Title: Say and Seal, Volume II

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Release date: April 8, 2009 [eBook #28545]
Most recently updated: January 4, 2021

Language: English

Produced by Daniel Fromont

[Transcriber's note: Susan Warner (1819-1885) & Anna Warner (1824-1915), *Say and seal* (1860), Tauchnitz edition 1860 volume 2]

COLLECTION

OF

BRITISH AUTHORS

VOL. CCCXCIX.

SAY AND SEAL.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

SAY AND SEAL.

BY

THE AUTHOR OF "WIDE WIDE WORLD,"

AND

THE AUTHOR OF "DOLLARS AND CENTS."

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IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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BERNHARD TAUCHNITZ

1860.

SAY AND SEAL.

VOL. II.

CHAPTER I.

So came the holiday week, wherein was to be done so much less than usual—and so much more. Mr. Linden's work, indeed, was like to double on all hands; for he was threatened with more tea-drinkings, dinners, suppers, and frolics, than the week would hold. How should he manage to give everybody a piece of him, and likewise present himself entire to the assembled boys when ever they chose to assemble?—which promised to be pretty often. How should he go skating, sliding, and sleigh-riding, at all hours of the day and night, and yet spend all those hours where he wanted to spend them? It was a grave question; and not easy, as he remarked to Faith, to hold so many feelings in his hands and hurt none of them. So with the question yet undecided, Christmas day came.

It was a brilliant day—all white and blue; the sky like a sapphire, the earth like a pearl; the sunbeams burnished gold.

"Ha' ye but seen the light fall of the snow,
Before the soil hath smutched it?"—

Such was Pattaquasset, Christmas morning. And the bright lily,

"Before rude hands have touched it,"

that was Faith Derrick when she came down stairs. The dainty little crimson silk hood which Mrs. Derrick had quilted for her, was in her hand, brought down for display; but at present the sitting-room was empty, and Faith passed on to her work-basket, to put the hood in safe keeping. She found a pre-occupied basket. At some unknown hour of the night, Santa Claus had come and left upon it his mark in the shape of a package: a rather large and rather thin package, but done up with that infallible brown paper and small cord which everybody knows by instinct. Who ever looked twice at a parcel from *that* wagon, and doubted whence it came?

Faith's cheeks took an additional tinge, quite as brilliant as if the crimson hood had been on. What doubtful fingers lifted the package from the basket!

The thing—whatever it was—had been done up carefully. Beneath the brown paper a white one revealed itself, beneath that a red leather portfolio—made in the pretty old-fashioned style, and securing its contents by means of its red leather tongue. But when Faith had withdrawn this, and with the caution always exercised on such occasions had also drawn out the contents, she found the prettiest continuation of her Italian journey, in the shape of very fine photographs of all sorts of Italian places and things, mingled with here and there an excursion into the Swiss mountains.

A few almost awe-stricken glances Faith gave; then she put the photographs in the portfolio again, scarcely seen, and looked at the outside of the red leather; felt of its smooth surface with admiring fingers that hardly believed what they touched, and a face glowing with a very deep glow by this time. Faith thought herself rich, beyond the imagination of a millionaire. But after a little mute amazed consideration of her happiness, she rushed off to the kitchen to signalize the Christmas breakfast—and perhaps spend a few of her too many thoughts—by the preparation and production of one of Madame Danforth's nice, but in Pattaquasset unheard of, delicacies; and when all the rest of the breakfast was ready, Faith demurely went in with her dish.

She had not a word of acknowledgment for Mr. Linden, which was ungrateful. She gave him her hand, however, with a manner and look which were graceful enough; being at once open and shy, very bright, and yet veiled with a shade of reserve. She had been over the fire, so her face was naturally a little rosy. There was no particular reserve about him,—his "Merry Christmas" was not only wished but carried out, so far as breakfast time extended. Faith might be as demure as she liked, but she had to be merry too; so on the whole the breakfast room was beaming with more than sunlight. Yes, it was a merry Christmas!—merry without and merry within,—that sort of merriment which "doeth good like a medicine." Gay voices and steps and snowballing on the broad street; gay snowbirds and chickadees in the branches; in the house glad faces; over and upon all, clear sunshine and the soft hush of a winter's morning.

"What are you going to do to-day, mother?" said Faith towards the close of breakfast time.

"I'd rather look at you than anything else, child," said her mother, "but I've got to go out, you know. What are *you* going to do Faith?"

"All sorts of things, mother. Mr. Linden?"—

"All sorts of things, Miss Faith—therefore we shall probably meet quite often in the course of the day," he said smiling. "Will you give me any commands?"

"Perhaps—if I can. Mother, how are we to get to Mrs. Somers to-night?—is Crab well?"

"O Crab's gone away for the winter, child, and we've got Mr.
Stoutenburgh's Jerry. To be sure—that's since you went away."

The first thing for Faith was the Christmas dinner, into which she plunged, heart and hand. The turkey, the apples, and the pies, were all seen to at last; and about an hour before dinner Faith was ready to take off her kitchen apron and go into the parlour. She longed for a further touch and eyesight of that red leather.

She had it, for that hour; as dainty a luxuriating over her treasures as anybody ever had. Faith pondered and dreamed over the photographs, one after another; with endless marvel and querying of numberless questions springing out of them,—general and particular, historical, natural, social, and artistic or scientific. Questions that sometimes she knew only enough to form vaguely. What a looking over of prints that was! such an hour as is known by few, few of those who have seen engravings all their lives. Nay, further than that;—such as is not known by many a one that stands on the Bridge of sighs, and crosses the Mer de glace, and sees the smoke curling up from Vesuvius. For once in a while there is an imaginary traveller at home to whom is revealed more of the spirit of beauty residing in these things, than hundreds of those who visit them do ever see. Who

"Feels the warm Orient in the noontide air,
And from cloud-minarets hears the sunset call to prayer."

Before dinner time was quite on the stroke came home Mr. Linden, who betaking himself first upstairs and then into the sitting-room, brought Faith her Christmas breastknot of green and red. Stiff holly leaves, with their glossy sheen, and bright winterberries—clear and red, set each other off like jewellers' work; and the soft ribbon that bound them together was of the darkest possible blue. It was as dainty a bit of floral handicraft as Faith had often seen.

"Will you wear it, Miss Faith?" Mr. Linden said as he laid it on the table by her.

Faith had come out of her dream, and gave the holly and winterberries a downcast look of recognition. It was given in silence, but the pleasure which had been uppermost for some time presently made her overcome shyness, and looking up gratefully she exclaimed, "Mr. Linden—what pleasure you have given me!"—The soft colour which had been in her cheeks before, mounted instantly to deep crimson, and she added timidly, "Wasn't it you?"

"What pleasure you give me!"—he said with a smile at her crimson and all. "Yes, it was I."

"It seems to me I have been at those places to-day," she went on, looking over at the sofa where her portfolio lay. "I have been fancying your sister standing here and there and looking at something I saw in the picture. Now I can understand a little better what she was writing about."

"I am very glad you like them! Some time you must let me give you any explanations they may need. What have you found for me to do this afternoon?"

"Aren't you going to be busy, Mr. Linden?"

"About something—your business shall come first."

"It can wait," said Faith very brightly. "It was just that, Mr. Linden.—I was going to ask you some time to shew them to me. I have been looking at some of them by myself, and going into a great many things over them that I could not understand. But any time will do for that—as well as to-day."

"And to-day as well as any time"—he said smiling; "but I suppose we must wait till after dinner."

There was great satisfaction at that dinner, not to say in it—which indeed the dinner merited. There was the remaining glow of the pleasant morning, and a little dawning of the afternoon, besides the hour's own light. Faith indeed was the radiating point of pleasure, which the two others watched and furnished with new supplies. Then after dinner came the Italian work, and she had as elaborate and careful answers and information as she wished for. Mr. Linden could go back and tell her where each place got its name, and what had been its history, with many stories of its climate and productions and traditions; and so one by one Faith went over again her new treasures. One by one,—until the short afternoon began to fade, and it was time to dress for Mrs. Somers'; and they had made but little progress into the portfolio, after all. Yet it was a great "progress" to Faith;—a grand procession through the years of history and the stages of civilization and the varying phases of nature and humanity.

Very tenderly the photographs were restored to the portfolio and the red leather tongue drawn through, with a little breath heavy with pleasure, and Faith carried off the whole to be put where profane hands should not get hold of it. Then the comparatively ignoble business of dressing occupied her. And Mrs. Derrick yet more, who of course was there to help and look on; while Faith's head was erratically in her portfolio, or at Rome, or at Florence, or—elsewhere,—as the case might be. Her dress was this evening the same she had worn to Mrs. Stoutenburgh's, but the knot of holly and winterberries transformed her more than the rose and myrtle had done; and she stood an undoubted guest of Christmas night. Faith herself took somewhat of the effect, which her thought however concentrated.

"Mother," she said as she looked in the glass,—"I never saw anything so pretty!"

"Neither did I, child," said Mrs. Derrick smiling.

Faith took still closer note of the beauty of her breastknot; and then gathering up her crimson hood and cloak, they went down stairs. It was not quite the hour yet for Mrs. Somers'. Mr. Linden was ready and in the sitting-room; but Faith did not this time call his attention to her bouquet. She came in and sat down very quietly in a corner of the sofa. He paused in his walk up and down the room however, noting her well as she came in and took her seat; coming presently to take one at her side; and then catching up a book from the table he proceeded to give her the ice palace of the little brook, with which he had threatened her before.—

"Down swept the cold wind from the mountain peak,
From the snow five thousand summers old"—etc.

"O," exclaimed Faith, "I have seen just such a brook! I have played in it; when mother was afraid I should take cold, and wouldn't let me stay. But that's as good as the brook," she added timidly.

"Without the danger of taking cold. You are quite sure it has not chilled you, Miss Faith?—do you feel 'winter-proof'?"

"I think I do, for to-day," said Faith. "If the evening were to be even very disagreeable, I think I could stand it."

Which remark was perhaps significant.

The tinkle of Jerry's bells now made itself heard at the door, and Faith was shawled and cloaked and wrapped up by her mother in the house and by Mr. Linden in the sleigh. He was more skilful about it than Squire Stoutenburgh; and contrived to enclose Faith in a little wigwam of buffalo robes, without letting her feel the weight of them. Then they dashed off—Jerry well disposed for exercise after his five minutes' stand, and spurning the snow from a light enough pair of heels. How merrily the bells jingled! how calmly and steadily the stars shone down! There was no moon now, but the whitened earth caught and reflected every bit of the starlight, and made it by no means dark; and the gleams from cottage windows came out and fell on the snow in little streaks of brightness. Sleighs enough abroad!—from the swift little cutters and large family sleighs that glided on towards the parsonage, down to sledding parties of boys, cheered only by a cow-bell and their own laughter. Tinkle, tinkle—everywhere,—near by and in the distance; the dark figures just casting a light shadow on the roadside, the merry voices ignoring anything of the kind.

Mrs. Somers' house was a good long drive from Mrs. Derrick's. The road was first on the way to Mr. Simlins'; from there it turned off at right angles and went winding crookedly down a solitary piece of country; rising and falling over uneven ground, twisting out of the way of a rock here and there, and for some distance skirting the edge of a woodland. There was light enough to see by, but it was not just the piece of road one would choose of a dark night; and Faith felt thankful Squire Deacon was gone to Egypt.

CHAPTER II.

In the dressing-room Faith was seized upon in the warmest manner by Mrs. Stoutenburgh, who looked very pretty in her dress of bright crimson silk.

"I'm so glad you've come back, dear. And how well you're looking!—a little thin, though. But you'll soon make up for that. You're just as lovely as you can be, Faith—do you know it?"

"No, ma'am."—Her *flowers*, she knew, were as lovely as they could be.
"Jerry brought us, Mrs. Stoutenburgh, after all, and pretty fast too."

"O he can go fast enough. You needn't look so sober, child—of course no one thinks so but me, and nobody ever minds what I say. *That's* pretty, I suppose you'll allow," she said laughing, and bending down closer to Faith's holly leaves,—"what is it, Faith? basswood?"

"Don't you know holly, Mrs. Stoutenburgh? And the berries are winterberries."

"Yes my dear—I perceive. You mustn't get angry with me, child—I tell you nobody does, not even your grave escort. At least not for anything I do to *him*. Well I'll go down and electrify people with the news that you're coming." And the crimson dress floated off to the tune of a light step and a merry voice. And

more slowly and more doubtfully the black dress and winterberries followed her. Perhaps in very truth Faith would have been willing that Mr. Stoutenburgh should have taken her under his broad wing for that going down stairs. At least she was as absolutely grave and quiet as anybody ever saw her, and a little more inclined to be shrinking. But Mr. Linden was alone in the hall at that minute, so there was no one else to shrink from; and if Faith wanted to shrink from him, she hardly could,—there was such an absence of anything to alarm her, both in his look and manner. Therefore, though she had to go down stairs upon his arm, and pass sundry people on their way up, Faith felt that he was a shield between her and the glances and words which he so little regarded. Eyes and tongues indeed ventured hut little in his presence; but that protection of course extended only to the centre of the drawing-room, and the welcome which Faith received from Mrs. Somers,—then she must shield herself. Then truly, for a while, she was taken possession of by Squire Stoutenburgh, who walked with her up and down, and said all manner of kind things.

Faith had no particular skill to shield herself from anything, and indeed gave herself no thought about it. She took what came, in a simple and quiet spirit, which was very apt to strike like a bee the right part of every flower; or that perhaps carried its own honey along. So she walked up and down with Mr. Stoutenburgh; and so she afterwards entered into the demands of a posse of her old and young friends who had not seen her for a good while.

Amidst a little group of these people, collected benignly around Faith, Dr. Harrison presently intruded himself. Now Dr. Harrison was a lion, and the smaller animals naturally fell off from him, which was precisely what he expected them to do. The doctor had the field soon clear.

"What have you been doing to yourself?" he said to Faith with the kindly, familiar manner which had grown up between them.

"Taking good care,"—she said, in smiling answer to his question.

"Who took the care? yourself?"

"Yes."

"I thought so."

"Why, Dr. Harrison?"

"Excuse me," said he. "Anybody else would have done it better."

"No," said she shaking her head,—"you are wrong."

"You have been—" said he, looking at her,—"you have been 'doing your duty' too hard."

"Can one do that, Dr. Harrison?"

"Certainly!"

"I haven't been doing it this time."

"Do you remember," he said sitting down by her and lowering his voice,—"what you said once about the flowers of the wilderness?"

"Yes."

"Would you like to see some of them?"

"In the wilderness?"

"No," said he smiling. "I can shew you one family of them, by their portraits, here—to-night."

"I would like to see them in the wilderness or anywhere!" said Faith.

"Then if you'll come with me"—

And the next thing was Dr. Harrison's walking off the black silk and winterberries before all the eyes of the people and through one room after another, till a little one-side room was reached which was not a thoroughfare to anything. In this little room was a table and a lamp upon it, and also several very large thin books. There was also, which was singular, a very comfortable easy chair. In this Dr. Harrison installed his charge close by the table, and drew up one of the volumes.

"I am going to introduce to you," he said, "the whole family of the Rhododendrons."

"Rhododendron?"—said Faith. "I never saw them."

"It is their loss," said the doctor; "but here they are."

It was as he said;—the whole family of the plant, in the most superb style of portraiture and presentation. Full size and full colour; one of the most magnificent of such works. Faith had never seen a Rhododendron, and even in her dreams had never visited a wilderness where such flowers grew. Her exquisite delight fully satisfied Dr. Harrison, and quite kept her attention from herself and the fact of her being shut off from the rest of the company. Now and then one and another would drop in and look at what they were about, with curiosity if not with sympathy; but Rhododendrons were not alluring to most of the people, nor to say truth was Dr. Harrison. With most urbane politeness he dispersed any desire to remain and look over his proceedings which might have been felt by some of the intruders; or contrived that they should find nothing to detain them.

It was a long business, to turn over all those delicious portraits of floral life and give anything like a sufficient look at each one. Such glories of vegetable beauty Faith had never imagined. It was almost a new revelation. There were deep brilliant crimsons; there was the loveliest rose-colour, in large heads of the close elegant flowers; there were, larger still and almost incredible in their magnificence, enormous clusters of cream-coloured and tinted and even of buff. There were smaller and humbler members of the family, which would have been glorious in any other companionship. There were residents of the rich regions of the tropics; and less superb members of the temperate zones; there were trees and shrubs; and there were little bushy, hardy denizens of the highest and barrenest elevations of rocks and snow to which inflorescence ever climbs. Faith almost caught her breath.

"And these are in the wilderness!" she said.

"Yes. What then?" said the doctor. Faith did not say.

"You are thinking they 'waste their sweetness'?"

"O no, indeed! I don't think that."

"You are thinking something. Please let me be the better for it."

"One ought to be the better for it," said Faith.

"Then I hope you won't refuse it to me," said Dr. Harrison gently laughing at her.

"I was thinking, Dr Harrison, what the Bible says,—'He hath made everything beautiful in his time';—and, 'God saw everything that he had made, and behold it was very good.'"

The doctor turned over the leaf to a new Rhododendron. Faith's thoughts went to Pequot, and her heart gave a bound of joy at the remembrance of the sick woman there.

Mrs. Stoutenburgh's crimson dress was so softly worn and managed, that the wearer thereof was close in Dr. Harrison's neighbourhood for a minute before he was aware of her presence; which quiet motions, it should be observed, were habitual to Mrs. Stoutenburgh, and not at all assumed for the occasion. Therefore it was with no idea of startling anybody, that she said presently, "My dear Faith, what *are* you looking at through those Rhododendrons?" Faith started, and looked up with a bit of a smile.

"What do you see, Mrs. Stoutenburgh?" said the doctor.

"O several things," said the lady, passing her hand softly over Faith's brow, and then with one of her sudden impulses putting her lips there. "Do you like them, Faith?"

"Does not Mrs. Stoutenburgh like them?" said the doctor, as he placed a chair for her in the best position left for seeing.

"Thank you," said she laughing. "I came here to be seen this evening. And so ought some other people. How much do you pay for the monopoly, doctor?"

"I really don't know!" said Dr. Harrison with a very slight rise of his handsome eyebrows. "I am in Pattaquasset—which is to me a region of uncertainties. You will know better than I, Mrs. Stoutenburgh."

"Well," said Mrs. Stoutenburgh with a wicked look at the doctor for his sole benefit,—"speaking of Rhododendrons, which you've seen often enough before,—don't you admire *this*—which you have *not* seen before?" and she touched Faith's holly leaves with the tip of her little glove. "I should think it must stir what Mr. Linden calls your 'nerves of pleasant sensation'."

"I am honoured by your estimation," said the doctor laughing slightly. "Miss Derrick's taste is matchless. It is an act of benevolence for her to wear flowers."

Faith's very brow crimsoned, till she bent it from view as much as she could. In all her truth she could not rise up there and confess that her skill was not the skill to be commended. She wanted a shield then.

"Don't flatter yourself that you are an object of charity," said Mrs. Stoutenburgh turning over another leaf to give Faith employment. "They're talking of games in the other room, dear," she added in a gentle voice,—"may I tell Mrs. Somers you will play too?"

"Yes ma'am, certainly!"

"They're not ready yet—sit still and enjoy your prints—I'll see what they are about." And the lady left the room. Dr. Harrison sought some particularly fine specimens and engaged Faith in talk about them and their localities and habits, till her self-possession was restored.

"Have you heard the news about Mr. Linden?" he asked with most nonchalant carelessness.

"What news?" said Faith, doubtful whether he meant Squire Stoutenburgh's chapter or some other.

"Then he hasn't told you himself?"

"No," said Faith.

"I thought you ought to be authority," the doctor went on in the same tone. "It is very good news—for him—I hope it is true. They say—I have heard,—how beautiful the droop of those petals is!—and the shade of colour is rare—They say, that he has a very dear friend abroad; I mean in Europe, somewhere. Do you think it is true?"

"Yes," said Faith. She thought it was not wonderful news.

"I mean a lady friend?" said the doctor.

"Yes," said Faith again. She knew now what the doctor meant, but she did not feel inclined to enter into the subject or to enlighten him at all. Then too Mr. Linden might have more friends than *one* abroad!—It flashed upon her like a curious illumination.

"Then the story is true?" said the doctor.

"I don't know, sir," said Faith in some distress. "I know nothing about it."

"But you don't know that it is not true?" said he looking at her.

"No, sir. I don't know."

Dr. Harrison's further questions and remarks were cut short by the entrance of the very person referred to; who coming up with his usual light, alert step, held out his hand first of all to the questioner.

"Good evening, doctor!—how do you do again? Miss Faith, may I take you away from these beauties?" And the released hand was offered to her. She put hers in it very willingly but very silently; Faith dared not say a word to him about the Rhododendrons or about anything else.

"Ah, you have two hands again," said Dr. Harrison, "and you turn it against me!"

"Not that fact—" Mr. Linden said as he went off. And then slackening his step, he talked or made Faith talk—and laugh—every inch of the way into the room where all the rest were clustered ready for blind man's buff. It was a triumph of his skill,—or of his power,—for she had left the Rhododendrons in a mood most shy and quiet, and disposed to keep so. Dr. Harrison had not followed them, but soon made his entrance upon the company by another door.

"What is going on? or off, Mrs. Stoutenburgh?" he whispered to that lady.

"Why the bandage is going on, and we're going off," said she laughing. "Will you be blinded first, doctor?"

"Blind man's buff!" said the doctor shrugging his shoulders comically. "Barbarous! I would rather 'go

off' too—but anything to please you, Mrs. Stoutenburgh. A game to see how much a man without his five senses can do against other people who have them." But the doctor gallantly stepped up to Mrs. Somers.

"I represent the forlorn hope for the evening, aunt Ellen. Has anybody volunteered to be the first victim?"

"You are the last person in the room that ought to volunteer," said Mrs. Somers,—"however, blindness is proverbial in some cases. Miss Essie will bandage your eyes, Julius—and use her own for you in the meanwhile, I dare say. Miss Essie, here is a candidate."

"Not for Miss Essie's good offices!" said the doctor. "I know her. I shall not trust her. I will put myself in safe hands."

And with an inexpressible air of carelessness and easy pleasure-taking, Dr. Harrison carried his handsome person across the room to where Faith yet stood by the side of Mr. Linden; stood looking rather sober. She had not brought any of the rosy Rhododendron colour away in her face; or else it had faded. The doctor came up and spoke in an undertone as wilfully and gracefully independent as his manner.

"If I ask you to do me the honour to put this handkerchief over my eyes, Miss Derrick, I suppose you will not know what it signifies?"

"No, sir," said Faith, with a very slight smile and extra colour.

"Where I have been," said the doctor,—"where we never play it!—it is played in this way. My entreating you to blind my eyes, signifies that without them I shall endeavour to find you."

"Then I wish you'd get somebody else to do it, Dr. Harrison."

"You are not in earnest?" said the doctor.

"Very much in earnest."

"But I should observe," said he smiling, "that even the unkindness of your refusal would not change my endeavour. I only give you, as in honour bound, the chance of doing all you can to prevent my succeeding. Will you do it?"

He tendered the handkerchief. Faith coloured a little more, but to put a stop to his absurdities, as they seemed to her, and to her consequent prominence before the eyes of people, she accepted the office. Dr. Harrison kneeled at her feet, and Faith put the handkerchief round his eyes and tied it on; endeavouring, to do her justice, to perform the task thoroughly. She was not quite sure how well it was done, after all,—for the doctor had interposed a gentle "Softly," as she was drawing the knot and had at the same time also raised his hand to ease the bandage. But Faith had to let it go so; and simply resolved to take care of herself.

Many eyes, meanwhile, surveyed this performance with much edification, glancing too at the motionless figure who at Faith's side looked down upon it. But when the smile in those eyes touched the lips as well, Mrs. Stoutenburgh was roused to a pitch of delight; and running into the middle of the room to meet the doctor as he came to take his stand, she clapped her hands exclaiming, "O, doctor! doctor!—how could you let anybody tie anything over your eyes!"

"Is there treachery, Mrs. Stoutenburgh?" said the doctor with a comic stop.

"Where?"—said the lady.

"Nay,—I know where," said the doctor. And turning from her he addressed himself to the game.

But though Dr. Harrison shewed himself a keen player the game came to no sudden termination. And Faith could not help doubting that her work had not been too effectual. It was beyond question, even if she had not been forewarned, that the doctor was endeavouring to find—or endeavouring to catch her. In vain Mrs. Stoutenburgh's crimson and Miss Essie's blue floated past him and rustled behind him. In vain Mrs. Somers' purple stood in his way. The skirt of that one black silk could go nowhere that some one of the doctor's senses did not inform him of it. Closely he followed upon her flight, and keen work Faith found it, play as well as she would. She began to get out of breath, and the amusement and fun grew uproarious.

It was when her foot was failing that the doctor's gained strength: between him and the prize there

was now no barrier; no leap could avail Faith in the corner where she was at last hemmed in. Slowly and securely the doctor advanced, first himself and then his hands, and caught—Mr Linden! Caught him unmistakeably too,—there was no help for it; and Dr. Harrison in his astonishment forgot to pronounce him somebody else!

"Confound you!" said the doctor slowly and comically—"how did you get here?"

"Are you fatigued?" said Mr. Linden, taking off the bandage. "Miss Faith, you did *this* part of your work very ill."

"How did you get here?" repeated the doctor, taking hold of his arm and shaking it slightly. "I wasn't looking for *you*, man."

"What were you *looking* for?" said Mr. Linden, with a laughing return of the doctor's gaze.

"Shall I put that on for you?" said the latter with a sort of complicate expression, which however never lost its grace and ease. And then began another chase—but not of Faith this time,—perhaps Mr. Linden thought she needed rest. And the changes ran round the company, but never (as it happened) including Faith or Dr. Harrison, until they reached the finishing round of the game. Then it was Mr. Linden's turn again to wear the bandage, and then he gave Faith the sort of run he had given her before at Mrs. Stoutenburgh's—and with the same success.

"Haven't they played blind man's buff long enough?" Faith whispered, when the bandage was taken off her captor. She was flushed, a little, and sober more than a little.

"Yes—I will move a change," he answered in the same tone. Which he did, after a short consultation.

"Dr. Harrison—you have seen the 'Butterfly,' I suppose?"

"*The* butterfly?" said the doctor. "I have seen many—of all colours; but the butterfly par excellence, I know not. Unless it is one with white wings and black body, and spots of most brilliant red on the breast."

"The one I mean combines more colours," said Mr. Linden. "What were you doing in France, not to see it?"

"Seeing other things, I suppose. However, now you speak of it, I believe that butterfly has flown over me—sometime."

"Please to imagine yourself a gay rover for the nonce," said Mr. Linden, leading the doctor persuasively into the middle of the floor. "Just suppose you are a Purple Emperor—will you doctor? Miss Essie wants a story and forfeits,—I shall leave you to gratify her." But he himself went to give Miss Faith a seat. That was done with a very different manner from the gay, genial way in which he had addressed the doctor: it was genial enough, certainly, but grave.

"You do not feel well?" he said, as he wheeled up an easy chair for her. It was spoken too low for any one else to hear.

"Yes, I do,"—said Faith quickly. But her face flushed deep, and her eye though it glanced towards him, failed timidly of meeting his; and her voice had lost all the spring of pleasure.

"Then cannot you keep the promise you made about a disagreeable evening?" The tone was very low still—(he was arranging her footstool and chair) a little concerned too, a little—or Faith fancied it—but indeed she was not quite sure what the third part was; and then the doctor began his work.

For a minute or two she did not hear him, or heard without heed. She was thinking over Mr. Linden's question and struggling with it. For its slight tone, of remonstrance perhaps, only met and stirred into life the feeling she was trying to keep down. Her lip took one of its sorrowful curves for an instant; but then Dr. Harrison came towards them.

"What insect on the face of the earth, Linden, will you be? What does he resemble most, Miss Derrick?"

"I am not particular about being on the face of the earth," said Mr. Linden,—"the air will do just as well."

The doctor was waiting for Faith's answer. Under the exigency of the moment she gave it him, glancing up first at the figure beside her, perhaps to refresh her memory—or imagination—and smiling a little as she spoke.

"I don't think of any he is like, Dr. Harrison."

"Do you think I am like a purple butterfly?" said the doctor.

"Yes, a little,"—said Faith. But it was with a face of such childlike soberness that the doctor looked hard at her.

"What do you think you are like yourself?" said he; not lightly.

"I think I am a little like an ant," said Faith.

The doctor turned half round on his heel.

"'Angels and ministers of grace'!" was his exclamation. "Most winged, gentle, and etherial of all the dwellers in, or on, anthills,—know that thy similitude is nothing meaner than a flower. You must take the name of one, Miss Faith—all the ladies do—what will you be?"

"What will you be?" Mr. Linden repeated,—"Mignonette?—that is even below the level of some of your anthills."

"If you please,"—she said.

"Or one of your Rhododendrons?" said the doctor—"that is better; for you have the art—or the nature, indeed,—of representing all the tints of the family by turns—except the unlovely ones. Be a Rhodora!"

"No"—said Faith—"I am not like that—nor like the other, but I will be the other."

"Mignonette"—said the doctor. "Well, what shall we call him? what is *he* like?"

"I think," said Faith, looking down very gravely, not with the flashing eye with which she would have said it another time,—"he is most like a midge."

The little laugh which answered her, the way in which Mr. Linden bent down and said, "How do you know, Miss Faith?" were slightly mystifying to Dr. Harrison.

"I don't know,"—she said smiling; and the doctor with one or two looks of very ungratified curiosity left them and returned to his post.

"What are they going to play, Mr. Linden?" said Faith. The doctor's explanation, given to the rest generally, she had not heard.

"Do you know what a family connexion you have given me, Miss Faith?—The proverb declares that 'the mother of mischief is no bigger than a midge's wing.'"

An involuntary little caught breath attested perhaps Faith's acquiescence in the truth of the proverb; but the doctor's words prevented the necessity of her speaking.

"Miss Essie—Ladies and gentlemen! Please answer to your names, and thereby proclaim your characters. Mrs. Stoutenburgh, what are you?"

"A poppy, I think," said Mrs. Stoutenburgh laughing. "I like to be beforehand with the public."

"Will you please to name your lord and master? He is incapable of naming himself."

"I think you've named him!" said Mrs. Stoutenburgh with a gay toss of her pretty head. "I'm not learned in insects, doctor,—call him anything that eats up butter-flies."

"Mr. Stoutenburgh will—you be a grub?" said the doctor. "Or a beetle?
I don't know anything else that I—as a butterfly—dislike more."

"No, I'll be a cricket—I'm so spry," said the Squire,—"and I'll be down upon *you* in some other form, doctor."

