough bark. Never had I seen a more enchanting night. A thin mist rose from the bosom of the valley and hovered like a veil of silvery gauze over its rich depth of verdure. It floated round the edge of the horizon, subduing its outline of dazzling blue, and rolled off among the hills in soft, yet darkening convolutions. And high above me, serene and holy, the moon leaned over a ledge of slate-colored clouds, whose margin was plated with her beams, and looked pensively and solemnly on the pale and sad young face uplifted to her own. The stilly dews slept at my feet. They hung tremulously on the branches over my head, and sparkled on the spring blossoms that gave forth their inmost perfume to the atmosphere of night. Every thing was so calm, so peaceful, so intensely lovely,—and yet there was something deadly and chilling mingled with the celestial beauty of the scene. The lace clung in damp folds to my bosom. The hair fell heavy with moisture against my temples.

I heard a step softly crushing the grass near me. I did not look up, for I thought it was the step of Ernest; but my pulse throbbed with a quickened motion.

"Gabriella, my child, you must not sit here in this chill damp evening air."

It was Mrs. Linwood, who took me by the hand and drew me from the seat. It was not Ernest. He had not missed me. He had not feared for me the chill dews of night.

"I do not feel cold," I answered, with a slight shudder.

"Come in," she repeated, leading me to the house with gentle force.

"Not there," I said, shrinking from the open door of the parlor, through which I could see Ernest, with his head leaning on both hands, while his elbows rested on the back of Edith's chair. She was still singing, and the notes of her voice, sweet as they were, like the odor of the night-flowers, had something languishing and oppressive. I hurried by, and ascended the stairs. Mrs. Linwood followed me to the door of my apartment, then taking me by both hands, she looked me full in the face, with a mildly reproachful glance.

"O, Gabriella! if your spirit sink thus early, if you cannot bear the burden you have assumed, in the bright morning hour of love, how will you be able to support it in the sultry noon of life, or in the weariness of its declining day? You are very young,—you have a long pilgrimage before you. If you droop now, where will be the strength to sustain in a later, darker hour?"

"I shall not meet it," I answered, trying in vain to repress the rising sob. "I do not wish a long life, unless it be happier than it now promises to be."

"What! so young, and so hopeless! Where is the strength and vitality of your love? The fervor and steadfastness of your faith? My child, you have borne nothing yet, and you promised to hope all and endure all. Be strong, be patient, be hopeful, and you shall yet reap your reward."

"Alas! my mother, the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak."

"There is no task appointed to man or woman," she answered, "which may not be performed, through the power of God and the influences of the Holy Spirit. Remember this, my beloved daughter; and remember, too, that the heart which *bends* will not *break*. Good-night! We had better not renew this theme. 'Patient continuance in well-doing;' let this be your motto, and if happiness in this world be not your reward, immortality and glory in the next will be yours."

I looked after her as she gently retreated, and as the light glanced on the folds of her silver gray dress, she seemed to me as one of the shining ones revealed in the pilgrim's vision. At that moment *her* esteem and approbation seemed as precious to me as Ernest's love. I entered my chamber, and sitting down quietly in my beloved recess, repeated over and over again the Christian motto, which the lips of Mrs. Linwood uttered in parting,—"Patient continuance in well-doing."

I condemned myself for the feelings I had been indulging. I had felt bitter towards Edith for smiling so sweetly in her brother's face, when it had turned so coldly from me. I was envious of her power to soothe the restless spirit I had so unconsciously troubled. As I thus communed with my own heart, I unbound my hair, that the air might exhale the mist which had gathered in its folds. I brushed out the damp tresses, till, self-mesmerized, a soft haziness stole over my senses, and though I did not sleep, I was on the borders of the land of dreams.

CHAPTER XLIII.

I suppose I must have slept, though I was not conscious of it, for I did not hear Ernest enter the room, and yet when I looked again, he was sitting in the opposite window, still as a statue, looking out into the depths of night. I started as if I had seen a spirit, for I believed myself alone, and I did not feel less lonely now. There was something dejected in his attitude, and he sighed heavily as he turned and leaned his forehead against the window sash.

I rose, and softly approaching him laid my hand on his shoulder.

"Are you angry with me, Ernest?" I asked.

He did not answer, or turn towards me; but I felt a tremulous motion of his shoulder, and knew that he heard me.

"What have I done to displease you, dear Ernest?" again I asked. "Will you not speak to me and tell me, at least, in what I have offended?"

"I am not offended," he answered, without looking up; "I am not angry, but grieved, wounded, and unhappy."

"And will you not tell me the cause of your grief? Is not sympathy in sorrow the wife's holiest privilege?"

"Gabriella, you mock me!" he exclaimed, suddenly rising and speaking in a low, stern voice. "You know that you are yourself the cause of my grief, and your words are as hollow as your actions are vain. Did you not promise, solemnly promise never to deceive me again, after having caused me such agony by the deception I yet freely forgave?"

"Tell me, Ernest, in what have I deceived? If I know myself, every word and action has been as clear and open as noonday."

"Did you ever tell me your teacher was your lover,—he with whom you were so intimately associated when I first knew you? You suffered me to believe that he was to you in the relation almost of a father. I received him as such in my own home. I lavished upon him every hospitable

attention, as the friend and guide of your youth, and now you suffer me to hear from others that his romantic love was the theme of village gossip, that your names are still associated by idle tongues."

"I always believed before that unrequited love was not a theme for vain boasting, that it was a secret too sacred to be divulged even to the dearest and the nearest."

"But every one who has been so unfortunate as to be associated with you, seems to have been the victims of unrequited love. The name of Richard Clyde is familiar to all as the model of despairing lovers, and even Dr. Harlowe addresses you in a strain of unpardonable levity."

"O Ernest, cannot you spare even him?"

"You asked me the cause of my displeasure, and I have told you the source of my grief, otherwise I had been silent. There must be something wrong, Gabriella, or you would not be the subject of such remarks. Edith, all lovely as she is, passes on without exciting them. The most distant allusion to a lover should be considered an insult by a wedded woman and most especially in her husband's presence."

"I have never sought admiration or love," said I, every feeling of delicacy and pride rising to repel an insinuation so unjust. "When they have been mine, they were spontaneous gifts, offered nobly, and if not accepted, at least declined with gratitude and sensibility. If I have been so unfortunate as to win what your lovely sister might more justly claim, it has been by the exercise of no base allurement or meritricious attractions. I appeal to your own experience, and if it does not acquit me, I am for ever silent."

Coldly and proudly my eye met his, as we stood face to face in the light of the midnight moon. I, who had looked up to him with the reverence due to a superior being, felt that I was above him now. He was the slave of an unjust passion, the dupe of a distempered fancy, and as such unworthy of my respect and love. As I admitted this truth, I shuddered with that vague horror we feel in dreams, when we recoil from the brink of something, we know not what. I trembled when his lips opened, fearful he would say something more irrational and unmanly still.

"O Ernest!" I cried, all at once yielding to the emotions that were bearing me down with such irresistible power, "you frighten me, you fill me with unspeakable dread. There seems a deep abyss yawning between us, and I stand upon one icy brink and you on the other, and the chasm widens, and I stretch out my arms in vain to reach you, and I call, and nothing but a dreary echo answers, and I look into my heart and do not find you there. Save me, Ernest, save me,—my husband, save yourself from a doom so dreadful!"

Excited by the awful picture of desolation I had drawn, I slid down upon my knees and raised my clasped hands, as if pleading for life beneath the axe of the executioner. I must have been the very personification of despair, with my hair wildly sweeping round me, and hands locked in agony.

"To live on, live on together, year after year, cold and estranged, without love, without hope,"—I continued, unable to check the words that came now as in a rushing tide,—"Oh! is it not dreadful, Ernest, even to think of? There is no evil I could not bear while we loved one another. If poverty came,—welcome, welcome. I could toil and smile, if I only toiled for you, if I were only *trusted*, only *believed*. There is no sacrifice I would not make to prove my faith. Do you demand my right hand?—cut it off; my right eye?—pluck it out;—I withhold nothing. I would even lay my heart bleeding at your feet in attestation of my truth. But what can I do, when the idle breath of others, over which I have no power, shakes the tottering fabric of your confidence, and I am buried beneath the ruins?"

"You have never loved like me, Gabriella, or you would never dream of the possibility of its being extinguished," said he, in a tone of indescribable wretchedness. "I may alienate you from me, by the indulgence of insane passions, by accusations repented as soon as uttered,—I may revile and persecute,—but I can never cease to love you."

"O Ernest!" It was all gone,—pride, anger, despair, were gone. The first glance of returning love, —the first acknowledgment of uttered wrong, were enough for me. I was in his arms, next to his heart, and the last hours seemed a dream of darkness. I was happy again; but I trembled even in the joy of reconciliation. I realized on what a slender thread my wedded happiness was hanging, and knew that it must one day break. Moments like these were like those green and glowing spots found on the volcano's burning edge. The lava of passion might sweep over them quick as the lightning's flash, and beauty and bloom be covered with ashes and desolation.

And so the cloud passed by,—and Ernest was, if possible, more tender and devoted, and I tried to cast off the prophetic sadness that would at times steal over the brightness of the future. I was literally giving up all for him. I no longer derived pleasure from the society of Mr. Regulus. I dreaded the sportive sallies of Dr. Harlowe. I looked forward with terror to the return of Richard Clyde. I grew nervous and restless. The color would come and go in my face, like the flashes of the aurora borealis, and my heart would palpitate suddenly and painfully, as if some unknown evil were impending. Did I now say, as I did a few months after my marriage, that I preferred the stormy elements in which I moved, to the usual calm of domestic life? Did I exult, as the billows swelled beneath me and bore me up on their foaming crests, in the power of raising the whirlwind and the tempest? No; I sighed for rest,—for still waters and tranquil skies.

It is strange, that a subject which has entirely escaped the mind, when associations naturally recall it, will sometimes return and haunt it, when nothing seems favorable for its reception.

During my agitated interview with my unhappy father, I had forgotten Therésa La Fontaine, and the boy whose birthright I had unconsciously usurped. Mr. Brahan, in speaking of St. James and his *two* wives, said they had both disappeared in a mysterious manner. That boy, if living, was my brother, my half-brother, the legitimate inheritor of my name,—a name, alas! he might well blush to bear. *If living*, where was he, and who was he? Was he the heir of his father's vices, and was he conscious of his ignominious career? These questions constantly recurred, now there was no oracle near to answer. Once, and only once, I mentioned them to Mrs. Linwood.

"You had better not attempt to lift the veil which covers the past," she answered, in her most decided manner. "Think of the suffering, not to say disgrace, attached to the discovery of your father,—and let this brother be to you as though he had never been. Tempt not Providence, by indulging one wish on the subject, which might lead to shame and sorrow. Ernest has acted magnanimously with regard to the circumstances, which must have been galling beyond expression to one of his proud and sensitive nature. And I, Gabriella,—though out of delicacy to you,—I have forborne any allusion to the events of the last winter, have suffered most deeply and acutely on their account. I have suffered for myself, as well as my son. If there is any thing in this world to be prized next to a blameless conscience, it is an unspotted name. Well is it for you, that your own is covered with one, which from generation to generation has been pure and honorable. Well is it for you, that your husband's love is stronger than his pride, or he might reproach you for a father's ignominy. Remember this, when you feel that you have wrongs to forgive. And as you value your own happiness and ours, never, my child, seek to discover a brother, whom you would probably blush to acknowledge, and my son be compelled to disown."

She spoke with dignity and emphasis, while the pride of a virtuous and honored ancestry, though subdued by Christian grace, darkened her eyes and glowed on her usually colorless cheek. I realized then all her forbearance and delicacy. I understood what a deep wound her family pride must have received, and how bitterly she must have regretted a union, which exposed her son to contact with degradation and crime.

"I would not have spoken as I have, my daughter," she added, in a softened tone, "but with your limited knowledge of the world, you cannot understand the importance attached to unblemished associations. And never mention the subject to Ernest, if you would not revive memories that had better slumber for ever."

She immediately resumed her kind and gracious manner, but I never forgot the lesson she had given. My proud spirit needed no second warning. Never had I felt so crushed, so humiliated by the remembrance of my father's crimes. That he *was* my father I had never dared to doubt. Even Ernest relinquished the hope he had cherished, as time passed on, and no letter from Mr. Brahan threw any new light on the dark relationship; though removed from the vicinity of the dismal Tombs, the dark, gigantic walls cast their lengthening shadow over the fresh green fields and blossoming meadows, and dimmed the glory of the landscape.

The shadow of the Tombs met the shadow in my heart, and together they produced a chill atmosphere. I sighed for that perfect love which casteth out fear; that free, joyous intercourse of thought and feeling, born of undoubting confidence.

Could I live over again the first year of my wedded life, with the experience that now enlightens me, I would pursue a very different course of action. A passion so wild and strong as that which darkened my domestic happiness, should be resisted with the energy of reason, instead of being indulged with the weakness of fear. Every sacrifice made to appease its violence only paved the way for a greater. Every act of my life had reference to this one master-passion. I scarcely ever spoke without watching the countenance of Ernest to see the effect of my words. If it was overcast or saddened, I feared I had given utterance to an improper sentiment, and then I blushed in silence. Very unfortunate was it for him, that I thus fed and strengthened the serpent that should have been strangled in the cradle of our love; and his mother unconsciously did the same. She believed him afflicted by a hereditary malady which should inspire pity, and be treated with gentleness rather than resistance. Edith, too,—if a cloud passed over his brow, she exerted every winning and endearing sisterly art to chase the gloom.

The history of man for six thousand years shows, that in the exercise of unlimited power he becomes a despot. Kingly annals confirm the truth of this, and domestic records proclaim it with a thundering tongue. There must be a restraining influence on human passion, or its turbulent waves swell higher and higher, till they sweep over the landmarks of reason, honor and love. The mighty hand of God is alone powerful enough to curb the raging billows. He alone can say, "peace, be still." But he has ministers on earth appointed to do his pleasure, and if they fulfil their task He may not be compelled to reveal himself in flaming fire as the God of retributive justice.

I know that Ernest loved me, with all his heart, soul, and strength; but mingled with this deep, strong love, there was the alloy of selfishness,—the iron of a despotic will. There was the jealousy of power, as well as the jealousy of love, unconsciously exercised and acquiring by indulgence a growing strength.

My happiness was the first desire of his heart, the first aim of his life; but I must be made happy in *his* way, and by his means. His hand, fair, soft, and delicate as a woman's,—that hand, with its gentle, warm, heart-thrilling pressure, was nevertheless the hand of Procrustes; and though he

covered the iron bed with the flowers of love, the spirit sometimes writhed under the coercion it endured.

"You are not well," said Dr. Harlowe, as we met him during an evening walk. "I do not like that fluctuating color, or that quick, irregular breathing."

Ernest started as if he had heard my death-warrant; and, taking my hand, he began to count my quickly throbbing pulse.

"That will never do," said the doctor, smiling. "Her pulse will beat three times as fast under your fingers as mine, if you have been married nearly a year. It is not a good pulse. You had better take care of her."

"He takes a great deal too much care of me, doctor," I cried. "Do not make him think I am an invalid, or he will make a complete hothouse plant of me."

"Who ever saw an invalid with such a color as that?" asked Ernest.

"Too bright—too mutable," answered the doctor, shaking his head. "She is right. You keep her too close. Let her run wild, like any other country girl. Let her rise early and go out into the barnyard, see the cows milked, inhale their odorous breathings, wander in the fields among the new-mown hay, let her rake it into mounds and throw herself on the fragrant heaps, as I have seen her do when a little school-girl. Let her do just as she pleases, go where she pleases, stay as long as she pleases, in the open air and free sunshine; and mark my words, she will wear on her cheeks the steady bloom of the milkmaid, instead of the flitting rosiness of the sunset cloud."

"I am not conscious of imposing so much restraint on her actions as your words imply," said Ernest, a flush of displeasure passing over his pale and anxious countenance.

"Make her take a ride on horseback every morning and evening," continued Dr. Harlowe, with perfect coolness, without taking any notice of the interruption. "Best exercise in the world. Fine rides for equestrians through the green woods around here. If that does not set her right, carry her to the roaring Falls of Niagara, or the snowy hills of New Hampshire, or the Catskill Mountains, or the Blue Ridge. I cannot let the flower of the village droop and fade."

As he finished the sentence, the merry tones of his voice became grave and subdued. He spoke as one having the authority of science and experience, as well as the privilege of affection. I looked down to hide the moisture that glistened in my eyes.

"How would you like to travel as the doctor has suggested, Gabriella?" asked Ernest, who seemed much moved by the doctor's remarks. "You know I would go to"—

"Nova Zembla, if she wished it," interrupted the doctor, "but that is too far and too cold. Begin with a shorter journey. I wish I could accompany you, but I cannot plead as an excuse my wife's delicacy of constitution. Her health is as uniform as her temper; and even if life and death were at stake, she would not leave her housekeeping in other hands. Neither would she close her doors and turn her locks, lest moth and rust should corrupt, and thieves break in and steal. But pardon me. I have given you no opportunity to answer your husband's question."

"I shall only feel too happy to avail myself of his unnecessary fears with regard to my health," I answered. "It will be a charming way of passing the summer, if Mrs. Linwood and Edith will consent."

Dr. Harlowe accompanied us home, and nothing was talked of but the intended journey. The solicitude of Ernest was painfully roused, and he seemed ready to move heaven and earth to facilitate our departure.

"I am sorry to close Grandison Place in the summer season," said Mrs. Linwood; "it looks so inhospitable. Besides, I have many friends who anticipate passing the sultry season here."

"Let them travel with you, if they wish," said the doctor bluntly. "That is no reason why you should stay at home."

"Poor Madge!" cried Edith, who was delighted with the arrangement the doctor had suggested. "She will be so disappointed."

"Let her come," said Dr. Harlowe. "I will take charge of the wild-cat, and if I find her too mighty for me, I will get Mr. Regulus to assist me in keeping her in order. Let her come, by all means."

"Supposing we write and ask her to accompany us," said Mrs. Linwood. "Her exuberant spirits will be subdued by the exercise of travelling, and she may prove a most exhilarating companion."

"What, four ladies to one gentleman!" exclaimed Edith. "Poor Ernest! when he will have thoughts and eyes but for one!"

"I would sooner travel with the Falls of Niagara, or the boiling springs of Geyser," cried Ernest, with an instinctive shudder. "We should have to take a carpenter, a glazier, an upholsterer, and a seamstress, to repair the ruins she would strew in our path."

"If Richard Clyde were about to return a little earlier in the season," said the doctor, looking at Edith, "he would be a delightful acquisition to your party. He would divide with your brother the heavy responsibility of being the guardian of so many household treasures."

"Let us start as early as possible," exclaimed Ernest. The name of Richard Clyde was to his impatient, jealous spirit, as is the rowel to the fiery steed.

"And what will become of all our beautiful flowers, and our rich, ripening fruit?" I asked. "Must they waste their sweetness and value on the unappreciating air?"

"I think we must make Dr. Harlowe and Mr. Regulus the guardians and participators of both," said Mrs. Linwood.

"Give him the flowers, and leave the fruit to me," cried Dr. Harlowe, emphatically.

"That the sick, the poor, and the afflicted may be benefited by the act," replied Mrs. Linwood. "Let it be so, Doctor,—and may many a blessing which has once been mine, reward your just and generous distribution of the abounding riches of Grandison Place."

I left one sacred charge with the preceptor of my childhood.

"Let not the flowers and shrubbery around my mother's grave, and the grave of Peggy, wilt and die for want of care."

"They shall not. They shall be tenderly and carefully nurtured."

"And if Margaret comes during our absence, be kind and attentive to her, for my sake, Mr. Regulus."

"I will! I will! and for her own too. The wild girl has a heart, I believe she has; a good and honest heart."

"You discovered it during your homeward journey from New York. I thought you would," said I, pleased to see a flush light up the student's olive cheek. I thought of the sensible Benedict and the wild Beatrice, and the drama of other lives passed before the eye of imagination.

Gloomy must the walls of Grandison Place appear during the absence of its inmates,—that city set upon a hill that could not be hid, whose illuminated windows glittered on the vale below with beacon splendor, and discoursed of genial hospitality and kindly charity to the surrounding shadows. Sadly must the evening gale sigh through the noble oaks, whose branches met over the winding avenue, and lonely the elm-tree wave its hundred arms above the unoccupied seat,—that seat, beneath whose breezy shade I had first beheld the pale, impassioned, and haunting face of Ernest Linwood.

CHAPTER XLIV.

It is not my intention to describe our journey; and I fear it will indeed be an act of supererogation to attempt to give an idea of those majestic Falls, whose grandeur and whose glory have so long been the theme of the painter's pencil and the poet's lyre. Never shall I forget the moment when my spirit plunged into the roar and the foam, the thunders and the rainbows of Niagara. I paused involuntarily a hundred paces from the brink of the cataract. I was about to realize one of the magnificent dreams of my youthful imagination. I hesitated and trembled. I felt something of the trepidation, the blissful tremor that agitated my whole being when Ernest asked me into the moonlight garden at Cambridge, and I thought he was going to tell me that he loved me. The emotions I was about to experience would never come again, and I knew when once past could never be anticipated as now, with indescribable awe. I felt something as Moses did when he stood in the hollow of the rock, as the glory of the Lord was about to pass by. And surely no grander exhibition of God's glory ever burst on mortal eye, than this mighty volume of water, rushing, roaring, plunging, boiling, foaming, tossing its foam like snow into the face of heaven, throwing up rainbow after rainbow from unfathomable abysses, then sinking gradually into a sluggish calm, as if exhausted by the stupendous efforts it had made.

Clinging to the arm of Ernest, I drew nearer and nearer, till all personal fear was absorbed in a sense of overpowering magnificence. I was a part of that glorious cataract; I participated in the mighty struggle; I panted with the throes of the pure, dark, tremendous element, vassal at once and conqueror of man; triumphed in the gorgeous *arcs-en-ciel* that rested like angels of the Lord above the mist and the foam and the thunders of watery strife, and reposed languidly with the subsiding waves that slept like weary warriors after the din and strife of battle, the frown of contention lingering on their brows, and the smile of disdain still curling their lips.

Oh, how poor, how weak seemed the conflict of human passion in the presence of this sublime, this wondrous spectacle! I could not speak,—I could scarcely breathe,—I was borne down, overpowered, almost annihilated. My knees bent, my hands involuntarily clasped themselves over the arm of Ernest, and in this attitude of intense adoration I looked up and whispered, "God,—eternity."

"Enthusiast!" exclaimed he; but his countenance was luminous with the light that glowed on mine. He put his arm around me, but did not attempt to raise me. Edith and her mother were near, in company with a friend who had been our fellow-traveller from New England, and who had extended his journey beyond its prescribed limits for the sake of being our companion. I looked towards Edith with tremulous interest. As she stood leaning on her crutches, her

garments fluttering in the breeze, I almost expected to see her borne from us like down upon the wind, and floating on the bosom of that mighty current.

I said I did not mean to attempt a description of scenes which have baffled the genius and eloquence of man.

"Now I am content to die!" said an ancient traveller, when the colossal shadow of the Egyptian pyramids first fell on his weary frame. But what are those huge, unmoving monuments of man's ambition, compared to this grandest of creation's mysteries, whose deep and thundering voice is repeating, day after day and night after night,—"forever and ever," and whose majestic motion, rushing onward, plunging downward, never pausing, never resting, is emblematic of the sublime march of Deity, from everlasting to everlasting,—from eternity to eternity?

Shall I ever forget the moment when I stood on Termination Rock, beyond which no mortal foot has ever penetrated? I stood in a shroud of gray mist, wrapping me on every side,—above, below, around. I shuddered, as if the hollow, reverberating murmurs that filled my ears were the knell of the departed sun. That cold, gray mist; it penetrated the depths of my spirit; it drenched, drowned it, filled it with vague, ghost-like images of dread and horror. I cast one glance behind, and saw a gleam of heaven's sunny blue, one bright dazzling gleam flashing between the rugged rock and the rushing waters. It was as if the veil of the temple of nature were rent, and the glory of God shone through the fissure.

"Let us return," said I to Ernest. "I feel as if I had passed through the valley of the shadow of death. Is it not sacrilegious to penetrate so deeply into the mysteries of nature?"

"O Gabriella!" he exclaimed, his eyes flashing through the shrouding mist like burning stars, "how I wish you felt with me! Were it possible to build a home on this shelving rock, I would willingly dwell here forever, surrounded by this veiling mist. With you thus clasped in my arms, I could be happy, in darkness and clouds, in solitude and dreariness, anywhere, everywhere,—with the conviction that you loved me, and that you looked for happiness alone to me."

"As this moment," I answered, drawing more closely to him, "I fear as if I would rather stay here and die, than return to the world and mingle in its jarring elements. I would far rather, Ernest, make my winding-sheet of those cold, unfathomable waters, than live to feel again the anguish of being doubted by you."

"That is all past, my Gabriella,—all past. My nature is renewed and purified. I feel within me new-born strength and power of resistance. By the God of yon roaring cataract—"

"No,—no, Ernest, do not promise,—I dare not hear you, we are so weak, and temptations are so strong."

"Do you distrust yourself, or me?"

"Both, Ernest. I never, never felt how poor and vain and frail we are, till I stood, as now, in the presence of the power of the Almighty."

His countenance changed instantaneously. "To what temptations do you allude?" he asked. "I can imagine none that could shake my fidelity to you. My constancy is as firm as this rock. Those rushing waves could not move it. Why do you check a vow which I dare to make in the very face of Omnipotence?"

"I doubt not your faith or constancy, most beloved Ernest; I doubt not my own. You know what I do fear,—misconstruction and suspicion. But let us not speak, let us not think of the past. Let us look forward to the future, with true and earnest spirits, praying God to help us in weakness and error. Only think, Ernest, we have that within us more mighty than that descending flood. These souls of ours will still live in immortal youth, when that whelming tide ceases to roll, when the firmament shrivels like a burning scroll. I never realized it so fully, so grandly, as now. I shall carry from this rock something I did not bring. I have received a baptism standing here, purer than fire, gentle as dew, yet deep and pervading as ocean. I cannot describe what I mean, but I feel it. Before I came, it seemed as if a great wall of adamant rose between me and heaven; now there is nothing but this veil of mist."

As we turned to leave this region of blinding spray and mysterious shadows, Ernest repeated, in his most melodious accents, a passage from Schiller's magnificent poem of the diver.

> "And it bubbles and seethes, and it hisses and roars,
> As when fire is with water commixed and contending;
> And the spray of its wrath to the welkin upsoars,
> And flood upon flood hurries on, never ending.
> And it never *will* rest, nor from travail be free,
> Like a sea, that is laboring the birth of a sea."

Never did I experience a more exultant emotion than when we emerged into the clear air and glorious sunshine,—when I felt the soft, rich, green grass beneath, and the blue illimitable heavens smiling above. I had come out of darkness into marvellous light. I was drenched with light as I had previously been by the cold, gray mist. I remembered another verse of the immortal poem I had learned from the lips of Ernest:—

> "Happy they, whom the rose-hues of daylight rejoice,

The air and the sky that to mortals are given;
May the horror below never more find a voice,
Nor man stretch too far the wide mercy of heaven.
Never more, never more may he lift from the sight
The veil which is woven with terror and night."

CHAPTER XLV.

Amid the rainbows of the cataract, Edith's heart caught the first glowing tinge of romance.

We were wandering along the path that zones the beautiful island, whose name, unpoetic as it is, recalls one of the brilliant constellations of the zodiac; and Edith had seated herself on a rustic bench, under the massy dome of a spreading beech, and, taking off her bonnet, suffered her hair to float according to its own wild will on the rising breeze.

She did not observe a young man at a little distance, leaning back against an aged birch, on whose silvery bark the dark outlines of his figure were finely daguerreotyped. He was the beau ideal of an artist, with his long brown hair carelessly pushed back from his white temples, his portfolio in his left hand, his pencil in his right, and his dark, restless eyes glancing round him with the fervor of enthusiasm, while they beamed with the inspiration of genius. He was evidently sketching the scene, which with bold, rapid lines he was transferring to the paper. All at once his gaze was fixed on Edith, and he seemed spellbound. I did not wonder,—for a lovelier, more ethereal object never arrested the glance of admiration. Again his pencil moved, and I knew he was attempting to delineate her features. I was fearful lest she should move and dissolve the charm; but she sat as still as the tree, whose gray trunk formed an artistic background to her slight figure.

As soon as Ernest perceived the occupation of the young artist, he made a motion towards Edith, but I laid my hand on his arm.