"You'll have to fly higher first," said the doctor. "Miss Essie declares herself to be a purple Althaea. Miss Davids—an evening primrose. Miss Deacon—a cluster rose. Miss Fax—a sweet pink. Miss Chester—a daisy. Miss Bezac—what shall I put you down?" The butterfly was making a list of his flowers and insects, and cards had been furnished to the different members of the party, and pencils, to do as much for themselves.

"I'd as lieve be balm as anything else, if I knew how," said Miss
Bezac; "but I shouldn't call *that* putting me down."

"That fits, anyhow," said Squire Stoutenburgh.

"'Balm for hurt minds'"—said Dr. Harrison writing. "Miss Julia De Staff is a white lily. Miss Emmons—a morning glory. Mrs. Churchill a peony. Miss Derrick is mignonette. Mrs. Somers—?"

"I may as well be lavender," said Mrs. Somers. "You say I am in a good state of preservation."

"What is Mr. Somers?"

"Mr. Somers—what are you?" said his wife.

"Ha!—I don't know, my dear," said Mr. Somers blandly. "I think I am—a—out of place."

"Then you're a moth," said the doctor. "That is out of place too, in most people's opinion. Miss Delaney, I beg your pardon—what are you?"

"Here are the two Miss Churchills, doctor," said Miss Essie—"hyacinth and laburnum."

"I am sure you have been sponsor, Miss Essie. Well this is my garden of flowers. Then of fellow insects I have a somewhat confused variety. Mr. Stoutenburgh sings round his hearth in the shape of a black cricket. Mr. Linden passes unnoticed in the invisibility of a midge—nothing more dangerous. Mr. Somers does all the mischief he can in the way of devouring widows' houses. The two Messrs. De Staff" (two very spruce and moustachioed young gentlemen) "figure as wasp and snail—one would hardly think they belonged to the same family—but there is no accounting for these things. Mr. George Somers professes to have the taste of a bee—but luckily the garden belongs to the butterfly."

"In other words, some one has put Dr. Harrison in a flutter," said Mrs. Stoutenburgh.

"I haven't begun yet," said the doctor wheeling round to face her; "when I do, my first business will be to cut you up, Mrs. Stoutenburgh."

"Miss Faith," said Mr. Linden while the roll went on, "I have not forgotten your question,—they, and we, are going to play a French game called 'the Butterfly and the Flowers;' wherein I, a midge, am in humble attendance oh a sprig of mignonette. Whenever our butterfly gardener chooses to speak the name of any flower or insect, that Flower or insect must reply: when he speaks of the gardener, you flowers must extend one hand in token of welcome, we insects draw back in dismay: if the gardener brings his watering-pot, or there falls a shower of rain, you must hold up your head for joy—I must kneel down for fear. If the sunshine is mentioned, we are free to rejoice together—standing up and making demonstrations. You may reply, Miss Faith, either in your own words or quotations, so that you mention some one of your companions; but if you fail to speak, or break any other rule, you must pay a forfeit first and redeem it afterwards."

"I may mention either insect or flower?" said Faith.

"Yes, just what you like."

"If everybody is ready," said the doctor, "I will begin by remarking that I find myself in an 'embarras de richesses'—so many sweets around me that I—a butterfly—know not which to taste first; and such an array of enemies, hostile alike to the flowers and me, that I know not which to demolish first. I hope a demolishing rain will fall some of these days—ah! that is gratifying! behold my enemies shrinking already, while the flowers lift up their heads with pleasure and warm themselves in the rays of the sun. What is mignonette doing?"

There was a general outcry of laughter, for as the gentlemen had kneeled and bent their heads, and the flowers had risen to greet the sun,—Faith, in her amusement and preoccupation had sat still. She rose now, blushing a little at being called upon.

"Mignonette loves the sun without making any show for it. She has no face to lift up like the white lily."

"The white lily isn't sweet like lavender," said Miss Julia.

"And the lavender has more to do in the linen press than among butterflies," said Mrs. Somers.

"It is good to know one's place," said the doctor. "But the butterfly, seeking a safe resting place, flutters with unpoised flight, past the false poppy which flaunts its gay colours on the sight."

"And fixes its eyes on the distant gardener with his watering-pot," said Mrs. Stoutenburgh, stretching forth her hand, sibyl-like, towards the now prostrate doctor,—"whereat the mignonette rejoices."

"All the flowers rejoice," said the mignonette, "and the cricket jumps out of the way."

"Into the sunshine"—said Mr. Stoutenburgh, laughing;—"but the moth feels doubtful."

"The moth"—said Mr. Somers—"he—don't like the sunshine so well as the rain. He—ha—he wishes he was a midge there, to get under shelter."

"A midge *here* he can't be," said Mr. Linden, dropping his voice for Faith's benefit,—"'Two suns hold not their courses in one sphere!'"—Then aloud—"Invisibility is a great thing—when you can make up your mind to it, but 'Althaea with the purple eye' looks on life differently."

"I look on it soberly," said Miss Essie.—

"'Flutter he, flutter he, high as he will,
A butterfly is but a butterfly still.
And 'tis better for us to remain where we are,
In the lowly valley of duty and care,
Than lonely to soar to the heights above,
Where there's nothing to do and nothing to love.'"

"I'll flutter no more! after that"—said the doctor. "I'll creep into the heart of the white lily and beg it to shelter me."

"It won't hide you from the sun nor from the rain," said the white lily,—"and I'd as lieve shelter a spider besides."

Faith forgot again that she must welcome the sun; but she was not the only one who had incurred forfeits. Nor the last one who should. For while that interesting member of society who called himself spider, made his reply, Mr. Linden's attention naturally wandered—or came back; and the lively dialogue which then ensued between Messrs. Snail, Wasp, Beetle, etc. failed to arouse him to the duties of a midge or the fear of the gardener: he forgot everything else in the pleasure of making Mignonette laugh. Standing half before her at last, in some animated bit of talk, more than one sunbeam and watering-pot had come and gone, unnoticed by both midge and mignonette,—a fact of which some other people took note, and smilingly marked down the forfeits.

"Mr. Linden"—said the voice of Miss Essie at his elbow—"do you know what the doctor is saying?—'The mother of mischief is no bigger than a midge's wing!' You'd better speak to him."

Mr. Linden turned, with a laughing, recollective glance—

"Who speaks slightingly of the midge?—let him have a dose of syrup of poppies!"

"I guess you can find balm," said Mrs. Stoutenburgh gaily.

"He shall have it if he wants it," said Miss Bezac—"that is if *I*'ve got it,—though I rather guess he's got it himself,—I'm sure I don't know what he hasn't got. And it don't strike me he looks as if he wanted it, either, if I *had*. But it's funny I should and not the doctor—though to be sure most things are,—and *he*'s gone to 'the butterfly's ball and the grasshopper's feast.'"

"The grasshopper's feast being just now announced," said Mrs. Somers stepping forward, "I shall hope to set the flowers free from their natural enemies without more delay."

"I shall not confess to that!" said Mr. Linden under-tone. "But will you come, Miss Faith—the insects are all gone—

'Save the few that linger, even yet,
Round the Alyssum's tuft and the Mignonette.'"

The midge's prompt action had perhaps disappointed several other people. Dr. Harrison at any rate contrived with Miss Essie to be the immediately preceding couple in the walk to the supper-room.

"I'm glad of some refreshment!" said the doctor; "butterflies cannot live on the wing. Linden! have you been singing all the evening, in the character of a midge?"

"No," said Mr. Linden—"all the singing I have done has been in my own character."

"I am glad to hear it. By the way," said Dr. Harrison as they reached the supper-room and paired off from their respective charges,—"I am sorry to hear that Pattaquasset has no hold on you, Linden."

"Indeed?" said Mr. Linden,—an "indeed" which might refer to the doctor's sorrow, or the supposed fact.

"Nay I know nothing about it!" said the doctor lightly as he attacked the supper-table—"but Miss Derrick tells me it is true that your heart is in another place."

"Dr. Harrison!" Mr. Linden said, with a momentary erectness of position. But he said no more; turning off then towards Faith with her oysters. And the gentle respect and quick attention with which she was served, Faith might feel, and take note of—yet not guess that its peculiar tone this night was warring, hand to hand, with the injustice done her name. The doctor had unwittingly betrayed at least one point of talk held over the Rhododendrons—furnished a clue he dreamed not of; and stirred a power of displeasure which perhaps he thought Mr. Linden did not possess.

Faith did not indeed guess anything from the manner of the latter to her, although she felt it; she felt it as his own, kind and watchful and even affectionate; but like him, belonging to him, and therefore not telling upon the question. With a very humbled and self-chiding spirit, she was endeavouring to keep the face and manner which suited the place, above a deep sinking of heart which was almost overcoming. Her success was like the balance of her mind—doubtful. Gentle her face was as ever; all the crosses of the evening had not brought an angle there; but it was shadowed beyond the fitness of things; and she was still and retiring so far as it was possible to be, shrinking into a very child's lowness of place.

Ladies were in the majority that night and the gentlemen were obliged to be constantly on the move. In one of the minutes when Faith was alone, Mrs. Stoutenburgh came up.

"Faith," she whispered, "have you been doing anything to vex my friend?"

Faith started a little, with a sort of shadow of pain crossing her face.

"Who is your friend, Mrs. Stoutenburgh?"

"Hush, child!" she answered—"*your* friend, if you like it better." And she added softly but seriously, "Don't vex him,—he doesn't deserve it."

Faith's lip was that touchingly sorrowful child's lip for an instant. She was beyond speaking. Then came up help, in the shape of Miss Essie; with questions about the forfeits and about Mr. Linden. All Mrs. Stoutenburgh's kindness made itself into a screen for Faith, on the instant,—neither eyes nor tongues were allowed to come near her.

"Mr. Linden!" said Miss Essie as he just then came up, "will you help us give out forfeits? Who do you think is best to do it?"

"Mr. Linden," said Mrs. Somers, "we are all very anxious to know whether all the reports about you are true."

Mr. Linden bowed to the anxiety, but gave it no further heed.

"Are they?" she repeated.

"Do all the reports agree, Mrs. Somers?"

"I must confess they are at swords' points."

"Then they cannot all be true,—let them fight it out."

"But suppose some of the fighting should come upon you?"

"That is a supposition I have just refused to take up," said Mr. Linden, stepping towards the table and bringing a bunch of grapes to Faith's plate.

"Yes, but everybody hasn't the patience of Job," said Mrs. Somers. "Julius, for instance."

"He has at least his own ways of obtaining information," said Mr. Linden, and Faith felt the slight change of voice. "Miss Essie, what will you have?"

"Has the doctor any forfeits to pay?" was the somewhat irrelevant answer. "I should so like to see you two set against each other! Dr. Harrison!—have you any forfeits?"

"No," said the doctor;—"but as severe service to perform as if I had.
Linden, we shall want your help—it's too much for one man."

Faith edged away behind this growing knot of talkers, and presently was deeply engaged in conversation with Miss Cecilia Deacon, at a table in the corner, and alternating her attention between grapes and words. Then Squire Stoutenburgh walked softly up and stood behind Faith's chair.

"My dear, will you have anything more?"

"No, sir, thank you."

"Then I am going to carry you off!" said the Squire,—"if I wait a quarter of a second more I shall lose my chance. Come!"

Faith was very willing to come, indeed; and they went back to the drawing-room, all the company pouring after them; and Faith feeling as if she had got under a kind of lee shore, on Mr. Stoutenburgh's arm. It could not shelter her long, for the forfeits began.

The doctor and Mr. Linden, with Miss Essie and Mrs. Stoutenburgh for coadjutors, were constituted the awarding committee; and the forfeits were distributed to them indifferently. There were many to be redeemed; and at first there was a crowd of inferior interest, Messrs. Spider and Wasp, Mesdemoiselles White Lily and Cluster rose; who were easily disposed of and gallantly dismissed. But there were others behind. One of Faith's forfeits came up; it was held by Dr. Harrison.

"Please to stand forth, Miss Derrick, and hear your sentence," said the doctor, leading her to a central position in the floor; which Faith took quietly, but with what inward rebellion one or two people could somewhat guess.

"Have the goodness to state to the company what you consider to be the most admirable and praiseworthy of all the characters of flowers within your knowledge; and to describe the same, that we may judge of the justness of your opinion."

"Describe the character?" said Faith in a low voice.

"Yes. If you please."

She stood silent a moment, with downcast eyes, and did not raise them when she spoke. Her colour was hardly heightened, and though her voice rose little above its former pitch, its sweet accents were perfectly audible everywhere. The picture would have been enough for her forfeit.

"The prettiest character of a flower that I know, is that of a little species of Rhododendron. It is one of the least handsome, to look at, of all its family; its beauty is in its living. It grows on the high places of high mountains, where frost and barrenness give it no help nor chance; but there, where no other flower ever blossoms, it opens its flowers patiently and perseveringly; and its flowers are very sweet. Nothing checks it nor discourages it. As soon as the great cold lets it come, it comes; and as long as the least mildness lets it stay, it stays. Amidst snow and tempest and desolation it opens its blossoms and spreads its sweetness, with nobody to see it nor to praise it; where from the nature of the place it lives in, its work is all alone. For no other flower will bear what it bears.—Will that do?" said Faith, looking up gravely at her questioner.

Very gently, very reverently even, he took her hand, put it upon his arm and led her to a seat, speaking as he went low words of gratified pardon asking. "You must forgive me!" he said. "Forfeits must be forfeits, you know. I couldn't resist the temptation."

"Now wasn't that pretty?" whispered Miss Essie in the mean time in Mr.
Linden's ear.

He had listened, leaning against the mantelpiece, and with shaded eyes looking down; and now to Miss Essie's question returned only a grave bend of the head.

"If you have been looking at the floor all this while, you have lost something," said the lady. "Do you know your turn comes next? Mr. Linden—ladies and gentlemen!—is condemned to tell us what he holds the most precious thing in this world; and to justify himself in his opinion by an argument, a quotation, and an illustration!"—

"Now will he find means to evade his sentence!" said Mrs. Stoutenburgh laughing.

"He has confessed himself addicted to witchcraft in my hearing," said the doctor, who had remained standing by Faith's chair.

"The most precious thing in the world," said Mr. Linden, in a tone as carelessly graceful as his attitude, "is that which cannot be bought,—for if money could buy it, then were money equally valuable. Take for illustration, the perfection of a friend."

"*I* don't understand,"—said Miss Essie; "but perhaps I shall when I hear the rest."

He smiled a little and gave the quotation on that point in his own clear and perfect manner.

"'A sweet, attractive kind of grace;
A full assurance given by looks;
Continual comfort in a face;
The lineaments of gospel books,—
I trow that countenance cannot lye
Whose thoughts are legible in the eye.'"

The quotation was received variously, but in general with vast admiration. Miss Essie turned to Mrs. Stoutenburgh and remarked, half loud,

"*That's* easy to understand. I was dull."

"What do you think of it?" said the doctor softly, stooping towards Faith. But if she heard she did not answer him. She sat with downcast eyes that did not move. She had been wondering whether that was a description of "Pet,"—or of somebody else.

"Faith," whispered Mrs. Stoutenburgh's kind mischievous voice in her ear,—"in whose face do you suppose he finds 'continual comfort'?" But she was sorry the next instant, for the pained, startled look which flashed up at her. Sorry and yet amused—the soft little kiss on Faith's cheek was smiling although apologetic.

"Mr. Linden," said the doctor, who held the bag of forfeits,—"it is your duty to punish Miss Essie with some infliction, such as you can devise."

"Miss Essie," said Mr. Linden, walking gravely up to her, "if there is any person in this room towards whom you entertain and practise malicious, mischievous, and underhand designs, you are hereby sentenced to indicate the person, declare the designs, and to 'shew cause.'"

"Why I never did in my life!" said Miss Essie, with a mixture of surprise and amusement in her gracious black eyes.

"The court is obliged to refuse an unsupported negative," said Mr.
Linden bowing.

"Well," said Miss Essie, with no diminishing of the lustre of her black orbs,—"I had a design against you, sir!"

"Of what sort?" said Mr. Linden with intense gravity, while everybody else laughed in proportion.

"I had a design to enter your mind by private fraud, and steal away its secrets;—and the reason was, because the door was so terribly strong and had such an uncommon good lock! and I couldn't get in any other way."

"I hope that is news to the rest of the company," said Mr. Linden laughing as he bowed his acknowledgments. "It is none to me! Miss Essie, may your shadow never be less!"—

"Aint you ashamed!" said Miss Essie reproachfully. "Didn't such a confession deserve better? Who's next, Mr. Harrison?"

Some unimportant names followed, with commonplace forfeits according; then Faith's name came to Mr. Linden. Then was there an opening of eyes and a pricking of ears of all the rest of the company. Only Faith herself sat as still as a mouse, after one little quick glance over to where the person stood in whose hands she was. He stood looking at her,—then walked with great deliberation across the room to her low seat, and taking both her hands lifted her up.

"You need not be frightened," he said softly, as keeping one hand in his clasp he led her back to where he had been standing; then placed her in a great downy easy chair in that corner of the fireplace, and drew up a footstool for her feet.

"Miss Faith," he said, "you are to sit there in absolute silence for the next fifteen minutes. If anybody speaks to you, you are not to answer,—if you are longing to speak yourself you must wait. It is also

required that you look at nobody, and hear as little as possible." With which fierce sentence, Mr. Linden took his stand by the chair to see it enforced.

"What a man you are!" said Mrs. Stoutenburgh laughing.

"That's not fair play!" said Mrs. Somers. "She don't want to sit there—if you think she does, you're mistaken."

"She should have been more careful then," said Mr. Linden. "Dr. Harrison, you have the floor."

Dr. Harrison did not appear to think that was much of a possession;—to judge by his face, which cast several very observant glances towards the chair, and by his manner which for a moment was slightly abstracted and destitute of the spirit of the game. Miss Essie's eyes took the same direction, with a steady gaze which the picture justified. Faith sat where she had been placed, in most absolute obedience to the orders she had received,—except possibly—not probably—the last one. The lids drooped over her eyes, which moved rarely from the floor, and never raised themselves. Her colour had risen indeed to a rich tint, where it stayed; but Mrs. Somers' declaration nevertheless was hardly borne out by a certain little bit-in smile which lurked there too, spite of everything. Otherwise she sat like an impersonation of silence, happily screened, by not looking at anybody, from any annoyance of the eyes that were levelled at her and at the figure that held post by her side.

"Mrs. Stoutenburgh," said the doctor, "you have my aunt Ellen."

Mrs. Stoutenburgh however was lenient in that quarter, and told Mrs. Somers they would require nothing of her but the three last items of Pattaquasset news—which she, as pastor's wife, was bound to know. And Mrs. Somers was not backward in declaring them; the first being the engagement of two people who hated each other, the second the separation of two people who loved each other; the third, that Mr. Linden shot himself—to make a sensation.

"Mr. Linden," said the doctor, "you come next—and you are mine. What shall I do with you?"

"Why—anything," said Mr. Linden.

"Well—I am greatly at a loss what you are good for," said the doctor lightly,—"but on the whole I order you to preach a sermon to the company."

"Have you any choice as to the text?"

"I am not in the way of those things," said the doctor laughingly. "Give us the lesson you think we want most."

The clear, grave look that met him—Dr. Harrison had seen it before. The change was like the parting of a little bright vapour, revealing the steadfast blue beneath.

"Nay doctor, you must bid me do something else! I dare not play at marbles with precious stones."

There was probably a mixture of things in the doctor's mind;—but the outward show in answer to this was in the highest degree seemly and becoming. The expression of Dr. Harrison's face changed; with a look gentle and kind, even winning, he came up to Mr. Linden's side and took his hand.

"You are right!" said he, "and I have got my sermon—which I deserve. But now, Linden, *that* is not your forfeit;—for that you must tell me—honestly—what you think of me." There was always a general air of carelessness about Dr. Harrison, as to what he said himself or what others said in his presence. Along with this carelessness, which whether seeming or real was almost invariable, there mingled now a friend's look and tone and something of a friend's apology making.

"But do you want me to tell everybody else?" said Mr. Linden, smiling in his old way at the doctor. "Do you like to blush before so many people?"

"That's your forfeit!" said the doctor resuming also his old-fashioned light tone. "You're to tell me—and you are *not* to tell anybody else!"

"Well—if you will have it," said Mr. Linden looking at him,—"Honestly, I think you are very handsome! —of course that is news to nobody but yourself."

"Mercy on you, man!" said the doctor; "do you think that is news to *me?*"

"It is supposed to be—by courtesy," said Mr. Linden laughing.

"Well—give me all the grace courtesy will let you," said the doctor; whether altogether lightly, or with some feeling, it would have been hard for a by-stander to tell. "Is Miss Derrick's penance out? She comes next—and Miss Essie has her."

"No,"—said Mr. Linden consulting his watch. "I am sorry to interfere with your arrangements, doctor, but justice must have its course."

"Then there is a 'recess'"—said the doctor comically. "Ladies and gentlemen—please amuse yourselves."—

He had no intention of helping them, it seemed, for he stood fast in his place and talked to Mr. Linden in a different tone till the minutes were run out. No thing could be more motionless than the occupant of the chair.

"Miss Faith," Mr. Linden said then, "it is a little hard to pass from one inquisitor to another—but I must hand you over to Miss Essie."

Faith's glance at him expressed no gratification. Meanwhile the doctor had gone for Miss Essie and brought her up to the fireplace.

"Miss Derrick," said the black-eyed lady, "I wish you to tell—as the penalty of your forfeit—why, when you thought the Rhododendron the most perfect flower, you did not take it for your name?"

If anybody had known the pain this question gave Faith—the leap of dismay that her heart made! Nobody knew it; her head drooped, and the colour rose again to be sure; but one hand sheltered the exposed cheek and the other was turned to the fire. She could not refuse to answer, and with the doctor's weapons she would not; but here, as once before, Faith's straightforwardness saved her.

"Why didn't you call yourself Rhodora?" repeated Miss Essie. And Faith answered,—

"Because another name was suggested to me."

The question could not decently be pushed any further; and both Miss Essie and the doctor looked as if they had failed. Faith's own tumult and sinking of heart prevented her knowing how thoroughly this was true.

"And you two people," said Mr. Linden, "come and ask Miss Derrick why she chose to appropriate a character that she thought fell short of perfection!—what is the use of telling anybody anything, after that?"

"I am only one people," said Miss Essie.

"I am another," said the doctor; "and I confess myself curious. Besides, a single point of imperfection might be supposed, without injury to mortal and human nature."

"Julius," said Miss Harrison, "will you have the goodness to do so impolite a thing as to look at your watch? Aunt Ellen will expect us to set a proper example. Dear Faith, are you bound to sit in that big chair all night?"

Then there was a general stir and break-up of the party. One bit of conversation Faith was fated to hear as she slowly made her way out of the dressing-room door, among comers and goers: the first speaker was a young De Staff.

"Since that shooting affair there's been nothing but reports about you,
Linden."

"Reports seldom kill," said Mr. Linden.

"Don't trust to that!" said another laughing moustache,—"keep 'em this side the water. By the way—is there any likeness of that fair foreigner going? How do you fancy *she* would like reports?"

"When you find out I wish you would let me know," said Mr. Linden with a little accent of impatience, as he came forward and took Faith in charge.

CHAPTER III.

It was pretty late when Jerry and his little sleigh-load got clear of the gates. The stars were as bright as

ever, and now they had the help of the old moon; which was pouring her clear radiance over the snow and sending long shadows from trees and fences. The fresh air was pleasant too. Faith felt it, and wondered that starlight and snow and sleigh-bells were such a different thing from what they were a few hours before. She chid herself, she was vexed at herself, and humbled exceedingly. She endeavoured to get back on the simple abstract ground she had held in her own thoughts until within a day or two; she was deeply ashamed that her head should have allowed even a flutter of imagination from Mr. Stoutenburgh's words, which now it appeared might bear a quite contrary sense to that which she had given them. What was *she*, to have anything to do with them? Faith humbly said, nothing. And yet,—she could not help that either,—the image of the possibility of what Dr. Harrison had suggested, raised a pain that Faith could not look at. She sat still and motionless, and heard the sleigh-bells without knowing to what tune they jingled.

It was a quick tune, at all events,—for the first ten or fifteen minutes Jerry dashed along to his heart's content, and his driver even urged him on,—then with other sleighs left far behind and a hill before him, Jerry brought the tune to a staccato, and Mr. Linden spoke. But the words were not very relevant to either stars or sleigh-bells.

"Miss Faith, I thought you knew me better."

They startled her, for she was a minute or two without answering; then came a gentle, and also rather frightened,

"Why?—why do you say that, Mr. Linden?"

"Do you think you know me?" he said, turning towards her with a little bit of a smile, though the voice was grave. "Do you think you have any idea how much I care about you?"

"I think you do," she said. "I am sure you do—very much!"

"Do you know how much?"—and the smile was full then, and followed by a moment's silence. "I shall not try to tell you, Miss Faith; I could not if I would—but there is something on the other side of the question which I want you to tell me."

And Jerry walked slowly up the snowy hill, and the slight tinkle of his bells was as silvery as the starlight of Orion overhead.

Faith looked at her questioner and then off again, while a rich colour was slowly mantling in her cheeks. But the silence was breathless. Jerry's bells only announced it. And having by that time reached the top of the hill he chose—and was permitted—to set off at his former pace; flinging off the snow right and left, and tossing his mane on the cool night air. Down that hill, and up the next, and down that—and along a level bit of road to the foot of another,—then slowly.

"Miss Faith," said Mr. Linden when they were half way up, "do you never mean to speak to me again?"

A very low-breathed although audible "yes."

"Is that all you mean to say?—I shall take it very comprehensively."

She was willing probably that he should take it any way that he pleased; but to add was as much beyond Faith's power at the moment as to subtract from her one word. She did not even look.

"Do you know what this silence is promising?" Mr. Linden said in the same tone, and bending down by her. "I do—and yet I want to hear you speak once more. If there is any reason why I should try not to love you better than all the rest of the world, you must tell me now."

One other quick, inquiring, astonished glance her eyes gave into his face; and then, as usual, his wish to have her speak made her speak, through all the intense difficulty. There was a minute's further hesitation, and then the words, very low, very simple, and trembling,

"Do—if you can."

"Do *try?*" he said in a lower and graver tone.

"Try?"—she said; then with a change of voice and in very much confusion,—"O no, Mr. Linden!"

"I should not succeed"—was all his answer, nor was there time for much more; for having now turned into the main street where other homeward-bound sleighs were flying along, there was nothing to do but fly along with the rest; and a very few minutes brought them home.

Mr. Skip was probably reposing in parts unknown, for there was no sign of him at his post; and when Faith had been silently taken out of the sleigh and into the hall, Mr. Linden went back to Jerry—telling her she must take good care of herself for five minutes.

Bewilderedly, and trembling yet, Faith turned into the sitting-room. It was warm and bright, Mrs. Derrick having only lately left it; and taking off hood and cloak in a sort of mechanical way, with fingers that did not feel the strings, she sat down in the easy chair and laid her head on the arm of it; as very a child as she had been on the night of that terrible walk;—wondering to herself if this were Christmas day—if she were Faith Derrick—and if anything were anything!—but with a wonder of such growing happiness as made it more and more difficult for her to raise her head up. She dreaded—with an odd kind of dread which contradicted itself—to hear Mr. Linden come in; and in the abstract, she would have liked very much to jump up and run away; but that little intimation was quite enough to hold her fast. She sat still drawing quick little breaths. The loud voice of the clock near by, striking its twelve strokes, was not half so distinct to her as that light step in the hall which came so swiftly and quick to her side.

"What is the problem now, pretty child?" Mr. Linden said, laying both hands upon hers,—"it is too late for study to-night. You must wait till to-morrow and have my help."

She rose up at that, however gladly she would have hidden the face her rising revealed; but yet with no awkwardness she stood before him, rosily grave and shy, and with downcast eyelids that could by no means lift themselves up to shew what was beneath; a fair combination of the child's character and the woman's nature in one; both spoken fairly and fully. Mr. Linden watched her for a minute, softly passing his hand over that fair brow; then drew her closer.

"I suppose I may claim Mr. Stoutenburgh's privilege now," he said. But it was more than that he took. And then with one hand still held fast, Faith was put back in her chair and wheeled up to the fire "to get warm," and Mr. Linden sat down by her side.

Did he really think she needed it, when she was rosy to her fingers' ends? But what could she do, but be very still and very happy Even as a flower whose head is heavy with dew,—never more fragrant than then, yet with the weight of its sweet burden it bends a little;—like that was the droop of Faith's head at this minute. Whither had the whirl of this evening whirled her? Faith did not know. She felt as if, to some harbour of rest, broad and safe; the very one where from its fitness it seemed she ought to be. But shyly and confusedly, she felt it much as a man feels the ground, who is near taken off it by a hurricane. Yet she felt it, for her head drooped more and more.

"Faith," Mr. Linden said, half smiling, half seriously, "what has made you so sober all this evening—so much afraid of me?"

The quick answer of the eye stayed not a minute; the blush was more abiding.

"You don't want me to tell you that!"—she said in soft pleading.

"Do you know now who I think has—

'A sweet attractive kind of grace'?"

"O don't, please, speak so, Mr. Linden!" she said bowing her face in her hands,—"it don't belong to me."—And pressing her hands closer, she added, "*You* have made me all I am—that is anything."

"There is one thing I mean to make you—if I live," he answered smiling, and taking down her hand. "Faith, what do you mean by talking to me in that style?—haven't you just given me leave to think what I like of you? You deserve another half hour's silent penance."

A little bit of smile broke upon her face which for an instant she tried to hide with her other hand. But she dropped that and turned the face towards him, rosy, grave, and happy, more than she knew, or she perhaps would have hidden it again. Her eyes indeed only saw his and fell instantly; and her words began and stopped.

"There is one comfort—"

"What, dear child?"

"That you know what to think," she said, looking up with a face that evidently rested in the confidence of that fact.

"About what?" Mr. Linden said with an amused look. "I have known what to think about *you* for some

time."

"I meant that,"—she said quietly and with very downcast eyes again.

"I am not in a good mood for riddles to-night," said Mr. Linden,—"just what does this one mean?"

"Nothing, only—" said Faith flushing,—"you said—"

She was near breaking down in sheer confusion, but she rallied and went on. "You said I had given you leave to think what you liked of me,—and I say it is a comfort that you know *what* to think."

Mr. Linden laughed.

"You are a dear little child!" he said. "Being just the most precious thing in the world to me, you sit there and rejoice that I am in no danger of overestimating you—which is profoundly true. My comfort in knowing what to think, runs in a different line."

It is hard to describe Faith's look; it was a mixture of so many things. It was wondering, and shamefaced; and curious for its blending of humility and gladness; but gladness moved to such a point as to be near the edge of sorrowful expression. She would not have permitted it to choose such expression, and indeed it easily took another line; for even as she looked, her eye caught the light from Mr. Linden's and the gravity of her face broke in a sunny and somewhat obstinate smile, which Faith would have controlled if she could.

"That penance was not so very bad," she said, perhaps by way of diversion.

"I enjoyed it," said Mr. Linden,—"I am not sure that everybody else did. Are you longing for another piece of rest?—Look up at me, and let me see if *I* ought to keep you here any longer."

She obeyed, though shyly; the smile lingering round her lips yet, and her whole face, to tell the truth, bearing much more resemblance to the dawn of a May morning than to the middle of a December night. Mr. Linden was in some danger of forgetting why he had asked to see it; but when her eyes fell beneath his, then he remembered.

"I must let you go," he said,—"I suppose the sooner I do that, the sooner I may hope to see you again. Will you sleep diligently, to that end?"

"I don't know—" she said softly; rising at the same time to gather up her wrappers which lay strewed about, around and under her. Her lips had the first answer to that; only as he let her go Mr. Linden said,

"You must try."

And a little scarce-spoken "yes" promised it.

It was easier than she thought. When Faith had got to her room, when she had as usual laid down her heart's burden—joyful or careful—in her prayer, there came soon a great subsiding; and mind and body slept, as sleep comes to an exhausted child; or as those sleep, at any age, whose hearts bear no weight which God's hand can bear for them, and who are contented to leave their dearest things to the same hand. There was no "ravelled sleeve of care" ever in Faith's mind, for sleep to knit up; but "tired nature's sweet restorer" she needed like the rest of the human family; and on this occasion sleep did her work without let or hindrance from the time ten minutes after Faith's head touched her pillow till the sun was strong and bright on the morning of the 26th of December. Yes, and pretty high up too; for the first thing that fell upon her waking senses was eight clear strokes of the town clock.

Faith got up and dressed herself in a great hurry and in absolute dismay; blushing to think where was her mother; and breakfast—and everybody—all this while, and what everybody was thinking of her. From her room Faith went straight to dairy and kitchen. She wanted her hands full this morning. But her duties in the kitchen were done; breakfast was only waiting, and her mother talking to the butcher. Faith stood till he was dismissed and had turned his back, and then came into Mrs. Derrick's arms.

"Mother!—why *didn't* you call me!"

"Pretty child!" was the fond answer, "why should I?—I've been up to look at you half a dozen times, Faith, to make sure you were not sick; but Mr. Linden said he was in no hurry for breakfast—and of course I wasn't. Did you have a good time last night?"

"I should think you *ought* to be in a hurry for breakfast by this time." And Faith busied herself in helping Cindy put the breakfast on the table.

"You run and call Mr. Linden, child," said her mother, "and I'll see to this. He was here till a minute ago, and then some of the boys wanted to see him."

Faith turned away, but with no sort of mind to present herself before the boys, and in tolerable fear of presenting herself before anybody. The closing hall door informed her that one danger was over; and forcing herself to brave the other, she passed into the sitting-room just as Mr. Linden reëntered it from the hall. Very timidly then she advanced a few steps to meet him and stood still, with cheeks as rosy as it was possible to be, and eyes that dared not lift themselves up.

The greeting she had did not help either matter very much, but that could not be helped either.

"What colour are your cheeks under all these roses?" Mr. Linden said smiling at her. "My dear Faith, were you quite tired out?"

"No—You must think so," she said with stammering lips—"but breakfast is ready at last. If you'll go in —I'll come, Mr. Linden."

"Do you want me to go in first?"

"Yes. I'll come directly."

He let her go, and went in as she desired; and having persuaded Mrs. Derrick that as breakfast was on the table it had better have prompt attention, Mr. Linden engaged her with a lively account of the people, dresses, and doings, which had graced the Christmas party; keeping her mind pretty well on that subject both before and after Faith made her appearance. How little it engrossed him, only one person at the table could even guess. But she knew, and rested herself happily under the screen he spread out for her; as quiet and demure as anything that ever sat at a breakfast table yet. And all the attention she received was as silent as it was careful; not till breakfast was over did Mr. Linden give her more than a passing word; but then he inquired how soon she would be ready for philosophy.

Faith's hesitating answer was "Very soon;"—then as Mr. Linden left the room she asked, "What are you going to do to-day, mother?"

"O just the old story," said Mrs. Derrick,—"two or three sick people I must go and see,—and some well people I'd rather see, by half. It's so good to have you home, dear!" And she kissed Faith and held her off and looked at her—several feelings at work in her face. "Pretty child," she said, "I don't think I ever saw you look so pretty."

Faith returned the kiss, and hid her face in her mother's neck; more things than one were in her mind to say, but not one of them could get out. She could only kiss her mother and hold her fast. The words that at last came, were a very commonplace remark about—"going to see to the dinner."

"I guess you will!" said Mrs. Derrick—"with Mr. Linden waiting for you in the other room. I wonder what he'd say to you, or to me either. And besides—people that want to see about dinner must get up earlier in the morning."

The words, some of them, were a little moved; but whatever Mrs. Derrick was thinking of, she did not explain, only bade Faith go off and attend to her lessons and make up for lost time.

Which after some scouting round kitchen and dairy, Faith did. She entered the sitting-room with the little green book in her hand, as near as possible as she would have done three weeks ago. Not quite.

She had a bright smile of welcome, and Mr. Linden placed a chair for her and placed her in it; and then the lessons went on with all their old gentle care and guidance. More, they could hardly have—though Faith sometimes fancied there was more; and if the old sobriety was hard to keep up, still it was done, for her sake. A little play of the lips which she could sometimes see, was kept within very quiet bounds; whatever novelty there might be in look or manner was perhaps unconscious and unavoidable. She might be watched a little more than formerly, but her work none the less; and Mr. Linden's explanations and corrections were given with just their old grave freedom, and no more. And yet how different a thing the lessons were to him!—

As to Faith, her hand trembled very much at first, and even her voice; but for all that, the sunshine within was easy to see, and there came a bright flash of it sometimes. In spite of timidity and shyness, every now and then something made her forget herself, and then the sunlight broke out; to be followed perhaps by a double cloud of gravity. But for the rest, she worked like a docile pupil, as she always had done.

Apparently her teacher's thoughts had not been confined to the work, if they had to her; for when all was done that could be done before dinner, he made one of those sudden speeches with which he

sometimes indulged himself.

"Faith—I wish you would ask me to do half a dozen almost impossible things for you."

What a pretty wondering look she gave him. One of the flashes of the sunlight came then. But then came an amused expression.

"What would be the good of that, Mr. Linden?"

"I should have the pleasure of doing them."

"I believe you would," said Faith. "I think the only things quite impossible to you are wrong things."

"The only thing you ever did ask of me was impossible," he said with a smile, upon which there was a shadow too—as if the recollection pained him. "Child, how could you?—It half broke my heart to withstand you so, do you know that? I want the almost impossible things to make me forget it."

Her lip trembled instantly and her command of herself was nearly gone. She had risen for something, and as he spoke she came swiftly behind him, putting herself where he could not see her face, and laid her hand on his shoulder. It lay there as light as thistle-down; but it was Faith's mute way of saying a great many things that her voice could not.

Very quick and tenderly Mr. Linden drew her forward again, and tried the power of his lips to still hers.

"Hush, dear child!" he said—"you must not mind any thing I say,—I am the last person in the world you ought to be afraid of. And you must not claim it as your prerogative to get before me in danger and behind me at all other times—because that is just reversing the proper order of things. Faith, I am going to ask an almost impossible thing of you."

"What is it?" Faith was secretly glad, for afraid of his *requests* she could not be.

"You will try to do it?"

"Yes—certainly!"

"It is only to forget that 'Mr. Linden' is any part of my name," he said smiling.

She had been rosy enough before, but now the blood reddened her very brow, till for one instant she put up her hands to hide it.

"What then?"—she said in a breathless sort of way.

"What you like"—he answered brightly. "I have not quite as many names as a Prince Royal, but still enough to choose from. You may separate, combine, or invent, at your pleasure."

There came a summons to dinner then; and part of the hours which should follow thereafter, Mr. Linden was pledged to spend somewhere with somebody—away from home. But he promised to be back to tea, and before that, if he could; and so left Faith to the quiet companionship of her mother and her lessons—if she felt disposed for them. They were both in the sitting-room together, Mrs. Derrick and the books,—both helping the sunlight that came in at the windows. But Faith neglected the books, and came to her mother's side. She sat down and put her arms round her, and nestled her head on her mother's bosom, as she had done in the morning. And then was silent. That might have been just what Mrs. Derrick expected, she was so very ready for it; her work was dropped so instantly, her head rested so fondly on Faith's. But her silence was soon broken.

"How long do you think I can wait, pretty child?" she said in the softest, tenderest tone that even she could use.

"Mother!" said Faith startling. "For what?"

"Suppose you tell me."

"Do you know, mother?" said Faith in a low, changed tone and drawing closer. But Mrs. Derrick only repeated,

"What, child?"

"What Mr. Linden has said to me,"—she whispered.

"I knew what he would"—but the words broke off there, and Mrs. Derrick rested her head again in

silence as absolute as Faith's.

For awhile; and then Faith lifted up her flushed face and began to kiss her.

"Mother!—why don't you speak to me?"

It was not very easy to speak—Faith could see that; but Mrs. Derrick did command her voice enough to give a sort of answer.

"He had my leave, child,—at least he has talked to me about you in a way that I should have said no to, if I had meant it,—and he knew that. Do you think I should have let him stay here all this time if I had *not* been willing?"

Faith laid her head down again.

"Mother—dear mother!"—she said,—"I want more than that!"—

She had all she wanted then,—Mrs. Derrick spoke clearly and steadily, though the tears were falling fast.

"I am as glad as you are, darling—or as he is,—I cannot say more than that. So glad that you should be so happy—so glad to have such hands in which to leave you." The last words were scarce above a whisper.

Faith was desperate. She did not cry, but she did everything else. With trembling fingers she stroked her mother's face; with lips that trembled she kissed her; but Faith's voice was steady, whatever lay behind it.

"Mother—mother!—why do you do so? why do you speak so? Does this look like gladness?" And lips and hands kissed away the tears with an eagerness that was to the last degree tender.

"Why yes, child!" her mother said rousing up, and with a little bit of a smile that did not belie her words,—"I tell you I'm as glad as I can be!—Tears don't mean anything, Faith,—I can't help crying sometimes. But I'm just as glad as he is," she repeated, trying her soothing powers in turn,—"and if you'd seen his face as I did when he went away, you'd think that was enough. I don't know whether I *could* be," she added softly, "if I thought he would take you away from me—but I know he'll never do that, from something he said once. Why pretty child! any one but a baby could see this long ago,—and as for that, Faith, I believe I love him almost as well as you do, this minute."

The last few minutes had tried Faith more than she could bear, with the complete reaction that followed. The tears that very rarely made their way from her eyes in anybody's sight, came now. But they were not permitted to be many; her mother hardly knew they were come before they were gone; and half nestling in her arms, Faith lay with her face hid; silent and quiet. It seemed to Mrs. Derrick as if she was too far off still, for she lifted Faith softly up, and took her on her lap after the old childish fashion, kissing her once and again.

"Now, pretty child," she said, softly stroking the uncovered cheek, "keep your hands down and tell me all about it. I don't mean every word," she added smiling, "but all you like to tell."

But Faith could not do that. She made very lame work of it. She managed only with much difficulty to give her mother a very sketchy and thin outline of what she wanted to know; which perhaps was as much as Mrs. Derrick expected; and was given with a simplicity as bare of additions as her facts were. A very few words told all she had to tell. Yes, her mother was satisfied,—she loved to hear Faith speak those few words, and to watch her the while—herself supplying all deficiencies; and then was content that her child should lie still and go to sleep, if she chose—it was enough to look at her and think: rejoicing with her and for her with a very pure joy, if it was sometimes tearful.

Faith presently changed her position, and gave a very particular attention to the smoothing of the hair over her mother's forehead. Then pulling her cap straight, and giving her a finishing look and kiss, she took a low seat close beside her, laid one of her study books on her mother's lap, resting one arm there fondly, and went hard to work remarking however that Mrs. Derrick might talk as much as she liked and she would talk too. But Mrs. Derrick either did not want to talk, or else she did not want to interrupt; for she watched Faith and smiled upon her, and stroked her hair, and said very little.

Just at the end of the afternoon, when Faith was finishing her work by firelight, Mr. Linden came in. She did not see the look that passed between her mother and him—she only knew that they held each other's hands for a minute silently,—then one of the hands was laid upon her forehead.

"Little student—do you want to try the fresh air?"

She said yes; and without raising her eyes, ran off to get ready. In another minute she was out in the cool freshness of the December twilight.

CHAPTER IV.

The walk lasted till all the afterglow had faded and all the stars come out, and till half Pattaquasset had done tea; having its own glow and starlight, and its flow of conversation to which the table talk was nothing.

Of course, Faith's first business on reaching home was to see about the tea. She and Mrs. Derrick were happily engaged together in various preparations, and Mr. Linden alone in the sitting-room, when the unwelcome sound of a knock came at the front door; and the next minute his solitude was broken in upon.

"Good evening!" said the doctor. "Three-quarters of a mile off 'I heard the clarion of the unseen midge!' so I thought it was best to come to close quarters with the enemy.—There is nothing so annoying as a distant humming in your ears. How do you do?" He had come up and laid his hand on Mr. Linden's shoulder before the latter had time to rise.

"What a perverse taste!" Mr. Linden said, laughing and springing up.
"All the rest of the world think a near-by humming so much worse."

"Can't distinguish at a distance," said the doctor;—"one doesn't know whether it's a midge or a dragon-fly. How is Mignonette? and Mignonette's mother?"

"They were both well the last time I saw them. In what sort of a calm flutter are you, doctor?"

"Do you think that is my character?" said the doctor, taking his favourite position on the rug.

"You go straight to the fire—like all the rest of the tribe," said Mr.
Linden.

"Is it inconsistent with the character of such an extra ordinary midge, to go straight to the mark?"

"Nobody ever saw a midge do that yet, I'll venture to say."

"And you are resolved to act in character," said the doctor gravely. "You have got clean away from the point. I asked you last night to tell me what you thought of me. We are alone now—do it, Linden!"

"Why do you want to know?"

"I don't know. A man likes to talk of himself—cela s'entend—but I care enough about you, to care to know how I stand in your thoughts. If you asked me how I stand in my own, I could not tell you; and I should like to know how the just balances of your mind—I'm not talking ironically, Linden,—weigh and poise me;—what sort of alloy your mental tests make me out. No matter why!—indulge me, and let me have it. I presume it is nothing better than philosophical curiosity. I am—every man is to himself—an enigma—a mystery;—and I should like to have a sudden outside view—from optics that I have some respect for."

"I gave you the outside view last night," Mr. Linden said. But then he came and stood near the doctor and answered him simply; speaking with that grave gentleness of interest which rarely failed to give the speaker a place in people's hearts, even when his words failed of it.

"I think much of you, in the first place,—and in the second place, I wish you would let me think more; —you stand in my thoughts as an object of very warm interest, of very earnest prayer. Measured—not by my standards, but by those which the word of God sets up, you are like your own admirably made and adjusted microscope, with all the higher powers left off. The only enigma, the only mystery is, that you yourself cannot see this."

Dr. Harrison looked at him with a grave, considerative face, drawing a little back; perhaps to do it the better.

"Do you mean to say, that *you* do such a thing as pray for *me?*"

A slight, sweet smile came with the answer—"Can you doubt it?"

"Why I might very reasonably doubt it,—though not your word. Why do you,—may I ask?"

"What can I do for a man in deadly peril, whom my arm cannot reach?" The tone was very kindly, very earnest; the eyes with their deep light looked full into the doctor's.

Dr. Harrison was silent, meeting the look and taking the depth and meaning of it, so far as fathomable by him. The two faces and figures, fine as they both were, made a strange contrast. The doctor's face was in one of its serious and good expressions; but the other had come from a region of light which this one had never entered. And even in attitude—the dignified unconsciousness of the one, was very different from the satisfied carelessness of the other.

"May I further ask," he said in a softened tone,—"why you do this for me?"

"Because I care about you."

"It's incredible!" said the doctor, his eye wavering, however. "One man care about another! Why, man, I may be the worst enemy you have in the world, for aught you know."

"That cannot hinder my being your friend."

"Do you know," said the other looking at him half curiously,—"I am ready to do such a foolish thing as to believe you? Well—be as much of a friend to me as you can; and I'll deserve it as well as I can—which maybe won't be very well. Indeed that is most likely!" He had stretched out his hand to Mr. Linden however, and clasped his warmly. He quitted it now to go forward and take that of Faith.

She came in just as usual, and met the doctor with her wonted manner; only the crimson stain on her cheek telling anything against her. She did not give him much chance to observe that; for Cindy followed her with the tea things and Faith busied herself about the table. The doctor went back to his stand and watched her.

"Mignonette has changed colour," he remarked presently. "How is that,
Miss Derrick?"

"How is what, sir?"

"How come you to change the proper characteristics of mignonette? Don't you know that never shews high brilliancy?"

"I suppose I am not mignonette to-night," said Faith, returning to the safer observation of the tea-table.

"Are you my flower, then? the Rhodora?" he said with a lowered tone, coming near her.

If Faith heard, she did not seem to hear this question. Her attention was bestowed upon the preparations for tea, till Mrs. Derrick came in to make it; and then Faith found a great deal to do in the care of the other duties of the table. It was a mystery, how she managed it; she who generally had as much leisure at meals as anybody wanted. Dr. Harrison's attention however was no longer exclusively given to her.

"Do you *always* have these muffins for tea, Mrs. Derrick?" he remarked with his second essay.

"Why no!" said Mrs. Derrick,—"we have all sorts of other things. Don't you like muffins, doctor?"

"Like them!" said the doctor. "I am thinking what a happy man Mr.
Linden must be."

"Marvellously true!" said Mr. Linden. "I hope you'll go home and write a new 'Search after happiness,' ending it sentimentally in muffins."

"Not so," said the doctor. "I should only begin it in muffins—as I am doing. But my remark after all had a point;—for I was thinking of the possibility of detaching anybody from such a periodical attraction. Mrs. Derrick, I am the bearer of an humble message to you from my sister and father—who covet the honour and pleasure of your presence to-morrow evening. Sophy makes me useful, when she can. I hope you will give me a gracious answer—for yourself and Miss Faith, and so make me useful again. It is a rare chance! I am not often good for anything."

"I don't know whether I know how to give what you call gracious answers, doctor," said Mrs. Derrick pleasantly. "I'm very much obliged to Miss Sophy, but I never go anywhere at night."

With the other two the doctor's mission was more successful; and then he disclosed the other object

of his visit.

"Miss Derrick, do you remember I once threatened to bring the play of Portia here—and introduce her to you?"

"I remember it," said Faith.

"Would it be pleasant to you that I should fulfil my threat this evening?"

"I don't know, sir," said Faith smiling,—"till I hear the play."

"Mr. Linden,—what do you think?" said the doctor, also with a smile.

"I am ready for anything—if you will let me be impolite enough to finish writing a letter while I hear the first part of your reading."

"To change the subject slightly—what do you suppose, Mr. Linden, would on the whole be the effect, on society, if the hand of Truth were in every case to be presented without a glove?" The doctor spoke gravely now.

"The effect would be that society would shake hands more cordially—I should think," said Mr. Linden; "though it is hard to say how such an extreme proposition would work."

"Do you know, it strikes me that it would work just the other way, and that hands would presently clasp nothing but daggers' hilts. But there is another question.—How will one fair hand of truth live among a crowd of steel gauntlets?"

"*What?*" Mr. Linden said, with a little bending of his brows upon the doctor. "I am wearing neither glove nor gauntlet,—what are you talking about?—And my half-finished letter is a fact and no pretence."

"I sha'n't believe you," said the doctor, "if you give my fingers such a wring as that. Well, go to your letter, and I'll take Miss Derrick to Venice—if she will let me."

Venice!—That exquisite photograph of the Bridge of Sighs, and "the palace and the prison on each hand," about which such a long, long entrancing account had been given by Mr. Linden to her—the scene and the talk rose up before Faith's imagination; she was very ready to go to Venice. Its witching scenery, its strange history, floated up, in a fascinating, strange cloud-view; she was ready for Shylock and the Rialto. Nay, for the Rialto, not for Shylock; him, or anything like him, she had never seen nor imagined. She was only sorry that Mr. Linden had to go to his letter; but there was a compensative side to that, for her shyness was somewhat less endangered. With only the doctor and Shylock to attend to, she could get along very well.

Shyness and fears however, were of very short endurance. To Venice she went,—Shylock she saw; and then she saw nothing else but Shylock, and those who were dealing with him; unless an occasional slight glance towards the distant table where Mr. Linden sat at his writing, might be held to signify that she *had* powers of vision for somewhat else. It did not interrupt the doctor's pleasure, nor her own. Dr. Harrison had begun with at least a double motive in his mind; but man of the world as he was, he forgot his unsatisfied curiosity in the singular gratification of reading such a play to such a listener. It was so plain that Faith was in Venice! She entered with such simplicity, and also with such intelligence, into the characters and interests of the persons in the drama; she relished their words so well; she weighed in such a nice balance of her own the right and the wrong, the true and the false, of whatever rested on nature and truth for its proper judgment;—she was so perfectly and deliciously ignorant of the world and the ways of it! The fresh view that such pure eyes took of such actors and scenes, was indescribably interesting; Dr. Harrison found it the best play he had ever read in his life. He made it convenient sometimes to pause to indoctrinate Faith in characters or customs of which she had no adequate knowledge; it did not hurt her pleasure; it was all part of the play.

In the second scene, the doctor stopped to explain the terms on which Portia had been left with her suitors.

"What do you think of it?"

"I think it was hard," said Faith smiling.

"What would you have done if you had been left so?"

"I would not have been left so."

"But you might not help yourself. Suppose it had been a father's or a mother's command? that

anybody might come up and have you, for the finding—if they could pitch upon the right box of jewelry?"

"My father or mother would never have put such a command on me," said Faith looking amused.

"But you may *suppose* anything," said the doctor leaning forward and smiling. "*Suppose* they had?"

"Then you must suppose me different too," said Faith laughing. "Suppose me to have been like Portia; and I should have done as she did."

The doctor shook his head and looked gravely at her.

"Are you so impracticable?"

"Was she?" said Faith.

"Then you wouldn't think it right to obey Mrs. Derrick in all circumstances?"

"Not if she was Portia's mother," said Faith.

"Suppose you had been the Prince of Arragon—which casket would you have chosen?" said Mr. Linden, as he came from his table, letter in hand.

"I suppose I should have chosen as he did," said the doctor carelessly—"I really don't remember how that was. I'll tell you when I come to him. Have you done letter-writing?"

"I have done writing letters, for to-night. Have I permission to go to Venice in your train?"

"I am only a locomotive," said the doctor. "But you know, with two a train goes faster. If you had another copy of the play, now, Linden—and we should read it as I have read Shakspeare in certain former times—take different parts—I presume the effect would excel steam-power, and be electric. Can you?"

This was agreed to, and the "effect" almost equalled the doctor's prognostications. Even Mrs. Derrick, who had somewhat carelessly held aloof from his single presentation of the play, was fascinated now, and drew near and dropped her knitting. It would have been a very rare entertainment to any that had heard it; but for once an audience of two was sufficient for the stimulus and reward of the readers. That and the actual enjoyment of the parts they were playing. Dr. Harrison read well, with cultivated and critical accuracy. His voice was good and melodious, his English enunciation excellent; his knowledge of his author thorough, as far as acquaintanceship went; and his habit of reading a dramatically practised one. But Faith, amid all her delight, had felt a want in it, as compared with the reading to which of late she had been accustomed; it did not give the soul and heart of the author—though it gave everything else. *That* is what only soul and heart can do. Not that Dr. Harrison was entirely wanting in those gifts either; they lay somewhere, perhaps, in him; but they are not the ones which in what is called "the world" come most often or readily into play; and so it falls out that one who lives there long becomes like the cork oak when it has stood long untouched in *its* world; the heart is encrusted with a monstrous thick, almost impenetrable, coating of bark. When Mr. Linden joined the reading, the pleasure was perfect; the very contrast between the two characters and the two voices made the illusion more happy. Then Faith was in a little danger of betraying herself; for it was difficult to look at both readers with the same eyes; and if she tried to keep her eyes at home, that was more difficult still.

In the second act, Portia says to Arragon,

"In terms of choice I am not solely led
By nice direction of a maiden's eyes," etc.

"What do you think of that, Miss Derrick?" said the doctor pausing when his turn came. "Do you think a lady's choice ought to be so determined?"

Faith raised her eyes, and answered, "No, sir."

"By what then? You don't trust appearances?"

Faith hesitated.

"I should like to hear how Portia managed," she said, with a little heightened colour. "I never thought much about it."

"What do you think of Portia's gloves, doctor?" said Mr. Linden.

"Hum"—said the doctor. "They are a pattern!—soft as steel, harsh as kid-leather. They fit too, so exquisitely! But, if I were marrying her, I think I should request that she would give her gloves into my keeping."

"Then would your exercise of power be properly thwarted. Every time you made the demand, Portia would, like a juggler, pull off and surrender a fresh pair of gloves, leaving ever a pair yet finer-spun upon her hands."

"I suppose she would," said the doctor comically. "Come! I won't marry her. And yet, Linden,—one might do worse. Such gloves keep off a wonderful amount of friction."

"If you happen to have fur which cannot be even *stroked* the wrong way!"

The doctor's eye glanced with fun, and Faith laughed The reading went on. And went on without much pausing, until the lines—

"O ten times faster Venus' pigeons fly
To seal love's bonds new made, than they are wont
To keep obliged faith unforfeited!
——Who riseth from a feast,
With that keen appetite that he sits down?
Where is the horse, that doth untread again
His tedious measures with the unbated fire
That he did pace them first? All things that are,
Are with more spirit chased than enjoyed."

"Do you believe in that doctrine, Miss Faith?" said the doctor, with a gentle look in her direction.

"I suppose it is true of some things,"—she said after a minute's consideration.

"What a wicked truth it is, Linden!" said the doctor.

"There is 'an error i' the bill,'" said Mr. Linden.

Faith's eyes looked somewhat eagerly, the doctor's philosophically.

"Declare and shew," said the doctor. "I thought it was a universal, most deplorable, human fact; and here it is, in Shakspeare, man; which is another word for saying it is in humanity."

"It is true only of false things. The Magician's coins are next day but withered leaves—the real gold is at compound interest."

The doctor's smile was doubtful and cynical; Faith's had a touch of sunlight on it.

"Where is your 'real gold'?" said the doctor.

"Do you expect me to tell you?" said Mr. Linden laughing. "I have found a good deal in the course of my life, and the interest is regularly paid in."

"Are you talking seriously?"

"Ay truly. So may you."

"From any other man, I should throw away your words as the veriest Magician's coin; but if they are true metal—why I'll ask you to take me to see the Mint some day!"

"Let me remind you," said Mr. Linden, "that there are many things in Shakspeare. What do you think of this, for a set-off?—

'Love's not Time's fool, though rosy lips and cheeks
Within his bending sickle's compass come;
Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,
But bears it out e'en to the edge of doom.
If this be error, and upon me proved,
I never writ, nor no man ever loved.'"

"There's an error proved upon *me*," said the doctor, biting his lips as he looked at Faith who had

listened delightedly. "Come on! I'll stop no more. The thing is, Linden, that I am less happy than you—I never found any real gold in my life!"

"Ah you expect gold to come set with diamonds,—and that cannot always be. I don't doubt you have gold enough to start a large fortune, if you would only rub it up and make it productive."

The doctor made no answer to that, and the reading went on; Faith becoming exceedingly engrossed with the progress of the drama. She listened with an eagerness which both the readers amusedly took heed of, as the successive princes of Morocco and Arragon made their trial: the doctor avowing by the way, that he thought he should have "assumed desert" as the latter prince did, and received the fool's head for his pains. Then they came to the beautiful "casket scene." The doctor had somehow from the beginning left Portia in Mr. Linden's hands; and now gave with great truth and gracefulness the very graceful words of her successful suitor. He could put truth into these, and did, and accordingly read beautifully; well heard, for the play of Faith's varying face shewed she went along thoroughly with all the fine turns of thought and feeling; here and elsewhere. But how well and how delicately Mr. Linden gave Portia! That Dr. Harrison could not have done; the parts had fallen out happily, whether by chance or design. Her ladylike and coy play with words—her transparent veil of delicate shifting turns of expression—contriving to say all and yet as if she would say nothing—were rendered by the reader with a grace of tone every way fit to them. Faith's eye ceased to look at anybody, and her colour flitted, as this scene went on; and when Portia's address to her fortunate wooer was reached—that very noble and dignified declaration of her woman's mind, when she certainly pulled off her gloves, wherever else she might wear them;—Faith turned her face quite away from the readers and with the cheek she could not hide sheltered by her hand—as well as her hand could—she let nobody but the fire and Mrs. Derrick see what a flush covered the other. Very incautious in Faith, but it was the best she could do. And the varied interests that immediately followed, of Antonio's danger and deliverance, gradually brought her head round again and accounted sufficiently for the colour with which her cheeks still burned. The Merchant of Venice was not the only play enacting that evening; and the temptation to break in upon the one, made the doctor, as often as he could, break off the other; though the interest of the plot for a while gave him little chance.

"So shines a good deed in a naughty world."

"Do you suppose, Miss Derrick," said Dr. Harrison with his look of amused pleasure,—"that is because the world is so dark?—or because the effects of the good deed reach to such a distance?"

"Both," said Faith immediately.

"You think the world is so bad?"

"I don't know much of the world," said Faith,—"but I suppose the *shining* good deeds aren't so very many."

"What makes a good deed *shining?*" said the doctor.

Faith glanced at Mr. Linden. But he did not take it up, and she was thrown back upon her own resources. She thought a bit.

"I suppose,"—she said,—"its coming from the very spirit of light."

"You must explain," said the doctor good-humouredly but smiling,—"for that puts me in absolute darkness."

"I don't know very well how to tell what I mean," said Faith colouring and looking thoughtful;—"I think I know. Things that are done for the pure love of God and truth, I think, shine; if they are ever so little things, because really there is a great light in them. I think they shine more than some of the greater things that people call very brilliant, but that are done from a lower motive."

"I should like"—said the doctor—"Can you remember an instance or two? of both kinds?"

Well Faith remembered an instance or two of *one* kind, which she could not instance. She sought in her memory.

"When Daniel kneeled upon his knees three times a day to pray, with his windows open, after the king's law had for bidden any one to do it on pain of death,—" said Faith.—"I think that was a shining good deed!"

"But that was a very notable instance," said the doctor.

"It was a very little thing he did," said Faith. "Only kneeled down to pray in his own room. And it has shined all the way down to us."