"Do not," I said; "she will make such a beautiful picture."

"I do not like that a stranger should take so great a liberty," he replied, in an accent of displeasure.

"Forgive the artist," I pleaded, "for the sake of the temptation."

The young man, perceiving that he was observed, blushed with the most ingenuous modesty, took up his hat that was lying on the grass, put his paper and pencil in his portfolio, and walked away into the wilderness of stately and majestic trees, that rose dome within dome, pillar within pillar, like a grand cathedral. We followed slowly in the beaten path, through the dark green maples, the bright-leaved luxuriant beech trees, and the quivering aspens, whose trembling leaves seem instinct with human sensibility. And all the time we wandered through the magnificent aisles of the island, the deep roar of the cataract, like the symphony of a great organ, rolled solemnly through the leafy solitude, and mingled with the rustling of the forest boughs.

In the evening the young artist sought an introduction to our party. His name was Julian, and had the advantage of romantic association. I was glad that Ernest gave him a cordial reception, for I was extremely prepossessed in his favor. Even the wild idea that he might be my unknown brother, had entered my mind. I remembered Mrs. Linwood's advice too well to express it. I even tried to banish it, as absurd and irrational; but it would cling to me,—and gave an interest to the young stranger which, though I dared not manifest, I could not help feeling. Fortunately his undisguised admiration of Edith was a safeguard to me. He was too artless to conceal it, yet too modest to express it. It was evinced by the mute eloquence of eyes that gazed upon her, as on a celestial being; and the listening ear, that seemed to drink in the lowest sound of her sweet, low voice. He was asked to exhibit his sketches, which were pronounced bold, splendid, and masterly.

Edith was leaning on her brother's shoulder, when she recognized her own likeness, most faithfully and gracefully executed. She started, blushed, and looked towards young Julian, whose expressive eyes were riveted on her face, as if deprecating her displeasure. There were no traces of it on her lovely countenance; even a smile played on her lips, at the faint reflection of her own loveliness.

And thus commenced an acquaintance, or I might say an attachment, as sudden and romantic as is ever described in the pages of the novelist. As soon as the diffidence that veiled his first introduction wore away, he called forth his peculiar powers of pleasing, and Edith was not insensible to their fascination. Since her brother's marriage, she had felt a vacuum in her heart, which often involved her in a soft cloud of pensiveness. She was unthroned, and like an uncrowned queen she sighed over the remembrance of her former royalty. It was not strange that the devotion of Julian, the enthusiasm of his character, the fervor of his language, the ardor, the grace of his manner, should have captivated her imagination and touched her heart. I never saw any one so changed in so short a time. The contrast was almost as great, to her former self, as between a placid silver lake, and the foam of the torrent sparkling and flashing with rainbows. Her countenance had lost its air of divine repose, and varied with every emotion of her soul. She was a thousand times more beautiful, and I loved her far more than I had ever done before. There

was something unnatural in her exclusive, jealous love of her brother, but now she acknowledged the supremacy of the great law of woman's destiny. Like a flower, suddenly shaken by a southern gale, and giving out the most delicious perfumes unknown before, her heart fluttered and expanded and yielded both its hidden sweetnesses.

"We must not encourage him," said Mrs. Linwood to her son. "We do not know who he is; we do not know his family or his lineage; we must withdraw Edith from the influence of his fascinations."

I did not blame her, but I felt the sting to my heart's core. She saw the wound she had unconsciously made, and hastened to apply a balm.

"The husband either exalts, or lowers, a wife to the position he occupies," said she, looking kindly at me. "She loses her own identity in his. Poverty would present no obstacle, for she has wealth sufficient to be disinterested,—but my daughter must take a stainless name, if she relinquish her own. But why do I speak thus? My poor, crippled child! She has disowned the thought of marriage. She has chosen voluntarily an unwedded lot. She does not, cannot, will not think with any peculiar interest of this young stranger. No, no,—my Edith is set apart by her misfortunes, as some enshrined and holy being, whom man must vainly love."

I had never seen Mrs. Linwood so much agitated. Her eyes glistened, her voice faltered with emotion. Ernest, too, seemed greatly troubled. They had both been accustomed to look upon Edith as consecrated to a vestal life; and as she had hitherto turned coldly and decidedly from the addresses of men, they believed her inaccessible to the vows of love and the bonds of wedlock. The young Julian was a poet as well as an artist; his pictures were considered masterpieces of genius in the painting galleries of the cities; he was, as report said, and as he himself modestly but decidedly affirmed, by birth and education a gentleman; he had the prestige of a rising fame, —but he was a stranger. I remembered my mother's history, and the youth of St. James seemed renewed in this interesting young man. I trembled for the future happiness of Edith, who, whatever might be her decision with regard to marriage, now unmistakably and romantically loved. Again I asked myself, "might not this young man be the son of the unfortunate Therésa, who under an assumed name was concealing the unhappy circumstances of his birth?"

"Let us leave this place," said Ernest, "and put a stop at once to the danger we dread. Are you willing, Gabriella, to quit these sublime Falls to-morrow?"

"I shall carry them with me," I answered, laughingly. "They are henceforth a part of my own being."

"They will prove rather an inconvenient accompaniment," replied he; "and if we turn our face on our return to the White Mountains, will you bring them back also?"

"Certainly. Take me the whole world over, and every thing of beauty and sublimity will cling to my soul inseparably and forever."

"Will you ask Edith, if she will be ready?"

She was in the room which she occupied with her mother, and there I sought her. She was reading what seemed to be a letter; but as I approached her I saw that it was poetry, and from her bright blushes, I imagined it an effusion of young Julian's. She did not conceal it, but looked up with such a radiant expression of joy beaming through a shade of bashfulness, I shrunk from the task imposed upon me.

"Dear Edith," said I, laying my hand on her beautiful hair, "your brother wishes to leave here to-morrow. Will you be ready?"

She started, trembled, then turned aside her face, but I could see the starting tear and the deepened blush.

"Of course I will," she answered, after a moment's pause. "It is far better that we should go,—I know it is,—but it would have been better still, had we never come."

"And why, my darling sister? You have seemed very happy."

"Too happy, Gabriella. All future life must pay the penalty due to a brief infatuation. I have discovered and betrayed the weakness, the madness of my heart. I know too well why Ernest has hastened our departure."

"Dearest Edith," said I, sitting down by her and taking her hand in both mine, "do not reproach yourself for a sensibility so natural, so innocent, nay more, so noble. Do not, from mistaken delicacy, sacrifice your own happiness, and that of another which is, I firmly believe, forever intertwined with it. Confide in your mother,—confide in your brother, who think you have made a solemn resolution to live a single life. They do not know this young man; but give them an opportunity of knowing him. Cast him not off, if you love him; for I would almost stake my life upon his integrity and honor."

"Blessings, Gabriella, for this generous confidence!" she exclaimed, throwing her arms round me, with all the impulsiveness of childhood; "but it is all in vain. Do you think I would take advantage of Julian's uncalculating love, and entail upon him for life the support and guardianship of this frail, helpless form? Do you think I would hang a dead, dull weight on the wings of his young ambition? Oh, no! You do not know me, Gabriella."

"I know you have very wrong views of yourself," I answered; "and I fear you will do great wrong to others, if you do not change them. You are not helpless. No bird of the wild-wood wings their way more fearlessly and lightly than yourself. You are not frail now. Health glows on your cheek and beams in your eye. You cling to a resolution conceived in early youth, before you recovered from the effects of a painful malady. A dull weight! Why, Edith, you would rest like down on his mounting wings. You would give them a more heavenly flight. Do not, beloved Edith, indulge these morbid feelings. There is a love, stronger, deeper than a sister's affection. You feel it now. You forgive me for loving Ernest. You forgive him for loving me. I believe Julian worthy of your heart. Give him hope, give him time, and he will come erelong, crowned with laurels, and lay them smiling at your feet."

"Dear, inspiring Gabriella!" she exclaimed, "you infuse new life and joy into my inmost soul. I feel as if I could discard these crutches and walk on air. No; I am not helpless. If there was need, I could toil for him I loved with all a woman's zeal. These hands could minister to his necessities, this heart be a shield and buckler in the hour of danger. Thank Heaven, I am lifted above want, and how blest to share the gifts of fortune with one they would so nobly grace! But do you really think that I ought to indulge such dreams? Am not I a cripple? Has not God set a mark upon me?"

"No,—you shall not call yourself one. You are only lifted above the gross earth, because you are more angelic than the rest of us. I hear your mother's coming footsteps; I will leave you together, that you may reveal to her all that is passing in your heart."

I left her; and as I passed Mrs. Linwood on the stairs, and met her anxious eyes, I said: "Edith has the heart of a woman. I know by my own experience how gently you will deal with it."

She kissed me without speaking; but I read in her expressive countenance that mingled look of grief and resignation with which we follow a friend to that bourne where we cannot follow them. Edith was lost to her. She was willing to forsake her mother for the stranger's home,—she who seemed bound to her by the dependence of childhood, as well as the close companionship of riper years. I read this in her saddened glance; but I did not deem her selfish. Other feelings, too, doubtless blended with her own personal regrets. She had no reason to look upon marriage as a state of perfect felicity. Her own had been unhappy. She knew the dark phantom that haunted our wedded hours; and what if the same hereditary curse should cling to Edith,—who might become morbidly sensitive on account of her personal misfortune?

Knowing it was the last evening of our stay, I felt as if every moment were lost, passed within doors. It seemed to me, now, as if I had literally seen nothing, so stupendously did images of beauty and grandeur grow upon my mind, and so consciously and surprisingly did my mind expand to receive them.

The hour of sunset approached,—the last sunset that I should behold, shining in golden glory on the sheeted foam of the Falls. And then I saw, what I never expect to witness again, till I see the eternal rainbows round about the throne of God,—three entire respondent circles, one glowing with seven-fold beams within the other, full, clear, distinct as the starry stripes of our country's banner,—no fracture in the smooth, majestic curves,—no dimness in the gorgeous dyes.

And moonlight,—moonlight on the Falls! I have read of moonlight on the ruins of the Coliseum; in the mouldering remains of Grecian elegance and Roman magnificence; but what is it compared to this? The eternal youth, the undecaying grandeur of nature, illumined by that celestial light which lends glory to ruins, and throws the illusion of beauty over the features of decay!

Edith wandered with Julian in the stilly moonlight, and their low voices were heard by each other amid the din of the roaring cataract.

Ernest was troubled. He was jealous even of a sister's love, and looked coldly on the aspiring Julian.

"He must prove himself worthy of Edith," he said. "He must not follow her to Grandison Place, till he can bring credentials, establishing his claims to confidence and regard."

Before we parted at night Edith drew me aside, and told me that her mother had consented to leave the decision of her destiny to *time*, which would either prove Julian's claims to her love, or convince her that he was unworthy of her regard. He was not permitted to accompany her home; but she was sure he would follow, with testimonials, such as a prince need not blush to own.

"How strange, how very strange it seems," she said, her eyes beaming with that soft and sunny light which comes from the day-spring of the heart, "for me to look forward to a future such as now I see, through a flowery vista of hope and love. How strange, that in so short a time so mighty a change should be wrought! Had Ernest remained single, my heart would have known no vacuum, so entirely did he fill, so exclusively did he occupy it. But since his marriage it has seemed a lonely temple with a deserted shrine. Julian has strewed flowers upon the altar, and their fragrance has perfumed my life. Even if they wither, their odor will remain and shed sweetness over my dying hour."

Sweet, angelic Edith! may no untimely blight fall on thy garland of love, no thorns be found with its glowing blossoms, no canker-worm of jealousy feed on their early bloom.

The morning of our departure, as I looked back where Julian stood, pale and agitated, following the receding form of Edith, with a glance of the most intense emotion, I saw a gentleman approach the pillar against which he was leaning, whose appearance riveted my attention. He

was a stranger, who had probably arrived the evening before, and, preoccupied as Julian was, he extended his hand eagerly to meet the grasp of his. He was tall, much taller than Julian, and of a very stately mien. He looked as if he might be in the meridian of life, and yet his hair, originally black, was mingled with snowy locks around the temples, and on the crown of his head. I saw this as he lifted his hat on approaching Julian, with the firm, proud step which indicates intellectual power. What was there about this stranger that haunted me long after the thunders of the cataract had ceased to reverberate on the ear? Where had I seen a countenance and figure resembling his? Why did I feel an irresistible desire to check the rolling wheels that bore me every moment further from that stately form with its crown of living snow?

"How long will you remain in that uncomfortable position?" asked Ernest. The spell was broken. I turned, and met the glance that needed no explanation. This earnest scrutiny of a stranger excited his displeasure; and I did not wonder, when I thought of the strange fascination I had experienced. I blushed, and drew my veil over my face,—resolving henceforth to set a guard over my eyes as well as my lips. It was the first dark-flashing glance I had met since I had left Grandison Place. It was the last expiring gleam of a baleful flame. I knew it must be; and, leaning back in the carriage, I sunk into one of those reveries which I used to indulge in childhood,—when the gates of sunset opened to admit my wandering spirit, and the mysteries of cloud-land were revealed to the dream-girl's eye.

CHAPTER XLVI.

The very evening after our return, while Dr. Harlowe was giving an account of his stewardship, and congratulating Edith and myself on the bloom and animation we had acquired, a gentleman was announced, and Richard Clyde entered. The heart-felt, joyous welcome due to the friend who is just returned from a foreign land, greeted his entrance. Had I known of his coming, I might have repressed the pleasure that now spontaneously rose; but I forgot every thing at this moment, but the companion of my childhood, the sympathizing mourner by my mother's grave, the unrequited lover, but the true and constant friend. He was so much improved in person and manners; he was so self-possessed, so manly, so frank, so cordial! He came among us like a burst of sunshine; and we all—all but *one*—felt his genial influence. He came into the family like a long absent son and brother. Why could not Ernest have welcomed him as such? Why did he repel with coldness and suspicion the honest, ingenuous heart that longed to meet his with fraternal warmth and confidence? I could not help drawing comparisons unfavorable to Ernest. He, who had travelled through the same regions, who had drank of the same inspiring streams of knowledge as the young student, who came fresh and buoyant from the classic halls where he had himself gained honor and distinction,—he, sat cold and reserved, while Richard dispensed life and brightness on all around.

"Oh, how much this is like home!" he exclaimed, when the lateness of the hour compelled him to depart; "how happy, how grateful I am, to meet so kind, so dear a welcome. It warmed my heart, in anticipation, beyond the Atlantic waves. I remembered the maternal kindness that cheered and sustained me in my collegiate probation, and blessed my dawning manhood. I remembered Edith's heavenly music, and Gabriella's."

He had become so excited by the recollections he was clothing in words, that he lost the command of his voice as soon as he mentioned my name. Perhaps the associations connected with it were more powerful than he imagined; but whatever was the cause he stopped abruptly, bowed, and left the room.

Mrs. Linwood followed him into the passage, and I heard her telling him that he must consider Grandison Place his home indeed, for she felt that she had welcomed back another beloved son. She was evidently hurt by the chilling reserve of Ernest's manners, and wished to make up for it by the cordial warmth of her own.

"There goes as fine a youth as ever quickened the pulses of a maiden's heart," said Dr. Harlowe, as Richard's quick steps were heard on the gravel walk; "I am proud of him, we all ought to be proud of him. He is a whole-souled, whole-hearted, right-minded young man, worth a dozen of your fashionable milk-sops. He is a right down splendid fellow. I cannot imagine why this sly little puss was so blind to his merits; but I suppose the greater glory dimmed the less."

Good, excellent Dr. Harlowe! Why was he always saying something to rouse the slumbering serpent in the bosom of Ernest? Slumbering, did I say? Alas! it was already awakened, and watching for its prey. The doctor had the simplicity of a child, but the shrewdness of a man. Had he dreamed of the suffering Ernest's unfortunate temperament caused, he would have blistered his tongue sooner than have given me a moment's pain. He suspected him of jealousy, of the folly, not the madness of jealousy, and mischievously liked to sport with a weakness which he supposed evaporated with the cloud of the brow, or vanished in the lightning of the eye. He little imagined the stormy gust that swept over us after his departure.

"Mother!" exclaimed Ernest, as soon as the doctor had closed the door, in a tone which I had never heard him use to her before, "I will no longer tolerate that man's impertinence and presumption. He never comes here that he does not utter insulting words, which no gentleman should allow in his own house. It is not the first, nor the second, nor the third time that he has

insulted me through my wife. His superior age, and your profound respect for him, shall no longer prevent the expression of my indignation. I shall let him know on what terms he ever again darkens this threshold."

"Ernest!" cried his mother, with a look in which indignation and grief struggled for mastery, "do you forget that it is your mother whom you are addressing?—that it is her threshold not yours on which you have laid this withering ban?"

"Had not Dr. Harlowe been your friend, and this house yours, I should have told him my sentiments long since; but while I would not forget my respect as a son, I must remember my dignity as a husband, and I will allow no man to treat my wife with the familiarity he uses, polluting her wedded ears with allusions to her despairing lovers, and endeavoring indirectly to alienate her affections from me."

"Stop, Ernest, you are beside yourself," said Mrs. Linwood, and the mounting color in her face deepened to crimson,—"you shall not thus asperse a good and guileless man. Your insane passion drives you from reason, from honor, and from right. It dwarfs the fair proportions of your mind, and deforms its moral beauty. I have been wrong, sinful, weak, in yielding to your infirmity, and trying by every gentle and persuasive means to lead you into the green pastures and by the still waters of domestic peace. I have counselled Gabriella, when I have seen her young heart breaking under the weight of your suspicions, to bow meekly and let the storm pass over her. But I do so no more. I will tell her to stand firm and undaunted, and breast the tempest. I will stand by her side, and support her in my arms, and shield her with my breast. Come, Gabriella, come, my child; if my son *will* be unjust, *will* be insane, I will at least protect you from the consequences of his guilty rashness."

I sprang into her arms that opened to enfold me, and hid my face on her breast. I could not bear to look upon the humiliation of Ernest, who stood like one transfixed by his mother's rebuking glance. I trembled like an aspen, there was something so fearful in the roused indignation of one usually so calm and self-possessed. Edith sunk upon a seat in a passion of tears, and "oh, brother! —oh, mother!" burst through thick-coming sobs from her quivering lips.

"Mother!" exclaimed Ernest,—and his voice sounded hollow and unnatural,—"I have reason to be angry,—I do not deserve this stern rebuke,—you know not how much I have borne and forborne for your sake. But if my mother teaches that rebellion to my will is a wife's duty, it is time indeed that we should part."

"Oh, Ernest!" cried Edith; "oh, my brother! you will break my heart."

And rising, she seemed to fly to his side, and throwing her arms round his neck, she lifted up her voice and wept aloud.

"Hush, my daughter, hush, Edith," said her mother. "I wish my son to hear me, and if they were the last words I ever expected to utter, they could not be more solemn. I have loved you, Ernest, with a love bordering on idolatry,—with a pride most sinful in a Christian parent,—but even the strength of a mother's love will yield at last before the stormy passions that desolate her home. The spirit of the Spartan mother, who told her son when he left her for the battle field, 'to return *with* his shield, or *on* it,' animates my bosom. I had far, far rather weep over the grave of my son, than live to blush for his degeneracy."

"And I would far rather be in my grave, this moment," he answered, in the same hoarse, deep undertone, "than suffer the agonies of the last few hours. Let me die,—let me die at once; then take this young man to your bosom, where he has already supplanted me. Make him your son in a twofold sense, for, by the heaven that hears me, I believe you would bless the hour that gave him the right to Gabriella's love."

"Father, forgive him, he knows not what he utters," murmured his mother, lifting her joined hands to heaven. I still clung to her in trembling awe, forgetting my own sorrow in the depth and sacredness of hers. "Ernest," she said, in a louder tone, "I cannot continue this painful scene. I will go to my own chamber and pray for you; pray for your release from the dominion of the powers of darkness. Oh, my son! I tremble for you. You are standing on the brink of a terrible abyss. The fiend that lurked in the bowers of Eden, and made its flowers dim with the smoke of fraternal blood, is whispering in your ear. Beware, my son, beware. Every sigh and tear caused by the indulgence of unhallowed passion, cries as loud to Almighty God for vengeance as Abel's reeking blood. Come, Gabriella, I leave him to reflection and prayer. I leave him to God and his own soul. Come, Edith, leave him and follow me."

There was something so commanding in her accent and manner I dared not resist her, though I longed to remain and whisper words of peace and love to my unhappy husband. I knew that his soul must be crushed into the dust, and my heart bled for his sufferings. Edith, too, withdrew her clinging arms, for she dared not disobey her mother, and slowly and sadly followed us up the winding stairs.

"Go to bed, my child," said she to Edith, when we reached the upper platform. "May God in his mercy spare you from witnessing another scene like this."

"Oh, mother! I never shall feel happy again. My poor brother! you did not see him, mother, when you left him. You did not look upon him, or you could not have left him. There was death on his face. Forgive him, dear mother! take him back to your heart."

"And do you think he is not here?" she exclaimed, pressing her hands on her heart, as if trying to sustain herself under an intense pain. "Do you think he suffers alone? Do you think I have left him, but for his good? Do you think I would not now gladly fold him in my arms and bathe his soul in the overflowing tenderness of maternal love? O child, child! Earth has no sounding line to fathom the depths of a mother's heart. Good-night. God bless you, my darling Edith."

"And Gabriella?"

"Will remain with me."

Mrs. Linwood, whose left arm still encircled me, brought me into her chamber, and closed the door. She was excessively pale, and I mechanically gave her a glass of water. She thanked me; and seating herself at a little table, on which an astral lamp was burning, she began to turn the leaves of a Bible, which always lay there. I observed that her hands trembled and that her lips quivered.

"There is but one fountain which can refresh the fainting spirit," she said, laying her hand on the sacred volume. "It is the fountain of living waters, which, whosoever will, may drink, and receive immortal strength."

She turned the leaves, but there was mist over her vision,—she could not distinguish the well-known characters.

"Read for me, my beloved Gabriella," said she, rising and motioning me to the seat she had quitted. "I was looking for the sixty-second Psalm."

She seated herself in the shadow of the curtain, while I nerved myself for the appointed task. My voice was at first low and tremulous, but as the sound of the words reached my ear, they penetrated my soul, like a strain of solemn music. I felt the divine influence of those breathings of humanity, sanctified by the inspiration of the Deity. I felt the same consciousness of man's insignificance as when I listened to Niagara's eternal roar. And yet, if God cared for us, there was exaltation and glory in the thought.

"Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance and my God."

"Go on," said Mrs. Linwood, as I paused on this beautiful and consoling verse; "your voice is sweet, my child, and there is balm in every hallowed word."

I turned to the ninety-first Psalm, which I had so often read to my own dear mother, and which I had long known by heart; then the hundred and sixteenth, which was a favorite of Ernest's. My voice faltered. I thought of him in loneliness and anguish, and my tears blotted the sacred lines. We both remained silent, for the awe of God's spirit was upon us, and the atmosphere made holy by the incense of His breath.

A low, faint knock at the door. "Come in," said Mrs. Linwood, supposing it a servant. She started, when the door opened, and Ernest, pale as a ghost, stood on the threshold. I made a movement towards him, but he did not look at me. His eyes were riveted on his mother, who had half risen at his entrance, but sunk back on her seat. He passed by me, and approaching the window where she sat, knelt at her feet, and bowed his head in her lap.

"Mother," said he, in broken accents, "I come, like the returning prodigal. I have sinned against Heaven and thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son,—give me but the hireling's place, provided it be near thy heart."

"And have I found thee again, my son, my Ernest, my beloved, my only one?" she cried, bending down and clasping her arms around him. "Heavenly Father! I thank thee for this hour."

Never had I loved them both as I did at that moment, when the holy tears of penitence and pardon mingled on their cheeks, and baptized their spirits as in a regenerating shower. My own tears flowed in unison; but I drew back, feeling as if it were sacrilege to intrude on such a scene. My first impulse was to steal from the room, leaving them to the unwitnessed indulgence of their sacred emotions; but I must pass them, and I would not that even the hem of my garments should rustle against them.

Mrs. Linwood was the first to recognize my presence; she raised her head and beckoned me to approach. As I obeyed her motion, Ernest rose from his knees, and taking my hand, held it for a moment closely, firmly in his own; he did not embrace me, as he had always done in the transports of reconciliation; he seemed to hold me from him in that controlling grasp, and there was something thrilling, yet repelling, in the dark depths of his eyes that held me bound to the spot where I stood.

"Remain with my mother, Gabriella," said he; "I give you back to her guardianship, till I have done penance for the sins of this night. The lips that have dared to speak to a mother, and such a mother, the words of bitterness and passion, are unworthy to receive the pledge of love. My eyes are opened to the enormity of my offence, and I abhor myself in dust and ashes; my spirit shall clothe itself in garments of sackcloth and mourning, and drink of the bitter cup of humiliation. Hear, then, my solemn vow;—nay, my mother, nay, Gabriella,—I must, I will speak. My Saviour fasted forty days and forty nights in the wilderness, he, who knew not sin, and shall not I, vile as a malefactor, accursed as a leper, do something to prove my penitence and self-abasement? For

forty days I abjure love, joy, domestic endearments, and social pleasures,—I will live on bread and water,—I will sleep on the uncarpeted floor,—or pass my nights under the canopy of heaven."

Pale and shuddering I listened to this wild, stem vow, fearing that his reason was forsaking him. No martyr at the stake ever wore an expression of more sublime self-sacrifice.

"Alas, my son!" exclaimed his mother, "one tear such as you have shed this hour is worth a hundred rash vows. Vain and useless are they as the iron bed, the girdle of steel, the scourge of the fanatic, who expects to force by self-inflicted tortures the gates of heaven to open. Do you realize to what sufferings you are dooming the hearts that love you, and whose happiness is bound up in yours? Do you realize that you are making our home dark and gloomy as the dungeons of the Inquisition?"

"Not so, my mother; Gabriella shall be free as air, free as before she breathed her marriage vows. To your care I commit her. Let not one thought of me cloud the sunshine of the domestic board, or wither one garland of household joy. I have imposed this penance on myself in expiation of my offences as a son and as a husband. If I am wrong, may a merciful God forgive me. The words are uttered, and cannot be recalled. I cannot add perjury to the dark list of my transgressions. Farewell, mother; farewell, Gabriella; pray for me. Your prayers will call down ministering angels, who shall come to me in the hour of nature's agony, to relieve and sustain me."

He left us, closed the door, and passed down the stairs, which gave a faint echo to his retreating footsteps. We looked at each other in grief and amazement, and neither of us spoke for several minutes.

"My poor, misguided boy!" at length burst from his mother's pale lips, "I fear I was too harsh,—I probed him too deeply,—I have driven him to the verge of madness. Oh! how difficult it is to deal with a spirit so strangely, so unhappily constituted! I have tried indulgence, and the evil seemed to grow with alarming rapidity. I have exercised a parent's authority, and behold the result. I can do nothing now, but obey his parting injunction,—pray for him."

She folded her hands across her knees, and looked down in deep, revolving thought.

Forty days of gloom and estrangement! Forty days! Oh! what a wilderness would life be during those long, long days! And what was there beyond? I dared not think. A dreary shadow of coming desolation,—like the cold, gray mist which wrapped me as I stood on the rocks of Niagara, hung over the future. Would I lift it if I could? Oh, no! Perish the hand that would anticipate the day of God's revealing.

CHAPTER XLVII.

Ernest, faithful to his vow, slept on the floor in the library, and though he sat down at the table with us, he tasted nothing but bread and water. A stranger might not have observed any striking difference in his manners, but he had forbidden himself even the glance of affection, and his eye studiously and severely avoided mine. From the table he returned to the library, and shut himself up till the next bell summoned us to our now joyless and uncomfortable meals.

I cannot describe the tortures I endured during this season of unnatural and horrible constraint. It sometimes seemed as if I should grow crazy; and poor Edith was scarcely less unhappy. It was now that Mrs. Linwood showed her extraordinary powers of self-control, her wisdom, and intellectual strength. Calmly and serenely she fulfilled her usual duties, as mistress of her household and benefactress of the village. To visitors and friends she was the same hospitable and charming hostess that had thrown such enchantment over the granite walls of Grandison Place. She had marked out the line of duty for Edith and myself, which we tried to follow, but it was often with sinking hearts and faltering footsteps.

"If Ernest from a mistaken sense of duty has bound himself by a painful and unnatural vow," said she, in that tone of grave sweetness which was so irresistible, "*we* must not forget the social and domestic duties of life. A threefold responsibility rests upon us, for we must endeavor to bear the burden he has laid down. He must not see the unlimited power he has over our happiness, a power he is now unconsciously abusing. Smile, my children, indulge in all innocent recreations; let me hear once more your voices echoing on the lawn; let me hear the soothing notes of my Edith's harp; let me see my Gabriella's fingers weaving as wont, sweet garlands of flowers."

And now, the house began to be filled up with visitors from the city, who had been anxiously waiting the return of Mrs. Linwood. The character of Ernest for eccentricity and moodiness was so well known, that the peculiar situation in which he had placed himself did not attract immediate attention. But I knew I must appear, what I in reality was for the time, a neglected and avoided wife; and most bitterly, keenly did I suffer in consequence of this impression. In spite of the pain it had caused, I was proud of Ernest's exclusive devotion, and the notice it attracted. I knew I was, by the mortification I experienced, when that devotion was withdrawn. It is true, I knew he was inflicting on himself torments to which the fabled agonies of Tantalus, Sisyphus, and Ixion combined could not be compared; but others did not; they saw the averted eye, the coldness, the distance, the estrangement, but they did not, could not see, the bleeding heart, the agonized spirit hidden beneath the veil.

I ought to mention here the reason that Mr. Regulus did not come as usual to welcome us on our return. He had been appointed professor of mathematics in —— College, and had given up the charge of the academy where he had taught so many years with such indefatigable industry and distinguished success. He was now visiting in Boston, but immediately on his return was to depart to the scene of his new labors.

Mr. Regulus, or, as we should now call him, Professor Regulus, had so long been considered a fixture in town, this change in his destiny created quite a sensation in the circle in which he moved. It seemed impossible to do without him. He was as much a part of the academy as the colossal pen, whose gilded feathers still swept the blue of ether. Were it not for the blight that had fallen on my social joys, I should have mourned the loss of this steadfast friend of my orphan years; but now I could not regret it. The mildew of suspicion rested on our intercourse, and all its pleasant bloom was blasted. He was in Boston. Had he gone to ask the dauntless Meg to be the companion of his life, in the more exalted sphere in which he was about to move? And would she indeed suffer her "wild heart to be tamed by a loving hand?"

What delightful evenings we might now have enjoyed had not the dark passion of Ernest thrown such a chilling shadow over the household! Richard came almost every night, for it was his *home*. He loved and reverenced Mrs. Linwood, as if she were his own mother. Edith was to him as a sweet and gentle sister; and though never by word or action he manifested a feeling for me which I might not sanction and return as the wife of another, I knew, that no one had supplanted me in his affections, that I was still the Gabriella whom he had enshrined in his boyish heart,—in "all save hope the same." He saw that I was unhappy, and he pitied me. The bright sparkle of his eye always seemed quenched when it turned to me, and his voice when it addressed me had a gentler, more subdued tone. But his spirit was so sparkling, so elastic, his manners so kind and winning, his conversation so easy and graceful, it was impossible for sadness or constraint to dwell long in his presence. Did I never contrast his sunny temper, his unselfish disposition, his happy, genial temperament, with the darkness and moodiness and despotism of Ernest? Did I never sigh that I had not given my young heart to one who would have trusted me even as he loved, and surrounded me with a golden atmosphere of confidence, calm and beautiful as an unclouded autumn sky? Did I not tremble at the thought of passing my whole life in the midst of the tropic storms, the thunders and lightnings of passions?

And yet I loved Ernest with all the intensity of my first affection. I would have sacrificed my life to have given peace to his troubled and warring spirit. His self-imposed sufferings almost maddened me. My heart, as it secretly clung to him and followed his lonely steps as, faithful to his frantic vow, he withdrew from domestic and social intercourse,—longed to express its emotions in words as wildly impassioned as these:—

> "Thou hast called me thine angel in moments of bliss,
> Still thine angel I'll prove 'mid the horrors of this.
> Through the furnace unshrinking thy steps I'll pursue,
> And shield thee, and save thee, and perish there too."

Oh, most beloved, yet most wretched and deluded husband, why was this dark thread,—this cable cord, I might say,—twisted with the pure and silvery virtues of thy character?

In the midst of this unhappy state of things, Margaret Melville arrived. She returned with Mr. Regulus, who brought her one beautiful evening, at the soft, twilight hour, to Grandison Place. Whether it was the subdued light in which we first beheld her, or the presence of her dignified companion, she certainly was much softened. Her boisterous laugh was quite melodized, and her step did not make the crystal drops of the girandoles tinkle as ominously as they formerly did. Still, it seemed as if a dozen guests had arrived in her single person. There was such superabundant vitality about her. As for Mr. Regulus, he was certainly going on even unto perfection, for his improvement in the graces was as progressive and as steady as the advance of the rolling year. I could not but notice the extreme elegance of his dress. He was evidently "at some cost to entertain himself."

"Come up stairs with me, darling," said she to me, catching my hand and giving it an emphatic squeeze; "help me to lay aside this uncomfortable riding dress,—besides," she whispered, "I have so much to tell you."

As we left the room and passed Mr. Regulus, who was standing near the door, the glance she cast upon him, bright, smiling, triumphant, and happy, convinced me that my conjectures were right.

"My dear creature!" she exclaimed, as soon as we were in my own chamber, throwing herself down on the first seat she saw, and shaking her hair loose over her shoulders, "I am so glad to see you. You do not know how happy I am,—I mean how glad I am,—you did not expect me, did you?"

"I thought Mr. Regulus had gone to see you, but I did not know that he would be fortunate enough to bring you back with him. He discovered last winter, I have no doubt, what a pleasant travelling companion you were."

"Oh, Gabriella, I could tell you something so strange, so funny,"—and here she burst into one of her old ringing laughs, that seemed perfectly uncontrollable.

"I think I can guess what it is," I said, assisting her at her toilet, which was never an elaborate business with her. "You and Mr. Regulus are very good friends, perhaps betrothed lovers. Is that

so very strange?"

"Who told you?" she exclaimed, turning quickly round, her cheeks crimsoned and her eyes sparkling most luminously,—"who told you such nonsense?"

"It does not require any supernatural knowledge to know this," I answered. "I anticipated it when you were in New York, and most sincerely do I congratulate you on the possession of so excellent and noble a heart. Prize it, dear Margaret, and make yourself worthy of all it can, of all it will impart, to ennoble and exalt your own."

"Ah! I fear I never shall be worthy of it," she cried, giving me an enthusiastic embrace, and turning aside her head to hide a starting tear; "but I do prize it, Gabriella, beyond all words."

"Ah, you little gypsy!" she exclaimed, suddenly resuming her old wild manner, "why did you not prize it yourself? He has told me all about the romantic scenes of the academy,—he says you transformed him from a rough boor into a feeling, tender-hearted man,—that you stole into his very inmost being, like the breath of heaven, and made the barren wilderness blossom like the rose. Ah! you ought to hear how beautifully he talks of you. But I am not jealous of you."

"Heaven forbid!" I involuntarily cried.

"You may well say that," said she, looking earnestly in my face; "you may well say that, darling. But where is Ernest? I have not seen him yet."

"He is in the library, I believe. He is not very well; and you know he never enjoys company much."

"The same jealous, unreasonable being he ever was, I dare say," she vehemently exclaimed. "It is a shame, and a sin, and a burning sin, for him to go on as he does. Mr. Regulus says he could weep tears of blood to think how you have sacrificed yourself to him."

"Margaret,—Margaret! If you have one spark of love for me,—one feeling of respect and regard for Mrs. Linwood, your mother's friend and your own, never, never speak of Ernest's peculiarities. I cannot deny them; I cannot deny that they make me unhappy, and fill me with sad forebodings; but he is my husband,—and I cannot hear him spoken of with bitterness. He is my husband; and I love him in spite of his wayward humors, with all the romance of girlish passion, and all the tenderness of wedded love."

"Is love so strong as to endure every thing?" she asked.

"It is so divine as to forgive every thing," I answered.

"Well! you are an angel, and I will try to set a guard on these wild lips, so that they shall not say aught to wound that dear, precious, blessed little heart of yours. I will be just as good as I can be; and if I forget myself once in a while, you must forgive me,—for the old Adam is in me yet. There, how does that look?"

She had dressed herself in a plain white muslin, with a white sash carelessly tied; and a light fall of lace was the only covering to her magnificent arms and neck.

"Why, you look like a bride, Margaret," said I. "Surely, you must think Mrs. Linwood is going to have a party to-night. Never mind,—we will all admire you as much as if you were a bride. Let me twist some of these white rosebuds in your hair, to complete the illusion."

I took some from the vase that stood upon my toilet, and wreathed them in her black, shining locks. She clapped her hands joyously as she surveyed her image in the mirror; then laughed long and merrily, and asked if she did not look like a fool.

"Do you think there is any thing peculiar in my dress?" she suddenly asked, pulling the lace rather strenuously, considering its gossamer texture. "I do not wish to look ridiculous."

"No, indeed. It is like Edith's and mine. We always wear white muslin in summer, you know; but you never seemed to care much about dressing here in the country. I never saw you look so well, so handsome, Madge."

"Thank you. Let us go down. But, stop one moment. Do you think Mrs. Linwood will think it strange that I should come here with Mr. Regulus?"

"No, indeed."

"What do you think she will say about our—our engagement?"

"She will be very much pleased. I heard her say that if you should become attached to a man of worth and talents such as he possesses, you would become a good and noble woman."

"Did she say that? Heaven bless her, body and soul. I wonder how she could have any trust or faith in such a Greenland bear as I have been. I will not say *am*, for I think I have improved some, don't you?"

"Yes! and I believe it is only the dawn of a beautiful day of womanhood."

Margaret linked her arm in mine with a radiant smile and a vivid blush, and tripped down stairs with a lightness almost miraculous. Mr. Regulus was standing at the foot of the stairs leaning on the bannisters, in a musing attitude. As soon as he saw us, his countenance lighted up with a

joyful animation, and he offered his arm to Margaret with eager gallantry. I wondered I had not discovered before how very good looking he was. Never, till he visited us in New York, had I thought of him but as an awkward, rather homely gentleman. Now his smile was quite beautiful, and as I accompanied them into the drawing-room, I thought they were quite a splendid-looking pair. Mrs. Linwood was in the front room, which was quite filled with guests and now illuminated for the night.

"Not now," I heard Margaret whisper, drawing back a little; "wait a few moments."

"Oh! it will be all over in a second," said he, taking her hand and leading her up to Mrs. Linwood, who raised her eyes with surprise at the unwonted ceremony of their approach, and the blushing trepidation of Margaret's manner.

"Permit me to introduce Mrs. Regulus," said he, with a low bow; and though he reddened to the roots of his hair, he looked round with a smiling and triumphant glance. Margaret curtsied with mock humility down to the ground, then breaking loose from his hand, she burst into one of her Madge Wildfire laughs, and attempted to escape from the room. But she was intercepted by Dr. Harlowe, who caught her by the arm and kissed her with audible good-will, declaring it was a physician's fee. The announcement of the marriage was received with acclamation and clapping of hands. You should have heard Edith laugh; it was like the chime of silvery bells. It was so astonishing she could not, would not believe it. It was exactly like one of Meg's wild pranks to play such a farce. But it was a solemn truth. Margaret, the bride of the morning, became the presiding queen of the evening; and had it not been for the lonely occupant of the library, how gaily and happily the hours would have flown by. How must the accents of mirth that echoed through the hall torture, if they reached his morbid and sensitive ear! If I could only go to him and tell him the cause of the unwonted merriment; but I dared not do it. It would be an infringement of the sacredness of his expiatory vow. He would know it, however, at the supper table; but no! he did not appear at the supper table. He sent a message to his mother, that he did not wish any, and the hospitable board was filled without him.

"I can hardly forgive you, Margaret," said Mrs. Linwood, "for not giving us an opportunity of providing a wedding feast. How much better it would have been to have had the golden ring and fatted calf of welcome, than this plain, every-day meal."

"Your every-day meals are better than usual wedding feasts," replied Margaret, "and I do not see why one should eat more on such an occasion than any other. You know *I* care nothing for the good things of this life, though Mr. Regulus may be disappointed."

"Indeed, you are mistaken," said Mr. Regulus, blushing. "I think so little of what I eat and drink, I can hardly tell the difference between tea and coffee."

This was literally true, and many a trick had been played upon him at his boarding place while seated at his meals, with an open book at the left side of his plate, and his whole mind engaged in its contents.

"Mrs. Regulus," said Dr. Harlowe, giving due accent to her new name, "is, as everyone must perceive, one of those ethereal beings who care for nothing more substantial than beefsteak, plum-pudding, and mince-pie. Perhaps an airy slice of roast turkey might also tempt her abstemiousness!"

"Take care, Doctor,—I have some one to protect me now against your lawless tongue," cried Madge, with inimitable good-humor.

"Come and dine with us to-morrow, and you shall prove my words a libel, if you please. I cannot say that my wife will be able to give you any thing better than Mrs. Linwood's poor fare, but it shall be sweetened by a heart-warm welcome, and we will drink the health of the bonny bride in a glass of ruby wine!"

And was it possible that no note was taken of the strange absence of the master of the table? Was it no check to social joy and convivial pleasure? It undoubtedly was, in the first place; but Margaret's exhilarating presence neutralized the effect produced by his absence on the spirits of the guests. The occasion, too, was so unexpected, so inspiring, that even I, sad and troubled as I was, could not help yielding in some degree to its gladdening influence.

After supper I had a long and delightful conversation with my metamorphosed preceptor. He spoke of his marriage with all the ingenuousness and simplicity of a child. He thanked me for having told him, when I parted from him in New York that he had an influence over Margaret that he had not dreamed of possessing. It made him, he said, more observant of her, and more careful of himself, till he ready found her a pleasant study. And somehow, when he had returned to his country home, it seemed dull without her; and he found himself thinking of her, and then writing to her, and then going to see her,—till, to his astonishment, he found himself a lover and a husband. His professorship, too, happened to come at the exact moment, for it emboldened him with hopes of success he could not have cherished as a village teacher.

"How the wild creature happened to love me, a grave, ungainly pedagogue, I cannot divine," he added; "but if gratitude, tenderness, and the most implicit confidence in her truth and affection can make her happy, she shall never regret her heart's choice."

Confidence did he say? Happy, thrice happy Margaret!

CHAPTER XLVIII.

It was an evening of excitement. Edith sang, and Margaret played some of her elfin strains, and Mr. Regulus made music leap joyously from the sounding violin. There was one in the lonely library who might have made sweeter music than all, whose spirit's chords were all jangled and tuneless, and whose ear seemed closed to the concord of melodious sounds. *My* soul was not tuned to harmony now, but still there was something soothing in its influence, and it relieved me from the necessity of talking, the exertion of *seeming* what I could not *be*. It was a luxury to glide unnoticed on the stream of thought, though dark the current, and leading into troubled waters. It was a luxury to think that the sighs of the heart might breathe unheard in the midst of the soft rolling waves of Edith's melody, or the dashing billows of Margaret's. Sometimes when I imagined myself entirely unobserved, and suffered the cloud of sadness that brooded over my spirits to float outwards, if I accidentally raised my eyes, I met those of Richard Clyde fixed on me with an expression of such intense and thrilling sympathy, I would start with a vague consciousness of guilt for having elicited such expressive glances.

Madge was playing as only Madge could play, and Edith standing near the door that opened into the saloon in the front parlor. She looked unusually pale, and her countenance was languid. Was she thinking of Julian, the young artist at the Falls, and wondering if the brief romance of their love were indeed a dream? All at once a change, quick as the electric flash, passed over her face. A bright, rosy cloud rolled over its pallor, like morning breaking in Alpine snows. Even the paly gold of her hair seemed to catch the glory that so suddenly and absolutely illumined her. She was looking into the saloon, and I followed the direction of her kindling eyes. Julian was at that moment crossing the threshold. She had seen him ascending the steps, and her heart sprang forth to meet him. I saw her hesitate, look round for her mother, who was not near her, then, while the rosy cloud deepened to crimson, she floated into the saloon.

I went to Mrs. Linwood, who was in the back parlor, to tell her of the arrival of the new guest. She started and changed color. His coming was the seal of Edith's destiny. "I will not come," he had said to her in parting, "till I can bring abundant testimonials of my spotless lineage and irreproachable reputation."

I had drawn her apart from the company, expecting she would be agitated by the annunciation.

"Should not Ernest know of this?" I asked. "He did not abjure all the rites of hospitality. Oh, for Edith's sake, tell him of Julian's arrival, and entreat him to come forth and welcome him."

"I have been to him once and urged him to greet Mr. Regulus, and merely offer him the usual congratulations on his marriage, but he persistingly refused. I fear he is killing himself by this spirit-scourging vow. I never saw him look so pale and wretched as he does to-night. I dread more and more the consequences of this self-inflicted martyrdom."

As I looked up in Mrs. Linwood's face, on which the light of the chandelier resplendently shone, I observed lines of care on her smooth brow, which were not there two weeks before. The engraver was doing his work delicately, secretly, but he was at work, and it was Ernest's hand that guided the steel as it left its deepening grooves.

"O! that I dared to go to him!" said I; "may I, dear mother? I can but be denied. I will speak to him as a friend, coldly if it must be, but let me speak to him. He can but bid me leave him."

"You too, my darling," said she, in a low, sad-toned voice, "you are wilting like a flower deprived of sunshine and dew. But go. Take this key. He locks himself within, and all you can do he will not grant admittance. The only way is to use this pass-key, which you must return to me. I must go and welcome Julian."

She put the key in my hand, and turned away with a sigh. I trembled at my own audacity. I had never forced myself into his presence, for the dullness of his vow was upon me, and the hand that would have removed the icy barrier he had raised between us was numbed by its coldness.

The way that led to the library was winding, sweeping by the lofty staircase, and terminating in a kind of picture gallery. Some of these were relics of the old Italian masters, and their dark, rich coloring came out in the lamp light with gloomy splendor. I had seen them a hundred times, but never had they impressed me with such lurid grandeur as now. One by one, the dark lines started on the canvas glowing with strange life, and standing out in bold, sublime relief. I hurried by them and stood in front of the library door with the key trembling in my hand. I heard no sound within. All was still as death. Perhaps, exhausted by his lonely vigils, he slept, and it would be cruel to awaken him. Perhaps he would frown on me in anger, for not respecting the sanctity of his vow. I had seen him at noon, but he did not speak or look at me; and as his mother said, he had never appeared so pale, so heart-worn, and so wretched. He was evidently ill and suffering, though to his mother's anxious inquiries he declared himself well, perfectly well. There was one thing which made me glad. The gay, mingling laughs, the sounds of social joy, of music and mirth, came so softened through the long winding avenue, that they broke against the library in a soft, murmuring wave that could not be heard within.

Why did I stand trembling and irresolute, as if I had no right to penetrate that lonely apartment? He was my husband, and a wife's agonized solicitude had drawn me to him. If he repulsed me, I

could but turn away and weep;—and was not my pillow wet with nightly tears?

Softly I turned the key, and the door opened, as if touched by invisible hands. He did not hear me,—I know he did not,—for he sat at the upper end of the room, on a window seat, leaning back against the drapery of the curtain that fell darkly behind him. His face was turned towards the window, through whose parted damask the starry night looked in. But though his face was partially turned from me, I could see its contour and its hue as distinctly as those of the marble busts that surrounded him. He looked scarcely less hueless and cold, and his hand, that lay embedded in his dark wavy hair, gleamed white and transparent as alabaster. I stood just within the door, with suspended breath and wildly palpitating heart, praying for courage to break the spell that bound me to the spot. All my strength was gone. I felt myself a guilty intruder in that scene of self-humiliation, penance, and prayer. Though reason condemned his conduct, and mourned over his infatuation, the holiness of his purpose shone around him and sanctified him from ridicule and contempt. There was something pure, spiritual, almost unearthly in his countenance; but suffering and languor cast a shadow over it, that appealed to human sympathy.

If he would only move, only turn towards me! The Israelites, at the foot of the cloud-girdled mount, whose fiery zone they were forbidden to pass, could scarcely have felt more awe and dread than I did, strange and weak as it may seem. I moved nearer, still more near, till my shadow fell upon him. Then he started and rose to his feet, and looked upon me, like one suddenly awakened from a deep sleep.

"Gabriella!" he exclaimed.

Oh! I cannot describe the inexpressible softness, tenderness, and music of his accent. It was as if the whole heart were melting into that single word. All my preconceived resolutions vanished, all coldness, alienation, and constraint. "I had found him whom my soul loved." My arms were twined around him,—I was clasped to his bosom with the most passionate emotion, and the hearts so violently wrenched asunder once more throbbed against each other.

"Ernest, beloved Ernest!"

"Temptress, sorceress!" he suddenly exclaimed, pushing me from him with frenzied gesture, —"you have come to destroy my soul,—I have broken my solemn vow,—I have incurred the vengeance of Almighty God. Peace was flowing over me like a river, but now all the waves and billows of passion are gone over me. I sink,—I perish, and you, you,—Gabriella, it is you who plunge me in the black abyss of perjury and guilt."

I was terrified at the dark despair that settled on his brow. I feared his reason was forsaking him, and that I, in my rashness, had accelerated his doom.

"Do not, do not talk so dreadfully, Ernest. Forgive me, if I have done wrong in coming. Forgive me, if for one moment I recalled you to the tenderness you have so long abjured. But mine is the offence, and mine be the sorrow. Do not, I pray you, blame yourself so cruelly for my transgression, if it indeed be one. Oh, Ernest, how pale, how wretched you look! You are killing yourself and me,—your mother too. We cannot live in this state of alienation. The time of your vow is only half expired,—only twenty days are past, and they seem twenty years of woe. Dear Ernest, you are tempting God by this. One tear of penitence, one look of faith, one prayer to Christ for mercy, are worth more than years of penance and lonely torture. Revoke this rash vow. Come back to us, my Ernest,—come down from the wilderness, leave the desolate places of despair, and come where blessings wait you. Your mother waits to bless you,—Edith waits you to greet and welcome her Julian,—Margaret, a happy bride, waits your friendly congratulations. Come, and disperse by your presence the shadow that rests on the household."

"Would you indeed counsel me to break a solemn vow, Gabriella? It may have been rash; but it was a vow; and were I to break it, I should feel forever dishonored in the sight of God and man."

"Which, think you, had more weight when placed in the scales of eternal justice, Herod's rash vow, or the life of the holy prophet sacrificed to fulfil it? O Ernest!—wild, impulsive words forced from the lips of passion should never be made guides of action. It is wrong, I know, to speak unwisely and madly, but doubly, trebly wrong to act so."

As thus I pleaded and reasoned and entreated, I kept my earnest gaze on his face, and eagerly watched,—watched with trembling hope and fear the effect of my words. I had drawn back from him as far as the width of the library, and my hands were clasped together and pressed upon my bosom. I did not know that I stood directly beneath the picture of the Italian flower-girl, till I saw his glance uplifted from my face to hers, with an expression that recalled the morning when he found me gazing on her features, in all the glow of youth, love, joy, and hope. Then I remembered how he had scattered my rose leaves beneath his feet, and what a prophetic sadness had then shaded my spirits.

"Alas! my poor Gabriella," he cried, looking down from the picture to me, with an expression of the tenderest compassion; "Alas, my flower-girl! how have I wilted your blooming youth! You are pale, my girl, and sad,—that bewitching smile no longer parts your glowing lips. Would to God I had never crossed your path of roses with my withering footsteps! Would to God I had never linked your young, confiding heart to mine, so blasted by suspicion, so consumed by jealousy's baleful fires! Yet, Heaven knows I meant to make you happy. I meant to watch over you as tenderly as the mother over her new-born infant,—as holily as the devotee over the shrine of the saint he adores. How faithless I have been to this guardianship of love, you know too well. I have

been a madman, a monster,—you know I have,—worthy of eternal detestation. But you have not suffered alone. Remorse—unquenchable fire; remorse—undying worm, avenges every pang I have inflicted on you. Remorse goaded me to desperation,—desperation prompted the expiatory vow. It must be fulfilled, or I shall forfeit my self-respect, my honor, and truth. But I shall be better, stronger,—I feel I shall, after passing this stern ordeal. It will soon be over, and I have a confidence so firm that it has the strength of conviction, that in this lonely conflict with the powers of darkness I shall come off conqueror, through God's assisting angels."

He spoke with fervor, and his countenance lighted up with enthusiasm. Bodily weakness and languor had disappeared, and his transparent cheek glowed with the excitement of his feelings.

"If you are really thus supported by divine enthusiasm," I said, with an involuntary kindling of admiration, "perhaps I ought to submit in silence, where I cannot understand. Forgive me before I leave you, Ernest, this rash intrusion. We may forgive even our enemies."

"Forgive, Gabriella! Oh! if you knew the flood of joy and rapture that for one moment deluged my soul! I dare not recall it. Forgive, O my God!"

He turned away, covered his face with his left hand, and made a repelling gesture with the other. I understood the motion, and obeyed it.

"Farewell, Ernest," said I, slowly retreating; "may angels minister to you and bear up your spirit on their wings of love!"

I looked back, on the threshold, and met his glance then turned towards me. Had I been one of the angels I invoked, it could not have been more adoring.

And thus we parted; and when I attempted to describe the interview to his mother, I wept and sobbed as if I had been paying a visit to his grave. And yet I was glad that I had been, glad that I had bridged the gulf that separated us, though but momentarily.

Perhaps some may smile at this record. I have no doubt they will, and pronounce the character of Ernest unnatural and *impossible*. But in all his idiosyncrasy, he is the Ernest Linwood of Grandison Place, just such as I have delineated him, just such as I knew and loved. I know that there are scenes that have seemed, that will seem, overwrought, and I have often been tempted to throw down the pen, regretting the task I have undertaken. But, were we permitted to steal behind the scenes of many a life drama, what startling discoveries would we make! Reality goes beyond the wildest imaginings of romance,—beyond the majestic sweep of human genius. Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor imagination conceived, the wild extent to which the passions of man may go. The empire of passion is veiled, and its battle ground is secret Who beheld the interview in the library, which I have just described? Who saw him kneeling at his mother's feet at the midnight hour? Or who witnessed our scenes of agony and reconciliation in the palace walls of our winter home? Ah! the world sees only the surface of the great deep of the heart. It has never plunged into the innermost main,—never beheld the seething and the rolling of the unfathomable mystery:—

> "And where is the diver so stout to go,—
> I ask ye again—to the deep below?"

Well do I remember the thrilling legend of the roaring whirlpools, the golden goblet, and the dauntless diver, and well do I read its meaning.

O Ernest! I have cast the golden goblet of happiness into a maelstrom, and he alone, who walked unsinking the waves of Galilee, can bring back the lost treasure from the dark and boiling vortex.

CHAPTER XLIX.

Julian was worthy of Edith. His parentage was honorable and pure, his connections irreproachable, and his own character noble and unblemished. Reason could oppose no obstacle, and the young artist was received into the family as the betrothed of the lovely lame girl.

The romantic idea which had suggested itself to my mind, that he might be the son of Therésa and my own half-brother, had vanished before the testimonies of his birth. Another daydream too. I had always looked forward to the hour when Richard would transfer his affections to Edith, and be rewarded by her love for his youthful disappointment. But she was destined to reign in undivided sovereignty over a heart that had never been devoted to another; to be loved with all the fervor of passion and all the enthusiasm of genius.

It was the day of social gathering at Dr. Harlowe's; but I remained at home. I felt as if I could not be missed from the circle in which Madge, in bridal charms, sparkled a ruby gem, and the fairer Edith shone, a living pearl. Though scarcely one year a wife, the discipline of my wedded experience had so chastened and subdued me, I seemed to myself quite a matron, beside those on whom the morning glow of love and hope were beaming. Madge and Edith were both older than myself, and yet I had begun to live far earlier.

In the later part of the day, Mrs. Linwood, who had also remained at home, asked me to

accompany her in a ride. She wished to visit several who were sick and afflicted, and I always felt it a privilege to be her companion.

"Will you object to calling here?" she asked, when we approached the old gray cottage, once my mother's home and my own. "There is a sick woman here, whom I wish to see. You can walk about the green skirting the woods, if you prefer. This enchanting breeze will give new life to your body and new brightness to your spirits."

I thanked her for the permission, knowing well the kind regard to my feelings which induced her to give it. She knew sad memories must hang around the apartments where my mother and the faithful Peggy had suffered and died; and that it would be a trial to me to see strangers occupying the places so hallowed by association.