"And in later times," said Mr. Linden,—"when the exploring shallop of the Mayflower sought a place of settlement, and after beating about in winter storms came to anchor Friday night at Plymouth Rock;—all Saturday was lost in refitting and preparing, and yet on Sunday they would not land. Those two dozen men, with no human eye to see, with every possible need for haste!"

"That hasn't shined quite so far," said the doctor, "for it never reached me. And it don't enlighten me now! I should have landed."

"Do you know nothing of the *spirit* of Say and Seal, as well as the province?" said Mr. Linden.

"As how, against landing?"

"They rested that day '*according to the commandment*.' Having promised to obey God in all things, the seal of their obedience was unbroken."

"Well, Miss Faith," said the doctor—"Now for a counter example."

"I know so little of what has been done," said Faith. "Don't you remember some such things yourself, Dr. Harrison?—Mr. Linden?"—The voice changed and fell a little as it passed from one to the other.

"General Putnam went into the wolf's den, and pulled him out"—said the doctor humorously,—"that's all I can think of just now, and it is not very much in point. I don't know that there was anything very bright about it except the wolf's eyes!—But here we are keeping Portia out of doors, and Miss Derrick waiting! Linden—fall to." And with comical life and dramatic zeal on the doctor's part, in a few minutes more, the play was finished.

"Mrs. Derrick," said the doctor gravely as he rose and stood before her,—"I hope you approve of plays."

Mrs. Derrick expressed her amusement and satisfaction.

"Miss Faith," he said extending his hand,—"I have to thank you for the most perfect enjoyment I have ever had of Shakspeare. I only wish to-morrow evening would roll off on such swift wheels—but it would be too much. Look where this one has rolled to!" And he shewed his watch and hurried off; that is, if Dr. Harrison could be said to do such a thing.

The rest of the party also were stirred from their quiet. Mrs Derrick went out; and Mr. Linden, coming behind Faith as she stood by the fire, gently raised her face till he could have a full view of it, and asked her how she liked being in Venice?

"Very much," she said, smiling and blushing at him,—"very much!"

"You are not the magician's coin!" he said, kissing her. "You are not even a witch. Do you know how I found that out?"

"No"—she said softly, the colour spreading over her face and her eyes falling, but raised again immediately to ask the question of him.

"A witch's charms are always dispelled whenever she tries to cross running water!"—

She laughed; an amused, bright, happy little laugh, that it was pleasant to hear.

"But what did Dr. Harrison mean,—by what he said when he thanked me?
What did he thank me for?"

"He *said*—for a new enjoyment of Shakspeare."

"What did he mean?"

"Do you understand how the sweet fragrance of mignonette can give new enjoyment to a summer's day?"

She blushed exceedingly. "But, Mr. Linden, please don't talk so! And I don't want to give Dr. Harrison enjoyment in that way."

"Which part of your sentence shall I handle first?" he said with a laughing flash of the eyes,—"'Dr. Harrison'—or 'Mr. Linden'?"

"The first," said Faith laying her hand deprecatingly on his arm;—"and let the other alone!"

"How am I to 'please not to talk'?"

"So—as I don't deserve," she said raising her grave eyes to his face.
"I would rather have you tell me my wrong things."

He looked at her, with one of those rare smiles which belonged to her; holding her hand with a little soft motion of it to and fro upon his own.

"I am not sure that I dare promise 'to be good,'" he said,—"I am so apt to speak of things as I find them. And Mignonette you are to me—both in French and English. Faith, I know there is no glove upon your hand,—and I know there is none on mine; but I cannot feel, nor imagine, any friction,—can you?"

She looked up and smiled. So much friction or promise of it, as there is about the blue sky's reflection in the clear deep waters of a mountain lake—so much there was in the soft depth—and reflection—of Faith's eyes at that moment. So deep,—so unruffled;—and as in the lake, so in the look that he saw, there was a mingling of earth and heaven.

CHAPTER V.

Wednesday morning was cold and raw, and the sun presently put on a thick grey cloak. There were suspicions abroad that it was one made in the regions of perpetual snow, for whatever effect it might have had upon the sun, it made the earth very cold. Now and then a little frozen-up snowflake came silently down, and the wind swept fitfully round the corners of houses, and wandered up and down the chimneys. People who were out subsided into a little trot to keep themselves warm, all except the younger part of creation, who made the trot a run; and those who could, staid at home.

All of Mrs. Derrick's little family were of this latter class, after the very early morning; for as some of them were to brave the weather at night, there seemed no reason why they should also brave it by day. As speedily as might be, Mr. Linden despatched his various matters of outdoor business, of which there were always more or less on his hands, and then came back and went into the sitting-room to look for his scholar. In two minutes she came in from the other door, with the stir of business and the cold morning fresh in her cheeks. But no one would guess—no one could ever guess, from Faith's brown dress and white rufffles, that she had just been flying about in the kitchen—to use Cindy's elegant illustration—"like shelled peas"; not quite so aimlessly, however. And her smiling glance at her teacher spoke of readiness for all sorts of other business.

The first thing she was set about was her French exercise, during the first few lines of which Mr. Linden stood by her and looked on. But then he suddenly turned away and went up stairs—returning however, presently, to take his usual seat by her side. He watched her progress silently, except for business words and instructions, till the exercise was finished and Faith had turned to him for further directions; then taking her hand he put upon its forefinger one of the prettiest things she had ever seen. It was an old-fashioned diamond ring; the stones all of a size, and of great clearness and lustre, set close upon each other all the way round; with just enough goldsmith's work to bind them together, and to form a dainty frill of filagree work above and below—looking almost like a gold line of shadow by that flashing line of light.

"It was my mother's, Faith," he said, "and she gave it to me in trust for whatever lady I should love as I love you."

Faith looked down at it with very, very grave eyes. Her head bent lower, and then suddenly laying her hands together on the table she hid her face in them; and the diamonds glittered against her temple and in contrast with the neighbouring soft hair.

One or two mute questions came there, before Mr. Linden said softly, "Faith!" She looked up with flushed face, and all of tears in her eyes *but* the tears; and her lip had its very unbent line. She looked first at him and then at the ring again. Anything more humble or more grave than her look cannot be imagined. His face was grave too, with a sort of moved gravity, that touched both the present and the past, but he did not mean hers should be.

"Now what will you do, dear child?" he said. "For I must forewarn you that there is a language of rings which is well established in the world."

"What—do you mean?" she said, looking alternately at the ring and him.

"You know what plain gold on this finger means?" he said, touching the one he spoke of. She looked at first doubtfully, then coloured and said "yes."

"Well diamonds on *this* finger are understood to be the avant-couriers of that."

Faith had never seen diamonds; but that was not what she was thinking of, nor what brought such a deep spot of colour on her cheeks. It was pretty to see, it was so bright and so different from the flush which had been there a few minutes before. Her eyes considered the diamonds attentively.

"What shall I do?" she said after a little.

"I don't know—you must try your powers of contrivance."

"I cannot contrive. I could keep ray glove on to-night; but I could not every day. Shall I give it back to you to keep for me?"—she said looking at it lovingly. "Perhaps that will be best!—What would you like me to do?"

"Anything *but* that," he said smiling,—"I should say that would be worst. You may wear a glove, or glove-finger—what you will; but there it must stay, and keep possession for me, till the other one comes to bear it company. In fact I suppose I *could* endure to have it seen!"

Her eyes went down to it again. Clearly the ring had a charm for Faith. And so it had, something beyond the glitter of brilliants. Of jewellers' value she knew little; the marketable worth of the thing was an enigma to her. But as a treasure of another kind it was beyond price. His mother's ring, on *her* finger—to Faith's fancy it bound and pledged her to a round of life as perfect, as bright, and as pure, as its own circlet of light-giving gems. That she might fill to him—as far as was possible—all the place that the once owner of the diamonds would have looked for and desired; and be all that *he* would look for in the person to whom the ring, so derived, had come. Faith considered it lovingly, with intent brow, and at last lifted her eyes to Mr. Linden by way of answer; without saying anything, yet with half her thoughts in her face. His face was very grave—Faith could see a little what the flashing of that ring was to him; but her look was met and answered with a fulness of warmth and tenderness which said that he had read her thoughts, and that to his mind they were already accomplished. Then he took up one of her books and opened it at the place where she was to read.

The morning, and the afternoon, went off all too fast, and the sun went down sullenly. As if to be in keeping with the expected change of work and company, the evening brought worse weather,—a keener wind—beginning to bestir itself in earnest, a thicker sky; though the ground was too snow-covered already to allow it to be very dark. With anybody but Mr. Linden, Mrs. Derrick would hardly have let Faith go out; and even as it was, she several times hoped the weather would moderate before they came home. Faith was so well wrapped up however, both in the house and in the sleigh, that the weather gave her no discomfort; it was rather exhilarating to be so warm in spite of it; and they flew along at a good rate, having the road pretty much to themselves.

"Faith," Mr. Linden said as they approached Judge Harrison's, "I cannot spend all the evening here with you—that is, I ought not. I had a message sent me this afternoon—too late to attend to then, which I cannot leave till morning. But if I see you safe by the fire, I hope Miss Harrison will take good care of you till I get back."

"Well," said Faith,—"I wouldn't meddle with your 'oughts,'—if I could. I hope you'll take care of Jerry!"—

"What shall I do with him?"

"Don't you know?" said Faith demurely.

"I suppose I ought to drive him so fast that he'll keep warm," said Mr.
Linden. "What else?"

Faith's little laugh made a contrast with the rough night. "You had better let me get out to the fire," she said joy fully,—"or *I* sha'n't keep warm."

"You sha'n't?" he said bending down by her, as they reached the door,—"your face has no idea of being cold!—I'll take care of Jerry, child—if I don't forget him in my own pleasant thoughts."

Faith threw off her cloak and furs on the hall table where some others lay, and pulled off one glove.

"Keep them both on!" Mr. Linden said softly and smiling,—"enact Portia for once. Then if you are much urged, you can gracefully yield your own prejudices so far as to take off one."

She looked at him, then amusedly pulled on her glove again; and the door was opened for them into a region of warmth and brightness; where there were all sorts of rejoicings over them and against the cold night. Mr. Linden was by force persuaded to wait till after coffee before braving it again; and the Judge and his daughter fairly involved Faith in the meshes of their kindness. A very mouse Faith was to-night, as ever wore gloves; and with a little of a mouse's watchfulness about her, fancying cat's ears at every corner. A brown mouse too; she had worn only her finest and best stuff dress. But upon the breast of that, a bunch of snowy Laurustinus, nestling among green leaves, put forth a secret claim in a way that was very beautifying. The Judge and Miss Sophy put her in a great soft velvet chair and hovered round her, both of them conscious of her being a little more dainty than usual. Sophy thought perhaps it was the Laurustinus; her father believed it intrinsic.

The coffee came, and the doctor.

"I have something better for you than Portia to-night"—he said as he dealt out sugar,—"though not something better than muffins."

"Faith, my dear child," said Miss Sophy,—"you needn't be so ceremonious—none of us are wearing gloves."

Faith laughed and blushed and pulled off one glove.

"You are enacting Portia, are you?" said Dr. Harrison. "Even she would not have handled wigs with them. I see I have done mischief! But the harm I did you last night I will undo this evening. Ladies and Gentlemen!—I will give you, presently, the pleasure of hearing some lines written expressive of my wishes toward the unknown—but supposed—mistress of my life and affections. Any suggestions toward the bettering of them—I will hear."

"The bettering of what?" said Mrs. Somers,—"your life and affections?"

"I am aware, my dear aunt Ellen, you think the one impossible—the other improbable. I speak of bettering the wishes."

"'Unknown but supposed'"—said Mr. Linden. "'Item—She hath many nameless virtues'."

"That is not my wish," said the doctor gravely looking at him, "I think nameless virtues—deserve their obscurity!"

"What do you call your ideal?"

"Psyche,—" said the doctor, after a minute's sober consideration apparently divided between Mr. Linden's face and the subject.

"That is not so uncommon a name as Campaspe," said Mr. Linden, with a queer little gesture of brow and lips.

"Who is Campaspe?" said the doctor; while Faith looked, and Miss Essie's black eyes sparkled and danced, and everybody else held his coffee cup in abeyance.

"Did you never hear of my Campaspe?" said Mr. Linden, glancing up from under his brows.

"We will exchange civilities," said the doctor. "I should be very happy to hear of her."

Laughing a little, his own cup sending its persuasive steam unheeded, his own face on the sparkling order—though the eyes looked demurely down,—Mr. Linden went on to answer.

"'Cupid and my Campaspe played
At cards for kisses; Cupid payed;
He stakes his quiver, bow and arrows,
His mother's doves, and teame of sparrows;
Loses them too; then down he throws
The coral of his lippe, the rose
Growing on's cheek, (but none knows how)
With these, the crystal of his browe,
And then the dimple of his chinne;
All these did my Campaspe winne.
At last he set her both his eyes,—
She won, and Cupid blind did rise.
O Love! has she done this to thee?
What shall, alas! become of me!'"

There was a general little breeze of laughter and applause. The doctor had glanced at Faith;—her colour was certainly raised; but then the old Judge had just bent down to ask her "if she had ever heard of Campaspe before?" The doctor did not hear but he guessed at the whisper, and saw Faith's laugh and shake of the head.

"Is that a true bill, Linden?"

"Very true,—" said Mr. Linden, trying his coffee. "But it is not yet known what will become of me."

"What has become of Campaspe?"

"She is using her eyes."

"Are they *those* eyes, Mr. Linden?" said Miss Essie coming nearer and using her own.

"What was the colour of Cupid's?"

"Blue, certainly!"

"Miss Derrick!"—said the doctor,—"let us have your opinion."

Faith gave him at least a frank view of her own, all blushing and laughing as she was, and answered readily,—"As to the colour of Cupid's eyes?—I have never seen him, sir."

The doctor was obliged to laugh himself, and the chorus became general, at something in the combination of Faith and her words. But Faith's confusion thereupon mastered her so completely, that perhaps to shield her the doctor requested silence and attention and began to read; of a lady who, he said he was certain, had borrowed of nobody—not even of Cupid.—

"'Whoe'er she be,
That not impossible she,
That shall command my heart and me.'"

"I believe she *is* impossible, to begin with," said Miss Essie. "You will never let any woman command you, Dr. Harrison."

"You don't know me, Miss Essie," said the doctor, with a curiously grave face, for him.

"He means—

'Who shall command my heart—*not* me.'"

said Mr. Linden.

"If she can command my heart—what of me is left to rebel?" said the doctor.

"Sophy," said Mrs. Somers, "how long has Julius been all heart?"

"Ever since my aunt Ellen has been *all* eyes and ears. Mr. Somers, which portion of your mental nature owns the supremacy of your wife? may I inquire, in the course of this investigation?"

"Ha!" said Mr. Somers blandly, thus called upon—"I own her supremacy, sir—ha—in all proper things!"

"Ha! Very proper!" said the doctor.

"That is all any good woman wants," said the old Judge benignly. "I take it, that is all she wants."

"Then you must say which are the proper things, father!" said Miss
Sophy laughing.

"You'll have to ask every man separately, Sophy," said Mrs. Somers,—"they all have their own ideas about proper things. Mr. Somers thinks milk porridge is the limit."

"Mr. Stoutenburgh," said the doctor, "haven't you owned yourself commanded, ever since your heart gave up its lock and key?"

"Yes indeed," said the Squire earnestly,—"I am so bound up in slavery that I have even forgotten the wish to be free! All my wife's things are proper!"

"O hush!" his wife said laughing, but with a little quick bright witness in her eyes, that was pretty to

see. Dr. Harrison smiled.

"You see, Miss Derrick!" he said with a little bow to her,—"there is witness on all sides;—and now I will go on with my *not impossible* she."—

He got through several verses, not without several interruptions, till he came to the exquisite words following;—

"'I wish her beauty,
That owes not all his duty
To gaudy tire or glistring shoetye.

'Something more than
Taffeta or tissue can,
Or rampant feather, or rich fan.

'More than the spoil
Of shop, or silk-worm's toil,
Or a bought blush, or a set smile.'"

While Miss Essie exclaimed, Miss Harrison stole a look at Faith; who was looking up at the doctor, listening, with a very simple face of amusement. Her thoughts were indeed better ballasted than to sway to such a breeze if she had felt it. But the real extreme beauty of the image and of the delineation was what she felt; she made no application of them. The doctor came to this verse.

"'A well-tamed heart,
For whose more noble smart
Love may be long choosing a dart.'—

What does that mean, Linden?—isn't that an error in the description?"

"Poetical license," said Mr. Linden smiling. "Psyche will give you trouble enough, wings and all,—there is no fear you will find her 'tamed'."

"How is Campaspe in that respect?"

"She has never given me much trouble yet," said Mr. Linden.

"What I object to is the 'long choosing'," said the doctor. "Miss de Staff—do you think a good heart should be very hard to win?"

"Certainly!—the harder the better," replied the lady. "That's the only way to bring down your pride. The harder she is, the more likely you are to think she's a diamond."

"Mrs. Stoutenburgh!"—

"What has been the texture of yours all these years, doctor?"

"He thinks that when he has dined the rest of the world should follow suit—like the Khan of Tartary," said Mrs. Somers.

"Miss Derrick!" said the doctor—"I hope for some gentleness from you. Do you think such a heart as we have been talking of, should be very difficult to move?"

Faith's blush was exquisite. Real speech was hard to command. She knew all eyes were waiting upon her; and she could not reason out and comfort herself with the truth—that to them her blush might mean several things as well as one. The answer came in that delicate voice of hers which timidity had shaken.

"I think—it depends on what there is to move it."

"What do you call sufficient force?" said Mrs. Somers.

"I?"—said Faith.—

"Yes, you," replied the parson's wife with a look not unkindly amused. "What sort and degree of power should move 'such a heart'?—to quote Julius."

Faith's blush was painful again, and it was only the sheer necessity of the case that enabled her to rally. But her answer was clear. "Something better than itself, Mrs. Somers."

"I should like to know what that is!" said Mrs. Somers.

Mr. Linden's involuntary "And so should I"—was in a different tone, but rather drew eyes upon himself than Faith.

"It's of no consequence to you!" said the doctor, with a funny, mock serious tone of admonition.

Mr. Linden bowed, acquiescingly.—"Psychology is an interesting study"—he added, in qualification. "But let me return your warning, doctor—you have a formidable rival."

"Qui donc?"

"Cupid carried off Psyche some time ago—do you suppose you can get her back?" And with a laughing sign of adieu, Mr. Linden went away.

Luckily for Faith, she was not acquainted with the heathen mythology; and was also guiltless of any thought of connexion between herself and the doctor's ideal. So her very free, unsuspicious face and laughter quite reassured him.

"Mr. Linden is an odd sort of person," said Miss Essie philosophically. "I have studied him a good deal, and I can't quite make him out. He's a very interesting man! But I think he is deeper than he seems."

"He's deeper than the salt mines of Salzburg then!" said the doctor.

"Why?" said Miss Essie curiously.

The doctor answered gravely that "there were beautiful things there";—and went on with his reading. And Faith listened now with unwavering attention, till he came to—

"'Sydnean showers
Of soft discourse, whose powers
Can crown old winter's head with flowers.'"

Faith's mind took a leap. And it hardly came back again. The reading was followed by a very lively round game of talk; but it was not *such* talk; and Faith's thoughts wandered away and watched round that circlet of brightness that was covered by her glove; scattered rays from which led them variously,—home, to her Sunday school, to Pequot,—and to heaven; coming back again and again to the diamonds and to the image that was in the centre of them. No wonder her grave sweet face was remarked as being even graver and sweeter than usual; and the doctor at last devoted himself to breaking up its quiet. He took her into the library to finish the Rhododendrons—ostensibly—but in reality to get rid of the stiff circle in the other room. The circle followed; but no longer stiff; under the influence of the cold weather and the big fires and good prompting, their spirits got up at last to the pitch of acting charades. Miss Harrison brought down her stores of old and new finery; and with much zeal and success charades and tableaux went on for some length of time; to the extreme amusement of Faith, who had never seen any before. They did not divert her from watching for the sound of Mr. Linden's return; but it came not, and Miss Essie expected and hoped aloud in vain. The hour did come, and passed, at which such gatherings in Pattaquasset were wont to break up. That was not very late to be sure. The Stoutenburghs, and the De Staffs, and finally Mr. and Mrs. Somers, went off in turn; and Faith was left alone to wait; for she had refused all offers of being set down by her various friends.

It happened that Mr. Linden had been, by no harmful accident but simply by the untowardness of things, delayed beyond his time; and then having a good distance to drive, it was some while after the last visiters had departed when he once more reined up Jerry at the door. No servant came to take him, and Mr. Linden applied himself to the bell-handle. But there seemed a spell upon the house—or else the inmates were asleep—for ring as he would, no one came.

To fasten Jerry and let himself in were the next steps—neither of which took long. But in the drawing-room, to which he had been ushered in the beginning of the evening, there was now no one. The lights and the fires and the empty chairs were there; that was all. Mr. Linden knew the house well enough to know where next to look; he crossed the hall to a room at the other side, which was the one most commonly used by the family, and from which a passage led to the library. No one was here, and the room was in a strange state of confusion. Before he had well time to remark upon it, Faith came in from the passage bearing a heavy marble bust in her arms. The colour sprang to her cheeks; she set down Prince Talleyrand quickly and came towards Mr. Linden, saying, "There's fire in the library."

"My dear child!" he said softly, "what is the matter? What are you about?"

"Why there is fire in the library—it's all on fire, or soon will be," she said hurriedly, "and we are bringing the things out. The fire can't get in here—its a fireproof building only the inside will all burn up. The servants are carrying water to the roof of the house, lest that should catch. I am so glad to see you!"—

And Miss Sophy and the doctor came in, carrying one a picture, the other an armful of books. Faith ran back through the passage. But before she could set her foot inside the library, Mr. Linden's hand was on her shoulder, and he stepped before her and took the survey of the room in one glance.

Its condition was sufficiently unpromising. The fire had kindled in a heap of combustible trumpery brought there for the tableaux. It had got far beyond management before any one discovered it; and now was making fast work in that corner of the room and creeping with no slow progress along the cornices of the bookshelves. Short time evidently there was for the family to remove their treasures from its destructive sweep. One corner of the room was in a light blaze; one or two lamps mockingly joined their light to the glare; the smoke was curling in grey wreaths and clouds over and around almost everything. Here an exquisite bust of Proserpine looked forlornly through it; and there a noble painting of Alston's shewed in richer lights than ever before, its harmony of colouring. The servants were, as Faith had said, engaged in endeavouring to keep the roof of the house from catching; only one old black retainer of the family, too infirm for that service, was helping them in the labour of rescuing books and treasures of art from the tire, which must take its way within the library. The wall it could not pass, that being, as Faith had also said, proof against it.

"Stay where you are," Mr. Linden said, "and I will hand things to you"—adding under his breath, "if you love me, Faith!" And passing into the room he snatched Proserpine from her smoky berth and gave her to the old servant, handing Faith a light picture.

"Don't let your sister come in here, Harrison," he said, springing up the steps to the upper shelves of the bookcase nearest the fire—"and don't let everybody do everything,—keep half in the passage and half here."

"Yes, Sophy," said the doctor, "that is much better—don't you come in here, nor Miss Faith. And don't work too hard," he said gently to the latter as she came back after bestowing the picture. "I won't ask you not to work at all, for I know it would be of no use."

"Just work like monkeys," Mr. Linden said from his high post, which was a rather invisible one. "Reuben!—I am glad of your help."

"Reuben!" exclaimed Faith joyously. "How good that is. Give me those books, Reuben."—

And after that the work went on steadily, with few words. It was too smoky an atmosphere to speak much in; and the utmost exertions on the part of every one of the workers left no strength nor time for it. "Like monkeys" they worked—the gentlemen handing things out of the smoke to the willing fingers and light feet that made quick disposition of them. Quick it had need to be, for the fire was not waiting for them. And in an incredibly short time—incredible save to those who have seen the experiment tried,—books and engravings were emptied from shelf after shelf—compartment after compartment—and lodged within the house. Not a spare inch of space—not a spare second of time, it seemed, was gone over; and the treasures of the library were in quick process of shifting from one place to another. It was rather a weary part Faith had to play, to stop short at the doorway and see the struggle with smoke and fire that was going on inside; and an anxious eye and trembling heart followed the movements of one of the workers there whenever she returned to her post of waiting. She would rather have been amid the smoke and the fire too, than to stand off looking on; but she did what she was desired—and more than she was desired; for she said not a word, like a wise child. Only did her work with no delay and came back again. Two excellent workers were the doctor and Mr. Linden; Reuben was a capital seconder; and no better runners than the two ladies need have been found; while the old Judge and his old serving man did what they could. There was every appearance that their efforts would be successful; the fire was to be sure, greatly increased and fast spreading, but so also the precious things that it endangered were already in great measure secured. Probably very little would have been lost to be regretted, if the workers had not suffered a slight interruption.

Mr. Linden was in the middle of the room unlocking the drawers of the library table, which was too large to be removed. Old Nero, the black man, had taken one of the lamps which yet remained burning, a large heavy one, to carry away. He was just opposite the table, when a stone bust of some weight, which had stood above the bookcases, detached by the failure of its supports, came down along with some spars of the burning wood and fell against a rich screen just on the other side of Nero. The screen was thrown over on him; he struggled an instant to right himself and it, holding his lamp off at an awful

angle towards Mr. Linden; then, nobody could tell how it was, Nero had saved himself and struggled out from the falling screen and burning wood, and Faith and the lamp lay under it, just at Mr. Linden's feet. Yet hardly under it—so instantly was it thrown off. The lamp was not broken, which was a wonder; but Faith was stunned, and the burning wood had touched her brow and singed a lock of hair.

In such a time of confusion all sorts of things come and go, unseen but by the immediate actors. Dr. Harrison and Reuben were intent upon a heavy picture; the Judge and his daughter were in the other room. And Faith was lifted up and borne swiftly along to the drawing-room sofa, and there was cold water already on her brow, before the others reached her. She was only a little stunned and had opened her eyes when they came up. They came round her, all the gang of workers, like a swarm of bees, and with as many questions and inquiries. Faith smiled at them all, and begged they would go back and finish what they were doing.

"I'll stay here a little while," she said; "my fall didn't hurt me a bit, to speak of. Do go! don't anybody wait for me."

There seemed nothing else to be done; she would own to wanting nothing; and her urgency at length prevailed with them, however reluctantly, to leave her and go back to the library. But Mr. Linden stood still as the others moved off.

"Where are you hurt?" he said in a low voice.

"I suppose the fall bruised me a little bit. It didn't do me any real harm. Don't wait here for me."

"Where?" Mr. Linden said.

"Where it bruised me? A little on my head—and elbow—and side; altogether nothing!"

He sat down by her, passing his hand softly over the scorched hair; then said, "Let me see your arm."

"Oh no!—that's not necessary. I said I was bruised, but it isn't much."

"Faith, you have not told me the whole."

Her eye shrank from his instantly, and her colour flitted from red to pale.

"There is nothing more I need tell you. They will all be back here—or some of them—if you stay. I'll tell you anything you please to morrow," she added with a smile. But he only repeated, "Tell me now—I have a right to know."

Her lip took its childish look, but her eye met him now. "Don't look so!"—she said, "as if there was any reason for it. I think some of the fluid from that lamp ran down on my arm—and it smarts. Don't stay here to look grave about me!—it isn't necessary."

He bent his head and gave her one answer to all that—then sprang up and went for Dr. Harrison. Faith tried to hinder him, in vain.

There was little now to detain anybody in the library, he found, and a good deal to drive everybody out of it. The fire had seemed to take advantage of its unwatched opportunity and had put it pretty well out of any one's power to rescue much more from its rapacity. Reuben and Dr. Harrison were carrying out the drawers of the table, which Mr. Linden had been unlocking; and the doctor dropped the one he held the instant he caught the sense of Mr. Linden's words. He went through the other way, summoning his sister.

Faith was lying very quietly and smiled at them, but her colour went and came with odd suddenness. She would not after all let the doctor touch her; but rising from the sofa said she would go up stairs and let Sophy see what was wanting. The three went up, and Mr. Linden was left alone.

He stood still for a moment where they left him, resting his face upon his hand, but then he went back to the burning room; and stationing himself at the doorway, bade all the rest keep back, and those that could to bring him water. Reuben sprang to this work as he had done to the other; some of the servants had come down by this time; and Mr. Linden stood there, dashing the water about the doorway and into the room, upon the floor, the great table, and such of the bookcases as he could come near. The effect was soon evident. The blazing bits of carved moulding as they fell to the floor, went out instead of getting help to burn; and the heavier shelves and wainscot which being of hard wood burned slowly, began to give out steam as well as smoke. The door and doorway were now perfectly safe—the fire hardly could spread into the passage, a danger which had been imminent when Mr. Linden came, but which the family seemed to have forgotten; secure in their fireproof walls, they forgot the un-fireproof floor, nor seemed to remember how far along the passage the cinders might drift. When there

was really nothing more for him to do, and he had given the servants very special instructions as to the watch they should keep, then and not till then did Mr. Linden return to the parlour; the glow of his severe exercise fading away.

He found the Judge there, who engaged him in not too welcome conversation; but there was no help for it. He must hear and answer the old gentleman's thanks for his great services that night—praises of his conduct and of Faith's conduct; speculations and questions concerning the evening's disaster. After a time that seemed tedious, though it was not really very long, Miss Harrison came down.

"She'll be better directly," she said. "Do sit down, Mr. Linden!—I have ordered some refreshments—you must want them, I should think; and you'll have to wait a little while, for Faith says she will go home with you; though I am sure she ought not, and Julius says she must not stir."

Mr. Linden bowed slightly—answering in the most commonplace way that he was in no hurry and in no need of refreshments; and probably he felt also in no need of rest—for he remained standing.

"How is she, dear? how is she?" said the Judge. "Is she much hurt?"

"Just *now*," said Miss Harrison, "she is in such pain that she cannot move—but we have put something on that will take away the pain, Julius says, in fifteen minutes; and she will be quite well this time to-morrow, he says."

"But is she much hurt?" Judge Harrison repeated with a very concerned face.

"She'll be well to-morrow, father; but she was dreadfully burned—her arm and shoulder—I thought she would have fainted upstairs—but I don't know whether people *can* faint when they are in such pain. I don't see how she can bear her dress to go home, but she says she will; Mrs. Derrick would be frightened. Mr. Linden, they say every body does what you tell them—I wish you'd persuade Faith to stay with me to-night! She won't hear me."

"How soon can I see her?"—The voice made Miss Harrison look—but her eyes said her ears had made a mistake.

"Why she said she would come down stairs presently—as soon as the pain went off enough to let her do anything—and she wanted me to tell you so; but I am sure it's very wrong. Do, Mr. Linden, take something!"—(the servant had brought in a tray of meats and wine)—"While you're waiting, you may as well rest yourself. How shall we ever thank you for what you've done to-night!"