Time had been at work on that old cottage, with its noiseless but effacing fingers. And its embroidering fingers too, for the roof from which many a shingle had fallen, was green with garlands of moss, wrought into the damp and mouldering wood with exquisite grace and skill. I turned away with a sigh, and beheld infancy by the side of the humble ruin, the oriental palace which was my bridal home, and wondered at the marvellous changes of life.

I wandered to the welling spring by whose gushing waters I had so often sat, indulging the wild poetry of my childish imagination. I gazed around, scarcely recognizing the once enchanting spot. A stone had literally rolled against the mouth of the fountain, and the crystal diamonds no longer sparkled in the basin below. An awkward pump, put up near the cabin, explained this appearance of neglect and wildness. The soft grassy slope where I used to recline and watch the fountain's silvery play, was overgrown with tall, rank, rustling weeds, among which I could distinguish the deadly bloom and sickening odor of the nightshade. There was a rock covered with the brightest, richest covering of dark green moss, on which I seated myself, and gave myself up to the memories of the past. Perhaps this was the same rock on which Richard Clyde and I had often sat side by side, and watched the shadows of twilight purple the valley.

I untied my bonnet and laid it on the long grass, for I was shaded from the western sun, and the breeze blew fresh and pure from the hills he was about to crown with a right royal diadem. While I thus sat, I heard footsteps quick and eager echoing behind, and Richard Clyde bounded down the slope and threw himself on the ground at my side.

"Thank heaven," he exclaimed, "I have found you, Gabriella, and found you alone!"

His manner was hurried and agitated, his eyes had a wild expression, and tossing aside his hat, he wiped thick-coming drops of perspiration from his forehead.

His words, and the unusual excitement of his manner, alarmed me.

"What has happened, Richard? Where have you sought me? What tidings have you to communicate? Speak, and tell me, for I tremble with fear."

"I am so agitated," he cried, sitting down on the rock at my side, and taking one of my hands in his. I started, for his was so icy cold and tremulous, and his face was as pale as Ernest's. He looked like one who had escaped some terrible danger, and in whose bosom horror and gratitude were struggling for mastery.

"Is it of Ernest you have come to tell me?" I asked, with blanched lips.

"No, no, no! I know nothing of him. It is of myself,—of you, I would speak. I have just made the most astonishing discovery! Never till now have I heard your real name and early history. O! Gabriella you whom I have loved so long with such fervor, such passion, such idolatry,—you (O righteous God forgive me!) are the daughter of my father,—for Therésa La Fontaine was my own mother. Gabriella,—sister,—beloved!"

He clasped me to his bosom; he kissed me again and again, weeping and sobbing like a child. In broken words he deplored his sinful passion, entreating me to forgive him, to love him as a brother, to cling to him as a friend, and feel that there was one who would live to protect, or die to defend me. Bewildered and enraptured by this most unthought of and astounding discovery, my heart acknowledged its truth and glowed with gratitude and joy. Richard, the noble-hearted, gallant Richard, was my brother! My soul's desire was satisfied. How I had yearned for a brother! and to find him,—and such a brother! Oh I joy unspeakable. Oh! how strange,—how passing strange,—how almost passing credulity!

At any moment this discovery would have been welcomed with rapture. But now, when the voluntary estrangement of Ernest had thrown my warm affections back for the time into my own bosom, to pine for want of cherishing, it came like a burst of sunshine after a long and dreary darkness,—like the music of gushing waters to the feverish and thirsty pilgrim.

My heart was too full for questions, and his for explanations. They would come in due time. He was *my brother*,—that was enough. Ernest could not be jealous of a brother's love. He would own with pride the fraternal bond, and forget the father's crimes in the son's virtues.

It seemed but a moment since Richard had called me sister. Neither of us had spoken, for tears choked our words; but our arms were still entwined, and my head rested on his bosom, in all the abandonment of nature's holiest feelings. All at once I heard a rustling in the grass, soft and stealthy like a gliding snake. I raised my head, looked back, looked up.

Merciful Father of heaven and earth! did I not then pass the agonies of death?

I saw a face,—my God! how dark, how deadly, how terrible it was! I knew that face, and my heart was rifted as if by a thunderbolt.

The loud report of a pistol, and a shriek such as never before issued from mortal lips, bursting from mine, were simultaneous sounds. Richard fell back with a deep groan. Then there seemed a rushing sound as the breaking up of the great deep, a heaving and tossing like the throes of an earthquake; then a sinking, sinking, lower and lower, and then a cloud black as night and heavy as iron came lowering and crushing me,—me, and the bleeding Richard. All was darkness,—silence,—oblivion.

CHAPTER L.

A light, soft and glimmering as morning twilight, floated round me. Was it the dawn of an eternal morning, or the lingering radiance of life's departing day? Did my spirit animate the motionless body extended on that snowy bed, or was it hovering, faint and invisible, above the confines of mortality?

I was just awakened to the consciousness of existence,—a dim, vague consciousness, such as one feels in a dissolving dream. I seemed involved in a white, transparent cloud, and reclining on one of those downy-looking cloud-beds that I have seen waiting to receive the sinking sun.

While thus I lay, living the dawning life of infancy, the white cloud softly rolled on one side, and a figure appeared in the opening, that belonged to a previous state of existence. I had seen its mild lineaments in another world; but when,—how long ago?

My eyes rested on the features of the lady till they grew more and more familiar, but there was a white cloud round her face, that threw a mournful shadow over it,—*that* I had never seen before. Again my eyelids closed, and I seemed passing away, where, I knew not; yet consciousness remained. I felt soft, trembling kisses breathed upon my face, and tears too, mingling with their balm. With a delicious perception of tenderness, watchfulness, and love, I sunk into a deep, deep sleep.

When I awoke, the silver lustre of an astral lamp, shaded by a screen, glimmered in the apartment and quivered like moonbeams in the white drapery that curtained the bed. I knew where I was,—I was in my own chamber, and the lady who sat by my bedside, and whose profile I beheld through the parted folds of the curtains, was Mrs. Linwood. And yet, how strange! It must have been years since we had met, for the lovely brown of her hair was now a pale silver gray, and age had laid its withering hand on her brow. With a faint cry, I ejaculated her name, and attempted to raise my head from the pillow, but in vain. I had no power of motion. Even the exertion of uttering her name was beyond my strength. She rose, bent over me, looked earnestly and long into the eyes uplifted to her face, then dropping on her knees and clasping her hands, her spirit went upwards in silent prayer.

As thus she knelt, and I gazed on her upturned countenance, shaded by that strange, mournful, silver cloud, my thoughts began to shape themselves slowly and gradually, as the features of a landscape through dissolving mists. They trembled as the foliage trembles in the breeze that disperses the vapors. Images of the past gained distinctness of outline and coloring, and all at once, like the black hull, broken mast, and rent sails of a wrecked vessel, one awful scene rose before me. The face, like that of the angel of death, the sound terrible as the thunders of doom, the bleeding body that my arms encircled, the destroying husband,—the victim brother,—all came back to me; life,—memory,—grief,—horror,—all came back.

"Ernest! Richard!" burst in anguish from my feeble lips.

"They live! my child, they live!" said Mrs. Linwood, rising from her knees and taking my passive hand in both hers; "but ask nothing now; you have been very ill, you are weak as an infant; you must be tranquil, patient, and submissive; and grateful, too, to a God of infinite mercy. When you are stronger I will talk to you, but not now. You must yield yourself to my guidance, in the spirit of an unweaned child."

"They live!" repeated I to myself, "my God, I bless thee! I lie at thy footstool. I am willing to die; I long to die. Let the waves of eternity roll over my soul."

Husband and brother! they lived, and yet neither came to me on my couch of sickness. But Richard! had not I seen him bleeding, insensible, the image of death? he lived, yet he might be on the borders of the grave. But she had commanded me to be silent, submissive, and grateful; and I tried to obey her. My physical weakness was such, it subdued the paroxysms of mental agony, and the composing draught which she gave me was a blessed Nepenthe, producing oblivion and repose.

The next day I recognized Dr. Harlowe, the excellent and beloved physician. When I called him by name, as he stood by the bed, counting my languid pulse, the good man turned aside his head to hide the womanish tears that moistened his cheeks. Then looking down on me with a benignant smile, he said, smoothing my hair on my forehead, as if I were a little child—

"Be a good girl; keep quiet; be patient as a lamb, and you will soon be well."

"How long have I been ill, Doctor?" I asked. "I am very foolish, I know; but it seems as if even you look older than you did."

"Never mind, my dear, how long you have been sick. I mean to have you well in a short time. Perhaps I do look a little older, for I have forgotten to shave this morning."

While he was speaking, I caught a glimpse of the lawn through a slight opening in the window curtain, and I uttered an exclamation of amazement and alarm. The trees which I had last beheld clothed in a foliage of living green, were covered with the golden tints of autumn; and here and there a naked bough, with prophetic desolation, waved its arm across the sky.

Where had my spirit been while the waning year had rolled on? Where was Ernest? Where was Richard? Why was I forsaken and alone?

These questions quivered on my tongue, and would have utterance.

"Tell me, Doctor,—I cannot live in this dreadful suspense."

He sat down by me, still holding my hand in his, and promised to tell me, if I would be calm and passive. He told me that for two months I had been in a state of alternate insensibility and delirium, that they had despaired of my life, and that they welcomed me as one risen from the grave. He told me that Ernest had left home, in consequence of the prayers of his mother, till Richard should recover from the effects of his wound, which they at first feared would prove fatal; that Richard was convalescent, was under the same roof with me, and would see me as soon as I could bear the meeting.

"Ernest knows that he is my brother,—he knows that I am innocent," I exclaimed, my whole soul trembling on his answer.

"I trust he knows it now," he replied, with a troubled countenance. "His mother has written and told him all. We were ignorant ourselves of this, you must recollect, till Richard was able to explain it."

"And he went away believing me a wretch!" I cried, in a tone of unutterable agony. "He will never, never return!"

"My dear child," replied Dr. Harlowe, in an accent of kind authority, "you have no right to murmur; you have been spared the most awful infliction a sovereign God could lay upon you,—a brother's life taken by a husband's hand. Praise the Almighty day and night, bless Him without ceasing, that He has lifted from your bosom this weight of woe. Be reconciled to your husband's absence. Mourn not for a separation which may prove the greatest blessing ever bestowed upon both. All may yet be well. *It will be*, if God wills it; and if He wills it not, my dear child, you must then lay your hand on your mouth, and your mouth in the dust, and say, 'It is the Lord, let Him do what seemeth good in His sight.'"

"I know it,—I feel it," I answered, tears raining on my pillow; "but let me see my brother. It will do me good."

"By and by," said he; "he is not very strong himself yet. The young rascal! if he had only confided to me the secret with which his heart was bursting! But there is no use in crying over burnt bread. We must keep it out of the fire next time."

The entrance of Edith checked this conversation, and it was well. She came with her usual gentle motion, and fair, pitying countenance, and diffused around her an atmosphere of divine repose. My brain, relieved of the dreadful tension of suspense, throbbed soft and cool beneath the snow of her loving fingers. She, too, was pale and wan, but she smiled upon me with glistening eyes, and whispered words of sweetest consolation.

It was not till after the lapse of several days that I was permitted to see Richard, and then the doctor said he deserved a good whipping for insisting on coming. He came into the room leaning on the arm of Dr. Harlowe, and supported on the other side by Mrs. Linwood. He looked like the shadow of his former self,—so white, so thin and languid, and his countenance showed as plainly as words could speak, that he was struck with the same sad change in me.

"Now no heroics, no scene," said the doctor; "say how do you do, and shake hands, but not one bit of sentiment,—I forbid that entirely."

"My sister, my dear sister!" said Richard, bending down and kissing my forehead. He reeled as he lifted his head, and would have fallen had not Dr. Harlowe's strong arm supported him.

I longed to embrace him with all a sister's fondness, and pour out on his bosom all my sorrow and my love; but the doctor was imperative, and made him recline in an easy-chair by the bedside, threatening him with instant dismission if he were not perfectly quiet and obedient. I saw Richard start and shudder, as his eyes rested on my left arm, which hung over the counterpane. The sleeve of my loose robe had slipped up, baring the arm below the elbow. The start, the shudder, the look of anguish, made me involuntarily raise it, and then I saw a scar, as of a recently healed wound just below the elbow. I understood it all. The ball that had penetrated his back, had passed through my arm, and thus prevented it from reaching the citadel of life. That feeble arm had been his safeguard and his shield; it had intercepted the bolt of death; it had

barricaded, as it were, the gates of hell.

Mrs. Linwood, who was standing by me, stooped down, kissed the scar, and drew the sleeve gently over it. As she bowed her head, and I saw the silver shadow on her late dark, brown hair, I felt how intense must have been the suffering that wrought this wondrous change,—and I resolved to bear unmurmuring my own sorrows, rather than add a feather's weight to her burden of woe.

I remembered how the queenly locks of Marie Antoinette were whitened in one night of agony. Perhaps my own dark tresses were crowned by premature snow. I had not seen myself since the green of summer had passed into the "sere and yellow leaf," and perhaps the blight of my heart was visible on my brow. When I was alone with Edith, I surprised her by asking if my hair were not white. She smiled, and bringing a toilet glass, held it before me. What was my astonishment to see my hair curling in short waves round my face, like the locks of childhood! And such a face, —so white, so colorless. I hardly recognized myself, and pushing back the glass, I burst into tears.

"Dear Gabriella!" said Edith, quite distressed, "I am sorry they cut off your beautiful hair. But the doctor said it must be done. It does not spoil you, though. You do not know how sweetly childish it makes you look."

"I care not for the looks, Edith; it is not that. But it is so dreadful to think of so many changes, and I unconscious of all. Such a long, dreary blank! Where was my soul wandering? What fearful scenes may hereafter dawn on my memory? Beauty! No, Edith; think not I weep for the cloud that has passed over it. The only eyes in which I desired to appear lovely, will never behold me more."

"You will not be the only sufferer, Gabriella," said Edith, mournfully. "A dreadful blow has fallen upon us all; but for our mother's sake, if not for a greater, we must endeavor to submit."

"Tell me, Edith, what I dare not ask of her, tell me where *he* is gone, and tell me the particulars of those first dark hours when my soul was in such awful eclipse. I *must* know; and when once told, I shall be resigned, whatever be my fate."

Edith seated herself on the side of the bed, and leaned back so that I could not look in her face. Then putting her arms round me, she drew me towards her, and made me rest against her shoulder.

"If you grieve to listen, think how painful it is for me to relate," said she.

"I will," I answered; "I shall have strength to hear whatever you have fortitude to tell."

"You must not ask a minute description of what will always be involved in my remembrance in a horror of thick darkness. I know not how I got home from Dr. Harlowe's, where the tidings reached me. My mother brought you in the carriage, supported in her arms; and when I first saw you, you were lying just where you are now, perfectly insensible. Richard was carried to Dr. Harlowe's on a litter, and it was *then* feared he might not live."

Edith's voice faltered.

"It was after sunset. The saloon was dark, and all was gloom and confusion in the household. Mamma and I were standing by your bed, with our backs to the door, when we heard a hoarse, low voice behind us, saying,—

"'Is she dead?'

"We turned, and beheld Ernest right in the door way, looking more like a spectre than a human being.

"'No, no,' answered my mother; and almost running to meet him, she seized him by the arm, drew him into the chamber, and closed the door. He struggled to be released; but she seemed to have the strength of numbers in her single grasp.

"'She is not dead,' said she, pointing to the bed, 'though she hears, sees, knows nothing; but Richard will die, and you will be arrested as a murderer. You must not linger here one moment. Go, and save yourself from the consequences of this fatal act. Go, if you would not see me, your mother, die in agony at your feet."

"Oh! Gabriella, had you seen her then, her who has such sublime self-control, prostrate at his feet, wringing her hands and entreating him to fly before it was too late, you would not wonder that the morning sun shone on her silver hair.

"'I will not fly the death for which I groan,' cried Ernest. 'Had I ten thousand lives, I would loathe and curse them all.'

"'Parricide, parricide,' exclaimed my mother, 'wo, wo be to him who spurns a kneeling mother's prayer.'

"'Oh! my mother,' cried he, endeavoring to raise her from the ground, while he shook as if with ague shiverings. 'I do not spurn you; but why should I live, with a brand blacker than Cain's on my heart and soul,—crushed, smitten, dishonored, and undone?'

"'Forbear, my son. This blighted form is sacred as it is spotless. Has not blood quenched your

maniac passion?'

"The eyes of Ernest flashed with lurid fire.

"'Locked in each other's arms they fell,' he muttered through his shut teeth, 'heart to heart, mother. I saw them, and God, who will judge me, saw them. No, she is *false, false, false*,—*false* as the lost angels who fell from paradise into the burning pit of doom.'

"But what am I doing, Gabriella? I did not mean to repeat this. I had become so excited by the remembrance of that terrible scene, I knew not what I was saying. You cannot bear it. I must not go on. What would my mother, what would Dr. Harlowe say, if they knew of this?"

I entreated her to continue. I told her that nothing she had said was half so dreadful as my imagination had depicted, that I grew strong with my need of strength.

"And you and your mother believed him," I said, with astonishing calmness; "you knew not that Richard was my brother."

"Had it not been for your wounded arm," replied Edith, laying her hand gently on the scar, "we should have supposed he was under a strong delusion to believe a lie. Appearances were against you, and your condemnation was my brother's palliation, if not acquittal. My mother continued her supplications, mingled with tears and sighs that seemed to rend the life from her bosom; and I, Gabriella, do you think *I* was silent and passive? I, who would willingly have laid down my life for his? We prevailed,—he yielded,—he left us in the darkness of night,—the darkness of despair. It is more than two months since, and we have received no tidings of the wanderer. My mother urged him to go to New York and remain till he heard the fate of Richard. She has written to him there, again and again, but as yet has received no answer."

"And he went without one farewell look of her whom he deemed so vile,—so lost?" said I, pressing Edith's hand against my cold and sinking heart.

"No, Gabriella. His last act was to kneel by your side, and pray God to forgive you both. Twice he went to the door, then coming back he bent over you as if he would clasp you in his arms; then with a wild ejaculation he turned away. Never saw I such anguish in the human countenance."

"I have but one question more to ask," said I, after a long pause, whose dreariness was that which follows the falling of the clods in the grave hollow. "How did Ernest know that Richard was with me, when we left him alone in the library?"

"Dr. Harlowe accidentally alluded to your father's history before Richard, who, you recollect, was in foreign lands during the excitement it caused, and had never heard the circumstances. As soon as he heard the name of St. James, I saw him start, and turn to the doctor with a flushed and eager countenance. Then he drew him one side, and they conversed together some time in a low undertone; and Richard's face, red one moment and white the next, flashed with strange and shifting emotions. At the time when your father's name obtained such unhappy notoriety, and yours through him, in the public papers, my mother confided to Dr. Harlowe, who was greatly troubled on your account, the particulars of your mother's life. She thought it due to your mother's memory, and his steady friendship. I know not how much he told Richard, whose manner evidently surprised him, but we all noticed that he was greatly agitated; and then he abruptly took leave. He came immediately here, and inquired for you, asked where you were gone, and hurried away as if on an errand of life and death. Ernest, who was passing along the winding gallery, heard him, and followed."

Another dreary pause. Then I remembered Julian, and the love-light that had illumined them both that memorable evening. Edith had not once alluded to her own clouded hopes. She seemed to have forgotten herself in her mother's griefs and mine.

"And Julian, my beloved Edith? There is a future for you, a happy one, is there not?"

"I do not expect happiness," she answered, with a sigh; "but Julian's love will gild the gloom of sorrow, and be the rainbow of my clouded days. He will return in the winter, and then perhaps he will not leave me again. I cannot quit my mother; but he can take a son's place in her desolated home. No garlands of roses will twine round my bridal hours, for they are all withered, all but the rose of Sharon, Gabriella, whose sacred bloom can never fade away. It is the only flower worth cherishing,—the only one without thorns, and without blight."

Softly withdrawing her supporting arms, she suffered me to sink back on the pillow, gave me a reviving cordial, drew the curtains, and taking up a book, seemed absorbed in its contents. I closed my eyes and appeared to sleep, that she might not suppose her narration had banished repose. I had anticipated all she uttered; but the certainty of desolation is different to the agonies of suspense. I could have borne the separation from Ernest; but that he should believe me the false, guilty wretch I had seemed to be, inflicted pangs sharper than the vulture's beak or the arrow's barb. If he had left the country, as there was every reason to suppose he had, with this conviction, he never would return; and the loneliness and dreariness of a widowhood more sad than that which death creates, would settle down darkly and heavily on my young life.

I did not blame him for the rash deed he had wrought, for it was a madman's act. When I recalled the circumstances, I did not wonder at the frantic passion that dyed his hand in blood; and yet I could not blame myself. Had I shrunk from a brother's embrace, I should have been either more or less than woman. I had yielded to a divine impulse, and could appeal to nature and Heaven for

justification.

But I had sinned. I had broken the canons of the living God, and deserved a fearful chastisement. I had made unto myself an idol, and no pagan idolater ever worshipped at his unhallowed shrine with more blind devotion. I had been true to Ernest, but false to my Maker, the one great and *jealous* God. I had lived but for one object, and that object was withdrawn, leaving all creation a blank.

I stood upon the lonely strand, the cold waves beating against my feet, and the bleak winds piercing through my unsheltered heart. I stretched out my arms to the wild waste of waters, in whose billows my life-boat was whelmed, and I called, but there was none to answer. I cried for help, but none came. Then I looked up to heaven, and high above the darkness of the tempest and the gloom of the deep, one star shining in solitary glory arrested my despairing gaze. I had seen it before with the eye of faith, but never beaming with such holy lustre as now, when all other lights were withdrawn.

"Brightest and best of the sons of the morning,
Dawn on my darkness, and lend me thine aid.
Star of the East, the horizon adorning,
Guide where the infant Redeemer is laid."

Why, tender and pitying Saviour, do we wait for the night time of sorrow to fathom the depths of thy love and compassion? Why must every fountain of earthly joy be dried up, before we bow to taste the waters of Kedron; and every blossom of love be withered, before we follow thee to the garden of Gethsemane?

CHAPTER LI.

Though the circumstance of discovering a brother in the lover of my youth seems more like romance than reality, nothing could be more simple and natural than the explanation of the mystery. His recollection did not go back to the period recorded in my mother's manuscript, when he was brought as a lawful heir to the home in which my early infancy was sheltered. His first remembrances were associated with a mother's sorrow and loneliness,—with an humble dwelling in one of the by-lanes of the city of New York, where she toiled with her needle for their daily bread.

"I remember," said Richard, "how I used to sit on a low stool at my mother's feet, and watch her, as she wrought in muslin the most beautiful flowers and devices, with a skill and rapidity which seemed miraculous to me. Young as I was, I used to wonder that any one could look so sad, while producing such charming figures. Once, I recollect, the needle resisted her efforts to draw it through the muslin. She threw it from her, and taking another from the needle-case met with no better success.

"'*Oh! mon Dieu!*' she cried, dropping her work in her lap and clasping her hands, 'my tears rust them.'

"'And why do you let so many fall, mother?' I asked. 'Where do they all come from?'

"'From a breaking heart,' she answered, and I never forgot her looks or her words. The breaking heart became an image in my mind, almost as distinct as the rusted steel. For a long time I was afraid to jump or bound about the room, lest the fracture in my mother's heart should be made wider, and more tears come gushing through.

"But she did not always weep. She taught me to read, while she toiled with her needle, and she told me tales of the genii and of fairy-land, at twilight hour, or as she used to say, '*entre le loup et le chien*,' in her own expressive, idiomatic language. She told me, too, stories from the Bible, before I was able to read them, of Isaac bound on the sacrificial pyre, with his father kneeling by him, ready to plunge the knife in his young heart, when the angels called to him out of heaven to stay his uplifted hand; of Joseph's wondrous history, from his coat of many colors, fatal cause of fraternal jealousy, to the royal robes and golden chain with which Pharaoh invested him; of David, the shepherd-boy, the minstrel monarch, the conqueror of Philistia's giant chief. It was thus she employed the dim hours between the setting sun and the rising stars; but the moment she lighted her lonely lamp she again plied her busy needle, though alas! too often rusted with her tears.

"Thus my early childhood passed,—and every day my heart twined more closely round my mother's heart, and I began to form great plans of future achievements to be wrought for her. I would be a second Joseph and go to some distant land and win fame, and honors, and wealth, and send for her that I might lay them all at her feet. She would not, at first, recognize her boy in the purple and fine linen of his sumptuous attire; but I would fall on her neck, and lift up my voice and weep aloud, and then she would know her child. A mother's tears, Gabriella, nurture great aspirations in a child.

"I used to accompany her to the shop when she carried home her work. It was there she first met the gentleman whose name I bear. Their acquaintance commenced through me, to whom he

seemed peculiarly attracted, and he won my admiring gratitude by the gifts he lavished upon me. He came often to see my mother, and though at first she shrunk from his visits, she gradually came to welcome him as a friend and a benefactor.

"One evening, I think I was about eight or nine years old, she took me in her arms, and told me, with many tears, that Mr. Clyde, the good and kind gentleman whom I loved so much, had offered to be a father to me, and was going to take us both to a pleasant home in the country, where I could run about in the green fields, and be free as the birds of the air. She told me that perhaps my own father was living, but that he had left her so long their union was annulled by law, and that she had a right to marry another, and that she did so that I might have a father and protector. She explained this simply, so that I understood it all, and I understood too why she wished me to drop my own name and take that of her future husband. It was associated with so much sorrow and wrong, it was painful to her ear, and Mr. Clyde wished me to adopt his own. He was a good and honorable man, and I cherish his memory with reverence and gratitude. If the fissure in my mother's heart was not healed, it closed, and tears no longer dripped through.

"Our country home was pleasant and comfortable, and I revelled in the delights of nature, with all the wild passion of a bird let loose from the imprisoning cage. I went to school,—I was in the world of action,—the energies of incipient manhood awoke and struggled in my bosom. We remained about two years in this rural residence, situated in the western part of New York, when Mr. Clyde was called to attend a dying father, who lived in this town, Gabriella, not very far from the little cottage in the woods where I first knew you. He took my mother and myself with him, for she was in feeble health, and he thought the journey would invigorate her. It did not. A child of sunny France, she languished under the bleaker New England skies. She was never able to return; and he who came to bury a father, soon laid a beloved wife by the side of the aged. My heart went down to the grave with her, and it was long before its resurrection. My step-father was completely crushed by the blow, for he loved her as such a woman deserved to be loved, and mourned as few mourn. He remained with his aged mother in the old homestead, which she refused to leave, and I was placed in the academy under the charge of Mr. Regulus, where I first knew and loved you, my own sister, my darling, beloved Gabriella."

If I had loved Richard before, how much more did I love him now, after hearing his simple and affecting history, so similar to my own. As I had never loved him otherwise than as a brother, the revelation which had caused such a terrible revulsion in his feelings was a sacred sanction to mine. His nerves still vibrated from the shock, and he could not pronounce the word sister without a tremulousness of voice which betrayed internal agitation.

He had but little more to relate. His step-father was dead, and as there was found to be a heavy mortgage on his estate, he was left with a moderate income, sufficient to give him an education and a start in life. His expenses in Europe had been defrayed by some liberal gentlemen, who still considered themselves the guardians of his reputation and his fortunes.

It was painful to me to tell the story of our father's crimes, of which he had heard but a slight outline. When I described our interview in the Park, he knit his brows over his flashing eyes, and his whole frame quivered with emotion.

"My poor sister! what a dreadful scene for you. What have you not suffered! but you shall never know another sorrow from which I can shield you, another wrong from which I can defend."

"O Richard! when I think of him in his lonely dungeon, alone with remorse and horror; when I think of my mother's dying injunctions, I feel as if I must go to him, and fulfil the holy mission she bade me perform. Read her manuscript; you have a right to its contents, though they will rend your heart to peruse them; take it with you to your own room, when you go, for I cannot look on and see you read words that have been driven like burning arrows through my soul."

When I again met Richard, I could see in his bloodshot eyes what thoughts were bleeding within.

"My mother left me the same awful legacy," said he. "She left her forgiveness, if he lived; oblivion of all her wrongs, if dead. Oh! what bolt of vengeance is red enough for the wretch who could destroy the happiness of two such women as your mother and mine! All-righteous Providence, may thy retributive fires—"

"Stop! stop!" I cried, throwing my arms round him, and arresting his fearful words, "he is our father, you must not curse him. By our mothers' ashes, by their angels, now perhaps hovering over us, forbear, my brother, forbear."

"God help me," he exclaimed, his lips turning to an ashy paleness, "I did not know what I was about to say; but is it not enough to drive one mad, to think of the fountain of one's life being polluted, poisoned, and accursed?"

"One drop of the Saviour's blood can cleanse and make it pure, my brother, if he were only led to the foot of the cross."

Richard's countenance changed; a crimson flush swept over his face, and then left it colorless.

"My hand is not worthy to lead him there," he cried, "and if it were, I fear there is no mercy for so hardened, so inveterate a transgressor."

"There *is*, Richard, there *is*. Let the expiring thief bear witness to a Saviour's illimitable love. Oh! it is sinful to set bounds to God's immeasurable mercy. Let us go together, my brother. My

mother's dream may yet be realized. Who knows but our weak, filial hands, may lift our unhappy father from the black abyss of sin and impenitence, Almighty God assisting us? If heavenly blessings are promised to him who turns a soul from the error of his ways, think, Richard, how divine the joy, if it be an erring parent's soul, thus reclaimed and brought home to God? Let us go, as soon as we have strength to commence the journey. I cannot remain here, where every thing reminds me of my blighted hopes and ruined happiness. It seems so like a grave, Richard."

"I wonder you do not hate. I wonder you do not curse me," exclaimed he, with sudden vehemence, "for it is my rashness that has wrought this desolation. Dearly have you purchased a most unworthy brother. Would I had never claimed you, Gabriella; never rolled down such a dark cloud on your heart and home."

"Say not so, my beloved brother. The cloud was on my heart already, and you have scarcely made it darker or more chilling. I feel as if I had been living amid the thunderstorms of tropic regions, where even in sunshine electric fires are flashing. Before this shock came, my soul was sick and weary of the conflicts of wild and warring passions. Oh! you know not how often I have sighed for a brother's heart to lean upon, even when wedded joys were brightest,—how much more must I prize the blessing now! Surely never brother and sister had more to bind them to each other, than you and I, Richard. Suffering and sorrow, life's holiest sacraments, have hallowed and strengthened the ties of nature."

It was not long before we were able to ride abroad with Mrs. Linwood and Edith, and it was astonishing how rapidly we advanced in restoration to health. I could perceive that we were objects of intense interest and curiosity, from the keen and eager glances that greeted us on every side; for the fearful tragedy of which I had been the heroine, had cast a shadow over the town and its surroundings. Its rumor had swept beyond the blue hills, and Grandison Place was looked upon as the theatre of a dark and bloody drama. This was all natural. Seldom is the history of every-day life marked by events as romantic and thrilling as those compressed in my brief experience of eighteen years. And of all the deep, vehement passions, whose exhibition excites the popular mind, there is none that takes such strong hold as jealousy, the terrible hydra of the human heart.

I believe I was generally beloved, and that a deep feeling of sympathy for my misfortunes pervaded the community, for I had never been elated by prosperity; but Ernest, whose exclusiveness and reserve was deemed haughtiness, was far from being popular. Mrs. Linwood was revered by all, and blessed as the benefactress of the poor and the comforter of the afflicted; but she was lifted by fortune above the social level of the community, and few, very few were on terms of intimacy with the inmates of the Granite Castle, as Grandison Place was often called. Its massy stone walls, its turreted roof, sweeping lawn, and elevated position, seemed emblematic of the aristocracy of its owners; and though the blessings of the lower classes, and the respect and reverence of the higher, rested upon it, there was a mediocral one, such as is found in every community, that looked with envy on those, whose characters they could not appreciate, because they were lifted so high above their own level.

I have spoken of Dr. Harlowe and Mr. Regulus as the most valued friends of the family; but there was one whom it would be ungrateful in me to omit, and whose pure and sacred traits came forth in the dark hours through which I had just passed, like those worlds of light which *are never seen by day*. I allude to Mr. Somerville, the pastor of the parish, and who might truly be called a man of God. The aged minister, who had presided over the church during my mother's life, had been gathered to his fathers, and his name was treasured, a golden sheaf, in the garner of memory. The successor, who had to walk in the holy footprints he had left in the valley, was obliged to take heed to his steps and to shake the dust of earth from his sandals as he went along. In our day of sunshine he had stood somewhat aloof, for he felt his mission was to the poor and lowly, to the sons and daughters of want and affliction; but as soon as sickness and sorrow darkened the household, he came with lips distilling balm, and hands ready to pour oil on the bruised and wounded heart.

Methinks I see him now, as when he knelt by my bedside, after I aroused from my long and deadly trance. No outward graces adorned his person, but the beauty of holiness was on his brow, and its low, sweet music in his somewhat feeble accents. It seemed to me as if an angel were pleading for me, and my soul, emerging as it were from the cold waves of oblivion, thrilled with new-born life. Had my spirit been nearer to God during its unconscious wanderings, and brought back with it impressions of celestial glory never conceived before? I know not; but I know that a change had passed over it, and that I felt the reality of that eternity, which had seemed before a grand and ever-receding shadow.

Every day, during Richard's illness and mine, came our good and beloved pastor, and he always left a track of light behind him. I always felt nearer heaven when he departed than when he came, for its kingdom was within him.

To him I confided my wish to accompany my brother on his filial mission, and he warmly approved it.

"As surely as I believe the Lord has put it into your heart to go," said he, "do I believe that a blessing will follow you."

Mrs. Linwood was more tardy in her sanction.

"My dear child," she said, looking at me with the tenderest compassion, "you do not know what is

before you. What will you do in that great city without female friendship and sympathy? You and Richard, both so young and inexperienced in the ways of the world. I will not, however, put any obstacle in his path, for man may go unshrinking where woman may not tread. But you, my Gabriella, must remain with me."

"Here, where the phantom of Ernest haunts my every step, where the echo of his voice is heard in every gale, and the shadow of departed joy comes between me and the sunshine of heaven? What can I do here but remind you by my presence of him, whom I have banished for ever from your arms? Let me go, my own dear mother, for I cannot remain passive here. I shall not want female sympathy and guardianship, for Mrs. Brahan is all that is kind and tender, and knows enough of my sad history to be entitled to unbounded confidence. I will write to her, and be guided by her, as if she were another Mrs. Linwood."

She yielded at last, and so did Dr. Harlowe, who cheered me by his cordial approval. He said it was the best thing I could do for myself; for change of scene, and a strong motive of action, might save me from becoming a confirmed invalid. Edith wept, but made no opposition. She believed I was in the path of duty, and that it would be made smooth beneath my feet.

No tidings from Ernest came to interrupt the dreary blank of his absence,—the same continuity of anxiety and uncertainty stretching on into a hopeless futurity. Again and again I said to myself—

"Better so a thousand times, than to live as I have done, scathed by the lightning of jealousy. Even if he returned, I could not, with the fear of God now before me, renew our unblest wedlock. The hand of violence has sundered us, and my heart fibres must ever bleed from the wrench, but they will not again intwine. He has torn himself ruthlessly from me; and the shattered vine, rent from its stay, is beginning to cling to the pillars of God's temple. It is for *him* I pray, for *him* I mourn, rather than myself. It is for his happiness, rather than my own justification, that I desire him to know the history of my innocence. I am willing to drink the cup of humiliation even to the dregs, if it may not pass from me; but spare him, O Heavenly Father, the bitter, bitter chalice."

It was a bleak morning in early winter, that we commenced our journey to that city, where little more than a year ago I had gone a young and happy bride. As we rode along the winding avenue, I looked out on the dry russet lawn, the majestic skeleton of the great elm, stripped of the foliage and hues of life, and saw the naked branches of the oaks clinging to each other in sad fraternity, and heard the wind whistling through them as through the shrouds of a vessel. With an involuntary shiver I drew nearer to Richard, and hid my face from the prophetic desolation of nature.

CHAPTER LII.

On our arrival in New York, we stopped at the —— hotel till private lodgings could be obtained. We both wished to be as retired as possible from public observation, and for this purpose I remained in my room, where Richard, as my brother, had the privilege of visiting me. I was anxious he should go immediately to Mr. Brahan's; for, added to my desire to be under the influence of her feminine regard, I cherished a faint hope that through him I might learn something of Ernest's mysterious exile.

They both returned with Richard; and while Mr. Brahan remained with him below, she came to my chamber, and welcomed me with a warmth and tenderness that melted, while it cheered.

"You must not stay here one hour longer," said she, pressing one hand in hers, while she laid the other caressingly on my short, curling hair. "You must go with me, and feel as much at home as with your own Mrs. Linwood. I pass a great many lonely hours, while my husband is absent engaged in business; and it will be a personal favor to me. Indeed, you must not refuse."

I said something about leaving my brother, while I expressed my gratitude for her kindness.

"Mr. Brahan will arrange that," she said; "you may be assured he shall be cared for. You have not unpacked your trunk; and here is your bonnet and mantilla ready to be resumed. You did not think I would suffer you to remain among strangers, when my heart has been yearning to meet you for weary months?"

With gentle earnestness she overcame all my scruples; and it was but a little time before I found myself established as a guest in the house where I first beheld the light of existence. How strange it seemed, that the children of the two betrayed and injured beings who had been made exiles from that roof, should be received beneath its shelter after the lapse of so many years!

Mrs. Brahan accompanied me to the chamber prepared for my reception; and had I been her own daughter she could not have lavished upon me more affectionate cares. The picture of my mother, which I had returned when we left the city, was hanging on the wall; and the eyes and lips of heavenly sweetness seemed to welcome her sad descendant to the home of her infancy. As I stood gazing upon it with mingled grief and adoration, Mrs. Brahan encircled me with her arm, and told me she understood now the history of that picture, and the mystery of its wonderful resemblance to me. I had not seen her since the notoriety my name had acquired, in consequence of the diamonds and my father's arrest; and she knew me now as the daughter of that unhappy man. Did she know the circumstances of the discovery of my brother, and my husband's flight? I

dared not ask; but I read so much sympathy and compassion in her countenance, and so much tenderness in her manners, I thought she had fathomed the depth of my sorrows.

"You look like a girl of fifteen," she said, passing her fingers through my carelessly waving locks. "Your hair was very beautiful, but I can scarcely regret its loss."

"I may look more juvenile,—I believe I do, for every one tells me so; but the youth and bloom of my heart are gone for ever."

"For ever from the lips of the young, and from those more advanced in life, mean very different things," answered Mrs. Brahan. "I have no doubt you have happier hours in store, and you will look back to these as morning shadows melting off in the brightening sunshine."

"Do you know all that has happened, dear Mrs. Brahan, since I left your city?"

"The rumor of the distressing circumstances which attended the discovery of your brother reached us even here, and our hearts bled for you. But all will yet be well. The terrible shock you have sustained will be a death blow to the passion that has caused you so much misery. Forgive me, if I make painful allusions; but I cannot suffer you to sink into the gloom of despondency."

"I try to look upward. I do think the hopes which have no home on earth, have found rest in heaven."

"But why, my dear young friend, do you close your heart to earthly hope? Surely, when your husband returns, you may anticipate a joyful reunion."

"When he returns! Alas! his will be a life-long exile. Believing what he does, he will never, never return."

"But you have written and explained every thing?"

"How can I write,—when I know not where to direct, when I know not to what region he has wandered, or what resting-place he has found?"

"But Mr. Harland!" said she, with a look of troubled surprise. "You might learn through him?"

"Mrs. Linwood has written repeatedly to Mr. Harland, and received no answer. She concluded that he had left the city, but knew not how to ascertain his address."

"Then you did not know that he had gone to India? I thought,—I believed,—is it possible that you are not aware"—

"Of what?" I exclaimed, catching hold of her arm, for my brain reeled and my sight darkened.

"That Mr. Linwood accompanied him," she answered, turning pale at the agitation her words excited. To India! that distant, deadly clime! To India, without one farewell, one parting token to her whom he left apparently on the brink of the grave!

By the unutterable anguish of that moment, I knew the delusion that had veiled my motives. I had thought it was only to reclaim a lost parent that I had come, but I found it was the hope of meeting the deluded wanderer, more than filial piety, that had urged my departure.

"To India!" I cried, and my spirit felt the tossings of the wild billows that lay rolling between. "Then we are indeed parted,—parted for ever!"

"Why, t'is but a step from ocean to ocean, from clime to clime," she said in kind, assuring accents. "Men think nothing of such a voyage, for science has furnished wings which bear them over space with the speed of an eagle. If you knew not his destination, I should think you would rejoice rather than mourn, to be relieved of the torture of suspense. Had I known that you were ignorant of the fact, I should have written months ago."

"Is it certain that he is gone?" I asked. "Did you see him? Did Mr. Brahan? How did you learn, what we have vainly sought to know?"

"Mr. Brahan had business with Mr. Harland, and having neglected some important items, followed him on board the ship in which he embarked. It was at night, and he remained but a short time; but he caught a glimpse of your husband, whom he immediately recognized, but who gave him no opportunity of speaking to him. Knowing he was a friend of Mr. Harland's, he supposed he had come on board to bid him farewell, though he was not aware of his being in the city. When we heard the rumor of the tragic scenes in which he acted so dread a part, and connected it with the time of Mr. Harland's departure, Mr. Brahan recalled Mr. Linwood's unexpected appearance in the ship, and the mystery was explained. But we dreamed not that his departure was unknown to you. If you had only written to us!"

It was strange that I had never thought of the possibility of their knowing any thing connected with Ernest. Mr. Harland was the only gentleman with whom he was on terms of intimacy, the only one to whom we thought of applying in the extremity of anxiety.

"Has the ship been heard from? What was its name?" I asked, unconscious of the folly of my first question.

"Not yet. It was called the 'Star of the East.' A beautiful and hope-inspiring name. Mr. Brahan can give you Mr. Harland's address. You can write to your husband through him. Every thing is as

clear as noonday. Do you not already inhale the fragrance of the opening flowers of joy?"

I tried to smile, but I fear it was a woful attempt. Even the scent of the roses had been crushed out of my heart.

"Your brother is an exceedingly interesting young man," she observed, perceiving that I could not speak without painful agitation of Ernest. "I have never seen a stranger who won my regard so instantaneously."

"Dear Richard!" I cried, "he is all that he seems, and far more. The noblest, kindest, and best. How sad that such a cloud darkens his young manhood!"

"It will serve as a background to his filial virtues and bring them out in bright and beautiful relief. I admire, I honor him a thousand times more than if he were the heir of an unspotted name, a glorious ancestry. A father's crimes cannot reflect shame on a son so pure and upright. Besides, he bears another name, and the world knows not his clouded lineage."

My heart warmed at her generous praises of Richard, who was every day more and more endeared to my affections. Where was he now? Had he commenced his mission, and gone to the gloomy cell where his father was imprisoned? He did not wish me to accompany him the first time. What a meeting it must be! He had never consciously beheld his father. The father had no knowledge of his deserted son. In the dungeon's gloom, the living grave of hope, joy, and fame, the recognition would take place. With what feelings would the poor, blasted criminal behold the noble boy, on whom he had never bestowed one parental care, coming like an angel, if not to unbar his prison doors, to unlock for him the golden gates of heaven!

I was too weary for my journey, too much exhausted from agitation to wait for Richard's return, but I could not lay my head on the pillow before writing to Mrs. Linwood and Edith, and telling them the tidings I had learned of the beloved exile. And now the first stormy emotions had subsided, gratitude, deep and holy gratitude, triumphed over every other feeling. Far, far away as he was, he was with a friend; he was in all human probability safe, and he could learn in time how deeply he had wronged me.

Often, on bended knees, with weeping eyes and rending sighs had I breathed this prayer,—"Only let him know that I am still worthy of his love, and I am willing to resign it,—let me be justified in his sight, and I am willing to devote my future life to *Thee*."

The path was opening, the way clearing, and my faith and resignation about to be proved. I recognized the divine arrangement of Providence in the apparently accidental circumstances of my life, and my soul vindicated the justice as well as adored the mercy of the Most High.

A voice seemed whispering in my ear, "O thou afflicted and tossed with tempests! there is a haven where thy weary bark shall find rest. I, who once bore the burden of life, know its sorrows and temptations, its wormwood and its gall. I bore the infirmities of man, that I might pity and forgive; I bore the crown of thorns, that thou mightest wear the roses of Paradise; I drained the dregs of human agony, that thou mightest drink the wine of immortality. Is not my love passing the love of man, and worth the sacrifice of earth's fleeting joys?"

As the heavenly accents seemed to die away, like a strain of sweet, low harmony, came murmuring the holy refrain—

> "Star of the East, the horizon adorning,
> Guide where the infant Redeemer is laid."

CHAPTER LIII.

Richard had visited the Tombs, but had not seen his father. The sight, the air, the ponderous gloom of the awful prison-house, was as much as he had fortitude to bear; and though he had at first thought preferred meeting him in the shadows of night, he recoiled from its additional horrors.

Poor fellow! I felt heart-sick for him. On one side the memory of his mother's wrongs,—on the other, his father's sufferings and disgrace. I knew by my own bitter experience the conflict he was enduring.

"After we have once met," he said, "the bitterest pang will be over."

When he returned, I was shocked at the suffering his countenance expressed. I sat down by him in silence, and took his hand in mine, for I saw that his heart was full.

"I cannot take you *there*, Gabriella," were the first words he uttered. "If my nerves are all unstrung, how will yours sustain the shock? He told me not to bring you, that your presence would only aggravate his sufferings."

"Did I not come to share your duties, Richard? and will it not be easier to go hand in hand, though we do tread a thorny path? I have heard of women who devote their whole lives to visiting the dungeons of the doomed, and pouring oil and balm into the wounds of penitence and

remorse; women who know nothing of the prisoner, but that he is a sinful and suffering son of Adam,—angels of compassion, following with lowly hearts the footsteps of their divine Master. O my brother, think me not so weak and selfish. I will convince you that I have fortitude, though you believe it not. Dr. Harlowe thinks I have a great deal. But, Richard, is it too painful to speak of the interview you so much dreaded? Does *he* look more wretched than you feared?"

"Look, Gabriella! Oh, he is a wreck, a melancholy wreck of a once noble man. Worn, haggard, gloomy, and despairing, he is the very personification of a sin-blasted being, a lost, ruined spirit. I had prepared myself for something mournful and degraded, but not for such a sight as this. O what an awful thing it is to give oneself up to the dominion of evil, till one seems to live, and move, and have their being in it! How awful to be consumed by slow, baleful fires, till nothing but smouldering ashes and smoking cinders are left! My God! Gabriella, I never realized before what *accursed* meant."

He started up, and walked up and down the room, just as Ernest used to do, unable to control the vehemence of his emotions.

"Father!" he exclaimed, "how I could have loved, revered, adored my father, had he been what my youthful heart has so panted to embrace. I loved my mother,—Heaven knows I did; but there always seemed majesty as well as beauty in the name of father, and I longed to reverence, as well as to love. Mr. Clyde was a good man, and I honored him; he was my benefactor, and I was grateful to him,—but he wanted the intellectual grandeur, to which my soul longed to pay homage. I was always forming an image in my own mind of what a father should be,—pure, upright, and commanding,—a being to whom I could look up as to an earthly divinity, who could satisfy the wants of my venerating nature."

"It is thus I have done," I cried, struck by the peculiar sympathy of our feelings. "In the dreams of my childhood, a vague but glorious form reigned with the sovereignty of a king and the sanctity of a high-priest, and imagination offered daily incense at its throne. Never, till I read my mother's history, was the illusion dispelled. But how did he welcome you, Richard? Surely he was glad and proud to find a son in you."

"He is no longer capable of pride or joy. He is burnt out, as it were. But he did at last show some emotion, when made to believe that I was the son of Therésa." His hand trembled, and his hard, sunken eye momentarily softened. "Did you come here to mock and upbraid me?" he cried, concealing his sensibility under a kind of fierce sullenness. "What wrong have I done you? I deserted you, it is true, but I saved you from the influence of my accursed example, which might have dragged you to the burning jaws of hell. Go, and leave me to my doom. Leave me in the living grave my own unhallowed hands have dug. I want no sympathy, no companionship,—and least of all, yours. Every time I look on you, I feel as if coals of fire were eating in my heart."

"Remorse, Richard," I exclaimed, "remorse! Oh! he feels. Our ministrations will not be in vain. Did you tell him that I was with you, that I came to comfort and to do him good?"

"I did; but he bade me tell you, that if he wanted comfort, it could not come through you,—that he would far rather his tortures were increased than diminished, that he might, he said, become inured to sufferings, which would continue as long as Almighty vengeance could inflict and immortality endure. My dear sister, I ought not to repeat such things, but the words ring in my ears like a funeral knell."

"Let us not speak of him any more at present," he added, reseating himself at my side, and he took my hand and pressed it on his throbbing temples. "There is sweetness in a sister's sympathy, balm in her gentle touch."

Mrs. Brahan, who had considerately left us alone, soon entered, saying it was luncheon time, and that a glass of wine would do us all good. Mr. Brahan followed her, whose intelligent and animated conversation drew our minds from the subjects that engrossed our thoughts. It was well for me that I had an opportunity of becoming so intimately acquainted with a married pair like Mr. and Mrs. Brahan. It convinced me that the most perfect confidence was compatible with the fondest love, and that the purest happiness earth is capable of imparting, is found in the union of two constant, trusting hearts.

"We have been married seventeen years," said Mrs. Brahan, in a glow of grateful affection, "and I have never seen a cloud of distrust on my husband's brow. We have had cares,—as who has not,—but they have only made us more dear to each, other, by calling forth mutual tenderness and sympathy. Ours was not one of those romantic attachments which partake of the wildness of insanity, but a serene, steady flame, that burns brighter and brighter as life rolls on."

She spoke out of the abundance of her heart, without meaning to contrast her own bright lot with mine, but I could not help envying her this unclouded sunshine of love. I tried to rejoice with her, without sighing for my own darker destiny; but there is an alloy of selfishness in the purest gold of our natures. At least, there is in mine.

There was another happy pair,—Mr. Regulus and his wild Madge. A letter from her, forwarded by Mrs. Linwood soon after our arrival in New York, breathed, in her own characteristic language, the most perfect felicity, mingled with heart-felt sympathy and affection. Their bridal hours were saddened by my misfortunes; and they were compelled to leave me when I was unconscious of their departure. Margaret was delighted with every thing around and about her,—the place, the people, and most of all her husband; though, in imitation of the Swedish wife, she called him her

bear, her buffalo, and mastadon. The exuberant energies of her character, that had been rioting in all their native wildness, had now a noble framework to grasp round, and would in time form a beautiful domestic bower, beneath whose shade all household joys and graces would bloom and multiply.

I have anticipated the reception of this letter, but I feared I might forget to mention it. It is delightful to see a fine character gradually wrought out of seemingly rough and unpromising elements. It is beautiful to witness the triumph of pure, disinterested affection in the heart of woman. It is sweet to know that the angel of wedded love scatters thornless flowers in some happy homes,—that there are some thresholds not sprinkled by blood, but guarded by confidence, which the *destroying demon* of the household is not permitted to pass over.

I do not like to turn back to myself, lest they who follow me should find the path too shadowy and thorny. But is it not said that they who go forth weeping, bearing precious seed, shall come again rejoicing, bending under the weight of golden sheaves?

I wrote to Ernest for the first time, for we had never been parted before. Again and again I commenced, and threw down the pen in despair. My heart seemed locked, closed as with Bastile bars. What words of mine could pierce through the cloud of infamy in which his remembrance wrapped me? He would not believe my strange, improbable tale. He would cast it from him as a device of the evil spirit, and brand me with a deeper curse. No! if he was so willing to cast me off, to leave me so coldly and cruelly, without one farewell line, one wish to know whether I were living or dead, let him be. Why should I intrude my vindication on him, when he cared not to hear it? He had no right to believe me guilty. Had a winged spirit from another sphere come and told me that *he* was false, I would have spurned the accusation, and clung to him more closely and more confidingly.

"But you knew his infirmity," whispered accusing conscience, "even before you loved him; and have you not seen him writhing at your feet in agonies of remorse, for the indulgence of passions more torturing to himself than to you! It is you who have driven him from country and home, innocently, it is true, but he is not less a wanderer and an exile. Write and tell him the simple, holy truth, then folding your hands meekly over your heart, leave the result to the disposal of the God of futurity."

Then words came like water rushing through breaking ice. They came without effort or volition, and I knew not what they were till I saw them looking at me from the paper, like my own image reflected in a glass. Had I been writing a page for the book of God's remembrance, it could not have been more nakedly true. I do believe there is inspiration now given to the spirit in the extremity of its need, and that we often speak and write as if moved by the Holy Ghost, and language comes to us in a Pentecostal shower, burning with heaven's fire, and tongues of flame are put in our mouth, and our spirits move as with the wings of a mighty wind.

I recollect the closing sentence of the letter. I knew it contained my fate; and yet I felt that I had not the power to change it.

"Come back to your country, your mother, and Edith. I do not bid you come back to me, for it seems that the distance that separates us is too immeasurable to be overcome. I remember telling you, when the midnight moon was shining upon us in the solitude of our chamber, that I saw as in a vision a frightful abyss opening between us, and I stood on one icy brink and you on the other, and I saw you receding further and further from me, and my arms vainly sought to reach over the cold chasm, and my own voice came back to me in mournful echoes. That vision is realized. Our hearts can never again meet till that gulf is closed, and confidence firm as a rock makes a bridge for our souls.

"I have loved you as man never should be loved, and that love can never pass away. But from the deathlike trance in which you left me, my spirit has risen with holier views of life and its duties. An union, so desolated by storms of passion as ours has been, must be sinful and unhallowed in the sight of God. It has been severed by the hand of violence, and never, with my consent, will be renewed, unless we can make a new covenant, to which the bow of heaven's peace shall be an everlasting sign; till passion shall be exalted by esteem, love sustained by confidence, and religion pure and undefiled be the sovereign principle of our lives."

CHAPTER LIV.

The Tombs!—shall I ever forget my first visit to that dismal abode of crime, woe, and despair?—never!

I had nerved myself for the trial, and went with the spirit of a martyr, though with blanched cheek and faltering step, into the heart of that frowning pile, on which I could never gaze without shuddering.

Clinging to the arm of Richard, I felt myself borne along through cold and dreary walls, that seemed to my startled ear echoing with sighs and groans and curses, upward through dark galleries, and passed ponderous iron doors that reminded me of Milton's description of the gates of hell, till the prison officer who preceded us paused before one of those grim portals, and

inserting a massy key, a heavy grating sound scraped and lacerated my ear.

"Wait one moment," I gasped, leaning almost powerless on the shoulder of Richard.

"I feared so," said he, passing his arm around me, his eyes expressing the most intense sensibility. "I knew you could not bear it. Let us return,—I was wrong to permit your coming in the first place."

"No, no,—I am able to go in now,—the shock is over,—I am quite strong now."

And raising my head, I drew a quick, painful breath, passed through the iron door into the narrow cell, where the gloom of eternal twilight darkly hung.

At first I could not distinguish the objects within, for a mist was over my sight, which deepened the shadows of the dungeon walls. But as my eye became accustomed to the dimness, I saw a tall, emaciated figure rising from the bed, which nearly filled the limited space which inclosed us. A narrow aperture in the deep, massy stone, admitted all the light which illumined us after the iron door slowly closed.

The dark, sunken eyes of the prisoner gleamed like the flash of an expiring taper, wild and fitful, on our entering forms. He was dreadfully altered,—I should scarcely have recognized him through the gloomy shade of his long-neglected hair, and thick, unshorn beard.

"Father," said Richard, trying to speak in a cheerful tone, "I have brought you a comforter. A daughter's presence must be more soothing than a son's."

I held out my hand as Richard spoke, and he took it as if it were marble. No tenderness softened his countenance,—he rather seemed to recoil from me than to welcome. I noticed a great difference in his reception of Richard. He grasped his hand, and perused his features as if he could not withdraw his gaze.

"Are you indeed my son?" he asked, in an unsteady tone. "Do you not mock me? Tell me once more, are you Therésa's child?"

"As surely as I believe her an angel in heaven, I am."

"Yes,—yes, you have her brow and smile; but why have you come to me again, when I commanded you to stay away? And why have you brought this pale girl here, when she loathes me as an incarnate fiend?"

"No,—no," I exclaimed, sinking down on the foot of the bed, in hopelessness of spirit, "I pity, forgive, pray for you, weep for you."