Miss Harrison spoke under some degree of agitation, but both she and her father failed in no kind or grateful shew of feeling towards their guest.

"How did it happen, Mr. Linden?" she said when she had done in this kind all she could.

He said he had not seen the accident—only its results.

"I can't imagine how Faith got there," said Miss Harrison. "She saw the screen coming over on Nero, I suppose, and thought she could save the lamp—she made one spring from the doorway, he says, to where he stood. And in putting up her hand to the lamp, I suppose that horrid fluid ran down her arm and on her shoulder—when Nero put out the lamp he must have loosened the fastening; it went all over her shoulder. But she'll be well to-morrow night, Julius says."

"Who's with her now, my dear?" said the Judge.

"O Julius is with her—he said he'd stay with her till I came back—she wanted Mr. Linden to know she would go home with him. Now, Mr. Linden, won't you send her word back that you'll take care of Mrs. Derrick if she'll stay?"

"I will go up and see her, Miss Harrison."

That was anticipated however, by the entrance of the doctor; who told his sister Miss Derrick wanted her help, then came gravely to the table, poured out a glass of wine and drank it. His father asked questions, which he answered briefly. Miss Derrick felt better—she was going to get up and come down stairs.

"But ought she to be suffered to go out to-night, Julius?—such a night?"

"Certainly not!"

The Judge argued the objections to her going. The doctor made no answer. He walked up and down the room, and Mr. Linden stood still. Ten or fifteen minutes passed; and then the door opened softly

and Faith, all dressed, cloaked, and furred, came in with her hood, followed by her friend. Miss Sophy looked very ill satisfied. Faith's face was pale enough, but as serenely happy as release from pain can leave a face that has no care behind. A white embodiment of purity and gentleness she looked. The doctor was at her side instantly, asking questions. Mr. Linden did not interrupt him,—he had met her almost before the doctor, and taken her hand with a quietness through which Faith could perceive the stir of feelings that might have swept those of all the others out into the snow. But he held her hand silently until other people had done their questions—then simply asked if she was quite sure she was fit to ride home? Then, with that passing of the barrier, look and voice did change a little.

"I mean to go,"—she said without looking at him,—"if you'll please to take me."

"She ought not,—I am sure she ought not!" exclaimed Miss Harrison in much vexation. "She is just able to stand."

"You know," Mr. Linden said,—not at all as if he was urging her, but merely making a statement he thought best to make; "I could even bring your mother here, in a very short time, if you wished it."

"O I don't wish it. I can go home very well now."

He gave her his arm without more words. Miss Harrison and the Judge followed regretfully to the door; the doctor to the sleigh.

"Are you well wrapped up?" he asked.

"I have got all my own and all Sophy's furs," said Faith in a glad tone of voice.

"Take care of yourself," he said;—"and Mr. Linden, you must take care of her—which is more to the purpose. If I had it to do, this ride would not be taken. Linden—I'll thank you another time."

They drove off. But as soon as they were a few steps from the house, Mr. Linden put his arm about Faith and held her so that she could lean against him and rest; giving her complete support, and muffling up the furs about her lightly and effectually, till it was hardly possible for the cold air to win through; and so drove her home. Not with many words,—with only a whispered question now and then, whether she was cold, or wanted any change of posture. The wind had lulled, and it was much milder, and the snow was beginning to fall softly and fast; Faith could feel the snow crystals on his face whenever it touched hers. Mr. Linden would have perhaps chosen to drive gently, as being easier for her, but the thick air made it needful. Once only he asked any other question.—

"Faith—is my care of you in fault, that it lets you come home?"

"No, I think not," she said;—"you hold me just so nicely as it is possible to be! and this snow-storm is beautiful." Which answer, though she might not know it, testified to her need of precisely the care he was giving her.

"Are you suffering much now, dear child?"

"Not at all. I am only enjoying. I like being out in such a storm as this.—Only I am afraid mother is troubled."

"No—I sent Reuben down some time ago, to answer her questions if she was up, and to have a good fire ready for you."

"O that's good!" she said. And then rested, in how luxurious a rest! after exertion, and after anxiety, and after pain; so cared for and guarded. She could almost have gone to sleep to the tinkle of Jerry's bells; only that her spirit was too wide awake for that and the pleasure of the time too good to be lost. She had not all the pleasure to herself—Faith could feel that, every time Mr. Linden spoke or touched her; but what a different atmosphere his mind was in, from her quiet rest! Pain had quitted her, but not him, though the kinds were different. Truly he would have borne any amount of physical pain himself, to cancel that which she had suffered,—there were some minutes of the ride when he would have borne it, only to lose the thought of that. But Faith knew nothing of it all, except as she could feel once or twice a deep breath that was checked and hushed, and turned into some sweet low-spoken word to her; and her rest was very deep. So deep, that the stopping of the sleigh at last, was an interruption.

The moment Jerry's bells rang their little summons at the door, the door itself opened, and from the glimmering light Reuben ran out to take the reins.

"Is Mrs. Derrick up?" Mr. Linden asked, when the first inquiry about Faith had been answered.

"I don't know, sir. I told her you wore afraid Miss Faith would take cold without a fire in her room—and she let me take up wood and make it; and then she said she wasn't sleepy, and she'd take care it didn't go out. I haven't seen her since."

"Thank you, Reuben—now hold Jerry for me,—I shall keep you here to-night," Mr. Linden said as he stepped out. And laying his hand upon the furs and wrappers, he said softly,—"Little Esquimaux—do you think you can walk to the house?"

"O yes!—certainly."

A little bit of a laugh answered her—the first she had heard since Campaspe; and then she was softly lifted up, and borne into the house over the new-fallen snow as lightly as if she had been a snowflake herself. The snow might lay its white feathers upon her hood, but Faith felt as if she were in a cradle instead of a snow-storm. She was placed in the easy chair before the sitting-room fire, and her hood and furs quickly taken off. "How do you feel?" Mr. Linden asked her.

She looked like one of the flakes of snow herself, for simplicity and colour; but there was a smile in her eyes and lips that had come from a climate where roses blow.

"I feel nicely.—Only a little bruised and battered feeling, which isn't unpleasant."

"Will you have anything?—a cup of tea?—that might do you good."

Faith looked dubious at the cup of tea; but then rose up and said it would disturb her mother, and she would just go and sleep.

"It won't disturb her a bit,"—Mr. Linden said, reseating her,—"sit still—I'll send Reuben up to see."

He left her there a very few minutes, apparently attending to more than one thing, for he came back through the eating-room door; bringing word to Faith that her fire and room were in nice order, and her mother fast asleep there in the rocking-chair to keep guard; and that she should have a cup of tea in no time. And with a smile at her, he went back into the eating-room, and brought thence her cup and plate, and requested to be told just how the tea should be made to please her, and whether he might invade the dairy for cream.

"If I could put this cloak over my shoulders, I would get some myself. Will you put it on for me? please.—Is there fire in the kitchen? I'll go and make the tea."

"Is there nothing else you would like to do?" he said standing before her,—"you shall not stir! Do you think I don't know cream when I see it?"—and he went off again, coming back this time in company with Reuben and the tea-kettle, but the former did not stay. Then with appeals to her for directions the tea was made and poured out, and toast made and laid on her plate; but she was not allowed to raise a finger, except now to handle her cup.

"It's very good!" said Faith,—"but—don't you remember you once told me two cups of cocoa were better than one?"

It is to be noted in passing, that all Faith's *nameless* addresses were made with a certain gentle, modulated accent, which invariably implied in its half timid respect the "Mr. Linden" which she rarely forgot now she was not to say.

"Dear child! I do indeed," he said, as if the remembrance wore a bright one. "But I remember too that my opinion was negatived. Faith, I used to wish then that I could wait upon you—but I would rather have you wait upon me, after all!"

Faith utterly disallowed the tone of these last words, and urged her request in great earnest. He laughed at her a little—but brought the cup and drank the tea,—certainly more to please her than himself; watching her the while, to see if the refreshment were telling upon her cheeks. She was very little satisfied with his performance.

"Now I'll go and wake up mother," she said at last rising. "Don't think of this evening again but to be glad of everything that has happened. I am."

"I fear, I fear," he said looking at her, "that your gladness and my sorrow meet on common ground. Child, what shall I do with you?"—but what he did with her then was to put her in that same cradle and carry her softly upstairs, to the very door of her room.

CHAPTER VI.

The same soft snow-storm was coming down when Faith opened her eyes next morning; the air looked like a white sheet; but in her room a bright fire was blazing, reddening the white walls, and by her side sat Mrs. Derrick watching her. Very gentle and tender were the hands that helped her dress, and then Mrs. Derrick said she would go down and see to breakfast for a little while.

"Wasn't it good your room was warm last night?" she said, stroking Faith's hair.

Faith's eyes acknowledged that.

"And wasn't it good you were asleep!" she said laughing and kissing Mrs. Derrick. "Mother!—I was so glad!"

"That's the funny part of it," said Mrs. Derrick. "Reuben's just about as queer in his way as Mr. Linden. The only thing I thought from the way he gave the message, was that somebody cared a good deal about his new possession—which I suppose is true," she added smiling; "and so I just went to sleep."

Mrs. Derrick went down; and Faith knelt on the rug before the fire and bent her heart and head over her bible. In great happiness;—in great endeavour that her happiness should stand well based on its true foundations and not shift from them to any other. In sober endeavour to lay hold, and feel that she had hold, of the happiness that cannot be taken away; to make sure that her feet were on a rock, before she stooped to take the sweetness of the flowers around her. And to judge by her face, she had felt the rock and the flowers both, before she left her room.

The moment she opened her door and went out into the hall, Mr. Linden opened his,—or rather it was already open, and he came out, meeting her at the head of the stairs. And after his first greeting, he held her still and looked at her for a moment—a little anxiously and intently. "My poor, pale little child!" he said—"you are nothing but a snowdrop this morning!"

"Well that is a very good thing to be," said Faith brightly. But the *colour* resemblance he had destroyed.

She was lifted and carried down just as she had been carried up last night, and into the sitting-room again; for breakfast was prepared there this morning, and the sofa wheeled round to the side of the fire all ready for her. How bright the room looked!—its red curtains within and its white curtains without, and everything so noiseless and sweet and in order. Even the coffeepot was there by this time, and Mrs. Derrick arranged the cups and looked at Faith on the sofa, with eyes that lost no gladness when they went from her to the person who stood at her side. Faith's eyes fell, and for a moment she was very sober. It was only for a moment.

"What a beautiful storm!" she said. "I am glad it snows. I am going to do a great deal of work to-day."

Mr. Linden looked at her. "Wouldn't you just as lieve be talked to sleep?"

She smiled. "You—couldn't—do that, Mr. Linden."

"Mr. Linden can do more than you think—and will," he said with a little comic raising of the eyebrows.

For a while after breakfast Faith sat alone, except as her mother came in and out to see that she wanted nothing,—alone in the soft snowy stillness, till Mr. Linden came in from the postoffice and sat down by her, laying against her cheek a soft little bunch of rosebuds and violets.

"Faith," he said, "you have been looking sober—what is the reason?"

"I haven't been looking *too* sober, have I? I didn't know I was looking sober at all."

She was looking quaint, and lovely; in the plain wrapper she had put on and the soft thoughtful air and mien, in contrast with which the diamonds jumped and flashed with every motion of her hand. A study book lay in her lap.

"How did all that happen last night?" said Mr. Linden abruptly.

"Why!"—said Faith colouring and looking down at her ring—"I was standing in the doorway and Nero was coming out with that great lamp; and when he got opposite the screen something fell on it, I

believe, from the burning bookcases, and it was thrown over against him—I thought the lamp and he would all go over together—and I jumped;—and in putting up my hand to the lamp I suppose, for I don't remember, the fluid must have run down my arm and on my shoulder—I don't know how it got on fire, but it must have been from some of the burning wood that fell. The next I knew, you were carrying me to the drawing-room—I have a recollection of that."

He listened with very grave eyes.

"Were you trying to take the lamp from Nero?"

"O no. I thought it was going to fall over."

"What harm would it have done the floor?"

The tinge of colour on Faith's cheek deepened considerably, and her eyes lifted not themselves from the diamonds. She was not ready to speak.

"I did not think of the floor"—

"Of what then?"

She waited again. "I was afraid some harm would be done,"—

"Did you prevent it?"

"I don't know"—she said rather faintly.

Gently her head was drawn down till it rested on his shoulder.

"Faith," he said in his own low sweet tones, "I stretched a little silken thread across the doorway to keep you out—did you make of that a clue to find your way in?"

She did not answer—nor stir.

There were no more questions asked—no more words said; Mr. Linden was as silent as she and almost as still. Once or twice his lips touched her forehead, not just as they had ever done it before, Faith thought; but some little time had passed, when he suddenly took up the book which lay in her lap and began the lesson at which it lay open; reading and explaining in a very gentle, steady voice, a little moved from its usual clearness. Still his arm did not release her. Faith listened, with a semidivided mind, for some time; there was something in this state of things that she wished to mend. It came at last, when there was a pause in the lesson.

"I am glad of all that happened last night," she said, "except the pain to you and mother. There is nothing to be sorry for. You shouldn't be sorry."

"Why not, little naughty child?—and why are you glad?"

"Because—it was good for me,"—she said, not very readily nor explicitly.

"In what way?"

"It was good for me,"—she repeated;—"it put me in mind of some things."

"Of what, dear child?"

It was a question evidently Faith would rather not have answered. She spoke with some difficulty.

"That there are such things in the world as pain—and trouble. It is best not to forget it."

Mr. Linden understood and felt; but he only answered, "It will be the business of my life to make you forget it. Now don't you think you ought to put up this book, and rest or sleep?"

"I dare say *you* ought," said Faith,—"and I wish you would. *I* want to work."

He gave her a laugh, by way of reply, and then gave her work as she desired; watching carefully against her tiring herself in any way, and making the lessons more of talk on his part and less of study on hers. They were none the less good for that, nor any the less pleasant. Till there came a knock at the front door; and then with a little sigh Faith leaned back against the sofa, as if lessons were done.

"There is Dr. Harrison."

"And I shall have to be on my good behaviour," Mr. Linden said, quitting the sofa. "But I suppose he

will not stay all the rest of the day." And as Cindy was slow in her movements, he went and opened the door; Faith the while fitting on a glove finger.

"First in one element, and then in another—" Mr. Linden said, as the doctor came in from a sort of simoon of snow.

"This one for me!" said Dr. Harrison shaking herself;—"but I should say you must be out of your element to-day."

"Wherefore, if you please?" said Mr. Linden, as he endeavoured to get the doctor out of his.

"Unless you live in a variety! I thought you were in your element last night." And the doctor went forward into the sitting-room. The first move was to take a seat by Faith and attend to her; and his address and his inquiries, with the manner of them, were perfect in their kind. Interested, concerned, tender, grateful, to the utmost limit of what might have been in the circumstances testified by anybody, with equal grace and skill they were limited there. Of special individual interest he allowed no testimony to escape him—none at least that was unequivocal. And Faith gave him answers to all he said, till he touched her gloved finger and inquired if the fire had been at work there too. Faith rather hastily drew it under cover and said no.

"What is the matter with it?"

"There is nothing bad the matter with it," said Faith, very imprudently letting her cheeks get rosy. The doctor looked at her—told her he could cure her finger if she would let him; and then rose up and assumed his position before the fire, looking down at Mr. Linden.

"There isn't much of a midge about you, after all," he said.

"I suppose in the matter of wings we are about on a par. What is the extent of the damage?"

"It is nothing worth speaking of—I think now," said the doctor. "But we are under an extent of obligation to you, my dear fellow,—which sits on me as lightly as obligation so generously imposed should;—and yet I should be doubly grateful if you could shew me some way in which I could—for a moment—reverse the terms on which we stand towards each other."

"I don't think of any generous imposition just now," said Mr. Linden smiling. "How are your father and sister?—I was afraid they would suffer from the fright, if nothing else."

"Strong nerves!" said the doctor shrugging his shoulders. "We all eat our breakfast this morning, and wanted the chops done as much as usual. Sophy *did* suffer, though; but it was because Miss Faith would do nothing but get hurt in the house and wouldn't stay to be made well."

"I am sure I did something more than *that*," said Faith, to whom the doctor had looked.

"You don't deserve any thanks!" he said sitting down again beside her;—"but there is somebody else that does, and I wish you would give me a hint how to pay them. That young fellow who says he is no friend of yours—he helped us bravely last night. What can I do to please him?"

"Mr. Linden can tell best," said Faith looking to him. The doctor turned in the same direction.

"Thank you!" Mr. Linden said, and the words were warmly spoken, yet not immediately followed up. "Thank you very much, doctor!" he repeated thoughtfully—"I am not sure that Reuben wants anything just now,—next summer, perhaps, he may want books."

"I see *you* are his friend?"

"Yes—if you give the word its full length and breadth."

"What is that?" said Dr. Harrison. "Don't go off to 'Nought and All.'"

"I suppose in this case I may say, a mutual bond of trust, affection, and active good wishes."

"There's something in that fellow, I judge?"

"You judge right."

"A fisherman's son, I think you said. Well—I share the 'active good wishes,' at least, if I can't assume the 'affection'—so think about my question, Linden, and I'll promise to back your thoughts. What do you do with yourself such a day? I was overcome with ennui—till I got out into the elements."

"Ennui is not one of my friends," said Mr. Linden smiling—"not even an acquaintance. In fact I never

even set a chair for him, as the woman in Elia set a chair for the poor relation, saying, 'perhaps he will step in to-day.' I have been busy, doctor—what shall I do to amuse you? will you have a foreign newspaper?"

The doctor looked dubious; then took the newspaper and turned it over, but not as if he had got rid of his ennui.

"This smoke in the house will drive us out of Pattaquasset a little sooner than we expected."

"Not this winter?"

"Yes. *That's* nothing new—but we shall go a few days earlier than we meant. I wish you were going too."

"When to return?" said Mr. Linden. "I mean you—not myself."

"I?—I am a wandering comet," said the doctor. "I have astonished Pattaquasset so long, it is time for me to flare up in some other place. I don't know, Linden. Somebody must be here occasionally, to overlook the refitting of the inside of that library—perhaps that agreeable duty will fall on me. But Linden,"—said the doctor dropping the newspaper and turning half round on his chair, speaking gracefully and comically,—"*you* astonish Pattaquasset as much as I do; and to tell you the truth you astonish me sometimes a little. This is no place for you. Wouldn't you prefer a tutorship at Quilipeak, or a professor's chair in one of the city colleges? You may step into either berth presently, and at your pleasure,—I know. I do not speak without knowledge."

There was a stir of feeling in Mr. Linden's face—there was even an unwonted tinge of colour, but the firm-set lips gave no indication as to whence it came; and he presently looked up, answering the doctor in tones as graceful and more simple than his own.

"Thank you, doctor, once more! But I have full employment, and am—or am not—ambitious,—whichever way you choose to render it. Not to speak of the pleasure of astonishing Pattaquasset," he added, with a smile breaking out,—"I could not hope to do that for Quilipeak."

"Please know," said the doctor, both frankly and with much respect in his manner, "that I have been so presumptuous as to concern my mind about this for some time—for which you will punish me as you think I deserve. How to be so much further presumptuous as to speak to you about it, was my trouble;—and I ventured at last," he said smiling, "upon my own certain possession of certain points of that 'friend' character which you were giving just now to Reuben Taylor—or to yourself, in his regard."

"I am sure you have them!—But about Reuben,—though I know reward is the last thing he thought of or would wish,—yet I, his friend, choose to answer for him, that if you choose to give him any of the books that he will need in college, they will be well bestowed."

"In college!" said the doctor. "Diable! Where is he going?"

"Probably to Quilipeak."

"You said, to college, man. I mean, what is college the road to, in the youngster's mind?"

"I am not sure that I have a right to tell you," said Mr. Linden,—"it is in his mind a road to greater usefulness—so much I may say."

"He'll never be more useful than he was last night. However, I'm willing to help him try.—What is Mignonette going to do with herself this afternoon?"—said the doctor throwing aside his newspaper and standing before her.

"I don't know," said Faith. "Sit here and work, I suppose."

"I'll tell you what she ought to do," the doctor went on impressively. "She ought to do what the flowers do when the sun goes down,—shut up her sweetness to herself, see and be seen by nobody, and cease to be conscious of her own existence."

Faith laughed, in a way that gave doubtful promise of following the directions. The doctor stood looking down at her, took her hand and gallantly kissed it, and finally took himself off.

"There is a good little trial of my patience!" Mr. Linden said. "I don't know but it is well he is going away, for I might forget myself some time, and bid him hands off."

At which Faith looked thoughtful.

"Faith," Mr. Linden said, gently raising her face, "would you like to live at Quilipeak?"

The answer to that was a great rush of colour, and a casting down of eyes and face too as soon as it was permitted.

"Well?" he said smiling—though she felt some other thread in the voice. "What did you think of the words that passed between the doctor and me? Would you like to have me agree to his proposal?"

"You would do what is best," she said with a good deal of effort. "I couldn't wish anything else."—

He answered her mutely at first, with a deep mingling of gravity and affection, as if she were very, very precious.

"My dear little child!" he said, "if anything on earth could make me do it, it would be you!—and yet I cannot."

She looked up inquiringly; but except by that look, she asked nothing.

"You strengthen my hands more than you weaken them," he said. "I am so sure that you would feel with me!—I know it so well! I have a long story to tell you, dear Faith,—some time, not now," he added, with a sort of shadow coming over his face. "Will you let me choose my own time? I know it is asking a good deal."

"It would be asking a great deal more of me to choose any other," Faith said with a sunny smile. "I like that time best."

He passed his hand softly once or twice across her forehead, giving her a bright, grateful look, though a little bit of a sigh came with it too,—then drew her arm within his and led her slowly up and down the room.

But after dinner, and after one or two more lessons—under careful guardianship, Faith was persuaded to lay herself on the sofa and rest, and listen,—first to various bits of reading, then to talk about some of her photographic pictures; the talk diverging right and left, into all sorts of paths, fictional, historic, sacred and profane. Then the light faded—the out-of-door light, still amid falling snow; and the firelight shone brighter and brighter; and Mrs. Derrick stopped listening, and went to the dining-room sofa for a nap. Then Mr. Linden, who had been sitting at Faith's side, changed his place so as to face her.

"How do you feel to-night?" he asked.

"Perfectly well—and as nicely as possible. Just enough remains of last night to make it pleasant to lie still."

"You are a real little sunbeam! Do you know I want you to go off with me on a shining expedition?"

"On *what* sort of expedition?" said Faith laughing.

"A shining one—I want to carry your bright face into all the darkest places I can find."

There was an alternation of amusement and a grave expression in her face for a minute, one and the other flitting by turns; but then she said quietly, "When, Mr. Linden?"

"What shall I do with you?" he said,—"shall I call you Miss Derrick?"

"No indeed!" she said colouring. "I don't often forget myself."

"No, I shall not do that, for it would punish myself too much, but I shall do something else—which will not punish me at all, and may perhaps make you remember. What do you suppose it will be?"

"I don't know"—she said flushing all over.

"Nothing worse than this"—he said, bending his face to hers. "Faith! I did not mean to frighten you so! I'll tell you where I want to take you.—You know Monday is the first of January, and I want to go with you to those houses in the neighbourhood where the wheels of the new year drag a little, and try to give them a pleasant start. Would you like it?"

"O!"—she said, springing forward with a delighted exclamation.—"Tell me, just what you mean. To which houses?"

"I mean that if you are well, we will have a long, long sleigh ride, and leave as many little pieces of comfort and pleasure by the way as we can. The houses, dear, will be more than you think—I must

make out a list."

Faith clapped her hands.

"O delicious! That is the best thing we could possibly do with Monday! and there are two days yet this week—I shall have plenty of chance, mother and I, to make everything. O what sorts of things shall we take? and what are some of the houses? There is Mrs. Dow, where we went that night,"—she said, her voice falling,—"and Sally Lowndes—what places are you thinking off?"

"I think we might give Reuben at least a visit, if nothing else,—and there are a good many such houses down about those points, and far on along the shore. I was thinking most of them—though there are some nearer by. But my Mignonette must not tire herself,—I did not mean to bring anything but pleasure upon her hands."

"You can't! in this way," said Faith in delighted eagerness. "Who keeps house in Reuben's home? he has no mother."

"No—I suppose I may say that he keeps house,—for his father is away a great deal, and Reuben always seems to be doing what there is to do. As to things—you will want some for well people, and some for sick,—at some houses the mere necessary bread and meat, and at others any of those little extras which people who spend all their money for bread and meat can never get. But little child," Mr. Linden said smiling, "if I let you prepare, you must let me send home."

"What?" said she. "I thought you said we would both take them together?"

He laughed—taking her hand and holding it in both his.

"And so we will!—I meant, send home here, to prepare."

"Oh!—Well," said Faith, "but we have a great deal now, you know; and I can send Mr. Skip to get more. But one thing I know—we will take Reuben a roast turkey!"

I wonder if she could tell, in the firelight, with what eyes he watched her and listened to her! Probably not, for his back was towards the fire, and the changing light and shade on his face was a little concealed. But the light had the mastery.

"Faith," he said, "I shall send you home some sugar-plums—upon express condition that you are not to eat them up; being quite sweet enough already."

His face was so hid that probably Faith thought her own was hid too, and did not know how clearly its moved timid changes were seen. She leaned forward, and touching one hand lightly to his shoulder, said,

"What do you mean to make me,—Endecott?"

It was a thing to hear, the soft fall and hesitancy of Faith's voice at the last word. Yet they hardly told of the struggle it had cost. How the word thrilled him she did not know,—the persons living from whom he ever had that name were now so few, that there was a strange mingling with the exquisite pleasure of hearing it from her lips,—a mingling of past grief and of present healing. He changed his place instantly; and taking possession of her, gave her the most gentle, tender, and silent thanks. Perhaps too much touched to speak—perhaps feeling sure that if he spoke at all it would be in just such words as she had so gently reproved. The answer at last was only a bright, "I told you I could not promise—and I will not now!"

She pushed her head round a little so that she could give a quick glance into his face, in which lay her answer. Her words, when she spoke, made something of a transition, which however was proved by the voice to be a transition in words only.

"Wouldn't a bag of potatoes be a good thing for us to take?"

"Certainly!—and we must take some books, and some orders for wood. And you must have a basket of trifles to delight all the children we meet."

"That's easy! And books, will you take? that's delicious! that's better than anything, for those who can enjoy them. Do you think any of them want bibles?"

"We will take some, at a venture—I never like to go anywhere without that supply. And then we shall both have to use our wits to find out just what is wanted in a particular place,—the people that tell you most have often the least to tell. And above all, Faith, we shall want plenty of sympathy and kind words and patience,—they are more called for than anything else. Do you think you can conjure up a sufficient

supply?"

"It is something I know so little about!" said Faith. "I have never had very much chance. When I went to see Mrs. Custers I didn't in the least know how to speak to her. But these people where we are going all know *you*, I suppose?"—she said with another and not a little wistful look up into his face.

"Most of them—more or less. What of it?"

"That makes it easy," she said quietly. "But I suppose it would be just the same if you didn't know them! About the sick people,—Endecott—if you can tell us *how* they are sick, mother and I between us can make out what things to prepare for them."

"Did you think I was in earnest, dear Faith, when I asked about your sympathy?" Mr. Linden said, drawing her closer.

"No.—I think I have the sympathy, but I don't so well know how to shew it. Then loaves of bread, I suppose, wouldn't come amiss?—And above all, meat. Where else do you think a roast turkey ought to go?"

"To one particular far-off house on the shore that is brim full of little children—and nothing else!"

"We'll take them a big one," said Faith smiling,—"and I suppose it is no matter how many cakes! You'll have to make a very particular list, with some notion of what would be best at each place; because in some houses they wouldn't bear what in others they would be very glad of. Wouldn't that be good? So that we might be sure to have the right thing everywhere—*one* right thing, at any rate. The other things might take their chance."

"Yes, I will do that. But you know the first thing is, that you should get well, and the next that you should *not* get tired,—and these must be secured, if nobody ever has anything."

Faith's laugh was joyous.

"To-morrow I mean to make cakes and pies," she said,—"and the next day I will bake bread and roast turkeys and boil beef! And you have no idea what a quantity of each will be wanted! I think I never saw anybody so good at talking people to sleep!—that didn't want to go. Now what is that?" For the knocker of the front door sounded loudly again.

"It is something to send people away—that don't want to go!" Mr. Linden said, as he put her back in her old position on the cushions, and moved his chair to a respectful distance therefrom. But nothing worse came in this time than a note, well enveloped and sealed, which was for Mr. Linden. It ran after this fashion.—

"*In the snow—yet and the chair not only set for Ennui, but ennui in the chair!*

"*This 28th Dec*. 18

"DEAR LINDEN,

You see my condition. I am desperate for want of something to do—*so* I send you this. Enclosed you will please find—if you haven't dropped it on the floor!—$25, for the bibliothecal and collegiate expenses of 'Miss Derrick's friend.' If you should hereafter know him to be in further want of the same kind of material aid and comfort—please convey intelligence of the same to myself or father. He—-i. e-. said 'friend'—saved to *us* last night far more than the value of this.

I am sorry I have no more to say! for your image—what else could it be?—has for the moment frightened Ennui into the shadow—but he will come back again as soon as I have sealed this. By which you will know when you read the (then) present condition of

Your friend most truly

JULIUS HARRISON.

In Pattaquasset, is it?"

Mr. Linden read the note by firelight and standing—then came and sat down by Faith and put it in her hands. By firelight Faith read it hastily, and looked up with eyes of great delight. "Oh!" she said, —"isn't that good!" Then she looked down at the note soberly again.

"Well, little child? what?" he said smiling. "Yes, I am very glad. What are you doubting about?"

"I am not doubting about anything," she said giving him the note,—"only thinking of this strange man."

"Is he very strange?" Mr. Linden said. But he did not pursue the subject, going back instead to the one they had been upon, to give her the information she had asked for about the sick people they were likely to meet in their rounds; passing gradually from that to other matters, thence into silence. And Faith followed him, step by step,—only when he was quite silent, she was—asleep!

CHAPTER VII.