"I want neither pity, forgiveness, nor prayers," he sullenly answered. "I want nothing but freedom, and that you cannot give. Go back to your husband, and tell him I curse him for the riches that tempted me, and you for the jewels that betrayed. You might have given me gold instead of diamonds, and then I would have been safe from the hell-hounds of law. Curse on the sordid fear"—

"Stop," cried Richard, seizing the arm he had raised in imprecation, and fixing on him an eye of stem command. "You shall not wound her ears with such foul blasphemy. Utter another word of reproach to her, and I will leave you for ever to the doom you merit. Is this the return you make for her filial devotion? Betrayer of her mother, robber of her husband, coward as well as villain, how dare you blast her with your impious curse?"

Richard forgot at that moment he was speaking to a father, in the intensity of his indignation and scorn. His eye burned, his lip quivered, he looked as if he could have hurled him against the granite walls.

St. James quailed and writhed out of his grasp. His face turned the hue of ashes, and he staggered back like a drunken man.

"I did not mean to curse her," he cried. "I am mad half the time, and know not what I say. Who would not be mad, cut off from communion with their kind, in such a den as this, with fiends whispering, and devils tempting, and know that it is not for a day, a week, a month, nor even a year; but for ten long years! And what will life be then, supposing I drag out its hated length through imprisonment, and horror, and despair? What is it now? A worn shred, a shivelled scroll, a blasted remnant of humanity!"

He sat down again on the side of the bed, and leaning forward, bent his face downward and buried it in his hands. Groans, that seemed to tear his breast as they forced their passage, burst spasmodically from his lips. Oh! if that travailing soul, travailing in sin and sorrow, would cast itself on the bosom of Divine Mercy, would prostrate itself at the foot of the cross, till the scarlet dye of crime was washed white in a Saviour's blood! What were ten years of imprisonment and anguish, to eternal ages burning with the unquenchable fires of remorse!

"O father!" I cried, moved by an irresistible impulse, and approaching him with trembling steps, "these prison walls may become the house of God, the gate of heaven, dark and dismal as they are. The Saviour will come and dwell with you, if you only look up to him in penitence and faith; and he will make them blissful with his presence. He went into the den of lions. He walked through the fiery furnace. He can rend these iron doors and give you the glorious liberty of the children of God. If I could only speak as I feel, if I only knew how to convince and persuade;—but

alas! my tongue is weak, my words are cold. Richard will you not help me?"

"If he will not listen to you, Gabriella, he would not be persuaded though an angel spoke."

"Why do you care about my soul?" asked the prisoner, lifting his head from his knees, and rolling his bloodshot eyes upon me.

"Because you are my father," I answered,—overcoming my trepidation, and speaking with fervor and energy,—"because my mother prayed for you, and my Saviour died for you."

"Your mother!" he exclaimed; "who was she, that she should pray for me?"

"My mother!" I repeated, fearing his mind was becoming unsettled; "if you have forgotten her, I do not wish to recall her."

"I remember now,—her name was Rosalie," he said, and a strange expression passed over his countenance. "I was thinking of my poor Therésa."

He looked at Richard as he spoke, and something like parental tenderness softened his features. Degraded as he was, unworthy as it seemed he must ever have been of woman's love, I could not help a pang of exquisite pain at the thought of my mother's being forgotten, while Therésa was remembered with apparent tenderness. When I met him in the Park, he expressed exceeding love for me for her sake,—he spoke of her as the beloved of his youth, as the being whose loss had driven him to desperation and made him the wretch and outcast he was. And now, no chord of remembrance vibrated at her name, no ray of fondness for her child played upon the sacrifice I was offering. It was a sordid deception then,—his pretended tenderness,—to gain access to my husband's gold; and I turned, heart-sick and loathing away. As I did so, I caught a glimpse of a book that looked like the Bible on a little table, between the bed and the wall. With an involuntary motion I reached forward and opened it.

"I am so glad," I cried, looking at Richard. "I wanted to bring one; but I thought I would ask permission."

"Yes," exclaimed St. James, with a ghastly smile, "we all have Bibles, I believe. Like the priest's blessing, they cost nothing."

"But you read it, father!" said Richard, anxiously. "You cannot fail to find light and comfort in it. You cannot be altogether lonely with such a companion."

"What is the use of reading what one cannot understand?" cried he, in a gloomy tone. "Your mother was a Catholic. She did not read the Bible, and if there is a heaven above, it was made for such as she."

"My mother *did* read her Bible," answered Richard, with solemnity. "She taught me to read it, making a table of her knees, while her hands toiled for our subsistence. It was a lamp to her path, a balm to her sorrows. She lived according to its precepts. She died, believing in its promises."

The glistening eyes of Richard seemed to magnetize his father, so earnest, so steadfast was his gaze.

"Have you *her* Bible?" he asked, in a husky voice.

"I have; it was her dying gift."

"Bring it, and read to me the chapters she loved best. Perhaps—who knows? Great God! I was once a praying child at my mother's knee."

Richard grasped his father's hand with a strong emotion,

"I will bring it, father. We will read it together, and her spirit will breathe into our hearts. The pages are marked by her pencil, blistered by her tears."

"Yes, bring it!" he repeated. "Who knows? Just heaven!—who knows?"

Who, indeed, did know what influence that book, embalmed in such sacred memories, might have on the sinner's blasted heart? The fierceness and sullenness that had repelled and terrified me on our first entrance had passed away, and sensibility roused from an awful paralysis, started at the ruins it beheld. There was hope, since he could feel. Richard's filial mission might not be in vain. But *mine* was. I realized this before I left the cell, and resolved to yield to him the task which I had hoped to share. I could not help feeling grieved and disappointed, not so much on my own account, as for the indifference manifested to my mother's memory,—that mother who had loved him, even to her dying hour.

My heart hardened against him; but when I rose to go, and looked round on the narrow and dismal tomb in which he was inclosed, and then on his hollow cheek and wasted frame, and thought in all human probability those walls would prove his grave, it melted with the tenderest compassion.

"Is there any thing I can do for your comfort?" I asked, trying in vain to keep back the rushing tears. "Can I send you any thing to do you good? If you wish to see me again, tell Richard, and I will come; but I do not wish to be in the way. He, I see, can do every thing I could do, and far more. I thought a daughter could draw so near a father's heart!"

I stopped, choked with emotion which seemed contagious, for Richard turned aside and took up his handkerchief, which had dropped upon the bed. St. James was agitated. He gave the hand which I extended a spasmodic pressure, and looked from me to Richard, and then back again, with a peculiar, hesitating expression.

"Forgive me," said he, in a gentler accent than I had yet heard him use, "my harsh, fierce words; as I told you, it was a demon's utterance, not mine. You would have saved me, I know you would. I made you unhappy, and plunged into perdition myself. No, you had better not come again. You are too lovely, too tender for this grim place. My boy will come; and you, you, my child, may pray for me, if you do not think it mockery to ask God to pardon a wretch like me."

I looked in his face, inexpressibly affected by the unexpected gentleness of his words and manner. Surely the spirit of God was beginning to move over the stagnant waters of sin and despair. I was about to leave him,—the lonely,—the doomed. I, too, was lonely and doomed.

"Father!" I cried, and with an impulse of pity and anguish I threw my arms round him and wept as if my heart was breaking; "I would willingly wear out my life in prayer for you, but O, pray for yourself. One prayer from your heart would be worth ten thousand of mine."

I thought not of the haggard form I was embracing; I thought of the immortal soul that inhabited it; and it seemed a sacred ruin. He clasped me convulsively to him one moment, then suddenly withdrawing his arms, he pushed me towards Richard,—not harshly, but as if bidding him take care of me; and throwing himself on the bed, he turned his face downward, so that his long black hair covered it from sight.

"Let us go," said Richard, in a low voice; "we had better leave him now."

As we were passing very softly out of the cell, he raised his head partially, and calling to Richard, said,—

"Come back, my son, to-morrow. I have something to tell you. I ought to do it now, while you are both here, but to-morrow will do; and don't forget your mother's Bible."

Again we traversed the stone galleries, the dismal stairs, and our footsteps left behind us a cold, sepulchral sound. Neither of us spoke, for a kind of funeral silence solemnized our hearts. I looked at one of the figures that were gliding along the upper galleries, though there were many of them,—prisoners, who being condemned for lighter offences than murder or forgery, were allowed to walk under the eye of a keeper. I was conscious of passing them, but they only seemed to deepen the gloom, like ravens and bats flapping their wings in a deserted tower.

As we came into the light of day, which, struggling through massy ridges of darkness, burst between the grand and gloomy columns that supported the fabric, I felt as if a great stone were rolling from my breast I raised the veil, which I had drawn closely over my face, to inhale the air that flowed from the world without I was coming out of darkness into light, out of imprisonment into freedom, sunshine, and the breath of heaven.

There were men traversing the vestibule in many directions; and Richard hurried me on, that I might escape the gaze of curiosity or the stare of impertinence. Against one of the pillars which we passed, a gentleman was standing, whose figure was so striking as to attract my abstracted eye. I had seen him before. I knew him instantaneously, though I had only had a passing glimpse of him the morning we left the Falls. It was the gentleman who had accosted Julian, and who had stamped himself so indelibly on my memory. And now, as I came nearer, I was struck by a resemblance in his air and features to our unhappy father. It is true there was the kind of difference there is between a fallen spirit and an angel of light; for the expression of the stranger's face was noble and dignified, as if conscious that he still wore undefaced the image of his Maker. He lifted his hat as we passed, with that graceful courtesy which marks the gentleman, and I again noticed that the dark waves of his hair were mingled with snow. It reminded me of those wreaths of frost I had seen hanging from the evergreens of Grandison Place.

The singularity of the place, the earnestness of his gaze, and the extraordinary attraction I felt towards him, brought the warm, bright color to my cheeks, and I instinctively dropped the veil which I had raised a moment before. As we entered the carriage, which had been kept in waiting, the horses, high-spirited and impatient, threatened to break loose from the driver's control,—when the stranger, coming rapidly forward, stood at their heads till their transient rebellion was over. It was but an instant; for as Richard leaned from the carriage window to thank him, the horses dashed forward, and I only caught one more glimpse of his fine, though pensive features.

"Richard, did you not perceive a resemblance to our father in this gentleman, noble and distinguished as he appears? I was struck with it at the first glance."

"Yes, there is a likeness; but not greater than we very often see strangers bearing to each other. My father must once have been a fine looking man, though now so sad a wreck. A life of sinful indulgence, followed by remorse and retribution, leaves terrible scars on the face as well as the soul."

"But how strange it is, that we are sometimes so drawn towards strangers, as by a loadstone's power! I saw this gentleman once before, at the Falls of Niagara, and I felt the same sudden attraction that I do now. I may never see him again. It is not probable that I ever shall; but it will be impossible for me to forget him. I feel as if he must have some influence on my destiny; and

such a confidence in his noble qualities, that if I were in danger I would appeal to him for protection, and in sorrow, for sympathy and consolation. You smile, Richard. I dare say it all sounds foolish to you, but it is even so."

"Not foolish, but romantic, my own darling sister. I like such sentiments. I like any thing better than the stereotyped thoughts of the world. You have a right to be romantic, Gabriella, for your life has been one of strange and thrilling interest."

"Yes; strange indeed!" I answered, while my soul rolled back on the billows of the past, wondering at the storms that heaved them so high, when life to many seemed smooth as a sea of glass. Then I thought how sweet the haven of eternal repose must be to the wave-worn mariner; how much sweeter to one who had had a tempestuous voyage, than one who had been floating on a tranquil current; and the closing verse of an old hymn came melodiously to my recollection:—

"There will I bathe my weary soul
In seas of endless rest,
And not a wave of trouble roll
Across my peaceful breast."

CHAPTER LV.

What a contrast did the large, airy, pleasant nursery room of Mrs. Brahan present, to the narrow cell I had so lately quitted! I accompanied her there after dinner, while Richard, anxious to follow up the impression he had made, returned to the prison, taking with him his mother's Bible. I had hardly thought of the communication which he said he wished to make, till I saw Richard depart. Then it recurred to me; but it did not seem possible that it could interest or affect me much, though it might my brother.

I have not spoken of Mrs. Brahan's children, because I have had so much to say of others; but she had children, and very lovely ones, who were the crowning blessings of her home. Her eldest were at school, but there were three inmates of the nursery, from five to ten years of age, adorned with the sweetest charms of childhood, brightness, purity, and bloom. She called them playfully her three little graces; and I never admired her so much, as when she made herself a child in their midst, and participated in their innocent amusements. After supper they were brought into the parlor to be companions of their father one hour, which he devoted exclusively to their instruction and recreation; but after dinner Mrs. Brahan took the place of the nurse, or rather governess, and I felt it a privilege to be with her, it made me feel so entirely at home, and the presence of childhood freshened and enlivened the spirits. It seemed as if fairy fingers were scattering rose-leaves on my heart. Was it possible that these young, innocent creatures would ever become hardened by worldliness, polluted by sin, or saddened by sorrow? And yet the doomed dweller of the Tombs had said that morning, "that he was once a praying child at his mother's knee!" How would that mother have felt, if, when his innocent hands were folded on her lap and his cherub lips repeated words which perhaps angels interpreted, she could have looked into future years, and beheld the condemned and blasted being in whose withering veins her own lifeblood was flowing?

While I was reclining on the children's bed and the youngest little girl was playing with my ringlets, as short and childish as her own, I was told a gentleman was in the parlor, who inquired for me.

"Cannot I excuse myself?" I asked of Mrs. Brahan. "I did not wish any one to know that I was in the city. I did not wish to meet any of my former acquaintances."

Then it suddenly flashed into my mind, that it might be some one who brought tidings of Ernest, some one who had met the "Star of the East," on his homeward voyage. There was nothing wild in the idea, and when I mentioned it to Mrs. Brahan, she said it was possible, and that I had better go down. Supposing it was a messenger of evil! I felt as if I had borne all I could bear, and live. Then all at once I thought of the stranger whom I had seen in the vestibule of the prison, and I was sure it was he. But who was he, and why had he come? I was obliged to stop at the door, to command my agitation, so nervous had I been made by the shock from which I had not yet recovered. My cheeks burned, but my hands were cold as ice.

Yes, it was he. The moment I opened the door, I recognized him, the stately stranger of the Tombs. He was standing in front of the beautiful painting of the fortress, and his face was from me. But he turned at my entrance, and advanced eagerly to meet me. He was excessively pale, and varying emotions swept over his countenance, like clouds drifted by a stormy wind. Taking both my hands in his, he drew me towards him, with a movement I had no power to resist, and looked in my face with eyes in which every passion of the soul seemed concentrated, but in which joy like a sun-ray shone triumphant.

Even before he opened his arms and clasped me to his bosom, I felt an invisible power drawing me to his heart, and telling me I had a right to be there.

"Gabriella! child of my Rosalie! my own lost darling!" he exclaimed, in broken accents, folding me closer and closer in his arms, as if fearing I would vanish from his embrace. "Gracious God! I

thank thee,—Heavenly Father! I bless thee for this hour. After long years of mourning, and bereavement, and loneliness, to find a treasure so dear, to feel a joy so holy! Oh, my God, what shall I render unto Thee for all thy benefits!"

Then he bowed his head on my neck, and I felt hot tears gushing from his eyes, and sobs, like the deep, passionate sobs of childhood, convulsing his breast.

Yes, he *was* my father. I knew it,—I felt it, as if the voice of God had spoken from the clouds of heaven to proclaim it. He was my father, the beloved of my angelic mother, and he had never wronged her, never. He had not been the deceiver, but the deceived. Without a word of explanation I believed this, for it was written as if in sunbeams on his noble brow. The dreams of my childhood were all embodied in him; and overpowered by reverence, love, gratitude, and joy, I slid from his arms, and on bended knees and with clasped hands, looked up in his face and repeated again and again the sacred name of "Father."

It is impossible to describe such bewildering, such intense emotions. Seldom, except in dreams, are they felt, when the spirit seems free from the fetters of earth. Even when I found myself sitting by his side, still encircled in his arms and leaning on his heart, I could scarcely convince myself that the scene was real.

"And Richard, my brother!" I cried, beginning to feel bewildered at the mysteries that were to be unravelled; "joy is not perfect till he shares it with me."

"Will it make you unhappy, my darling Gabriella, to know that Richard is your cousin, instead of your brother?"

I pressed my hands on my forehead, for it ached with the quick, lightning-like thoughts that flashed through my brain.

"And he, the inmate of yon dismal cell?" I exclaimed, anticipating, as if by intuition, the reply,—

"Is my brother, my twin brother, whom in youth our mother could not distinguish from myself. This fatal resemblance has caused all my woe. Therésa la Fontaine was *his* wife and Richard is *his* son, not mine."

How simple, how natural, all this seemed! Why had not my mother dreamed of the possibility of such a thing! Knowing the existence of this brother, why had she not at once found in him the solution of the dark problem, which was the enigma as well as anguish of her life?

"My unhappy brother!" said he, while a dark shade rested on his brow; "little did I think, when I visited his dungeon this morning, of the revelation he would make! I have been an exile and a wanderer many years, or I might perhaps have learned sooner what a blessing Heaven has been guarding for my sad and lonely heart. I saw you as you passed out of the prison, and your resemblance to my beloved Rosalie struck me, as an electric shock."

"And yours to him whom I believed my father, had the same effect on me. How strange it was, that then I felt as if I would give worlds to call *you* father, instead of the wretched being I had just quitted."

"Then you are willing to acknowledge me, my beloved, my lovely daughter," said he, pressing a father's kiss on my forehead, from which his hand fondly put back the clustering locks. "My daughter! let me repeat the name. My daughter! how sweet, how holy it sounds! Had *she* lived, or had she only known before she died, the constancy and purity of my love; but forgive me, thou Almighty chastener of man's erring heart! I dare not murmur. She knows all this now. She has given me her divine forgiveness."

"She left it with me, father, to give you; not only her forgiveness, but her undying love, and her dying blessing."

Withdrawing the arm with which he still embraced me, he bowed his face on his hands, and I hardly dared to breathe lest I should disturb the sacredness of his emotions. "She knows all this now." My heart repeated the words. Methought the wings of her spirit were hovering round us,—her husband and her child,—whom the hand of God had brought together after years of alienation and sorrow. And other thoughts pressed down upon me. By and by, when we were all united in that world, where we should know even as we are known, Ernest would read my heart, by the light of eternity, and then he would know how I loved him. There would be no more suspicion, or jealousy, or estrangement, but perfect love and perfect joy would absorb the memory of sorrow.

"And you are married, my Gabriella?" were the first words my father said, when he again turned towards me. "How difficult to realize; and you looking so very young. Young as you really are, you cheat the eye of several years of youth!"

"I was very ill, and when I woke to consciousness, I found myself shorn of the glory of womanhood,—my long hair."

"You are so like my Rosalie. Your face, your eyes, your smile; and I feel that you have her pure and loving heart. Heaven preserve it from the blight that fell on hers!"

The smile faded from my lip, and a quick sigh that I could not repress saddened its expression. The eyes of my father were bent anxiously on me.

"I long to see the husband of my child," said he. "Is he not with you?"

"No, my father, he is far away. Do not speak of him now, I can only think of you."

"If he is faithless to a charge so dear," exclaimed St. James, with a kindling glance.

"Nay, father; but I have so much to tell, so much to hear, my brain is dizzy with the thought. You shall have all my confidence, believe me you shall; and oh, how sweet it is to think that I have a father's breast to lean upon, a father's arms to shelter me, though the storms of life may blow cold and dreary round me,—and such a father!—after feeling such anguish and shame from my supposed parentage. Poor Richard! how I pity him!"

"You love him, then? Believing him your brother, you have loved him as such?"

"I could not love him better were he indeed my brother. He was the friend of my childhood," and a crimson hue stole over my face at the remembrance of a love more passionate than a brother's. "He is gifted with every good and noble quality, every pure and generous feeling,—friend, brother, cousin—it matters not which—he will ever be the same to me."

Then I spoke of Mrs. Linwood, my adopted mother,—of my incalculable obligations, my unutterable gratitude, love, and admiration,—of the lovely Edith and her sisterly affection, and I told him how I longed that he should see them, and that *they* should know that I had a father, whom I was proud to acknowledge, instead of one who reflected disgrace even on them.

"Oh! I have so much to tell, so much to hear," I again repeated. "I know not when or where we shall begin. It is so bewildering, so strange, so like a dream. I fear to let go your hand lest you vanish from my sight and I lose you forever."

"Ah, my child, you cannot feel as I do. You have enshrined other images in your heart, but mine is a lonely temple, into which you come as a divinity to be worshipped, as well as a daughter to be loved. I did not expect such implicit faith, such undoubting confidence. I feared you would shrink from a stranger, and require proofs of the truth of his assertions. I dared not hope for a greeting so tender, a trust so spontaneous."

"Oh! I should as soon doubt that God was my Father in heaven, as you my father on earth. I *know* it, I do not *believe* it."

I think my feelings must have been something like a blind person's on first emerging from the darkness that has wrapped him from his birth. He does not ask, when the sunbeams fall on his unclouded vision, *if it be light*. He knows it is, because it fills his new-born capacities for sight,—he knows it is, by the shadows that roll from before it. I knew it was my father, because he met all the wants of my yearning filial nature, because I felt him worthy of honor, admiration, reverence, and love.

I know not how long I had been with him, when Mr. Brahan entered; and though it had been seventeen years since he had seen him, he immediately recognized the artist he had so much admired.

"I have found a daughter, sir," said St. James, grasping his hand with fervor. He could not add another word, and no other was necessary.

"I told her so," cried Mr. Brahan, after expressing the warmest congratulations; "I told her husband so. I knew the wretch who assumes your name was an impostor, though he wonderfully resembles yourself."

"He has a right to the name he bears," answered my father, and his countenance clouded as it always did when he alluded to his brother. "We are twin brothers, and our extraordinary resemblance in youth and early manhood caused mistakes as numerous as those recorded in the Comedy of Errors, and laid the foundation of a tragedy seldom found in the experience of life."

While they were conversing, I stole from the room and ran up stairs to tell Mrs. Brahan the wondrous tidings. Her sympathy was as heart-felt as I expected,—her surprise less. She never could believe that man my father. Mr. Brahan always said he was an impostor, only he had no means to prove it.

"How beautiful!" she said, her eyes glistening with sympathetic emotion, "that he should find you here, in his own wedded home,—the place of your birth,—the spot sanctified by the holiest memories of love. Has not your filial mission been blest? Has not Providence led you by a way you little dreamed of? My dear Gabriella, you must not indulge another sad misgiving or gloomy fear. Indeed you must not."

"I know I ought not; but come and see my father."

"What is he like?" she asked, with a smile.

"Like the dream of my childhood, when I imagined him one of the sons of God, such as once came down to earth."

"Romantic child!" she exclaimed; but when she saw my father, I read admiration as well as respect in her speaking eye, and I was satisfied with the impression he had made.

Richard came soon after informed by his father of all I could tell him and a great deal more,

which he subsequently related to me. I think he was happier to know that he was cousin, than when he believed himself my brother. The transition from a lover to a brother was too painful. He could not divest himself of the idea of guilt, which, however involuntary, made him shudder in remembrance. But a cousin! The tenderness of natural affection and the memories of love, might unite in a bond so near and dear, and hallow each other.

In the joy of my emancipation from imagined disgrace, I did not forget that the cloud still rested darkly on him,—that he still groaned under the burden which had been lifted from my soul. He told me that he had hope of his father's ultimate regeneration,—that he had found him much softened,—that he wept at the sight of Therésa's Bible, and still more when he read aloud to him the chapters which gave most consolation to her dying hours.

The unexpected visit of his brother, from whom he had been so long separated, and whom he supposed was dead, had stirred still deeper the abysses of memoir and feeling.

I will now turn a little while from myself, and give a brief history of the twin brothers, as I learned it from my father's lips, and Richard's, who narrated to me the story of *his* father's life as he heard it in the dungeon of the Tombs.

CHAPTER LVI.

Henry Gabriel and Gabriel Henry St. James, were born in the Highlands of New York. Their father was of English extraction, though of American birth; their mother the daughter of a French refugee, who had sought shelter in the land of freedom from the storms of the Revolution. So the elements of three nations mingled in their veins.

There was nothing remarkable in their childhood, but their resemblance to each other, which was so perfect that their own mother was not able to distinguish the one from the other. Perhaps either of them, seen separately, would not have excited extraordinary interest, but together they formed an image of dual beauty as rare as it was attractive. They were remarkable for their fine physical development, their blooming health, and its usual accompaniments, sunniness of temper, and gaiety of spirits; but even in early childhood these twin-born bodies showed that they were vitalized by far different souls. Their father was a sea-captain; and while Gabriel would climb his knees and listen with eager delight to tales of ocean life and stirring adventures, Henry, seated at his mother's feet, with his hands clasped on her lap and his eyes riveted on her face, would gather up her gently sparkling words in his young heart, and they became a pavement of diamonds, indestructible as it was bright and pure.

As they grew older, the master-passion of each became more apparent. Gabriel made mimic boats and ships, and launched them on the bosom of a stream which flowed back of their dwelling, an infant argosy freighted with golden hopes. Henry drew figures on the sandy shore, of birds and beasts and creeping things, and converted every possible material into tablets for the impressions of his dawning genius. Gabriel was his father's darling, Henry was mother's beloved. I said she could not distinguish her twin-born boys; but when she looked into their eyes, there was something in the earnest depths of Henry's, an answering expression of love and sensibility, which she sought in vain in his brother's. The soul of the sea-dreaming boy was not with her; it was following the father on the foaming paths of ocean.

"My boys shall go with me on my next voyage," said the captain. "It is time to think of making men of them. They have been poring over books long enough to have a holiday; and, by the living Jove, they shall have it. It is the ruin of boys to be tied to their mother's apron strings after they are twelve years old. They are fit for nothing but peddlers or colporteurs."

Gabriel clapped his hands exultingly; but Henry drew closer to his mother's side.

"My hero, my young brave," cried the captain, slapping his favorite boy on the shoulder, "you are worth a dozen such girl-boys as your brother. Let him be a kitten and cry mew, if he will, while you climb the topgallant-mast and make ladders of the clouds."

"I am as brave as he is," said Henry, straightening his youthful figure, and looking at his father with a kindling eye. "I am not afraid of the water; but who will protect my mother, if I go away with you?"

"Bravo! There is some spirit in the boy after all," exclaimed the captain, who loved his wife with the devotion and constancy of a sailor. "He has chosen an honorable post, and by heaven I will not force him to leave it. I see that nature, when she gave us twins, intended we should go shares in our boys. It is just. Gabriel shall go with me, but the silver cup of fortune may after all find its way in Henry's sack."

Thus at twelve years of age the twin brothers separated, and from that era their life-paths diverged into a constantly widening angle.

The captain discovered too late the error he had committed in cultivating the roving propensities of his son, to the exclusion of steady, nobler pursuits. He had intended merely to give him a holiday, and a taste of a seafaring life; but after revelling in the joys of freedom, he found it impossible to bind him down to the restraints of scholastic life. He wanted him to go to college,

but the young rover bravely refused obedience to parental authority, saying, that one genius in a family was enough; and the father, gazing with pride on the wild, handsome, and dauntless boy, said there was no use in twisting the vine the wrong way, and yielded to his will. Henry, imbosomed in classic shades, gathered the fruits of science and the flowers of literature, while his genius as an artist, though apparently dormant, waited the Ithuriel touch of opportunity to wake into life and action.

Captain St. James had prospered in his enterprises and acquired a handsome fortune, so that his sons would not be dependent on their own exertions for support. Gabriel unfortunately knew this circumstance too well, and on the faith of his father's fortune indulged in habits of extravagance and dissipation as ruinous as they were disgraceful. The captain did not live to witness the complete degradation of his favorite son. His vessel was wrecked on a homeward voyage, and the waves became the sailor's winding-sheet. His wife did not long survive him. She died, pining for the genial air of her own sunny clime, leaving the impress of her virtues and her graces on the character of one of her sons. Alas for the other!

Free now from parental restraint, as he had long been from moral obligations, Gabriel plunged into the wildest excesses of dissipation. In vain Henry lifted his warning voice, in vain he extended his guardian hand, to save him who had now become the slave as well as the votary of vice. His soul clave to his brother with a tenderness of affection, which neither his selfishness nor vices, not even his crimes, could destroy. A gambler, a roueé, every thing but a drunkard, he at length became involved in so disgraceful a transaction, he was compelled for safety to flee the country; and Henry, ignorant what course he had taken, gave him up in despair, and tried to forget the existence of one whose remembrance could only awaken sorrow and shame. He went to Europe, as has been previously related, and with the eye of a painter and the heart of a poet, travelled from clime to clime, and garnered up in his imagination the sublimities of nature and the wonders of art. His genius grew and blossomed amid the warm and fostering influences of an elder world, till it formed, as it were, a bower around him, in whose perennial shades he could retire from haunting memories and uncongenial associations.