The next two days were busy ones, all round; for though Faith was carefully watched, by both her guardians, yet she was really well and strong enough again to be allowed to do a good deal; especially with those intervals of rest and study which Mr. Linden managed for her. His work, between these intervals, took him often out of doors, and various were the tokens of that work which came home—greatly to Faith's interest and amusement. They were curiously indicative, too, both of the varied wants of the poor people in the neighbourhood, and of his knowledge on the subject. From a little pair of shoes which was to accompany one roast turkey, to the particular sort of new fishing net which was to go with the other, it really seemed as if every sort of thing was wanted somewhere,—simple things, and easy to get, and not costing much,—but priceless to people who had no money at all. Faith was appointed receiver general, and her hands were full of amusement as well as business. And those two things were the most of all that Mr. Linden suffered to come upon them,—whatever his own means might be, it was no part of his plan to trench upon Mrs. Derrick's; though she on her part entered heart and hands into the work, with almost as much delight as Faith herself, and would have given the two carte-blanche to take anything she had in the house. Faith didn't ask *him* what she should take there, nor let him know much about it till Monday. By this time, what with direct and indirect modes of getting at the knowledge, Faith had become tolerably well acquainted with the class or classes of wants that were to be ministered to. Many were the ovenfuls that were baked that Friday and Saturday! great service did the great pot that was used for boiling great joints! nice and comforting were the broths and more delicate things provided, with infinite care, for some four or five sick or infirm people. But Faith's delight was the things Mr. Linden sent home; every fresh arrival of which sent her to the kitchen with a new accession of zeal, sympathy, and exultation,—sympathy with him and the poor people; exultation in the work—most of all in him! Great was the marvelling of Cindy and Mr. Skip at these days' proceedings.

So passed Friday and Saturday; and Sunday brought a lull. Faith thought so, and felt so. Her roast turkeys and chickens were reposing in spicy readiness; her boiled meats and bakeries were all accomplished and in waiting; and dismissing all but a little joyful background thought of them, Faith gave her whole heart and mind to the full Sabbath rest, to the full Sabbath rising; and looked, in her deep happiness, as if she were—what she was—enjoying the one and striving after the other. But the ways by which we are to find the good we must seek, are by no means always those of our own choosing.

It was a clear, cold, still, winter's day. Cold enough by the thermometer; but so still that the walking to church was pleasant. They had come home from the afternoon service—Faith had not taken off her things—when she was called into the kitchen to receive a message. The next minute she was in the sitting-room and stood by the side of Mr. Linden's chair.

"Mrs. Custers is dying—and has sent for me."

"For you, dear child?—Well—Are you able to go?"

"Oh yes."

He looked at her in silence, as if he were making up his own mind on the subject, then rose up and gently seating her on the sofa, told her to rest there till he was ready; but before he came back again Mrs. Derrick came to Faith's side with a smoking cup of chicken broth and a biscuit.

"You've got to eat it, pretty child," she said fondly,—"we're both agreed upon that point."

Which point mandate Faith did not try to dispute.

The town clock had struck four, all counted, when Jerry dashed off from the door with the little sleigh behind him. No other sleigh-bells were abroad, and his rang out noisily and alone over the great waste

of stillness as soon as they were quit of the village. The air happily was very still and the cold had not increased; but low, low the sun was, and sent his slant beams coolly over the snow-white fields, glinting from fences and rocks and bare thickets with a gleam that threatened he would not look at them long. The hour was one of extreme beauty,—fair and still, with a steady strength in its stillness that made the beauty somewhat imposing. There was none of the yielding character of summer there; but a power that was doing its work and would do it straight through. "He giveth forth his ice like morsels; who can stand before his cold?"—thought Faith.

The sleighing was excellent; the roads in perfect condition.

"How long is it since you were here?" Mr. Linden said as the house came in sight, shewn only by its twinkling panes of glass.

"Not since before I went to Pequot—not since a day or two after that ride we took with Dr. Harrison, when you rode 'Stranger' the first time."

"How was she then?"

"Not much different from what she had been before—she didn't say much—she seemed to like to listen to me, or to see me, or both. That was all I could be sure of."

"Try not to let her spend her strength in examining the past state of her mind. Bid her lay hold of the promise now. A present hold will answer all her questions—and is all the oldest Christian can rest in."

"I wish you could speak to her instead of me," said Faith. "Perhaps she will let you."

"It is not you nor I, my child.—Fix your heart upon Christ, and let him speak,—fix your eyes upon him, and let his light shine."

"I know it. O I do!—" she said, looking up at him with an humble, moved face.

He lifted her out of the sleigh and led her up to the house, where they were presently admitted; into an outer room first, where Faith could lay off her furs.

"She's some brighter to-night," the woman in attendance said, in answer to Mr. Linden's questions. "I guess she'll be real glad to see you"—this was addressed to Faith.

Faith left Mr. Linden there, and went into the sick chamber alone; where she was always received as if she had brought an olive branch, or a palm branch, or both of them, in her hand. The spirit of both, no doubt, was in her; the gentle face looked the promise of both peace and victory, as only humility can look it.

Mrs. Custers on her part looked—as the other had said—glad; if so bright a word could be applied to a face that had lost all its own light, and where no reflected light as yet shone. Yet she was quieter than when Faith had first seen her, whether from mental relief or physical prostration, and was most eager for all Faith's words,—listening for the most part in silence, but with eyes that never said "enough." As some poor exhausted traveller takes the water which he has at last reached in the desert, nor knows yet whether its bright drops can avail to save his life, but lays him down by the fountain—there to live or die. And Faith, feeling that her hand was ministering those drops of life, lost every other thought,—except to wish for a hand that could do it better. Once she ventured a proposition.

"I have a friend here, Mrs. Custers, who can tell you about all these things much better than I can. Will you let him? May I ask him to come in and see you?"

"Better?" she said slowly—"I don't believe it. Who is he? your brother?"

"No—I haven't any brother. But that don't matter. He's somebody that is a great deal better than I am. May I let him come in? He's here," said Faith very quietly, along with her flushing cheek.

There was a poor little faint smile for a moment upon the sick woman's lips while Faith spoke, but it passed and she answered in the same tone—"I'll see him—to please you—before you go. I just want the words now—and I like you best."

Faith troubled her no more with unnecessary suggestions, and gave her "the words." Gave them with the fragrance of her own love about them, which certainly is the surest human vehicle for the love above human that is in them. As on that first occasion, Faith placed herself on the side of the bed; and holding one of Mrs. Custers' hands in her own, bending her soft quiet face towards the listening eyes and ears, she gave her one by one, like crumbs of life-giving food, the words of promise, of encouragement, of invitation, of example. No answer cheered or helped her; no token of pleasure or

even of assent met her; only those fixed listening eyes bade her go on, and told that whether for life and refreshment or no, the words were eagerly taken in, each after the other, as she said them. There was something in the strong sympathy of the speaker—in her own feeling and joy of the truths she told—that might give them double power and life to the ears of another. Faith reported the words of her Master with such triumphant prizing of them and such leaning on their strength; she gave his invitations in such tones of affection; she told over the instances of others' prevailing faith with such an evident, clear, satisfying share in the same;—the living words this time lost nothing of their power by a dead utterance. Of her own words Faith ventured few; now and then the simplest addition to some thing she had repeated, to make it more plain, or to carry it further home; such words as she could not keep back; such words, very much, as she would have spoken to Johnny Fax; not very unlike what Johnny Fax might have spoken to her. But there was not a little physical exhaustion about all this after a while, and Faith found she must have some help to her memory. She went into the other room.

"I want a bible," she said looking round for it—"Is there one here?"

Yes there was one, but it was Mr. Linden's. That was quickly given her.

"I forgot it at the moment you went in," he said, "and then I did not like to disturb you. My dear Faith!—" and he held her hand and looked at her a little wistfully. She brought her other hand upon his, and looked down and looked up wistfully too; like one with a heart full.

"Can I help you? can I take your place?"

"She won't let you," said Faith shaking her head. "She says she will see you by and by—but she must take her own time for it."

And Faith went back to her ministrations. Of all bibles, she would have had that one in her hand then! And yet its companionship bowed down her heart with a sense of weakness;—but that was the very position for the next move; a spring beyond weakness to the only real and sufficient ground of strength.

The afternoon merged into the evening. A tallow candle had been brought by the attendant into the room in which Mr. Linden was waiting; and its dim smoky light would have made a dismal place of it if he had had no other to go by. He could sometimes hear the low tones of a word or two in the other room; more often the tones were so low that they failed to reach him. When this state of things had lasted a long time—as it seemed—there came an interruption in the form of quick steps on the snow; then the door was pushed open, and Dr. Harrison appeared.

"You here!" was his astonished salutation. "What upon earth has brought you?"

"I came to bring some one else."

"*She* isn't here?" said the doctor. "You don't mean that?"

His emphatic pronouns were a little smile-provoking, in spite of the grave thoughts upon which they intruded—or rather perhaps because of them; but if Mr. Linden's face felt that temptation, it was only for a moment,—he answered quietly,

"If you mean Miss Faith, she has been here a long time."

The doctor knew that! if she came when she was called. *He* had stopped to eat his dinner.

"I mean her, of course," he said with his tone a little subdued. "I shouldn't think her mother would have let her come—such a night!—" Which meant very plainly that Dr. Harrison would not have let her.—"Is she in there with the woman now?"

"Yes."

The doctor went with grave aspect to the door of communication between the two rooms and softly opened it and went in; so softly, that Faith, engaged in her reading, did not hear anything; the sick woman's eyes were the first that perceived him. Hers rested on him a moment—then came back to Faith, and then again met the doctor's; but not just as they had been wont. And her first words bore out his impression.

"You may come in," she said, slowly and distinctly,—"I'm not afraid of you to-night."

He came forward, looked at her, touched her hand, kindly; and then without a word turned to Faith.

Faith did not dare ask a question, but her eyes put it silently.

"She don't want anything," said he meaningly. "Not from me. She may have anything she fancies to

have."

Faith's eyes went back to the other face. That the doctor's words had been understood there too, was evident from the little flitting colour, and the sick woman lay still with closed eyes, clasping Faith's hand as if she were holding herself back from drifting out on "that great and unknown sea." But she roused herself and spoke hurriedly. "Won't somebody pray for me?"

Faith bent over until her lips almost touched the sufferer's cheek and her warm breath floated in the words, "I'll bring somebody—" then loosing her hold, she sprang from the bed and out into the other room. But when she had clasped Mr. Linden's hand, Faith bent down her head upon it, unable to speak. The strength it could, his hand gave her—and his voice.

"What, my dear child?"

Then Faith looked up. "She wants you to pray for her." And without waiting for the unnecessary answer, she led Mr. Linden to the door of the room, there dropped his hand and went in before him. Dr. Harrison was standing by the bedpost, and looked wordlessly upon the two as they entered.

Mrs. Custers scanned the stranger's face as he came to wards her, with an anxious, eager look, as if she wanted to know whether he could do anything for her; the look changing to one of satisfaction. But to his low-spoken question as he took her hand, she gave an answer that was almost startling in its slow earnestness.

"Pray that I may believe—and that *he* may—and that God would bless her forever!"

How was such a request to be met! then and there!—for a moment Mr. Linden's eyes fell. But then he knelt by her side, and met it most literally,—in tones very low and clear and distinct, in words that might have been angels' plumage for their soft bearing upward of the sufferer's thoughts. Faith could feel a slight trembling once or twice of the hand that held hers, but the bitterness of its grasp had relaxed. Dr. Harrison was behind her; whether he stood or knelt she did not know; but *he* knew that when the other two rose to their feet, one of them was exceedingly pale; and his move, made on the instant, was to get her a glass of water. Faith only tasted it and gave it him back, and mounted to her former place on the bed. And for a little all was still, until Mr. Linden spoke again in the same clear, guiding tones.

"'My God, within thy hand
My helpless soul I trust!
Thy love shall ever stand—
Thy promise must!—'"

Then Mrs. Custers opened her eyes; and her first look was at Dr. Harrison. But whether the relaxed mental tension let the bodily weakness appear, or whether the tide was at that point where it ebbs most rapidly, her words were spoken with some trouble—yet spoken as if both to make amends and give information.

"You meant to be very kind—" she said—"and you have—But *now* I want to believe—even if it isn't any use."

Her eyes passed from him—rested for a minute on Mr. Linden—then came to Faith, and never wavered again. "Read"—was all she said.

With unnerved lip and quivering breath Faith began again her sweet utterance of some of those sweetest things. For a moment she longed to ask the other two listeners to go away and leave her alone; but reasons, different and strong, kept her mouth from speaking the wish; and then, once dismissed, it was forgotten. Her voice steadied and grew clear presently; its low, distinct words were not interrupted by so much as a breath in any part of the room. They steadied her; Faith rested on them and clung to them as she went along, with a sense of failing energy which needed a stay somewhere. But her words did not shew it, except perhaps that they came more slowly and deliberately. Mr. Linden had drawn back a little out of sight. Dr. Harrison kept his stand by the bedpost, leaning against it; and whatever that reading was to him, he was as motionless as that whereon he leaned.

Till some little length of time had passed in this way, and then he came to Faith's side and laid his hand on her open book.

"She does not hear you," he said softly.

Faith looked at him startled, and then bent forward over the woman whose face was turned a little from her.

"She is sleeping"—she said looking up again.

"She will not hear you any more," said the doctor.

"She breathes, regularly,—"

"Yes—so she will for perhaps some hours. But she will not waken again,—probably."

"Are you sure?" Faith said with another look at the calm face before her.

"Very sure!"—

Was it true? Faith looked still at the unconscious form,—then her bible fell from her hands and her head wearily sunk into them. The strain was over—broken short. She had done all she could,—and the everlasting answer was sealed up from her. Those heavy eyelids would not unclose again to give it; those parted lips through which the slow breath went and came, would never tell her. It seemed to Faith that her heart lay on the very ground with the burden of all that weight resting upon it.

She was not suffered to sit so long.

"May I take you away?"—Mr. Linden said,—"you must not stay any longer."

"Do you think it is no use?" said Faith looking up at him wearily.

"It is of no use," said Dr. Harrison. He had come near, and took her hand, looking at her with a moved face in which there was something very like tender reproach. But he only brought her hand gravely to his lips again and turned away. Mr. Linden's words were very low-spoken. "I think the doctor is right.—But let me take you home, and then I will come back and stay till morning if you like—or till there comes a change. *You* must not stay."

"I don't like to go,"—said Faith without moving. "She may want me again."

"There may be no change all night," said the doctor;—"and when it comes it will not probably be a conscious change. If she awakes at all, it will be to die. You could do nothing more."

Faith saw that Mr. Linden thought so, and she gave it up; with a lingering unwillingness got off the bed and wrapped her furs round her. Mr. Linden put her into the sleigh, keeping Jerry back to let the doctor precede them; and when he was fairly in front, Faith was doubly wrapped up—as she had been the night of the fire, and could take the refreshment of the cool air, and rest. Very wearily, for a while, mind and body both dropped. Faith was as still as if she had been asleep; but her eyes were gazing out upon the snow, following the distant speck of the doctor's sleigh, or looking up to the eternal changeless lights that keep watch over this little world and mock its changes. Yet not so! but that bear their quiet witness that there is something which is not "passing away;"—yea, that there is something which "endureth forever."

"He calleth them all by their names; for that he is strong in power, not one faileth." That was in Faith's mind along with other words—"The Lord knoweth them that are his." Her mind was in a passive state; things floated in and floated out. It was some time before Mr. Linden said anything—he let her be as silent and still as she would; but at last he bent over her and spoke.

"My Mignonette"—and the thought was not sweeter than the words—"are you asleep?"

"No—" she said in one of those etherial answering tones which curiously say a great many things.

"Are you resting?"

"Yes. I am rested."

"You must try not to bear the burden of your work after it is done. Now lay it off—and leave your poor friend in the hands where I trust she has left herself. Her senses are not closed to his voice."

"I do"—she said with a grateful look. "I know it is not my work—nor anybody's."

He drew the furs up about her silently, arranging and adjusting them so as to keep off the wind which had risen a little.

"We are not very far from home now,—we have come fast."

And as Jerry did not relax his pace, the little distance was soon travelled over. How fair the lights in their own windows looked then!—with their speech of blessing and comfort.

They all came together round the fire first, and then round the tea-table; Faith being specially watched over and waited on by both the others. Mrs. Derrick's half developed fear at their long stay, had given place to a sort of moved, untalkative mood when she heard the explanation, but a mood which relieved itself by trying every possible and impossible thing for Faith's refreshment. Every possible thing except refreshing talk—and that Mr. Linden gave her. Talk which without jarring in the least upon the evening's work, yet led her thoughts a little off from the painful part of it. Talk of the Christian's work—of the Christian's privilege,—of "Heaven and the way thither,"—of the gilding of the cross, of the glory of the crown. Faith heard and joined in it, but there was a point of pressure yet at her heart; and when they left the table and went into the other room, a slight thing gave indication where it lay. Faith took a little bench by Mrs. Derrick's side, drew her mother's arms round her close, and laid her head down on her lap.

How softly, how tenderly, did Mrs. Derrick answer the caress, as if she read it perfectly!—touching Faith's hands and brow and cheeks with fingers that were even trembling. And at last—whether her child's mute pleading was too much for her,—whether the pain which had never left her heart since the day of Faith's overturn had by degrees done its work,—she bent down her lips to Faith's cheek and whispered—"Yes, pretty child—I mean to try."

And so the door opened, and Cindy and Mr. Skip came in for prayers.
Faith hid her face, but otherwise did not stir.

How sweet the service was to them all that night!—yes, to them all; there was not one who could help feeling its influence. And yet it was very simple, and not very long,—Mr. Linden read first a few Bible passages, and then Wesley's hymn of the New Year,—with its bugle note of action,—and then to prayer, for which, by that time, every heart was ready.

"Come let us anew our journey pursue,
Roll round with the year,
And never stand still till the Master appear.
His adorable will let us gladly fulfil,
And our talents improve,
By the patience of hope and the labours of love.

"Our life is a dream; our time, as a stream,
Glides swiftly away,
And the fugitive moment refuses to stay.
The arrow is flown—the moment is gone;
The millennial year
Rushes on to our view, and eternity's here.

"O that each, in the day of his coming, may say,
I have fought my way through;
I have finished the work thou didst give me to do.
O that each from his Lord may receive the glad word,
Well and faithfully done!
Enter into my joy, and sit down on my throne."

CHAPTER VIII.

The first morning of the new year turned out as bright as could be desired for the great sleigh-riding expedition; the very day for it. And in the very mood for it were the people who were to go. Not but somewhat of last night's gravity hung about Faith's bright face; the one did no hurt to the other; for the best brightness is always sure to be grave, and the best gravity is almost sure to be bright, on some side. However there was nothing *contemplative* about the character of things this morning; there was too much action afoot. Such an army of meats and drinks, with all sorts of odd ends and varieties, from the shoes to the fishing-net, and such an array of apples and sugarplums!—to marshal and order them all in proper companies and ranks, wanted a general! But Faith was by no means a bad general, and up to the act of stowing the sleigh, at which point the things were made over to Mr. Linden and Mr. Skip, her part was well done. And Mr. Linden found in the course of *his* part of the business that Mrs. Derrick and Faith had followed a lead of their own.

There had been a pretty packing and tying up and labelling at the table, before the sleigh-packing began,—Faith's busy little fingers went in and out with great dexterity; and either Mr. Linden thought it

was pleasant to her—or knew it was pleasant to him, to have them so engaged; for though he stood by and talked to her, and laughed at her, he let the said little fingers have their way; except when they touched some harsh bit of string, or rough bit of paper, or unmanageable package, and then his own interfered. It was a bright packing up—without a shadow, at least that could be called such. But once or twice, when with some quick movement of Faith's hand the diamonds flashed forth their weird light suddenly,—she did see that Mr. Linden's eyes went down, and that his mouth took a set which if not of pain, was at least sad. It never lasted long—and the next look was always one of most full pleasure at her. But the second time, Faith's heart could hardly bear it. She guessed at the why and the what; but words were too gross a medium to convey from spirit to spirit the touch that love could give and pain bear. She watched her chance; and when one of Mr. Linden's hands was for a moment resting on a package that the other was busied in arranging, suddenly laying the jewelled hand on his, Faith's lips kept it company.

"Faith!" he said. And then as if he saw it all, he did not say another word, only held her for a minute in a very, very close embrace. But then he whispered,

"Faith—you must give me that in another way."

Faith appeared to have exhausted her ammunition, for she only answered by hiding her face.

"Faith"—Mr. Linden repeated.

She looked up slowly, blushing all over; and her very doubtful face seemed to negative the whole proceeding. But then an irrepressible little laugh began to play.

"I wouldn't do it," she said unsteadily,—"at least, I don't know that I would—if I hadn't wished so very much to give you something to-day;—and I have nothing else!—"

And nerving herself desperately, Faith laid one hand on Mr. Linden's shoulder and slightly raising herself on her toes, did bestow on his lips as dainty a kiss as ever Santa Claus brought in his box of New Year curiosities. But she was overcome with confusion the moment she had done it, and would have rushed off if that had been possible.

"Let me go"—she said hastily—"let me go!"—

In answer to which, she was held as securely fast as she ever had been in her life. Covering and hiding all of her face that she could, Faith renewed her request, in a comical tone of humility—as if she didn't deserve it.

"I never felt less inclined to let you go!"

"There is all that work to be done," said Faith, by way of possibly useful suggestion.

"Mignonette, will you remember your new lesson?"

She whispered softly, "No.—It was only Santa Claus."

"Not Campaspe?"

"No—Certainly not!"

"You remember," said Mr. Linden, "that when—'Cupid and Campaspe played at cards for kisses, *Cupid paid*.'—I was unavoidably reminded of that. But you may go on with your work,—you know what happens when lessons are learned imperfectly." And liberty for her work she had; no more.

"Child," said her mother coming in, "are you ready for your lunch?"

"Why no, mother," said Faith with a little laugh,—"of course not! but I can take it as I go on. There's a good deal of 'sorting' to do yet. I hope the sleigh is big."

"Take it as you go on, indeed!" said Mrs. Derrick. "You've got to stop and eat, child,—you can't live till night with nothing but other folk's dinners."

Faith however declared she could not *stop* to eat; and she contrived to carry on both the rival occupations together; and even to make right sure that no one else should attempt to live upon anything more etherial than sandwiches and pumpkin pie. She drank her coffee in the intervals of tying packages and writing labels, and ran about with a sandwich in one hand and a basket in the other; filling Mr. Linden's cup and putting tempting platefuls in his way. But he was as busy as she,—spending much of his time at the barn, where Squire Stoutenburgh's pretty little box sleigh was in process of filling with cloaks, buffalo robes, and commodities! At last everything was in, and Mr. Linden came to

announce that fact to Faith,—furs and hood were donned, and the sleigh was off with its whole load.

Bright, bright the snow was, and blue the shadows, and fair the white expanse of hill and meadow, all crisp and sparkling. Everybody was out—which was not wonderful; but so well had Mr. Linden disposed and covered up his packages, that all anybody could see was that he and Faith were taking a sleigh-ride,—which was not wonderful either. And before long they left the more frequented roads, and turned down the lane that led to the dwelling of Sally Lowndes. How different it looked now, from that summer evening when Faith had gone there alone. What a colouring then lay on all the ground that was now white with sunlight and blue with shade! And also, what a difference in the mental colouring. But Jerry, travelling faster than her feet had done, soon brought them to the house. Mr. Linden buckled the tie, and helped Faith to emerge from the buffalo robes; the winter wind blowing fresh from the sea, and sweeping over the down till Jerry shook his blanket in disapproval.

"Now my little counsellor," said Mr. Linden, "what does your wisdom say should go in here—besides this basket of substantiate? I think you know more of these people than I do?"—And the surf in its cold monotony, said—"Anything warm!"

"Mother has put in a shawl for Sally," said Faith, getting out the package;—(it was one that Mrs. Derrick found she could do without,)—"and a little paper of tea,—tea is Sally's greatest delight,—here it is!"

Sally's abode was in nothing different from the run of poor houses in the country; unpainted of course, outside and inside; a rag carpet on the floor, a gay patchwork coverlet on the bed. Sally herself was in the rocking-chair before a little wood fire. But there was not the look of even poor comfort which may sometimes be seen; want, that told of lack of means and that also went deeper, was visible in everything.

"I've come to wish you a happy new year, Sally," said Faith brightly.

"Laws! I wonder where it's to come from!" said Sally. "If *wishin'* I would fetch it—I've wished it to myself till I'm tired. Happy new years don't come to all folks. Aint that—How do you do, sir!—aint it the gentleman Jenny told of? that fell down at Mr. Simlins' door?"

"And got up again?" said Mr. Linden. "Yes, I presume I am the very person Jenny told of. I remember that Jenny was very kind to me, too. Where is she?"

"O she's to Mr. Simlinses all along! she's got a good place; she knows when she's comfortable. She don't think of me stayin' here all alone."

"But aren't you comfortable, Sally?" said Faith.

"I should like to know how I would be! Folks that *is* comfortable thinks all the world is like them! If they didn't they'd help."

"Well what is the first thing that would help to make you comfortable?" said Mr. Linden.

Sally looked at him, up and down.

"I'd like to see a speck o' somebody's face now and then. I mope and mope, till I wish I'd die to get rid of it! You see, sir, I aint as I used to was; and my family aint numerous now. There's no one lives in this house over my head but me and a girl what stays by me to do chores. Aint that a life for a spider?"

Faith had been stealthily unfolding the shawl and now put it round Sally's shoulders. "Will *that* help to make you comfortable?" she said gently.

"Laws!" said Sally—"aint that smart! That's good as far as it goes.
Where did that come from?"

"Mother sent it to you, for New Year."

"It's real becoming of her!" said Sally in a mollified tone, feeling of the shawl. "Well I won't say this New Years haint brought me something."

"It brings you too much cold air at present," Mr. Linden said. "Do you know that window lets in about as much cold as it keeps out?"

"Well I reckon I do," said Sally. "I've nothin' to do all day but sit here and realize onto it. There aint no such a thing as buildin' a fire in the chimney that'll keep out the cold from that winter."

"I should think not!—the way is to attack the window itself," he said, looking at it as if he were

studying the attack.

"We've brought you something else here, Sally, to help keep out the cold," said Faith. "May I put the things in your closet—so as to carry home my basket?"

"Yes, if you like. What have you got there, Faith?" said Miss Lowndes looking into the closet after her.

"There's a piece of beef, Sally, of mother's own curing—all ready cooked—so you'll have nothing to do but cook your potatoes—and mother thought you'd like a few of our potatoes, they're good this year. Then here is a little paper of tea she sent you, and I've brought you one of my own pumpkin pies—so you must say it is good, Sally."

"Well I'm beat!" said Sally. "Haint you got something else?"

She was like to be beat on all hands; for Mr. Linden who had been examining the window while Faith emptied her basket, now went out and presently brought back hammer and nails and strips of lath, that made Faith wonder whether he had brought a tool-chest along. But the noise of his hammer was much more cheerful than the rattling of the window, and when it had done its work outside as well as in, the wind might whistle for admission in vain. He came in and stood by the fire for a moment then, before they set off, and asked Faith softly what else was wanted? And Faith whispered in answer—

"'The Dairyman's Daughter?' but you must give it."

"Can't you get some comfort in reading your Bible, Sally?" said Faith while Mr. Linden went out to the sleigh with his hammer and nails.

"Laws!" said Sally—"what's the use! I haint got the heart to take the trouble to read, half the time."

"If you read one half the time, and pray too, Sally, you'll soon get heart for the other half."

"It's easy talkin'"—was Sally's encouraging view of the case.

"It's a great deal easier doing," said Faith. "If you try it, Sally, it'll make you so glad you'll never say you want comfort again."

"Well you've brought me a heap to-day anyhow," said Sally. "Just look at that winder! I declare!—I 'spect I'll make out to eat my dinner to-day without scolding."

Mr. Linden came back with the tract, but kept it in his hand for a minute.

"Do you know, Sally, how a house is built upon the bare ground?" he said. "The mason lays down one stone, and then another on that; and if he cannot have his choice of stones he takes just what come to hand—little and big, putting in plenty of mortar to bind all together. Now that's the way you must build up a happy year for yourself,—and in that way every one can." The words were spoken very brightly, without a touch of faultfinding.

"Well"—said Sally rocking herself back and forth in the rocking-chair—"I 'spect you know how."—Which might have been meant as a compliment, or as an excuse.

"I think you do," said Mr. Linden smiling; "and I am going to leave you a true story of how it was really done by somebody else. Will you read it?"

"Yes"—said Sally continuing to rock. "I'll do any thing you ask me to—after that winder. You've given me a good start—anyways. I'd as lieves hear you talk as most things."

There was not time for much more talk then, however. Mr. Linden and Faith went away, leaving the little book on the table. But when Sally went to take a nearer view of its words of golden example, there lay on it the first real little gold piece Sally had ever possessed.

"That was a good beginning," said Faith in a sort of quiet glee, after she had got into the sleigh again. "I knew, before, we were like a butcher and baker setting off on their travels; but I had no idea there was a carpenter stowed away anywhere!" And her laugh broke forth upon the air of those wild downs, as Jerry turned his head about.

"I must be something, you know," said Mr. Linden,—"and I don't choose to be the butcher—and certainly am not the baker."

They turned into the village again, and then down towards the shore; getting brilliant glimpses of the Sound now and then, and a pretty keen breeze. But the sun was strong in its modifying power, and bright and happy spirits did the rest. One little pause the sleigh made at the house where Faith had had

her decisive interview with Squire Deacon, but they did not get out there; only gave a selection of comforts into the hands of one of the household, and jingled on their way shorewards. Not turning down to the bathing region, but taking a road that ran parallel with the Sound.

"Do you remember our first walk down here, Faith?" said Mr. Linden,—"when you said you had shewed me the shore?"

"Well I did," said Faith smiling,—"I shewed you what I knew; but you shewed me what I had never known before."

"I'm sure you shewed me some things I had never known before," he said laughing a little. "Do you know where we are going now?"—they had left the beaten road, and entered a by-way where only footsteps marked the snow, and no sleigh before their own had broken ground. It seemed to be a sort of coast-way,—leading right off towards the dashing Sound and its low points and inlets. The shore was marked with ice as well as foam; the water looked dark and cold, with the white gulls soaring and dipping, and the white line of Long Island in the distance.

"No, I don't know. Where are we going? O how beautiful! O how beautiful!" Faith exclaimed. "Hasn't every time its own pleasure! Where are we going, Endecott?"

"To see one who Dr. Harrison 'fancies' may have 'something in him.' Whatever made the doctor take such a dislike to Reuben?"

Faith did not answer, and instead looked forward with a sort of contemplative gravity upon her brow. Her cheeks were already so brilliant with riding in the fresh air that a little rise of colour could hardly have been noticed.

"Do you know?"

Faith presently replied that she supposed it was a dislike taken up without any sort of real ground.

"Well to tell you the truth, my little Mignonette," said Mr. Linden, "the doctor's twenty-five dollars gives me some trouble in that connexion. Reuben will take favours gladly from anybody that likes him, but towards people who do not (they are very few, indeed) he is as proud as if he had the Bank of England at his back. *I* might send him a dinner every day if I chose; but if Reuben were starving, his conscience would have a struggle with him before he would take bread from Dr. Harrison."

Faith listened very seriously and her conclusion was a very earnest "Oh, I am sorry!—But then," she went on thoughtfully,—"I don't know that Dr. Harrison *dislikes* Reuben.—He don't understand him, how should he?—and I know they have never seemed to get on well together.—"

"I chose to answer for him the other day," said Mr. Linden—"and I shall not let him refuse; but I have questioned whether I would tell him anything about the money till he is ready for the books. Then if he should meet the doctor, and the doctor should ask him!—"

Faith was silent a bit.

"But Reuben will do what you tell him," she said. "And besides, Reuben was doing everything he could for Dr. Harrison the other night—he can't refuse to let Dr. Harrison do something for him. I don't think he ought."

"He had no thought of reward. Still, he would not refuse, if he supposed any part of the 'doing' was out of care for him,—and you know I cannot tell him that I think it is. But I shall talk to him about it. Not to-day: I will not run the risk of spoiling his pleasure at the sight of us. There—do you see that little beaver-like hut on the next point?—that is where he lives."

Faith looked at it with curious interest. That little brown spot amidst the waste of snow and waters—that was where the fisherman's boy lived; and there he was preparing himself for college. And for what beside?

"Will Reuben or his father be hurt at all at anything we have brought them?" she said then.

"No, they will take it all simply for what it is,—a New Year's gift. And Reuben would not dream of being hurt by anything we could do,—he is as humble as he is proud. We are like enough to find him alone."

And so they found him. With an absorbed ignoring of sleigh-bells and curiosity—perhaps because the former rarely came for him,—Reuben had sat still at his work until his visiters knocked at the low door. But then he came with a step and face ready to find Mr. Linden—though not Faith; and his first flush of

pleasure deepened with surprise and even a little embarrassment as he ushered her in. There was no false pride about it, but "Miss Faith" was looked upon by all the boys as a dainty thing; and Reuben placed a chair for her by the drift-wood fire, with as much feeling of the unfitness of surrounding circumstances, as if she had been the Queen. Something in the hand that was laid on his shoulder brushed that away; and then Reuben looked and spoke as usual.

Surrounding circumstances were not so bad, after all. Faith had noticed how carefully and neatly the snow was cleared from the door and down to the water's edge, and everything within bore the same tokens. The room was very tiny, the floor bare—but very clean; the blazing drift-wood the only adornment. Yet not so: for on an old sea chest which graced one side of the room, lay Reuben's work which they had interrupted. An open book, with one or two others beside it; and by them all, with mesh and netting-kneedle and twine, lay an old net which Reuben had been repairing. The drift-wood had stone supporters,—the winter wind swept in a sort of grasping way round the little hut; and the dashing of the Sound waters, and the sharp war of the floating ice, broke the stillness. But they were very glad eyes that Reuben lifted to Mr. Linden's face and a very glad alacrity brought forward a little box for Faith to rest her feet.

"Don't you mean to sit down, Mr. Linden?" he said.

"To be sure I do. But I haven't wished you a happy New Year yet." And the lips that Reuben most reverenced in the world, left their greeting on his forehead. It was well the boy found something to do—with the fire, and Faith's box, and Mr. Linden's chair! But then he stood silent and quiet as before.

"Don't *you* mean to sit down, Reuben?" said Faith.

Reuben smiled,—not as if he cared about a seat; but he brought forward another little box, not even the first cousin of Faith's, and sat down as she desired.

"Didn't you find it very cold, Miss Faith?" he said, as if he could not get used to seeing her there. "Are you getting warm now?"

Faith said she hadn't been cold; and would fast enough have entered into conversation with Reuben, but she thought he would rather hear words from other lips, and was sure that other lips could give them better.

"And have you got quite well, ma'm?" said Reuben.

"Don't I look well?" she said smiling at him. "What are you doing over there, Reuben?—making a net?"

"O I was mending it, Miss Faith."

"I can't afford to have you at that work just now," said Mr. Linden,—"you know we begin school again to-morrow. You must tell your father from me, Reuben, that he must please to use his new one for the present, and let you mend up that at your leisure. Will you?"

Reuben flushed—looking up and then down as he said, "Yes, sir,"—and then very softly, "O Mr. Linden, you needn't have done that!"

"Of course I need not—people never need please themselves, I suppose. But you know, Reuben, there is a great deal of Santa Glaus work going on at this time of year, and Miss Faith and I have had some of it put in our hands. I won't answer for what she'll do with you!—but you must try and bear it manfully."

Reuben laughed a little—half in sympathy with the bright words and smile, half as if the spirit of the time had laid hold of him.

"You know, Mr. Linden," said Faith laughing, but appealingly too,—"that Reuben will get worse handling from you than he will from me!—so let him have the worst first."

"I'll bring in your basket," was all he said,—and the basket came in accordingly; Reuben feeling too bewildered to even offer his services.

Faith found herself in a corner. She jumped up and placed herself in front of the basket so as to hide it. "Wait!"—she said. "Reuben, how much of a housekeeper are you?"

"I don't know, Miss Faith,—I don't believe I ever was tried."

"Do you know how to make mince pies, for instance?"

But Reuben shook his head, with a low-spoken, "No, Miss Faith,"—a little as if she were somehow

transparent, and he was viewing the basket behind her.

"Never mind my questions," said Faith, "but tell me. Could you stuff a turkey, do you think, if you tried?"

"I suppose I could—somehow," Reuben said, colouring and laughing. "I never tried, Miss Faith."

"Then you couldn't!" said Faith, her laugh rolling round the little room, as softly as the curls of smoke went up the chimney. "You needn't think you could! But Reuben, since you can't, don't you think you would let me do it once for you?"

Reuben's words were not ready in answer. But a bashful look at Faith's face—and her hands,—one that reminded her of the clam-roasting,—was followed by a grateful, low-spoken—"I don't think you ought to do anything for *me*, Miss Faith."

"I have had so much pleasure in it, Reuben, you'll have to forgive me;"—Faith answered, withdrawing from the basket.

"You must look into that at your leisure, Reuben," Mr. Linden said, as he watched the play of feeling in the boy's face. "Miss Faith is in no hurry for her basket."

Reuben heard him silently, and as silently lifted the basket from where it stood and set it carefully on the table. But then he came close up to Faith and stood by her side. "You are *very* good, Miss Faith!" he said. "I don't know how to thank you."

"Reuben!" said Faith colouring—"you mustn't thank me at all. I've just had the pleasure of doing—but it is Mr. Linden that has brought the basket here, and me too."

"And he must take you away," Mr. Linden said. "Reuben, you may thank Miss Faith just as much as you please. If I had nothing else to do, I should invite my self here to dinner, but as it is I must be off. Are you ready?" he said to Faith, while in silence Reuben knelt down to put on again the moccasins which she had thrown off, and then she followed Mr. Linden. Reuben followed too,—partly to help their arrangements, partly at Mr. Linden's bidding to bring back the net. But when there was added thereto a little package which could only mean books, Reuben's cup of gravity, at least, was full; and *words* of good-bye he had none.

And for a few minutes after they drove away Faith too was silent with great pleasure. She hardly knew, though she felt, how bright the sun was on the snow, and how genial his midday winter beams; and with how crisp a gleam the light broke on ice points and crests of foam and glanced from the snow-banks. The riches of many days seemed crowded into the few hours of that morning. Were they not on a "shining" expedition! Had they not been leaving sunbeams of gladness in house after house, that would shine on, nobody knew how long! Faith was too glad for a little while not to feel very sober; those sunbeams came from so high a source, and were wrought in with others that so wrapped her own life about. So she looked at Jerry's ears and said nothing.

"Faith," Mr. Linden said suddenly, "I wish I could tell you what it is to me to be going these rounds with you!"

Faith shewed a quick, touched little smile. "I've been thinking just now,—what it means."

"I should like to have the explanation of those last three words."

"What it means?"—and the slight play of her lips did not at all hinder the deep, deep strength of her thought from being manifest.—"It means, all you have taught me and led me to!—"

"You don't intend to lead me to a very clear understanding," he said playfully, and yet with a tone that half acknowledged her meaning. "Do you ever remember what you have taught me?—They say one should at the end of the year, reckon up all the blessings it has brought,—but I know not where to begin, nor how to recount them. This year!—it has been like the shield in the old fable,—it seemed to me of iron to look forward to—so cold and dark,—and it has been all gold!"

"Did it look so?" she said with quick eyes of sympathy.

"Yes, little Sunbeam, it looked so; and there were enough earthly reasons why it should. But unbelief has had a rebuke for once;—if I know myself, I am ready now to go forward without a question!"

Over what Hill Difficulty did that future road lie?—He did not explain, and the next words came with a different tone,—one that almost put the other out of Faith's head. "My little Sunbeam, do you keep warm?"

"Yes"—she said with a somewhat wistful look that came from a sunbeam determined upon doing its very best of shining, for him. But she was silent again for a minute. "There are plenty of sunbeams abroad to-day, Endecott," she said then with rare sweetness of tone, that touched but did not press upon his tone of a few minutes ago.

"Dear Faith," he said looking at her, and answering the wistfulness and the smile and the voice all in one,—"do you know I can never find words that just suit me for you?—And do you know that I think there was never such a New Year's day heard of?—it is all sunshine! Just look how the light is breaking out there upon the ice, and touching the waves, and shining through that one little cloud,—and guess how I feel it in my heart. Do you know how much work of this sort, and of every sort, you and I shall have to do together, little child, if we live?"

It was a look of beauty that answered,—so full in its happiness, so blushing and shy; but Faith's words were as simple as they were earnest.

"I wish it. There can't be too much."

Their course now became rather irregular; crossing about from one spot to another, and through a part of the country where Faith had never been. Here was a sort of shore population,—people living upon rocks and sand rent free, or almost that; and supporting themselves otherwise as best they might. A scattered, loose-built hamlet, perching along the icy shore, and with its wild winds to rock the children to sleep, and the music of the waves for a lullaby. But the children throve with such nursing, if one might judge by the numbers that tumbled in the snow and clustered on the doorsteps; and the amusement they afforded Faith was not small. The houses were too many here to have time for a *visit* to each,—a pause at the door, and the leaving of some little token of kindness, was all that could be attempted; and the tokens were various. Faith's loaves of bread, and her pieces of meat, or papers from the stock of tea and sugar with which she had been furnished, or a bowl of broth jelly for some sick person,—a pair of woollen stockings, perhaps, or a flannel jacket, for some rheumatic old man or woman,—or a bible,—or a combination of different things where the need demanded. But Faith's special fun was with the children.

When they first entered the hamlet, Mr. Linden brought forward and set at her feet one basket of trifling juvenile treasures, and another filled more substantially with apples and cakes and sugarplums; and then as all the children were out of doors, he drove slowly and let her delight as many of them as she chose. What pleasure it was!—those little cold hands, so unwonted to cakes and that could hardly hold apples,—how eagerly, how shyly, they were stretched out!—with what flourishes of bare feet or old shoes the young ones scampered away, or stood gazing after Jerry's little dust-cloud of snow;—ever after to remember and tell of this day, as one wherein a beautiful lady dressed up like a pussy cat, gave them an apple, or a stick of candy, or a picture book! Faith was in a debate between smiles and tears by the time they were through the hamlet and dashing out again on the open snow, for Mr. Linden had left all that part of the business to her; though the children all seemed to know him—and he them—by heart.

And good note Faith took of that, and laid up the lesson. She had been a very good Santa Claus the while, and had acted the part of a sunbeam indifferent well; being just about so bright and so soft in all her dealings with those same little cold hands and quick spirits; giving them their apples and candy with a good envelope of gentle words and laughter. Seeing that she had it to do, she went into the game thoroughly. But once she made a private protest.

"Do you know, Endecott, these things would taste a great deal sweeter if your hand gave them?"

"I know nothing of the sort! Sweeter?—look at that urchin deep in peppermint candy,—could anything enhance the spice or the sweetness of that?"

"Yes," said Faith shaking her head—"and look at that little girl before him, who took the apple and looked at you all the while!"

"She has an eye for contrast," he said laughing, "and is probably wondering why all people can't look alike!"

Faith did not secretly blame her, but she left that subject.

It was to the furthest point of their round that they went now,—another fisherman's house—far, far off, on the shore. A little larger than Reuben's, but not so neatly kept; as indeed how could it be? with so many children,—or how could the house hold them, in those times of weather when they condescended to stay in! They were in pretty good order, to do their mother justice, and she in great delight at the sight of her visiters. There was no room for silence here—or at least no silence in the room, for Mrs. Ling was never at a loss for words. And there was no need of much circumlocution in

presenting the turkey,—nothing but pleasure could come of it, let it enter on which foot it would; and the train of potatoes, and tea, and bread, and other things, fairly made Mrs. Ling's eyes shine,—though she talked away as fast as ever. The children were in spirits too great to be got rid of in any ordinary way, especially the youngest walking Ling; whose turn having not yet come for a pair of shoes from his father's pocket, was now to be fitted out of Mr. Linden's sleigh. And the shoes did fit—and little Japhet marked his sense of the obligation by at once requesting Faith to tie them. Which Faith did in a state of delight too great for words.

"Now what do you feel like?" she said, when Japhet was fairly shod and she still stooping at his feet.

"I feel like a king!" said Japhet promptly,—which had been the height of his unrepublican ambition for some time.

"Dear sakes!" said his mother, who had heard the child's request too late to interfere,—"I hope you'll not mind him, ma'am,—he oughter know better, but he don't. And poor things, when they gets pleased —it aint often, you see, ma'am, so I can't be hard upon 'em. Do you feel warm?—we do make out to keep warm, most times."

"I am quite warm, thank you; but I should think you'd feel the wind down here. Japhet,"—said Faith, who had brought in her basket of varieties and whose quiet eyes were fairly in a dance with fun and delight,—"which do you think kings like best—cookies or candy?"

To which Japhet with equal promptness replied,

"Candy—and cookies."

"Don't!"—his mother said again,—but the basket of varieties looked almost as wonderful to her eyes as to those of the children, who now gathered round as near as they dare come, while Mrs. Ling cautiously peeped over their heads.

"I see you feel like a king!" said Faith filling both Japhet's hands.—"There! now I hope you don't feel like Alexander."

"Alexander haint got nothin'!" said Japhet, looking towards his eldest brother.

Which did not overset Faith's gravity, because by this time she had none to speak of. Alexander's delight was found to be in red apples, and he thought a little common top a treasure such as neither Diogenes nor the real Alexander knew of between them! One little girl was made happy with a wonderful picture-book in which there were a dog, a cat, and a lion with a great mane just ready to eat a man up, with the stories thereto pertaining; and a neat little slate seemed a most desirable acquisition to the bright eyes of an older girl. They were all more satisfied than the conqueror of the world by the time Faith rose from the basket; and then she offered her tribute of gingerbread to Mrs. Ling. The little girl with the slate, once released from the spell of the basket, went up to Mr. Linden (who had stood looking on) and said,—"She's awake now, if you please, sir,"—and he turned and went into the next room, leaving Mrs. Ling to entertain Faith as best she might. For which Mrs. Ling was most ready.

"Ma always does want to see him"—she said. "You see, ma'am, she can't never get up now, so it's a play to hear somebody talk. And ma likes him special. Mr. Somers he's been kind too—and Mrs.—he come down when ma was first took, and since; but someways she don't just see into him much. I don' know but it's along of his bein' better than other folks—but after all, a person wants to have even good things talked to 'em so's they can understand. Now Mr. Linden,—my Mary there 'll listen to him for an hour, and never lose a word." And Mary's bright little eyes answered that readily, while Mrs. Ling's went back to the basket.

"I can't believe!" she said. "You don't know what you've done, ma'am! Why there aint one o' them children as ever see a real live turkey cooked, in their existence."

"You don't know what pleasure I had in doing it for them, Mrs. Ling.
Mr. Linden told me there was a houseful of children."

"Well so there is!" said Mrs. Ling looking round the room,—"and it's no wonder he thinks so, for they tease him most out of his life sometimes when he's here,—or would if he wam't as good-natured as the day's long. But there aint one too many, after all said and done, for I've got nothing else,—so if it warn't for them I should be poorly off." With which reverse statement of the case, Mrs. Ling complacently smoothed down four or five heads, and tied as many aprons.

"Ma," said little Mary, "will Mr. Linden sing for us to-day?"

"I dare say—if you ask him pretty," said her mother. "No, I guess he's busy and won't be bothered."

"He never *is* bothered," said Mary persistently, while two or three of the others recovering from their apples and shyness, ventured up to Faith again and began to stroke her furs.

"What does he sing for you, Jenny?" said Faith, taking the little picture-book girl on her lap, and glad to put her own face down in a somewhat sheltered position.

"O he sings hymns—" said Jenny, gazing abstractedly at the lion and the cat by turns,—"and other things too, sometimes."

"Hymns are very interesting. And beautiful—don't you think so?" said Mary drawing nearer.

"Yes, indeed I do," said Faith stretching out her hand and pulling the little girl up to her. "What ones do you like best, Mary?"

But Mary's answer stayed, for Mr. Linden came back at that moment, and skilfully making his way up to Faith without running over any of the little throng, he told her he was ready. And Faith, though secretly wishing for the song as much as any of the children, set Jenny on the floor and rose up; while Mr. Linden laughingly shewed her "an excellent way of investing ten cents," by giving the children each one. Meanwhile Mrs. Ling had been emptying the basket. There was the cold turkey in the full splendour of its rich brown coat—a good large turkey too; but lest there should not be enough of it to go round to so many mouths, Mrs. Derrick and Faith had added a nice piece, ready boiled, of salt pork. Then there were potatoes, and some of Faith's bread,—and a paper of tea and another of sugar; and there was arrowroot, made and unmade, for the sick woman, with some broth jelly. It was one of those houses where a good deal was wanted, and the supply had been generous in proportion. Mrs. Ling was at her wits' end to dispose of it all; and the children watched her in a gale of excitement, till the last thing was carried off, and Mrs. Ling began to shake out the napkins and fold them up. But then they came round Mr. Linden with their petition, urging it with such humble pertinacity, that he was fain at last to comply. It was only a child's Christmas hymn, set to a simple, bright, quick tune, which at first kept some of the smallest feet in a greater state of unrest than the older children thought at all respectful.

"O little children, sing!
Jesus, your Lord and King
For you a child became:
On that bright Christmas day
He in a manger lay,
Who hath the one Almighty name!

"Come children, love him now,
Before the Saviour bow,
Give him each little heart.
His spotless nature see,—
Then like him spotless be,
And choose his service for your part.

"The joy of loving him
Shall never fade nor dim,—
While worldly joys fly fast:—
Jesus to see and love,
First here and then above,
Such joy shall ever, ever last.

"I'll give myself away
On this new Christmas day,—
He gave his life for me!
Jesus, my heart is thine,
O make it humbly shine
With ever-living love to thee!

"O Jesus, our Great Friend,
Our Saviour, without end
Thy praises we will bring!
Glory to God's high throne!
Peace now on earth is known,

And we for joy may ever sing!"

"There"—Mr. Linden said, breaking the hush into which the children had subsided, and gently disengaging himself from them,—"now I have given you something to think of, and you must do it, and let me go." And he and Faith were presently on their way; Faith feeling that she had "something to think of" too.

The sun was westing fast as they turned, but now their way lay towards home, via sundry other places. The long sunbeams were passing lovely as they lay upon the snow, and the fantastic shadows of Jerry and the sleigh and all it held, were in odd harmony and contrast. The poverty-stricken house to which the two had walked that memorable night, had been already visited and passed, and several others with sick or poor inhabitants. Then Mr. Linden turned off down one of the scarce broken by-roads, and stopped before a little lonely brown house with an old buttonwood tree in front.

"There is a blanket to go in here, Faith," he said as he took her out, "and also my hammer!—for there is always something to do."

"Always something to do at this house?"

"Yes," he answered laughingly,—"so you must hold in check your aversion to carpenters."

"If you'll please have a charity for the butcher and baker, and tell me what I shall take in here? for my part."

"O we'll go in and find out,—these good people are never just suited unless they have the ordering of everything. They'll tell us what they want fast enough, but if we guessed at it beforehand, they would maybe find out that those were just the things they did *not* want. Only my hammer—I'm sure of that."

The "good people" in question, were an old man and his wife, living in one little room and with very little furniture. Very deaf the old man was, and both of them dimsighted, so that the old bible on the shelf was only a thing to look at,—if indeed it had ever been anything more, which some people doubted. This was one of the first things Mr. Linden took hold of after the kind greetings were passed, and he gave it to Faith; telling her that old Mr. Roscom always expected his visitors to read to him, and that if she would do that, he would mend Mrs. Roscom's spinning-wheel—which he saw was ready for him.

Faith threw back her hood and her furs, and took a seat close by the old man; and the first thing he heard was her sweet voice asking him where she should read, or if he liked to hear any part in particular.

"No," he said, "he liked to have it surprise him."

Faith pondered how she should best surprise him, but she had not much time to spare and no chance to ask counsel. So she read as her heart prompted her,—first the fifth chapter of II. Corinthians—with its joyful Christian profession and invitation to others; then she read the account of Jesus' healing the impotent man and bidding him "sin no more"; and then she turned over to the Psalms and gave Mr. Roscom the beautiful 103d psalm of thanksgiving,—which after those other two passages seemed particularly beautiful. This was work that Faith loved, and she read so.

How softly the hammer worked while she read, she might have noticed if her mind had not been full; but though she had no word from that quarter, Mr. Roscom's opinion was clear.

"That's good," he said,—"and strong;—and I'm obleeged to ye."

And then, the wheel being near done, there was a little skilful talk gone into; in the course of which Faith and Mr. Linden learned, that the old couple were "real tired of salt meat, some days"—and that rye bread "warnt thought wholesome by itself"—and that "if their tea should give out they didn't know what they *should* do!"—and that "times when the old man was a little poorly, nothing on airth would serve him but a roasted potato!" All of which was said just for the pleasure of talking to sympathizing faces,—without the least idea of what was at the door. The blanket was too old a want to be spoken of, but Faith needed only to look at the bed. And then she looked at Mr. Linden, in delighted watch to see what his next move would be; in the intervals of her chat with Mr. Roscom, which was very lively.

Mr. Linden had finished his work, and stood balancing his hammer and listening to the catalogue of wants with a smile both grave and bright.

"Are these just the things you wish for?" he said. "Well—'your Father knoweth that ye have need of them,'—and he has sent them by our hands to-day; so you see that you may trust him for the future."

He laid his hand on Faith's shoulder as an invitation to her to follow, and went out to the sleigh. She was at the side of it as soon as he, and in it the next minute, stopping to give him only with the eye one warm speech of sympathy and joy.

"You haven't put up a basket specially for these people, of course," she said,—"so we shall have to take the things from everywhere. There's a beautiful chicken in that basket, Endecott—I know; that's the largest one we have left; and bread—there aren't but two loaves here!—shall we give them both? Or do we want one somewhere else?"

"I think we may give them both. And Faith—don't you think a roasted apple might alternate usefully with the potato?"

Faith dived into the receptacle for apples and brought out a good quantity of the right kind. Potatoes were not in very large supply, but tea and sugar were—blessed things!—unfailing.

"And here is a pumpkin pie!" said Faith—"I am sure they'll like that—and as many cookies and cruller as you like. And what else, Endecott?—O here's a pair of those big socks mother knit—wouldn't they be good here?"

"Very good, dear child!—and this blanket must go—and some tracts,—that will furnish more reading. You run in with those, Faith—these other things are too heavy for you."

"I've strength enough to carry a blanket," said Faith laughing.

"Well, run off with that too, then," said Mr. Linden, "only if your strength gives out by the way, please to fall on the blanket."

Faith managed to reach the house safely and with a bright face deposited the blanket on a chair. "I got leave to bring this in to you, Mrs. Roscom," she said. "I suppose you know what Mr. Linden means you to do with it."

Perhaps they had seen no two people in the course of the day more thoroughly pleased than these two. The sources of pleasure were not many in that house, and the expectation of pleasure not strong; and the need of comforts had not died out with the supply; and old and alone as they were, the looking forward to possible cold and hunger was a trial. It was easy to see how that blanket warmed the room and promised a mild winter, and how the socks be came liniment,—and it seemed doubtful whether the old man would ever be sick enough for roast potatoes, with the potatoes really in the house. So with other things,—they took a childish pleasure even in the cakes and pie, and an order for wood was a real relief. And what a dinner they were already eating in imagination!

Mr. Linden had put Faith in the sleigh, with the last sunset rays playing about her; and he stood wrapping her up in all sorts of ways, and the old man and the old woman stood in the door to see. Then in a voice which he supposed to be a whisper, Mr. Roscom said,—

"Be she his wife?"

"He didn't say—and I don' know *what* he said," screamed Mrs. Roscom.

"Wal—she's handsome enough for it—and so's he," said the old man contemplatively. "I hope he'll get one as good!"

Very merrily Mr. Linden laughed as they drove away.

"I hope I shall!" he said. "Faith, what do you think of that? And which of us has the compliment?"

But Faith was engaged in pulling her furs and buffalo robes round her, and did not appear to consider compliments even a matter of moonshine; much less of sunshine. Her first words were to remark upon the exceeding beauty of the last touch the sunlight was giving to certain snowy heights and white cumuli floating above them; a touch so fair and calm as if heaven were setting its own seal on this bright day.

"Is your heart in the clouds?" Mr. Linden said, bending down to look at her with his laughing eyes. "How can you abstract your thoughts so suddenly from all sublunary affairs! Do you want any more wrapping up?"

A little flashing glance of most naive appeal, and Faith's eyes went down absolutely.

"You may as well laugh!" he said. "One cannot get through the world without occasionally hearing frightful suggestions."

Faith did laugh, and gave him another *good* little look, about which the only remarkable thing was that it was afraid to stay.

"What were your cloudy remarks just now?" said Mr. Linden.

"I wanted you to look at the beautiful light on them and those far-off ridges of hill—it is not gone yet."

"Yes, they are very beautiful. But I believe I am not in a meditative mood to-day,—or else the rival colours distract me. Faith, I mean to put you in the witness-box again."

"In the witness-box?"—she said with a mental jump to Neanticut, and a look to suit.

"Yes—but we are not on the banks of Kildeer river, and need not be afraid," he said with a smile. "Faith—what ever made you take such an aversion to Phil Davids?"

"I don't dislike him,"—she said softly.

"I did not mean to doubt your forgiving disposition! But what did he do to displease you?"

Did Mr. Linden know? or did he *not* know! Faith looked up to see. He was just disentangling one of the lines from Jerry's tail, but met her look with great composure.

"It's an old thing,"—said Faith. "It's not worth bringing up."

"But since I have brought it—won't you indulge me?"

The red on Faith's cheeks grew brilliant. "It isn't anything you would like,—if I told it to you.—Won't you let me let it alone?"

"I should like to hear you tell it."

"He made one or two rude speeches"—said Faith in very great doubt and confusion;—"that was all."

"*That* I knew before."

"Did you?" said Faith looking at him. "How did you know it, Endecott?"

There was a curious gentle, almost tender, modulation of tone in this last sentence, which covered a good deal of possible ground. Mr. Linden drew up one of her mufflers which had fallen off a little, giving her as he did so a silent though laughing answer, as comprehensive as her question.

"You are just the dearest and most precious little child in the whole world!" he said. "But why are you afraid to tell me *now?*—and why did Phil's insinuation cause you such dismay?"

Faith's confusion would have been, as her rosy flush was, extreme,—if something in Mr. Linden's manner had not met that and rebuked it, healing the wound almost before it was made. Between the two Faith struggled for a standing-ground of equanimity,—but words, though she struggled for them too, in her reason or imagination she could not find.

"I want an answer to one of these questions,"—Mr. Linden said, in a playful sort of tone. "Dr. Harrison used to ask me if you lived upon roses—but do you think I can?"

Faith made an effort. "What do you want me to say?"

"What was it in Phil's words that troubled you so much?"

The crimson rush came back overwhelmingly. "Oh Endy—please don't ask me!"

"Not quite fair,"—he said smiling. "I'm sure I am willing to tell *you* anything. Though indeed I do not suppose you need much telling. But Faith—is *that* the system of tactics by which you intend always to have your own way? I shall have to be philosophical to any point!"

"That speech is so very zigzag," said Faith, "that I cannot follow it.
How are you going to be philosophical, Mr. Linden?"

"Not by forgetting to exact your forfeit, Miss Derrick."

"That isn't fair," said Faith laughing. "I didn't for get!—I shouldn't think you had gone all day without eating anything!—and yet you must be starving."

"For what? little provider."

"For something to eat, I should think."

"Does that mean that you are suffering?—because if that be the case, I will refresh you (cautiously) with sugar-plums! A very superfluous thing, to be sure, but the most suitable I can think of."

Faith's laugh came clear now. "No indeed. Suffering! I never eat so many dinners in one day in my life. But I am hungry though, I believe. How many more places are we going to? I don't care how many," she said earnestly. "I like to be hungry."

"Well, keep up your spirits,—the next turn will bring us out of the woods, and a three-minute stay at one or two doors will end our work for this time. Meanwhile, do you want to hear a little bit of good poetry—on an entirely new subject?"

"Oh yes! if you please."

Demurely enough it was given.—

"'Her true beauty leaves behind
Apprehensions in my mind
Of more sweetness, than all art
Or inventions can impart.
Thoughts too deep to be expressed,
And too strong to be repressed.'"

She gave him a wistful look as he finished the lines; and then sat among her furs, as quiet again as a mouse.

"Do you like them, Mignonette?"

"Yes—very much."

"Would you like to tell me then why the hearing of them makes you sober?"

"Yes—if you wish"; she said gently. "I know—a little—I believe,—what you think of me; but what I seem to your eyes on the outside—and much more!—I want to be really, really—in the sight of the eye that tries the heart—and I am not now, Endy."

"My dear child—" he said,—and was silent a minute, speeding smoothly along through the starlight; then went on.

"Yes, dear Faith,—that is what I wish for you—and for myself. That is where we will most earnestly try to help each other." And presently, as eye and thoughts were caught and held by the wonderful constellation above in the clear sky, yet not drawn away from what they had been talking of, Mr. Linden said,—

"'Seek him that maketh the seven stars and Orion,—that bringeth the shadow of death upon the day, and turneth the night into morning!'" And so, in the thought of that, they went home; Orion looking down upon them, and they leaving bits of brightness by the way at the two or three houses which yet remained. The box sleigh got home at last emptied of all its load but the two travellers.

Mrs. Derrick and supper were ready for them, and had been a good while; and by this time Mr. Linden and Faith were ready for supper. And much as Mrs. Derrick had to hear, she had something to tell. How Judge Harrison had come to make a visit and say good-bye, and how he had put in her hands another twenty-five dollars to be added to those his son had already bestowed on Reuben. Squire Stoutenburgh too had been there; but his errand was to declare that Jerry could never be received again into his service, but must henceforth remain in Mrs. Derrick's stable and possession. Altogether, the day even at home had been an exciting one.