In the mean time, Gabriel had found refuge in his mother's native land. During his wild, roving life, he had mingled much with foreigners, and acquired a perfect knowledge of the French language,—I should rather say his knowledge was perfected by practice, for the twin brothers had been taught from infancy the melodious and expressive language of their mother's native clime. The facility with which he conversed, and his extremely handsome person, were advantages whose value he well knew how to appreciate, and to make subservient to his use.

It was at this time that he became acquainted with Therésa Josephine La Fontaine, and his worn and sated passions were quickened into new life. She was not beautiful, "but fair and excellent," and of a character that exercises a commanding influence over the heart of man. Had he known her before habits of selfish indulgence had become, like the Ethiopian's skin and the leopard's spots, too deep and indelible for chemic art to change, she might perhaps have saved him from the transgressor's doom. She loved him with all the ardor of her pure, yet impassioned nature, and fully believed that her heart was given to one of the sons of light, instead of the children of darkness. For awhile his sin-dyed spirit seemed to bleach in the whitening atmosphere that surrounded him, for a father's as well as a husband's joy was his. But at length the demon of ennui possessed him. Satan was discontented in the bowers of Paradise. Gabriel sighed for his profligate companions, in the bosom of wedded love and joy. He left home on a false pretence, and never returned. It was long before Therésa admitted a doubt of his faith, and it was not till a rumor of his marriage in America reached her ear, that she believed it possible that he could deceive and betray her. An American traveller from New York, who knew Henry St. James and was unconscious of the existence of his brother, spoke of his marriage and his beautiful bride in terms that roused every dormant passion in the breast of the deserted Therésa. Yet she waited long in the hope and the faith of woman's trusting heart, clinging to the belief of her husband's integrity and truth, with woman's fond adhesiveness. At length, when she had but convincing reason to believe herself a betrayed and abandoned wife, she took her boy in her arms, crossed the ocean waste, landed in New York, and by the aid of a directory sought the home of Henry St. James, deeming herself the legitimate mistress of the mansion she made desolate by her presence. The result of her visit has been already told. She unconsciously destroyed the happiness of others, without securing her own. It is not strange, that in the moment of agony and distraction caused by the revelation made by Therésa, Rosalie should not have noticed in the marriage certificate the difference between the names of Henry Gabriel and Gabriel Henry St. James.

Henry St. James had been summoned to Texas, then the Botany Bay of America, by his unhappy brother, who had there commenced a new career of sin and misery. He had gambled away his fortune, killed a man in a scene of strife and blasphemy, been convicted of homicide, escaped from the sentence, and, lurking in by-lanes and accursed places, fell sick, and wrote to his brother to come and save him from infamy and death.

How could he wound the spotless ears of Rosalie by the tale of his brother's guilt and shame? He had never spoken to her of his existence, the subject was so exquisitely painful, for he believed himself for ever separated from him, and why should his blasted name cast a shadow over the heaven of his domestic happiness?

Alter having raised his miserable brother from the gulf of degradation in which he had plunged, and given him the means of establishing himself in some honorable situation, which he promised

to seek, he returned to find his home occupied by strangers, his wife and child fled, his happiness wrecked, and his peace destroyed. The deluded and half frantic Therésa, believing him to be her husband, appealed to him, by the memory of their former love and wedded felicity, to forgive the steps she had taken that she might assert the claims of her deserted boy. Maddened by the loss of the wife whom he adored, he became for the time a maniac; and so terrible was his indignation and despair, the unhappy victim of his brother's perfidy fled trembling and dismayed from his presence.

In the calmer moments that succeeded the first paroxysms of his agony, Henry thought of his brother and of the extraordinary resemblance they bore to each other, and the mystery which frenzied passion had at first veiled from his eyes was partially revealed to his understanding. Could he then have seen her, and could she prove that she was the wife of Gabriel, he would have protected her with a brother's care and tenderness. But his first thought was for Rosalie,—the young, the beloved, the deceived, the fugitive Rosalie, of whose flight no clue could be discovered, no trace be found. The servants could throw no light on the mystery, for she had left in the darkness and silence of night. They only knew that Peggy disappeared at the same time, and was probably her companion. This circumstance afforded a faint relief to Henry's distracted mind, for he knew Peggy's physical strength and moral courage, as well as her remarkable attachment to his lovely and gentle wife. But whither had they gone? The natural supposition was, that she would throw herself on the protection of her step-mother, as the only person on whom she had any legitimate claims,—unkind as she had formerly been. He immediately started for the embattled walls of Fortress Monroe,—but before his departure, he put advertisements in every paper, which, if they met her eye, she could not fail to understand. Alas! they never reached the gray cottage imbosomed in New England woods!

In vain he sought her in the wave-washed home of her childhood. He met with no sympathy from the slighted and jealous step-mother, who had destroyed the only link that bound them together, the name of her father. She had married again, and disowned all interest in the daughter of her former husband. She went still further, and wreaked her vengeance on St. James for the wounds he had inflicted on her vanity, by aspersing and slandering the innocent Rosalie. He left her in indignation and disgust, and wandered without guide or compass, like another Orpheus in search of the lost Eurydice. Had he known Peggy's native place, he might have turned in the right direction, but he was ignorant of every thing but her name and virtues. At length, weary and desponding, he resolved to seek in foreign lands, and in devotion to his art, oblivion of his sorrows. Just before his departure he met his brother, and told him of the circumstances which banished him from home and country. Gabriel, whose love for Therésa had been the one golden vein in the dark ore of his nature, was awakened to bitter, though short-lived remorse, not only for the ruin he brought on her, but the brother, whose fraternal kindness had met with so sad a requital. Touched by the exhibition of his grief and self-reproach, Henry committed to his keeping a miniature of Rosalie, of which he had a duplicate, that he might be able to identify her, and Gabriel promised, if he discovered one trace of his wife and child, that he would write to his brother and recall him.

They parted. Henry went to Italy, where images of ideal loveliness mingled with, though they could not supplant, the taunting memories of his native clime. As an artist, and as a man, he was admired, respected, and beloved; and he found consolation, though not happiness. The one great sorrow of his life fell like a mountain shadow over his heart; but it darkened its brightness without chilling its warmth. He was still the sympathizing friend of humanity, the comforter of the afflicted, the benefactor of the poor.

In the mean time Gabriel continued his reckless and dissolute course, sometimes on land, sometimes on sea, an adventurer, a speculator, a gambler, and a wretch. Destiny chanced to throw him into the vortex of corruption boiling in the heart of New York, when I went there, the bride of Ernest. He had seen me in the street, before he met me at the theatre; and, struck by my resemblance to the miniature which his brother had given him, he inquired and learned my name and history, as well as the wealth and rank of my husband. Confirmed in his suspicion that I was the child of Rosalie, he resolved to fill his empty pockets with my husband's gold, by making me believe that *he* was my father, and appealing to my filial compassion. Not satisfied with his success, he forged the note, whose discovery was followed by detection, conviction, imprisonment, and despair.

The only avenue to his seared and hardened heart had been found by the son of Therésa, coming to him like a messenger from heaven, in all his purity, excellence, and filial piety, not to avenge a mother's wrongs, but to cheer and illumine a guilty father's doom. His brother, too, seemed sent by Providence at this moment, that he might receive the daughter whom, from motives of the basest selfishness, he had claimed as his own.

When I first saw my father at the Falls, he had just returned to his native land, in company with Julian, the young artist. Urged by one of those irresistible impulses which may be the pressure of an angel's hand, his spirit turned to the soil where he now firmly believed the ashes of his Rosalie reposed. He and Julian parted on their first arrival, met again on the morning of our departure, and travelled together through some of the glowing and luxuriant regions of the West. After Julian left him to visit Grandison Place, he lingered amid scenes where nature revelled in all its primeval grandeur and original simplicity, sketching its boldest and most attractive features, till, God-directed, he came to the city over which the memory of his brief wedded life trembled like a misty star throbbing on the lonely heart of night. Hearing that a St. James was in the dungeons of the Tombs, a convicted forger, he at once knew that it must be his brother. There he sought him,

and learned from him that the child of Rosalie lived, though Rosalie was a more.

As simple as sad, was the solution of my life's mystery.

Concealment was the fatal source of our sorrows. Even the noble Henry St. James erred in concealing his twin brotherhood, though woe and disgrace tarnished the once golden link. Rosalie and Therésa both erred, in not giving their children their father's name, though they believed it accursed by perjury and guilt.

Truth, and truth alone, is safe and omnipotent: "The eternal days of God are hers." Man may weave, but she will undeceive; man may arrange, but God will dispose.

CHAPTER LVII.

I told my father the history of my youth and womanhood, of my marriage and widowhood, with feelings similar to those with which I poured out my soul into the compassionate bosom of my Heavenly Father. He listened, pitied, wept over, and then consoled me.

"He must prove himself worthy of so sacred a trust," said he, clasping me to his bosom with all a father's tenderness, and all a mother's love, "before I ever commit it to his keeping. Never again, with my consent, shall you be given back to his arms, till 'the seed of the woman has bruised the serpent's head.'"

"I will never leave you again, dear father, under any circumstances, whatever they may be. Rest assured, that come weal, come woe, we will never be separated. Not even for a husband's unclouded confidence, would I forsake a father's sacred, new-found love."

"We must wait, and hope, and trust, my beloved daughter. Every thing will work together for the good of those that love God. I believe that now, fully, reverentially. Sooner or later all the ways of Providence will be justified to man, and made clear as the noonday sun."

He looked up to heaven, and his fine countenance beamed with holy resignation and Christian faith. Oh! how I loved this dear, excellent, noble father! Every hour, nay, every moment I might say, my filial love and reverence increased. My feelings were so new, so overpowering, I could not analyze them. They were sweet as the strains of Edith's harp, yet grand as the roaring of ocean's swelling waves. The bliss of confidence, the rapture of repose, the sublimity of veneration, the tenderness of love, all blended like the dyes of the rainbow, and spanned with an arch of peace the retreating clouds of my soul.

"When shall we go to Grandison Place?" he asked. "I long to pour a father's gratitude into the ear of your benefactress. I long to visit the grave of my Rosalie."

"To-morrow, to-day,—now, dear father, whenever you speak the word; provided we are not separated, I do not mind how soon."

He smiled at my eagerness.

"Not quite so much haste, my daughter. I cannot leave to Richard the sole task of ministering to the soul of my unhappy brother. His conscience is quickened, his feeling softened, and it may be that the day of grace is begun. His frame is weak and worn, his blood feverish, and drop by drop is slowly drying in his veins. I never saw any one so fearfully altered. Truly is it said, that 'the wages of sin is death.' Oh! if after herding with the swine and feeding on the husks of earth, he comes a repentant prodigal to his father's home, it matters not how soon he passes from that living tomb."

My father's words were prophetic. The prisoner's wasted frame was consuming slowly, almost imperceptibly, like steel when rust corrodes it. Richard and my father were with him every day, and gathered round him every comfort which the law permitted, to soften the horrors of imprisonment. Not in vain were their labors of love. God blessed them. The rock was blasted. The waters gushed forth. Like the thief on the cross, he turned his dying glance on his Saviour, and acknowledged him to be the Son of God. But it was long before the fiery serpents of remorse were deadened by the sight of the brazen reptile, glittering with supernatural radiance on the uplifted eye of faith. The struggle was fearful and agonizing, but the victory triumphant.

Had he needed me, I would have gone to him, and I often pleaded earnestly with my father to take me with him; but he said he did not wish me to be exposed to such harrowing scenes, and that Richard combined the tenderness of a daughter with the devotion of a son. Poor Richard! his pale cheeks and heavy eyes bore witness to the protracted sufferings of his father, but he bore up bravely, sustained by the hope of his soul's emancipation from the bondage of sin.

The prisoner must have had an iron constitution. The wings of his spirit flapped with such violence against its skeleton bars, the vulture-beak of remorse dipping all the time into the quivering, bleeding heart, it is astonishing how long it resisted even after flesh and blood seemed wasted away. Day after day he lingered; but as his soul gradually unsheathed itself, clearer views of God and eternity played upon its surface, till it flashed and burned, like a sword in the sunbeams of heaven.

At length he died, with the hand of his son clasped in his, the bible of Therésa laid against his heart, and his brother kneeling in prayer by his bedside. Death came softly, gently, like an angel of release, and left the seal of peace on that brow, indented in life by the thunder-scars of sin and crime.

After the first shock, Richard could not help feeling his father's death an unspeakable blessing, accompanied by such circumstances. In the grave his transgressions would be forgotten, or remembered only to forgive. He must now rise, shake off the sackcloth and ashes from his spirit, and put on the beautiful garments of true manhood. The friends, who had taken such an interest in his education, must not be disappointed in the career they had marked out. Arrangements had been made for him to study his profession with one of the most eminent lawyers of Boston, and he was anxious to commence immediately, that he might find in mental excitement an antidote to morbid sensibility and harrowing memory.

My father's wishes and my own turned to Grandison Place, and we prepared at once for our departure. I had informed Mrs. Linwood by letters of the events which I have related, and received her heart-felt congratulations. She expressed an earnest desire to see my father, but honored too much the motives that induced him to remain, to wish him to hasten. Now those motives no longer existed, I wrote to announce our coming, and soon after we bade adieu to one of the most charming abodes of goodness, hospitality, and pure domestic happiness I have ever known.

"You must write and tell me of all the changes of your changing destiny," said Mrs. Brahan, when she gave me the parting embrace; "no one can feel more deeply interested in them than myself. I feel in a measure associated with the scenes of your life-drama, for this is the place of your nativity, and it was under this roof you were united to your noble and inestimable father. Be of good cheer. Good news will come, wafted from beyond the Indian seas, and your second bridal morn will be fairer than the first."

I thanked her with an overflowing heart. I did not, like *her*, see the day-star of hope arising over that second bridal morn, but the sweet pathetic minor tone breathed in my ear the same holy strain:—

"Brightest and best of the sons of the morning,
Dawn on our darkness, and lend us thine aid;
Star of the East, the horizon adorning,
Guide where our infant Redeemer is laid."

CHAPTER LVIII.

I wish my father could have seen the home of my youth, when he first beheld it, in the greenness of spring or the bloom of summer; but white, cold, and dazzling was the lawn, and bleak, bare, and leafless the grand old elms and the stately brotherhood of oaks that guarded the avenue.

With pride, gratitude, joy, and a thousand mingling emotions, I introduced my father into a dwelling consecrated by so many recollections of happiness and woe. The cloud was removed from my birth, the stain from my lineage. I could now exult in my parentage and glory in my father.

Julian was there, and welcomed St. James with enthusiastic pleasure, who, on his part, seemed to cherish for him even parental affection. With joy and triumph beaming in his eyes and glowing on his cheek, Julian took the lovely Edith by the hand, and introduced her as his bride. Still occupying her usual place in her mother's home, in all her sweetness, simplicity, and spirituality, it was difficult to believe any change had come over her destiny. She had not waited for my presence, because she knew the bridal wreath woven for her would recall the blighted bloom of mine. She had no festal wedding. She could not, while her brother's fate was wrapped in uncertainty and gloom.

One Sunday evening, after Mr. Somerville had dismissed the congregation with the usual benediction, Julian led Edith to the altar, and her mother stood by her side till the solemn words were uttered that made them one. So simple and holy were the nuptial rites of the wealthy and beautiful heiress of Grandison Place.

My father spoke in exalted terms of the young artist, of his virtues and his genius, the singleness of his heart, the uprightness of his principles, and the warmth and purity of his affections. Had he, my father, needed any passport to the favor of Mrs. Linwood, he could not have had a surer one; but her noble nature instantaneously recognized his congenial and exalted worth. He had that in his air, his countenance, and manner, that distinguished him from the sons of men, as the planets are distinguished by their clear, intense, and steadfast lustre among the starry ranks of heaven.

I gave him the manuscript my mother had left me, and at his request pointed out the road and the diverging path that led to the spot where her grave was made. I did not ask to accompany him, for I felt his emotions were too sacred for even his daughter to witness. I mourned that the desolation of winter was added to the dreariness of death; that a pall of snow, white as her

winding-sheet and cold as her clay, covered the churchyard. In summer, when the grass was of an emerald green and the willows waved their weeping branches with a gentle rustle against the clustering roses, whose breath perfumed and whose blossoms beautified the place of graves, it was sweet, though sad, to wander amid the ruins of life, and meditate on its departed joys.

The broken shaft, twined with a drooping wreath carved in bas-relief, which rose above my mother's ashes, and the marble stone which marked the grave of Peggy, were erected the year after their deaths. The money which rewarded my services in the academy had been thus appropriated, or rather a portion of it. The remainder had been given to the poor, as Mrs. Linwood always supplied my wardrobe, as she did Edith's, and left no want of my own to satisfy, not even a wish to indulge. I mention this here, because it occurred to my mind that I had not done Mrs. Linwood perfect justice with regard to the motives which induced her to discipline my character.

I did not see my father for hours after his return. He retired to his chamber, and did not join the family circle till the evening lamps were lighted. He looked excessively pale, even wan, and his countenance showed how much he had suffered. Edith was singing when he came in, and he made a motion for her to continue; for it was evident he did not wish to converse. I sat down by him without speaking; and putting his arm round me, he drew me closely to his side. The plaintive melody of Edith's voice harmonized with the melancholy tone of his feelings, and seemed to shed on his soul a balmy and delicious softness. His spirit was with my mother in the dreams of the past, rather than the hopes of the future; and the memory of its joys lived again in music's heavenly breath.

It is a blessed thing to be remembered in death as my mother was. Her image was enshrined in her husband's heart, in the bloom and freshness of unfaded youth, as he had last beheld her,—and such it would ever remain. He had not seen the mournful process of fading and decay. To him, she was the bride of immortality; and his love partook of her own freshness and youth and bloom. Genius is *La fontaine de jouvence*, in whose bright, deep waters the spirit bathes and renews its morning prime. It is the well-spring of the heart,—the Castaly of the soul. St. James had lived amid forms of ideal beauty, till his spirit was imbued with their loveliness as with the fragrance of flowers, and he breathed an atmosphere pure as the world's first spring. He was *young*, though past the meridian of life. There was but one mark of age upon his interesting and noble person, and that was the snowy shade that softened his raven hair,—foam of the waves of time, showing they had been lashed by the storms, or driven against breakers and reefs of destiny.

The first time I took him into the library, he stopped before the picture of Ernest. I did not tell him whose it was. He gazed upon it long and earnestly.

"What a countenance!" he exclaimed. "I can see the lights and shades of feeling flashing and darkening over it. It has the troubled splendor of a tropic night, when clouds and moonbeams are struggling. Is it a portrait, or an ideal picture?"

"It is Ernest,—it is my husband," I answered; and it seemed to me as if all the ocean surges that rolled between us were pressing their cold weight on my heart.

"My poor girl! my beloved Gabriella! All your history is written there."

I threw myself in his arms, and wept. Had I seen Ernest dead at my feet, I could not have felt more bitter grief. I had never indulged it so unrestrainedly before in his presence, for I had always thought more of him than myself; and in trying to cheer him, I had found cheerfulness. Now I remembered only Ernest's idolatrous love, and his sorrows and sufferings, forgetting my own wrongs; and I felt there would always be an aching void which even a father's and brother's tenderness (for brother I still called Richard) could never fill.

"Oh, my father," I cried, "bear with my weakness,—bear with me a little while. There is comfort in weeping on a father's bosom, even for a loss like mine. I shall never see him again. He is dead, or if living, is dead to me. You cannot blame me, father. You see there a faint semblance of what he is,—splendid, fascinating, and haunting, though at times so dark and fearful. No words of mine can give an idea of the depth, the strength, the madness of his love. It has been the blessing and the bane, the joy and the terror, the angel and the demon of my life. I know it was sinful in its wild excess, and mine was sinful, too, in its blind idolatry, and I know the blessing of God could not hallow such a union. But how can I help feeling the dearth, the coldness, the weariness following such passionate emotions? How can I help feeling at times, that the sun of my existence is set, and a long, dark night before me?"

He did not answer,—he only pressed me convulsively to his heart, and I felt one hot tear, and then another and another falling on my brow.

Oh! it is cruel to wring tears from the strong heart of man; cruel, above all, to wring them from a father's heart,—that heart whose own sorrows had lately bled afresh. Every drop fell heavy and burning as molten lead on my conscience. I had been yielding to a selfish burst of grief, thoughtless of the agony I was inflicting.

"Forgive me, father!" I cried, "forgive me! On my knees, too, I will pray my Heavenly Father to forgive the rebel who dares to murmur at his chastisements, when new and priceless blessings gladden her life. I thought I had learned submission,—and I have, father, I have kissed in love and faith the Almighty hand that laid me low. This has been a dark moment, but it is passed."

I kissed his hand, and pressed it softly over my glistening eyes.

"Forgive you, my child!" he repeated, "for a sorrow so natural, so legitimate, and which has so much to justify it! I have wondered at your fortitude and disinterested interest in others,—I have wondered at your Christian submission, your unmurmuring resignation, and I wonder still. But you must not consider your destiny as inevitably sad and lonely. You have not had time yet to receive tidings from India. If, after the letter you have written, your husband does not return with a heart broken by penitence and remorse, and his dark and jealous passions slain by the sword of conviction, piercing two-edged and sharp to the very marrow of his spirit, he is not worthy of thee, my spotless, precious child; and the illusion of love will pass away, showing him to be selfish, tyrannical, and cruel, a being to be shunned and pitied, but no longer loved. Do not shudder at the picture I have drawn. The soul that speaks from those eyes of thousand meanings," added he, looking at the portrait that gazed upon us with powerful and thrilling glance, "must have some grand and redeeming qualities. I trust in God that it will rise above the ashes of passion, purified and regenerated. Then your happiness will have a new foundation, whose builder and maker is God."

"Oh! dear father!" was all I could utter. He spoke like one who had the gift of prophecy, and my spirit caught the inspiration of his words.

I have not spoken of Richard, for I had so much to say of my father, but I did not forget him. He accompanied us to Grandison Place, though he remained but a few days. I could not help feeling sad to see how the sparkling vivacity of his youth had passed away, the diamond brightness which reminded one of rippling waters in their sunbeams. But if less brilliant, he was far more interesting. Stronger, deeper, higher qualities were developed. The wind-shaken branches of thought stretched with a broader sweep. The roots of his growing energies, wrenched by the storm, struck firmer and deeper, and the wounded bark gave forth a pure and invigorating odor.

I walked with him, the evening before his departure, in the avenue from which the snow had been swept, leaving a smooth, wintry surface below. I was wrapped in furs, and the cold, frosty air braced me like a pair of strong arms.

I had so much to say to Richard, and now I was alone with him. I walked on in silence, feeling as if words had never been invented to express our ideas.

"You will never feel the want of a father's care and affection," at length I said. "My father could not love you better if you were his own son; and surely no own brother could be dearer, Richard, than you are and ever will be to me. You must not look mournfully on the past, but forward into a brightening future."

"I have but one object in life now," he answered, "and that is, to improve the talents God has given me for the benefit of mankind. I am not conscious of any personal hope or ambition, but a strong sense of duty acts upon me, and will save me from the corrosion of disappointment and the listlessness of despair."

"But you will not always feel so, Richard. You will experience a strong reaction soon, and new-born hopes and aspirations will shine gloriously to guide you upward and onward in your bright career. Think how young you are yet, Richard."

"The consciousness of youth does not always bring joy. It cannot, when youthful hopes are blighted, Gabriella. One cannot tear up at once the deep-rooted affections of years. Never was a love planted deeper, firmer than mine for you, before the soil of the heart had known the hardening winds of destiny. Start not, Gabriella, I am not going to utter one sentiment which, as a wife, you need blush to hear; but the parting hour, like that of death, is an honest one, and I must speak as I feel. May you never know or imagine my wretchedness when I believed you to be my sister, knowing that though innocent, I had been guilty, and that I could not love you merely with a brother's love. Thank heaven! you are my cousin. Ten thousand winning sweetnesses cluster round this dear relationship. The dearest, the strongest, the purest I have ever known."

"You will know a stronger, a dearer one, dear Richard,—you do not know yet how strong."

"I shall never think of my own happiness, Gabriella, till I am assured of yours."

"Then I will try to be happy for your sake."

"And if it should be that the ties severed by misfortune and distance are never renewed, you will remain with your father, and I will make my home with you, and it will be the business of both our lives to make you happy. No flower of the green-house was ever more tenderly cherished and guarded than you shall be, best beloved of so many hearts!"

"Thank you, oh, thank you, for all your tenderness, so far beyond my worth. Friend, brother, cousin, with you and such a father to love me, I ought to be the happiest and most grateful of human beings. But tell me one thing, dear Richard, before we part; do you forgive Ernest the wrong he has done you, freely and fully?"

"From the bottom of my heart I do."

"And should we ever meet again, may I tell him so?"

"Tell him I have nothing to forgive, for, believing as he did, vengeance could not wing a bolt of wrath too red, too deadly. But I would not recall the past. Your father beckons us,—he fears the

frosty evening air for you, but it has given a glowing rose to your cheeks!"

My father stood on the threshold to greet us, with that benign smile, that beautiful, winning smile that had so long been slumbering on his face, but which grew brighter and brighter every time it beamed on my soul.

The last evening of Richard's stay was not sad. Dr. Harlowe and Mr. Somerville were with us; and though the events with which he had been associated had somewhat sobered the doctor's mirthful propensities, the geniality of his character was triumphant over every circumstance.

My father expressed to him the most fervent gratitude for his parental kindness to me, as well as for a deeper, holier debt.

"You owe me nothing," said Dr. Harlowe; "and even if you did, and were the debt ten times beyond your grateful appreciation of it, I should consider myself repaid by the privilege of calling you my friend."

No one could speak with more feeling or dignity than the doctor, when the right chord was touched. He told me he had never seen the man he admired so much as my father; and how proud and happy it made me to have him say so, and know that his words were true! No one who has not felt as I did, the mortification, the shame and anguish of believing myself the daughter of a convicted criminal, can understand the intense, the almost worshipping reverence with which I regarded my late-found parent. To feel pride instead of humiliation, exultation instead of shame, and love instead of abhorrence, how great the contrast, how unspeakable the relief, how sublime and holy the gratitude!

CHAPTER LIX.

The snows of winter melted, the diamond icicles dropped from the trees, the glittering fetters slipped from the streams, and nature came forth a captive released from bondage, glowing with the joy of emancipation.

Nothing could be more beautiful, more glorious, than the valley in its vernal garniture. Such affluence of verdure; such rich, sweeping foliage; such graceful undulation of hill and dale; such exquisite blending of light and shade; such pure, rejoicing breezes; such blue, resplendent skies never before met, making *a tableau vivant* on which the eye of the great Creator must look down with delight.

It was the first time Mrs. Linwood had witnessed the opening of spring at Grandison Place, and her faded spirits revived in the midst of its blooming splendor. She bad preferred its comparative retirement during the past winter, and, in spite of the solicitations of her friends, refused to go to the metropolis. My father and Julian both felt an artist's rapture at the prospect unrolled in a grand panorama around them, and transferred to the canvas many a glowing picture. It was delightful to watch the progress of these new creations,—but far more interesting when the human face was the subject of the pencil. Edith and myself were multiplied into so many charming forms, it is strange we were not made vain by gazing on them.

I was very grasping in my wishes, and wanted quite a picture gallery of my friends,—Mrs. Linwood, Edith, and Dr. Harlowe; and my indulgent father made masterly sketches of all for his exacting daughter. And thus day succeeded day, and no wave from Indian seas wafted tidings of the absent husband and son. No "Star of the East" dawned on the nightshades of my heart. And the raven voice kept echoing in my ear, "Never more, never more." There had been a terrible gale sweeping along the whole eastern coast of the Atlantic, and many a ship had gone down, freighted with an argosy richer than gold,—the treasures of human hearts. I did not speak my fears, but the sickness of dread settled on my spirits, in spite of the almost super-human efforts I made to shake it from them. When my eyes were fixed on my father's paintings, I could see nothing but storm-lashed billows, wrecking ships, and pale, drowning mariners. I could see that Mrs. Linwood and Edith participated in my apprehensions, though they did not give them utterance. We hardly dared to look in each other's faces, lest we should betray to each other thoughts which we would, but could not conceal.

The library had been converted into my father's studio. He usually painted in the mornings as well as Julian; and in the afternoon we rode, or walked as inclination prompted, and the evenings were devoted to sewing, conversation, and music.

One afternoon, after returning from a ride about sunset, I went into the library for a book which I had left there. I never went there alone without stopping to gaze at the picture of Ernest, which every day acquired a stronger fascination. "Those eyes of a thousand meanings," as my father had said, followed me with thrilling intensity whenever I moved, and if I paused they fixed themselves on me as if never more to be withdrawn. Just now, as I entered, a crimson ray of the setting sun, struggling in through the curtained windows, fell warmly on the face, and gave it such a lifelike glow, that I actually started, as if life indeed were there.

As I have said before, the library was remote from the front part of the house, and even Margaret's loud, voluble laugh did not penetrate its deep retirement. I know not how long, but it must have been very long that I stood gazing at the picture, for the crimson ray had faded into a

soft twilight haze, and the face seemed gradually receding further and further from me.

The door opened. Never, never, shall I feel as I did then till I meet my mother's spirit in another world. A pale hand rested, as if for support, on the latch of the door,—a face pale as the statues, but lighted up by eyes of burning radiance, flashed like an apparition upon me. I stood as in a nightmare, incapable of motion or utterance, and a cloud rolled over my sight. But I knew that Ernest was at my feet, that his face was buried in the folds of my dress, and his voice in deep, tremulous music, murmuring in my ear.

"Gabriella! beloved Gabriella! I am not worthy to be called thy husband; but banish me not, my own and only love!"

At the sound of that voice, my paralyzed senses burst the fetters that enthralled them, and awoke to life so keen, there was agony in the awakening. Every plan that reason had suggested and judgment approved was forgotten or destroyed, and love, all-conquering, unconquerable love, reigned over every thought, feeling, and emotion. I sunk upon my knees before him,—I encircled his neck with my arms,—I called him by every dear and tender name the vocabulary of love can furnish,—I wept upon his bosom showers of blissful and relieving tears. Thus we knelt and wept, locked in each other's arms, and again and again Ernest repeated—

"I am not worthy to be thy husband," and I answered again and again—

"I love thee, Ernest. God, who knoweth all things, knows, and he only, how I love thee."

It is impossible to describe such scenes. Those who have never known them, must deem them high-wrought and extravagant those who *have*, cold and imperfect. It is like trying to paint chain-lightning, or the coruscations of the aurora borealis. I thought not how he came. What cared I, when he was with me, when his arms were round me, his heart answering to the throbs of mine? Forgotten were suspicion, jealousy, violence, and wrong,—nothing remained but the memory of love.

As the shades of twilight deepened, his features seemed more distinct, for the mist which tears had left dissolved, and I could see how wan and shadowy he looked, and how delicate, even to sickliness, the hue of his transparent complexion. Traces of suffering were visible in every lineament, but they seemed left by the ground-swell of passion, rather than its deeper ocean waves.

"You have seen your mother?" at length I said, feeling that I must no longer keep him from her, "and Edith? And oh, Ernest! have you seen my father? Do you know I have a father, whom I glory in acknowledging? Do you know that the cloud is removed from my birth, the stigma from my name? Oh, my husband, mine is a strange, eventful history!"

"Mr. Brahan told me of the discovery of your father, and of the death of his unhappy brother. I have not seen him yet. But my mother! When I left her, Gabriella, she had not one silver hair. *My* hand sprinkled that premature snow."

"It matters not now, dear Ernest," I cried, pained by the torturing sighs that spoke the depth of his remorse. "Flowers will bloom sweetly under that light snow. Edith is happy. We will all be happy,—my father too,—come and see him, Ernest,—come, and tell me, if I have need to blush for my lineage."

"Not for your lineage, but your husband. What must this noble father think of me?"

"Every thing that is kind and Christian. He has sustained my faith, fed my hopes, and prophesied this hour of reunion. Come, the moment you have seen him, you will trust, revere, and love him."

With slow and lingering steps we walked the winding gallery that led from the library, and entered the parlor, whose lights seemed dazzling in contrast to the soft gloom we had left behind.

Hand in hand we approached my father, who stood with his back to one of the windows, his tall and stately figure nobly defined. I tried to utter the words, "My husband! my father!" but my parted lips were mute. I threw myself into his arms, with a burst of emotion that was irrepressible, and he grasped the hand of Ernest and welcomed and blest him in warm, though faltering accents. Then Edith came with her sweet April face, and hung once more upon her brother's neck, and his mother again embraced him, and Julian walked to the window and looked abroad, to hide the tears which he thought a stain upon his manhood.

It was not till after the excitement of the hour had subsided, that we realized how weak and languid Ernest really was. He was obliged to confess how much he had suffered from illness and fatigue, and that his strength was completely exhausted. As he reclined on one of the sofas, the crimson hue of the velvet formed such a startling contrast to the pallor of his complexion, it gave him an appearance almost unearthly.

"You have been ill, my son," said Mrs. Linwood, watching him with intense anxiety.

"I have been on the confines of the spirit world, my mother; so near as to see myself by the light it reflected. Death is the solar microscope of life. It shows a hideous mass, where all seemed fair and pure."

He laid his hand over his eyes with a nervous shudder.

"But I am well now," he added; "I am only suffering from fatigue and excitement. Gabriella's

letter found me leaning over the grave. It raised me, restored me, brought me back to life, to hope, to love, and home."

He told us, in the course of the evening, how he had found Mr. Harland on the eve of embarking for India, and that he offered to be his companion; and how he had written to his mother before his voyage, telling her of his destination, and entreating her to write if she were still willing to call him her son. The letter came not to relieve the agonies of suspense, and mine contained the first tidings he received from his native land. It found him, as he had said, on a sick-bed, and its contents imparted new life to his worn and tortured being. He immediately took passage in a home bound ship, though so weak he was obliged to be carried on board in a litter. Mr. Harland accompanied him to New York, where on debarking they had met Mr. Brahan, who had given him a brief sketch of my visit, and the events that marked it.

As I sat by him on a low seat, with his hand clasped in mine, while he told me in a low voice of the depth of his penitence, the agonies of his remorse, and the hope of God's pardon that had dawned on what he supposed the night clouds of death, I saw him start as if in sudden pain. The lace sleeve had fallen back from my left arm. His eyes were fixed on the wound he had inflicted. He bent his head forward, and pressed his lips on the scar.

"They shall look upon him whom they have pierced," he murmured. "O my Saviour I could thy murderers feel pangs of deeper remorse at the sight of thy scarred hands and wounded side?"

"Never think of it again, dear Ernest. I did not know it, did not feel it. It never gave me a moment's pang."

"Yes, I remember well why you did not suffer."

"But you must not remember. If you love me, Ernest, make no allusion to the past. The future is ours; youth and hope are ours; and the promises of God, sure and steadfast, are ours. I feel as Noah and his children felt when they stepped from the ark on dry land, and saw the waters of the deluge retreating, and the rainbow smiling on its clouds. What to them were the storms they had weathered, the dangers they had overcome? They were all past. Oh, my husband, let us believe that ours are past, and let us trust forever in the God of our fathers."

"I do—I do, my Gabriella. My faith has hitherto been a cold abstraction; now it is a living, vital flame, burning with steady and increasing light."

At this moment Edith, who had seated herself at the harp, remembering well the soothing influence of music on her brother's soul, touched its resounding strings; and the magnificent strains of the *Gloria in Excelsis*,

> —"rose like a stream
> Of rich distilled perfume."

I never heard any thing sound so sweet and heavenly. It came in, a sublime chorus to the thoughts we had been uttering. It reminded me of the song of the morning stars, the anthem of the angels over the manger of Bethlehem,—so highly wrought were my feelings,—so softly, with such swelling harmony, had the notes stolen on the ear.

Ernest raised himself from his reclining position, and his countenance glowed with rapture. I had never seen it wear such an expression before. "Old things had passed away,—all things had become new."

"There is peace,—there is pardon," said he, in a voice too low for any ear but mine, when the last strain melted away,—"there is joy in heaven over the repenting sinner, there is joy on earth over the returning prodigal."

CONCLUSION

Two years and more have passed since my heart responded to the strains of the *Gloria in Excelsis*, as sung by Edith on the night of her brother's return.

Come to this beautiful cottage on the sea-shore, where we have retired from the heat of summer, and you can tell by a glance whether time has scattered blossoms or thorns in my path, during its rapid flight.

Come into the piazza that faces the beach, and you can look out on an ocean of molten gold, crimsoned here and there by the rays of the setting sun, and here and there melting off into a kind of burning silver. A glorious breeze is beginning to curl the face of the waters, and to swell the white sails of the skiffs and light vessels that skim the tide like birds of the air, apparently instinct with life and gladness. It rustles through the foliage, the bright, green foliage, that contrasts so dazzlingly with the smooth, white, sandy beach,—it lifts the soft, silky locks of that beautiful infant, that is cradled so lovingly in my father's arms. Oh! whose do you think that smiling cherub is, with such dark, velvet eyes, and pearly skin, and mouth of heavenly sweetness? It is mine, it is my own darling Rosalie, my pearl, my sunbeam, my flower, my every sweet and precious name in one.

But let me not speak of her first, the youngest pilgrim to this sea-beat shore. There are others who claim the precedence. There is one on my right hand, whom if you do not remember with admiration and respect, it is because my pen has had no power to bring her character before you, in all its moral excellence and Christian glory. You have not forgotten Mrs. Linwood. Her serene gray eye is turned to the apparently illimitable ocean, now slowly rolling and deeply murmuring, as if its mighty heart were stirred to its inmost core, by a consciousness of its own grandeur. There is peace on her thoughtful, placid brow, and long, long may it rest there.

The young man on my left is recognized at once, for there is no one like him, my high-souled, gallant Richard. His eye sparkles with much of its early quick-flashing light. The shadow of the dismal Tombs no longer clouds, though it tempers, the brightness of his manhood. *He* knows, though the world does not, that his father fills a convict's grave, and this remembrance chastens his pride, without humiliating him with the consciousness of disgrace. He is rapidly making himself a name and fame in the high places of society. Men of talent take him by the hand and welcome him as a younger brother to their ranks, and fair and charming women smile upon and flatter him by the most winning attentions. He passes on from flower to flower, without seeking to gather one to place in his bosom, though he loves to inhale their fragrance and admire their bloom.

"One of these days you will think of marrying," said a friend, while congratulating him on his brilliant prospects.

"When I can find another Gabriella," he answered.

Ah! Richard, there are thousands better and lovelier than Gabriella; and you will yet find an angel spirit in woman's form, who will reward your filial virtues, and scatter the roses of love in the green path of fame.

Do you see that graceful figure floating along on the white beach, with a motion like the flowing wave, with hair like the sunbeams, and eye as when

> "The blue sky trembles on a cloud of purest white?"

and he who walks by her side, with the romantic, beaming countenance, now flashing with the enthusiasm, now shaded by the sensibility of genius? They are the fair-haired Edith, and the artist Julian. He has laid aside for awhile the pencil and the pallette, to drink in with us the invigorating breezes of ocean. Let them pass on. They are happy.

Another couple is slowly following, taller, larger, more of the "earth, earthy." Do you not recognize my quondam tutor and the once dauntless Meg? It is his midsummer vacation, and they, too, have come to breathe an atmosphere cooled by sea-born gales, and to renew the socialities of friendship amid grand and inspiring influences. They walk on thoughtfully, pensively, sometimes looking down on the smooth, continuous beach, then upward to the mellow and glowing heavens. A softening shade has *womanized* the bold brow of Madge, and her red lip has a more subdued tint. She, the care-defying, laughter-breathing, untamable Madge, has known not only the refining power of love, but the chastening touch of sorrow. She has given a lovely infant back to the God who gave it, and is thus linked to the world of angels. But she has treasures on earth still dearer. She leans on a strong arm and a true heart. Let them pass on. They, too, are happy.

My dear father! He is younger and handsomer than he was two years since, for happiness is a wonderful rejuvenator. His youth is renewed in ours, his Rosalie lives again in the cherub who bears her name, and in whom his eye traces the similitude of her beauty. Father! never since the hour when I first addressed thee by that holy name, have I bowed my knee in prayer without a thanksgiving to God for the priceless blessing bestowed in thee.

There is one more figure in this sea-side group, dearer, more interesting than all the rest to me. No longer the wan and languid wanderer returned from Indian shores, worn by remorse, and tortured by memory. The light, if not the glow of health, illumines his face, and a firmer, manlier tone exalts its natural delicacy of coloring.

Do you not perceive a change in that once dark, though splendid countenance? Is there not more peace and softness, yet more dignity and depth of thought? I will not say that clouds never obscure its serenity, nor lightnings never dart across its surface, for life is still a conflict, and the passions, though chained as vassals by the victor hand of religion, will sometimes clank their fetters and threaten to resume their lost dominion; but they have not trampled underfoot the new-born blossoms of wedded joy. I am happy, as happy as a pilgrim and sojourner ought to be; and even now, there is danger of my forgetting, in the fulness of my heart's content, that eternal country, whither we are all hastening.

We love each other as fondly, but less idolatrously. That little child has opened a channel in which our purified affections flow together towards the fountain of all love and joy. Its fairy fingers are leading us gently on in the paths of domestic harmony and peace.

My beloved Ernest! my darling Rosalie! how beautiful they both seem, in the beams of the setting sun, that are playing in glory round them! and how melodiously and pensively, yet grandly does the music of the murmuring waves harmonize with the minor tone of tenderness breathing in our hearts!

We, too, are passing on in the procession of life, and the waves of time that are rolling behind us will wash away the print of our footsteps, and others will follow, and others still, but few will be tossed on stormier seas, or be anchored at last in a more blissful haven.

THE END.

Wives and Widows
Ruby Gray's Strategy
The Soldiers' Orphans
Silent Struggles
The Rejected Wife
The Wife's Secret
Mary Derwent
Fashion and Famine
The Curse of Gold
Mabel's Mistake
The Old Homestead
Doubly False
The Heiress
The Gold Brick

MRS. CAROLINE LEE HENTZ'S WORKS.

Ernest Linwood
The Planter's Northern Bride
Courtship and Marriage
Rena; or, the Snow Bird
Marcus Warland
Love after Marriage
Eoline; or Magnolia Vale
The Lost Daughter
The Banished Son
Helen and Arthur
Linda; or, the Young Pilot of the Belle Creole
Robert Graham; the Sequel to "Linda; or Pilot of Belle Creole"

JAMES A. MAITLAND'S WORKS.

The Watchman
The Wanderer
The Lawyer's Story
Diary of an Old Doctor
Sartaroe
The Three Cousins
The Old Patroon; or the Great Van Broek Property

T. A. TROLLOPE'S WORKS.

The Sealed Packet
Garstang Grange
Gemma
Leonora Casaloni
Dream Numbers
Marietta
Beppo, the Conscript

FREDRIKA BREMER'S WORKS.

Father and Daughter
The Four Sisters
The Neighbors
The Home
Life in the Old World. In two volumes.

MISS ELIZA A. DUPUY'S WORKS.

The Hidden Sin
The Dethroned Heiress
The Gipsy's Warning
All For Love
The Mysterious Guest
Why Did He Marry Her?
Who Shall be Victor
Was He Guilty
The Cancelled Will
The Planter's Daughter
Michael Rudolph; or, the Bravest of the Brave

EMERSON BENNETT'S WORKS.

The Border Rover
Clara Moreland
The Forged Will
Bride of the Wilderness
Ellen Norbury
Kate Clarendon
Viola; or Adventures in the Far South-West
The Heiress of Bellefonte
The Pioneer's Daughter

DOESTICKS' WORKS.

Doesticks' Letters
Plu-Ri-Bus-Tah
The Elephant Club
Witches of New York

WILKIE COLLINS' BEST WORKS.

Basil; or, The Crossed Path
The Dead Secret
Hide and Seek
After Dark
Miss or Mrs?
Mad Monkton
Sights a-Foot
The Stolen Mask
The Queen's Revenge
The Yellow Mask
Sister Rose

CHARLES LEVER'S BEST WORKS.

Charles O'Malley
Harry Lorrequer
Jack Hinton
Tom Burke of Ours
Knight of Gwynne
Arthur O'Leary
Con Cregan
Davenport Dunn
Horace Templeton
Kate O'Donoghue
A Rent in a Cloud
St. Patrick's Eve
Ten Thousand a Year, in one volume
The Diary of a Medical Student, by author "Ten Thousand a Year"

CHARLES DICKENS' WORKS.

Great Expectations
Bleak House
Mystery of Edwin Drood; and Master Humphrey's Clock
American Notes; and the Uncommercial Traveller
Hunted Down; and other Reprinted Pieces
The Holly-Tree Inn; and other Stories
The Life and Writings of Charles Dickens
Our Mutual Friend
Pickwick Papers
Tale of Two Cities
Nicholas Nickleby
David Copperfield
Oliver Twist
Christmas Stories
Sketches by "Boz"
Barnaby Rudge
Martin Chuzzlewit
Old Curiosity Shop
Little Dorrit
Dombey and Son
Dickens' New Stories
Mystery of Edwin Drood; and Master Humphrey's Clock
American Notes; and the Uncommercial Traveller
Hunted Down: and other Reprinted Pieces
The Holly-Tree Inn; and other Stories
The Life and Writings of Charles Dickens

ALEXANDER DUMAS' WORKS.

Count of Monte-Cristo
Edmond Dantes
The Three Guardsmen
Twenty Years After
Bragelonne
The Iron Mask
Louise La Valliere
Diana of Meridor
Adventures of a Marquis
Love and Liberty
Memoirs of a Physician
Queen's Necklace
Six Years Later
Countess of Charny
Andree de Taverney
The Chevalier
Forty-five Guardsmen
The Iron Hand
The Conscript
Countess of Monte-Cristo
Camille; or, The Fate of a Coquette, (La Dame Aux Camelias,)
The Fallen Angel
Felina de Chambure
The Horrors of Paris
Sketches in France
Isabel of Bavaria
Twin Lieutenants
Man with Five Wives
George; or, Isle of France
Annette; or, Lady of Pearls
Madame De Chamblay
The Black Tulip
The Corsican Brothers
The Count of Moret
Mohicans of Paris
The Marriage Verdict
Buried Alive

GEORGE W. M. REYNOLDS' WORKS.

Mysteries Court of London
Rose Foster
Caroline of Brunswick
Venetia Trelawney
Lord Saxondale
Count Christoval
Rosa Lambert
Mary Price
Eustace Quentin
Joseph Wilmot
Banker's Daughter
Kenneth
The Rye-House Plot
The Necromancer
The Opera Dancer
Child of Waterloo
Robert Bruce
The Gipsy Chief
Mary Stuart, Queen of Scots
Wallace, Hero of Scotland
Isabella Vincent
Vivian Bertram
Countess of Lascelles
Duke of Marchmont
Massacre of Glencoe
Loves of the Harem
The Soldier's Wife
May Middleton
Ellen Percy
Agnes Evelyn
Pickwick Abroad
Parricide
Discarded Queen
Life in Paris
Countess and the Page
Edgar Montrose
The Ruined Gamester
Clifford and the Actress
Queen Joanna; or the Mysteries of the Court of Naples
Ciprina; or, the Secrets of a Picture Gallery

MISS PARDOE'S POPULAR WORKS.

Confessions of a Pretty Woman
The Wife's Trials
The Jealous Wife
The Rival Beauties
Romance of the Harem
The Adopted Heir
The Earl's Secret

1.E.3. If an individual Project Gutenberg™ electronic work is posted with the permission of the copyright holder, your use and distribution must comply with both paragraphs 1.E.1 through 1.E.7 and any additional terms imposed by the copyright holder. Additional terms will be linked to the Project Gutenberg™ License for all works posted with the permission of the copyright holder found at the beginning of this work.

1.E.4. Do not unlink or detach or remove the full Project Gutenberg™ License terms from this work, or any files containing a part of this work or any other work associated with Project Gutenberg™.

1.E.5. Do not copy, display, perform, distribute or redistribute this electronic work, or any part of this electronic work, without prominently displaying the sentence set forth in paragraph 1.E.1 with active links or immediate access to the full terms of the Project Gutenberg™ License.

1.E.6. You may convert to and distribute this work in any binary, compressed, marked up, nonproprietary or proprietary form, including any word processing or hypertext form. However, if you provide access to or distribute copies of a Project Gutenberg™ work in a format other than “Plain Vanilla ASCII” or other format used in the official version posted on the official Project Gutenberg™ website (www.gutenberg.org), you must, at no additional cost, fee or expense to the user, provide a copy, a means of exporting a copy, or a means of obtaining a copy upon request, of the work in its original “Plain Vanilla ASCII” or other form. Any alternate format must include the full Project Gutenberg™ License as specified in paragraph 1.E.1.

1.E.7. Do not charge a fee for access to, viewing, displaying, performing, copying or distributing any Project Gutenberg™ works unless you comply with paragraph 1.E.8 or 1.E.9.

1.E.8. You may charge a reasonable fee for copies of or providing access to or distributing Project Gutenberg™ electronic works provided that:

- You pay a royalty fee of 20% of the gross profits you derive from the use of Project Gutenberg™ works calculated using the method you already use to calculate your applicable taxes. The fee is owed to the owner of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark, but he has agreed to donate royalties under this paragraph to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation. Royalty payments must be paid within 60 days following each date on which you prepare (or are legally required to prepare) your periodic tax returns. Royalty payments should be clearly marked as such and sent to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation at the address specified in Section 4, “Information about donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation.”

- You provide a full refund of any money paid by a user who notifies you in writing (or by e-mail) within 30 days of receipt that s/he does not agree to the terms of the full Project Gutenberg™ License. You must require such a user to return or destroy all copies of the works possessed in a physical medium and discontinue all use of and all access to other copies of Project Gutenberg™ works.

- You provide, in accordance with paragraph 1.F.3, a full refund of any money paid for a work or a replacement copy, if a defect in the electronic work is discovered and reported to you within 90 days of receipt of the work.

- You comply with all other terms of this agreement for free distribution of Project Gutenberg™ works.

1.E.9. If you wish to charge a fee or distribute a Project Gutenberg™ electronic work or group of works on different terms than are set forth in this agreement, you must obtain permission in writing from the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, the manager of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark. Contact the Foundation as set forth in Section 3 below.

1.F.

1.F.1. Project Gutenberg volunteers and employees expend considerable effort to identify, do copyright research on, transcribe and proofread works not protected by U.S. copyright law in creating the Project Gutenberg™ collection. Despite these efforts, Project Gutenberg™ electronic works, and the medium on which they may be stored, may contain “Defects,” such as, but not limited to, incomplete, inaccurate or corrupt data, transcription errors, a copyright or other intellectual property infringement, a defective or damaged disk or other medium, a computer virus, or computer codes that damage or cannot be read by your equipment.

1.F.2. LIMITED WARRANTY, DISCLAIMER OF DAMAGES - Except for the “Right of Replacement or Refund” described in paragraph 1.F.3, the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, the owner of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark, and any other party distributing a Project Gutenberg™ electronic work under this agreement, disclaim all liability to you for damages, costs and expenses, including legal fees. YOU AGREE THAT YOU HAVE NO REMEDIES FOR NEGLIGENCE, STRICT LIABILITY, BREACH OF WARRANTY OR

BREACH OF CONTRACT EXCEPT THOSE PROVIDED IN PARAGRAPH 1.F.3. YOU AGREE THAT THE FOUNDATION, THE TRADEMARK OWNER, AND ANY DISTRIBUTOR UNDER THIS AGREEMENT WILL NOT BE LIABLE TO YOU FOR ACTUAL, DIRECT, INDIRECT, CONSEQUENTIAL, PUNITIVE OR INCIDENTAL DAMAGES EVEN IF YOU GIVE NOTICE OF THE POSSIBILITY OF SUCH DAMAGE.

1.F.3. LIMITED RIGHT OF REPLACEMENT OR REFUND - If you discover a defect in this electronic work within 90 days of receiving it, you can receive a refund of the money (if any) you paid for it by sending a written explanation to the person you received the work from. If you received the work on a physical medium, you must return the medium with your written explanation. The person or entity that provided you with the defective work may elect to provide a replacement copy in lieu of a refund. If you received the work electronically, the person or entity providing it to you may choose to give you a second opportunity to receive the work electronically in lieu of a refund. If the second copy is also defective, you may demand a refund in writing without further opportunities to fix the problem.

1.F.4. Except for the limited right of replacement or refund set forth in paragraph 1.F.3, this work is provided to you 'AS-IS', WITH NO OTHER WARRANTIES OF ANY KIND, EXPRESS OR IMPLIED, INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO WARRANTIES OF MERCHANTABILITY OR FITNESS FOR ANY PURPOSE.

1.F.5. Some states do not allow disclaimers of certain implied warranties or the exclusion or limitation of certain types of damages. If any disclaimer or limitation set forth in this agreement violates the law of the state applicable to this agreement, the agreement shall be interpreted to make the maximum disclaimer or limitation permitted by the applicable state law. The invalidity or unenforceability of any provision of this agreement shall not void the remaining provisions.

1.F.6. INDEMNITY - You agree to indemnify and hold the Foundation, the trademark owner, any agent or employee of the Foundation, anyone providing copies of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works in accordance with this agreement, and any volunteers associated with the production, promotion and distribution of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works, harmless from all liability, costs and expenses, including legal fees, that arise directly or indirectly from any of the following which you do or cause to occur: (a) distribution of this or any Project Gutenberg™ work, (b) alteration, modification, or additions or deletions to any Project Gutenberg™ work, and (c) any Defect you cause.

Section 2. Information about the Mission of Project Gutenberg™

Project Gutenberg™ is synonymous with the free distribution of electronic works in formats readable by the widest variety of computers including obsolete, old, middle-aged and new computers. It exists because of the efforts of hundreds of volunteers and donations from people in all walks of life.

Volunteers and financial support to provide volunteers with the assistance they need are critical to reaching Project Gutenberg™'s goals and ensuring that the Project Gutenberg™ collection will remain freely available for generations to come. In 2001, the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation was created to provide a secure and permanent future for Project Gutenberg™ and future generations. To learn more about the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation and how your efforts and donations can help, see Sections 3 and 4 and the Foundation information page at www.gutenberg.org.

Section 3. Information about the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation

The Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation is a non-profit 501(c)(3) educational corporation organized under the laws of the state of Mississippi and granted tax exempt status by the Internal Revenue Service. The Foundation's EIN or federal tax identification number is 64-6221541. Contributions to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation are tax deductible to the full extent permitted by U.S. federal laws and your state's laws.

The Foundation's business office is located at 809 North 1500 West, Salt Lake City, UT 84116, (801) 596-1887. Email contact links and up to date contact information can be found at the Foundation's website and official page at www.gutenberg.org/contact

Section 4. Information about Donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation

Project Gutenberg™ depends upon and cannot survive without widespread public support and donations to carry out its mission of increasing the number of public domain and licensed works that can be freely distributed in machine-readable form accessible by the widest array of equipment including outdated equipment. Many small donations ($1 to $5,000) are particularly important to maintaining tax exempt status with the IRS.

The Foundation is committed to complying with the laws regulating charities and charitable

donations in all 50 states of the United States. Compliance requirements are not uniform and it takes a considerable effort, much paperwork and many fees to meet and keep up with these requirements. We do not solicit donations in locations where we have not received written confirmation of compliance. To SEND DONATIONS or determine the status of compliance for any particular state visit www.gutenberg.org/donate.

While we cannot and do not solicit contributions from states where we have not met the solicitation requirements, we know of no prohibition against accepting unsolicited donations from donors in such states who approach us with offers to donate.

International donations are gratefully accepted, but we cannot make any statements concerning tax treatment of donations received from outside the United States. U.S. laws alone swamp our small staff.

Please check the Project Gutenberg web pages for current donation methods and addresses. Donations are accepted in a number of other ways including checks, online payments and credit card donations. To donate, please visit: www.gutenberg.org/donate

Section 5. General Information About Project Gutenberg™ electronic works

Professor Michael S. Hart was the originator of the Project Gutenberg™ concept of a library of electronic works that could be freely shared with anyone. For forty years, he produced and distributed Project Gutenberg™ eBooks with only a loose network of volunteer support.

Project Gutenberg™ eBooks are often created from several printed editions, all of which are confirmed as not protected by copyright in the U.S. unless a copyright notice is included. Thus, we do not necessarily keep eBooks in compliance with any particular paper edition.

Most people start at our website which has the main PG search facility: www.gutenberg.org.

This website includes information about Project Gutenberg™, including how to make donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, how to help produce our new eBooks, and how to subscribe to our email newsletter to hear about new eBooks.