A little time after supper Faith went into the sitting-room. Mr. Linden was there alone. Faith came up to the back of his chair, laid a hand on his shoulder, and bent her head into speaking neighbourhood. It may be remarked, that though Faith no longer said "Mr. Linden," yet that one other word of his name was *never* spoken just like her other words. There was always a little lowering or alteration of tone, a slight pause before—or after it, which set and marked it as bordered round with all the regards which by any phrase could be made known.

"Endecott"—she said very softly,—"do you know what you have been doing to-day?"

"Comprehensively speaking—I have been enjoying myself," he said with a bright smile at her.

"You have been giving me a lesson all the while, that I felt through and through."

"Through and through?" he repeated. "Come round here, little bird—you need not perch on the back of my chair. What are you singing about?"

"Of what you have taught me to-day."

"I must have fallen into a very unconscious habit of lesson-giving.
What have I taught you?—suppose you teach me."

"How one should 'hold forth the word of life.'"

"Ah little bird!"—he said, with a look at her which said his day's lesson had been the same, yet on different grounds. "Well—if you can learn anything from so imperfect a teacher, I am glad. But do not rest there,—take up the olive leaf and bear it on!"

CHAPTER IX.

Mrs Derrick went to Pequot the next day, and found Miss Danforth as Faith had left her; or rather, somewhat more failing in everything but mind-strength. Mrs. Derrick was greatly welcomed by both ladies; but she had not been there three hours when Miss Dilly spoke out what was on her heart.

"Isn't Faith coming back to me again?"

For Faith's sake her mother hesitated, and yet it was for Faith's sake that she answered,—"Yes, if you want her."

"It won't be for long I shall want her,"—said Miss Dilly with a quietness very unlike her old self:—"but I would like to have her dear face and music about me once more—if she can let me."

Mrs. Derrick came back with Mr. Stoutenburgh to Pattaquasset that same evening; and Faith put up her books and made immediate preparations for going to Pequot in her stead.

"I must let you go, child," said her mother,—"I couldn't refuse."

"And I am so glad to-morrow is Wednesday, for I can take you over," said Mr. Linden.

Wednesday afternoon was very fair, and after dinner Faith and all her needful baggage were bestowed in the little sleigh, and the journey began. Not very much of a journey indeed, unless compared with the length of day-light; but as fair and bright and pleasant as a journey could be. Full of talk of all sorts,—gliding on through the fading day and the falling night, until

——"the floor of heaven Was thick inlaid with patines of bright gold."

Very bright the stars were, very dark the sky, when Jerry's bells began to mingle with a crowd of others in the streets of Pequot. Faith had insisted that Mr. Linden should come in and have a cup of tea or coffee before he went back again; and this being a not unreasonable request, besides a pleasant one, she had her way.

Miss Danforth was in her room and could not see Mr. Linden. Faith with a kiss and a word established the little Frenchwoman to talk to him, obtaining leave to do what she pleased; though Madame Danforth managed to have her share in the hospitality; got out cups and saucers for Faith and Mr. Linden both on a little table by the fire,—her rolls and her butter; talking all the while to him; and took a minute to run down into the kitchen and see that Faith and the coffee-pot were getting on properly. And it may be said in passing that the result did credit to both. The coffee served to Mr. Linden was faultless. Madame Danforth however had hardly presented him his cup, when she was called off and her guests were left alone.

"Faith," said Mr. Linden, "you must not forget that you have something to do for me as well as for other people while you are here."

"I don't forget it. But what do you mean, Endecott?"

"To put it in the most effective way—I mean that you must take care of me!" he said smiling.

"I will. As good care as you would take of yourself."

"That is a little ambiguous! But will you send me word very often of your success?"

Faith looked up and looked at him, a little startled.

"Do you mean—"

"I mean that there is a postoffice in Pattaquasset—and another in Pequot."

She coloured, and somewhat hastily busied herself with refilling Mr. Linden's cup. Then she folded her hands and sat looking into the fire with a face on which there was a touching expression of humbleness.

"My little Mignonette," he said, "what are you thinking of?"

"I am thinking of that,"—she said with a smile which did not change the expression. "Of what you want me to do—and about it."

"What about it? Are you inditing a letter to me on the spot?"

"No."

"What then?"

Faith would have liked to have her face out of sight, but she couldn't, conveniently.

"I am thinking, how I shall do it—and how you will not like it."

"*You* don't know"—said Mr. Linden. "Let me tell you how I shall like it. I shall read it, and love it, and answer it—will that satisfy you? or do you want me to hang it round my neck by a blue ribband?—because if you do, I will."

The laughing flash of Faith's eye contained nevertheless a protest.

"No, you will not like it, because it will not be fit for you to like; but you will have patience with it,"—she said with a smile which did in its loveliness bid good-bye to shadows.

Mr. Linden left the table, and standing before her as she had risen too, took her face softly in both hands and raised it up for his inspection.

"Do you know what a naughty child you are?"

A most quaint little "yes."

"Then why don't you behave better?" he said, enforcing his question but not releasing her.

"I suppose you will teach me, in time"—she said, blushing and sparkling under his hands. He seemed to like to study her face—or was thinking that he should not see it again for some time,—the expression on his own belonged to more than one thing.

"You must not make me wait for that letter, Faith," he said—"and I must not let you keep me any longer here! But if you want anything, of any sort, you must send to me."

"Yes!—to you or to mother."

"To me—if it is anything I can do," he said as he bade her good-bye. "And take care of yourself, dear child, for me." And releasing her at last, none too willingly, Mr. Linden went out alone into the starlight. He did not see—nor guess—how Faith stood before the fire where he had left her, looking down into it,—motionless and grave until Madame Danforth came back. Then all that part of her life was shut up within her, and Faith was again to other eyes what she had been before at Pequot. Yet not so entirely the same, nor was all that part of her life so entirely shut up to herself, that both her aunt and Madame Danforth did not have a thought and exchange a word on the subject.

"The sun has found the blossom!" said the little Frenchwoman knowingly one day; "they do not open so without that!"

"Nonsense!" said Miss Danforth. "I will ask her." But she never did.

And for a little while again Faith filled her old office. Miss Dilly had no troubles or darkness to clear away now; the Bible was plain sailing to her; but she could never spread her sails too soon or too full for that navigation. Early and late, as before, Faith read to her, with a joy and gladness all brightened

from the contrast of that Sunday night's reading, and coming with a fuller spring since that one little word of her mother the same night. Indeed the last few days had seemed to make the Bible even greatly more precious to Faith than ever before. She clung more fast, she searched more eagerly, among its treasures of riches, to its pillars of strength; valuing them all, as it seemed to her, with a new value, with a fresh knowledge of what might be found and won there for others and herself. So with the very eagerness of love Faith read the Bible to Miss Dilly; and so as she had done before, many a time, early and late, in childlike simpleness prayed at her bedside and by her chair. And as before when she was at Pequot she won Madame Danforth's heart, she intrenched herself there now. She was all over the house, carrying a sunbeam with her; but Faith never thought it was her own. She was a most efficient maid of all work, for nursing and too much care had worn poor Madame Danforth not a little. Faith was upper servant and cook by turns; and sometimes went to market; made every meal pleasant with her gentle happy ways; and comforted the two old ladies to the very top of comfort.

Whether she wanted to be at home or not, Faith did not stop to ask herself. But those letters—those letters—they were written, and they were carried to the postoffice—and others were found at the postoffice in reply to them. And what had been such trial in the proposition, became, even in the first instance, the joy of Faith's life. She wrote hers how she could; generally at night, when she could be quite uninterrupted and alone. It was often very late at night, but it was always a time of rare pleasure and liberty of heart; for if the body were tired, the spirit was free. And Faith's was particularly free, for the manacles and fetters of pride which weigh so bitter heavy on many a mind and life, her gentle and true spirit had let fall. She knew—nobody better—that her letters were not like those letters of Mr. Linden's sister, Pet:—those exquisite letters, where every grace and every talent of a finely gifted and fully cultivated mind seemed playing together with all the rich stores of the past and realities of the present. She knew, that in very style and formalities of execution, her own letters were imperfect and unformed. But she was equally sure that in time what was wrong in this kind would be made right; and she was not afraid to be found wrong, at all, for her own sake. It was because of somebody else, that she had flinched from this writing proposal; because she felt that what was wrong in *her* touched him now. But there again, Faith wrote, trusting with an absolute trust in the heart and hand to which she sent her letters; willing to be found wrong if need be; sure to be set right truly and gently. And so, Faith wrote her own heart and life out, from day to day, giving Mr. Linden precisely what he wanted, and with a child's fearlessness. It was a great thing to go to the postoffice those days! Faith left it to nobody else to do for her. And how strange—how weird, almost, the signature of those letters and her own name on the outside looked to her, in the same free, graceful handwriting which she had read on that little card so long ago! And the letters themselves?—enough to say, that they made Faith think of the way she had been sheltered from the wind, and carried upstairs when her strength failed, and read to and talked to and instructed,—that they made her long to be home and yet content to be there; giving her all sorts of details, of things in Pattaquasset and things elsewhere—just as the writer would have talked them to her; with sometimes a word of counsel, or of caution, or of suggestion,—or some old German hymn which she might find of use in her ministrations, written out in full. It may be mentioned in passing, that the fair little face he had been looking at, or her evident fear of writing to him, made Mr. Linden write to her that very night; a little sugarplum of a letter, which Faith had for her dinner next day.

And Faith read these letters at all sorts of times, and thought of them at other times; and made them next to her Bible—as she should.

CHAPTER X.

Two weeks passed quietly, without much apparent change in Miss Danforth; and Faith was beginning to think of appointing a time to go home. But the necessity for that was suddenly superseded. The Friday following, Miss Dilly took a change for the worse, and Saturday she died. Faith sent off tidings immediately to Pattaquasset; but her letter could not reach there till Monday; and Monday came a very great fall of snow which made travelling impossible. Faith waited patiently, comforting Madame Danforth as she might, and endeavouring to win her to some notion of that joy in the things of the Bible in which Miss Dilly had lived and died. For no change had come over Miss Dilly's sky; and she had set sail from the shores of earth in the very sunlight.

It fell out, that Faith's letter of Saturday afternoon had been five minutes too late for the mail; and after lying in the office at Pequot over Sunday, had been again subjected to the delays of Monday's storm, which in its wild fury put a stop to everything else; and thus, when Mr. Linden went to the office Tuesday morning before school time, the mail had not yet got in. Not long after, however, Mr. Skip brought home the letters; and Mrs. Derrick reading hers, at once took Mr. Skip and Jerry and set off for

Pequot; minding neither snowdrifts nor driving wind, when the road to Faith lay through them, and arriving there quite safe about the hour of midday.

The delayed funeral took place the same afternoon. And the next morning, in a brilliant cold day, snow all over the ground and the sky all blue, the mother and daughter set forth homewards. Madame Danforth was going to take another relation in, and live on still in the little house where she and her sister-in-law had made a happy home for so many years. Miss Danforth had left a few hundreds, three or four, to Faith. It was all she had owned in the world; her principal living having been an annuity settled upon her by her brother, which reverted to Madame Danforth.

It was about mid-afternoon when they reached home, and of course the house held no one but Cindy; except indeed that sort of invisible presence which books and other inanimate things make known; and Cindy had to tell of two or three visiters, but otherwise nothing. Very fair it all looked to Faith,—very sweet to her ear was the sound of the village clock, although as yet it was only striking three. She did not say much about the matter. A gleeful announcement that she was glad to be at home, she made to Mrs. Derrick; but after that she expressed herself in action. One of her first moves was to the kitchen, determined that there should be a double consciousness of her being at home when supper-time came. Then books were got out, and fires put in wonderful order. Mr. Linden might guess, from the state in which he found his room, that it had come under its old rule. No such fire had greeted him there for weeks; no such brushed-up clean hearth; no such delicate arrangement of table and chairs and curtains and couch. But the fire burned quietly and told no tales, otherwise than by its very orderly snapping and sparkling.

And indeed it so happened, that Mr. Linden went first into the sitting-room,—partly to see if any one was there, partly because the day was cold, and under Cindy's management there was small reason to suppose that his room was warm. And once there, the easy-chair reminded him so strongly that he was tired, that he even sat down in it before going upstairs,—which combination a long walk through the snowdrifts since school, made very acceptable. Five minutes after, Faith having got rid of her kitchen apron, opened softly the door of the sitting-room. She stopped an instant, and then came forward, her gladness not at all veiled by a very rosy veil of shy modesty. There was no stay in his step to meet her,—he had sprung up with the first sound of her foot on the threshold; and how much she had been missed and longed for Faith might guess, from the glad silence in which she was held fast and for a minute not allowed to speak herself. So very glad!—she could see it and feel it exceedingly as he brought her forward to the fire, and lifted up her face, and looked at it with eyes that were not easily satisfied.

"My little Sunbeam," he said, "how lovely you are!"

She had been laughing and flushing with a joy almost as frankly shewn as his own; but that brought a change over her face. The eyes fell, and the line of the lips was unbent after a different fashion.

"I don't know what it is like to see you again," Mr. Linden said as his own touched them once more,—"like any amount of balm and rest and refreshment! How long have you been here, dear child? and how do you do?—and have you any idea how glad I am to have you home?"

She answered partly in dumb show, clasping one hand upon his shoulder and laying down her head upon it. Her words were very quiet and low-spoken.

"We came home a while ago—and I am very well." Mr. Linden rested his face lightly upon her shining hair, and was silent—till Faith wondered; little guessing what thoughts the absence and the meeting and above all her mute expression, had stirred; nor what bitterness was wrapped in those sweet minutes. But he put it aside, and then took the sweetness pure and unmixed; giving her about as much sunshine as he said she gave him.

"How do you like writing to me, Faith?" he said. "Am I, on the whole, any more terrific at a distance than near by?"

"I didn't know you could be so good at a distance,"—she said expressively.

"Did you find out what reception your letters met?"

"I didn't want to find out."

"Do you call that an answer?" he said smiling. "Why didn't you want to find out?—and *did* you?"

"Why!"—said Faith,—"I didn't want to find out because it wasn't necessary. I *did* find out that I liked to write. But you wouldn't have liked it if you had known what time of night it was, often."

"What do you think of taking up a new study?" said Mr. Linden. "It strikes me that it would do you good to stand in the witness-box half an hour every day,—just for practice. Faith—did you find out what reception your letters met?"

"I knew before—" she said, meeting his eyes.

"Did you!—then what made you assure me I should not like them?"

"I don't think you did, Endecott—the parts of them that you oughtn't to have liked."

"Truly I think not!" he said laughing. "You are on safe ground there, little Mignonette. But speaking of letters—do you want more tidings from Italy?"

"O yes I if you please. Are they good? And has all been good here with you and the school since I have been away?"

"Yes, they are good,—my sister—and yours—is enjoying herself reasonably. And the boys have been good,—and I—have wanted my Mignonette."

One word in that speech brought a soft play of colour to Faith's face, but her words did not touch that point.

The days went on very quietly after that, and the weeks followed,—quietly, regularly, full of business and pleasure. Quick steps were made in many things during those weeks, little interrupted by the rest of Pattaquasset, some of the most stirring people of that town being away. An occasional tea-drinking did steal an evening now and then, but also furnished the before and after walk or ride, and so on the whole did little mischief; and as Faith was now sometimes taken on Mr. Linden's visits to another range of society, she saw more of him than ever; and daily learned more and more—not only of him, but of his care for her. His voice—never indeed harsh to any one—took its gentlest tones to her; his eye its softest and deepest lustre: no matter how tired he came home—the first sight of her seemed to banish all thought of fatigue. Faith could feel that she was the very delight of his life. Indeed, by degrees, she began to understand that she had long been so—only there had once been a qualification,—now, the sunshine of his happiness had nothing to check its expression, or its endeavour to make her life as bright. That he took "continual comfort" in her, Faith could see.

And—child!—he did not see what this consciousness spurred her to do; how the strength of her heart spent itself—yet was never spent—in efforts to grow and become more worthy of him and more fit for him to take comfort in. The days were short, and Faith's household duties not few, especially in the severe weather, when she could not let her mother be tried with efforts which in summer-time might be easy and pleasant enough. A good piece of every day was of necessity spent by Faith about house and in the kitchen, and faithfully given to its work. But her heart spurred her on to get knowledge. The times when Mr. Linden was out of school could rarely be study times, except of study with him; and to be prepared for him Faith was eager. She took times that were hers all alone. Nobody heard her noiseless footfall in the early morning down the stair. Long before it was light,—hours before the sun thought of shewing his face to the white Mong and the snowy houseroofs of Pattaquasset, Faith lighted her fire in the sitting-room, and her lamp on the table; and after what in the first place was often a good while with her Bible, she bent herself to the deep earnest absorbed pressing into the studies she was pursuing with Mr. Linden—or such of them as the morning had time for. Faith could not lengthen the day at the other end; to prevent the sun was her only chance; and day after day and week after week, through the short days of February, she had done solid work and a deal of it before anybody in the house saw her face in the kitchen or at breakfast. They saw it then as bright as ever. Mr. Linden only knew that his scholar made very swift and smooth progress. He would have known more, for Faith would have shewn the effects of her early hours of work in her looks and life the rest of the day, but happiness is strong; and a mind absolutely at peace with God and the world has a great rest! Friction is said to be one of the notable hindering powers in the world of matter—it is equally true, perhaps, of the world of spirit. Without it, in either sphere, how softly and with how little wear and tear, everything moves! And Faith's life knew none.

CHAPTER XI.

It was near the end of February,—rather late in the afternoon of a by no means balmy day, in the course of which Dr. Harrison had arrived to look after his repairs. But the workmen had stopped work and gone home to supper, and the doctor and his late dinner sat together. Luxuriously enough, on the doctor's part, for the dinner was good and well cooked, the bottles of wine irreproachable (as wine) in

their silver stands, the little group of different coloured glasses shining in the firelight. The doctor's fingerbowl and napkin stood at hand, (at this stage of the proceeding) his half-pared apple was clearly worth the trouble, and he himself—between the fire and his easy-chair—might be said to be "in the lap of comfort." Comfort rarely did much for him but take him on her lap, however—he seldom stayed there; and on the present occasion the doctor's eyes were very wide open and his thoughts at work. It might be presumed that neither process was cut short, when the old black man opened the door and announced Mr. Linden.

But if Mr. Linden could have seen the doctor's face just before, he might have supposed that his entrance had produced rather a sedative effect. For the brow smoothed itself down, the eye took its light play and the mouth its light smile, and the doctor's advance to meet his friend was marked with all its graceful and easy unconcern. He did not even seem energetic enough to be very glad; for grace and carelessness still blended in his welcome and in his hospitable attentions, nothing of which however was failing. He had presently made Mr. Linden as comfortable as himself, so far as possible outward appliances could be effectual; established him at a good side of the table; Burnished him with fruit and pressed him with wine; and then sitting at ease at his own corner, sipped his claret daintily, eyeing Mr. Linden good humouredly between sips; but apparently too happily on good terms with comfort to be in any wise eager or anxious as to what Mr. Linden's business might be, or whether he had any.

"Has the news of my arrival flown over Pattaquasset already?" said he. "I thought I had seen nothing but frieze jackets, and friezes of broken plaster—and I have certainly felt so much of another kind of *freeze* that I should hardly think even news could have stirred."

Mr. Linden's reception of the doctor's hospitality had been merely nominal—except so far as face and voice had the receiving, and he answered quietly—

"I don't know. I happened to want you, doctor, and so I found out that you were here."

"Want me? I am very glad to be wanted by you—so that it be not *for* you. What is it, my dear Linden?"

"No—you will not be glad," said Mr. Linden,—"though it is both for me and not for me. I want you to go with me to see one of my little scholars who is sick."

"Who is he?"

"One whom you have seen but will not remember,—Johnny Fax."

"Fax—" said the doctor—"I remember the name, but no particular owner of it. What's the matter with him?"

"I want you to come and see."

"Now?"—

"As near that as may be."

"Now it shall be, then; though with such a February night on one side, it takes all your power on the other to draw me out of this chair. You don't look much like Comedy, and I am very little like the great buskin-wearer—but I would as lieve Tragedy had me by the other shoulder as February, when his fingers have been so very long away from the fire. Did you ever read Thomson's 'Castle of Indolence,' Linden?"

"Not to much purpose—the name is all I remember."

"Stupid book,"—said the doctor;—"but a delightful place!"

The luxury of broadcloth and furs in which the doctor was presently involved might have rendered him reasonably independent, one would think, of February or any other of Jack Frost's band. Jerry was at the door, and involving themselves still further in buffalo robes the two gentle men drove to the somewhat distant farm settlement which called Jonathan Fax master. Mr. Fax was a well-to-do member of the Pattaquasset community, as far as means went; there was very little knowledge in his house how to make use of means. Nor many people to make use of the knowledge. The one feminine member of the family had lately married and gone off to take care of her own concerns, and Jonathan and his one other child lived on as best they might; the child being dependant upon the maid of all work for his clothes and breakfast, for his Sunday lessons upon Faith, for the weekday teaching and comfort of his little life upon Mr. Linden. Living along in this somewhat divided way, the child had suddenly taken sick —no one just knew how; nor just what to do with him—except to send Mr. Linden word by one of the other boys, which had been done that afternoon. And thus it was, that Dr. Harrison had been looked for, found, and drawn out into the February night with only the slight protection of furs and broadcloth.

Thus it was that after a short and rather silent drive, the two gentlemen went together into the last-century sort of a house, received the angular welcome of Jonathan Fax, and stood side by side by the bed where the sick child lay. Side by side—with what different faces! A difference which Johnny was quick to recognize. He lay on the bed, wrapped in a little old plaid cloak, and with cheeks which rivalled its one remaining bright colour; and half unclosing his heavy eyes to see the doctor, he stretched out his arms to Mr. Linden, clasping them round his neck as his friend sat down on the bedside and gently lifted him up, and receiving the kiss on his flushed cheek with a little parting of the lips which said how glad he was. But then he lay quite still in Mr. Linden's arms.

Whatever attractions the Castle of Indolence might have for Dr. Harrison upon occasion, he never seemed so much as to look that way when he was at his work. Now, it made no difference that *he* was no friend of Johnny's; he gave his attention thoroughly and with all his skill to the condition and wants of his little patient.

"Is there nobody to take care of him?" he asked in French, for Jonathan Fax with his square and by no means delicate and tender physiognomy stood at the other side of the bed heavily looking on.

"I shall, to-night," said Mr. Linden. "You may give me your directions."

The doctor proceeded to do this; but added, "He wants care and good nursing; and he'll suffer if he don't have it. He is a sick child."

"He shall have it," was all the answer; and when the doctor had finished his work for the time, Mr. Linden laid the child on the bed again, giving him a whispered promise to come back and stay with him all night; upon the strength of which promise Johnny fell into a deep sleep.

"Has the creature nobody to take care of him?" said the doctor as they went out.

"Nobody at home."

"I shall be here a day or two, Linden—I'll see him early in the morning again."

Mr. Linden's next move through the biting air was to drive home. At the door of the sitting-room Faith met him.

"Endecott—how is he?"

"Less well than I expected to find him, dear Faith. I found Dr.
Harrison and took him there with me."

"And what did Dr. Harrison say of him?"

"That he wanted good care and nursing."

"And who is there to give it to him, Endy?" she said with a very saddened and earnest face.

"Why I shall give it to him to-night, my child, and we'll see about to-morrow. The doctor promised to go there again in the morning."

She stood a moment silent, and then said, "I'll go with you."

"Not to-night, dear—it is not needful. He will not want more than one watcher."

"But he might want something else—something to be done that a woman about the house might be wanted for—let me go too!—"

"No indeed! you must go to sleep. And he will hardly want anything but what I can give him to-night. I know well what your little hands are in a sick room," he said taking them in his own,—"I know well!—but they are not made of iron—nor are you."

Faith looked ill satisfied.

"Well, you'll not hinder my taking your place by him to-morrow, Endy?"

"If I can," Mr. Linden said, "I shall come home to breakfast, and then I may know what you had better do; but if I should be detained there, and so not get here till midday, wait for me—I should not like to have you go without seeing me again; and I can leave Reuben there for the morning if need be."

"Oh Endecott!—" she said with a heart full; but she said no more and ran away. She came back soon to call Mr. Linden to tea, which had waited; and after tea when he was about going she put a basket in his hand.

"I hope Mr. Fax has wood in his house, so that you can keep a fire,—but you are not likely to find anything else there. You'll want everything that is in this, Endy—please remember."

"I will not forget," he said, as he gave her his thanks. "But what did that exclamation mean, before tea?"

"What exclamation?—Oh—" said Faith, smiling somewhat but looking down, "I suppose it meant that I was disappointed."

"My dear little child—you must try not to feel disappointed, because I am quite sure you ought not to go; and that must content both you and me. So good night."—

Faith tried to be contented, but her little scholar lay on her heart. And it lay on her heart too, that Mr. Linden would be watching all night and teaching all day. He did not know how much he had disappointed, for she had laid a fine plan to go by starlight in the morning to take his place and send him home for a little rest before breakfast and school. Faith studied only one book that night, and that was her Bible.

It was a night of steady watching,—broken by many other things, but not by sleep. There was constantly some little thing to do for the sick child,—ranging from giving him a drink of water, to giving him "talk," or rocking and—it might be—singing him to sleep. But the restless little requests never had to wait for their answer, and with the whole house sunk in stillness or sleep, Mr. Linden played the part of a most gentle and efficient nurse—and thought of Faith, and her disappointment. And so the night wore away, and the morning star came up, and then the red flushes of sunrise.

"Who turneth the night into day"—Mr. Linden thought, with a grave look from the window to the little face beside him—and then the words came,—

"In the morning, children, in the morning;
We'll all rise together in the morning!"

It was very early indeed, earlier even than usual, when Faith came down and kindled her fire. And then leaving it to burn, she opened the curtains of the window and looked out into the starlight. It was long before the red flush of the morning; it was even before the time when Faith would have gone to relieve the guard in that sick room; her thoughts sped away to the distant watcher there and the sick child. Faith could guess what sort of a watching it had been, and it was a comfort to think that Johnny had it. But then as she looked out into the clear still starlight, something brought up the question, what if Johnny should die?—It was overwhelming to Faith for a minute; her little scholar's loveliness had got fast hold of her heart; and she loved him for deep and far-back associations too. She could not bear to think that it might be. Yet she asked herself if this was a reasonable feeling? Why should she be sorry—if it were so—that this little blossom of Heaven should have an early transplanting thither? Ah, the fragrance of such Heaven-flowers is too sweet to be missed, and Earth wants them. As Faith looked sadly out into the night, watched the eternal procession of bright stars, and heard the low sweep of the wind, the words came to her,—separated from their context and from everything else as it seemed,—"I, the Lord, do all these things." Her mind as instantly gave a glad assent and rested itself in them. Not seen by her or by mortal the place or fitting of any change or turn of earthly things, in the great plan,—every one such turn and change had its place, as sure as the post of each star in the sky—as true to its commission as that wind, which came from no one knew where to go no one knew whither. Faith looked and listened, and took the lesson deep down in her heart.

Mr. Linden's little basket had stood him well in stead that long night,—for Faith had said truth; nothing was for him in Mr. Fax's house. Mr. Fax was well enough satisfied that Johnny's teacher should take the trouble of nursing the child, had no idea that such trouble would necessarily involve much loss of sleep, and still further no notion of the fact that a watcher at night needs food as much as fire. Fire Mr. Linden had, but he would have been worse off without the stores he found in his basket. In truth the supply generally was sufficient to have kept him from starving even if he had been obliged to go without his breakfast; but Dr. Harrison concerned himself about his little patient, and was better than Mr. Linden's hopes. He came, though in the cold short February morning, a good while before eight o'clock. He gave Mr. Linden a pleasant clasp of the hand; and then made his observations in silence.

"Is this one of your favourites?" he said at length.

A grave "yes."

"I am sorry for it."

Mr. Linden was silent at first, looking down at the child with a sort of expression the doctor had not

often seen, and when he spoke it was without raising his eyes.

"Tell me more particularly."

"I don't know myself,"—said the doctor with a frankness startling in one of his profession; but Dr. Harrison's characteristic carelessness nowhere made itself more apparent than in his words and about what people might think of them.—"I don't say anything *certainly*—but I do not like appearances."

"What is the matter?"

"It's an indefinite sort of attack—all the worse for that!—the root of which is hid from me. All you can do is to watch and wait. Have you been here through the night?"

"Yes," Mr. Linden answered—and put the further question, "Do you think there is any danger of contagion?"

"O no!—the fever, what there is, comes from some inward cause—a complicated one, I judge. I can guess, and that's all. Are there no women about the house?"

"None that are good for much." And looking at his watch, Mr. Linden laid the child—who had fallen asleep again—out of his arms among the pillows, arranging them softly and dextrously as if he were used to the business.

"Reuben Taylor will stay with him for the present," he said as he turned to Dr. Harrison.

"I'll come again by and by," the doctor said. "Meanwhile all that can be done is to let him have this, as I told you."

The directions were given to Reuben, the doctor drove off, and Mr. Linden set out on his quick walk home; after the confinement of the night, the cold morning air and exercise were rather resting than otherwise. It was a very thoughtful half hour—very sorrowful at first; but before he reached home, thought, and almost feeling, had got beyond "the narrow bounds of time," and were resting peacefully—even joyfully—"where bright celestial ages roll."

He entered the house with a light step, and went first upstairs to change his dress; but when he came down and entered the sitting-room, there was the tone of the whole walk upon his face still. Faith put her question softly, as if she expected no glad answer. And yet it was partly that, though given in very gentle, grave tones.

"There is more to fear than to hope, dear Faith,—and there is everything to hope, and nothing to fear!"

She turned away to the breakfast-table; and said little more till the meal was over. Then she rose when he did.

"I am going now, Endy!"—The tone was of very earnest determination, that yet waited for sanction.

"Yes," he answered—"Dr. Harrison says the fever is not contagious, I waited to know that. If I can I shall get free before midday, so I may meet you there. And can you prepare and take with you two or three things?"—he told her what.

Faith set about them; and when they were done, Mr. Skip had finished his breakfast and got Jerry ready. Some other preparations Faith had made beforehand; and with no delay now she was on her swift way to little Johnny's bedside. She came in like a vision of comfort upon the sick room, with all sorts of freshness about her; grasped Reuben's hand, and throwing back her hood, stooped her lips to Johnny's cheek. And Johnny gave her his usual little fair smile—and then his eyes went off to the doorway, as if he half expected to see some one else behind her. But it was from no want of love to *her*, as she knew from the way the eyes came back to her face and rested there, and took a sort of pleased survey of her hood and, her fur and her dress.

"Dear Johnny!—Can you speak to me?" said Faith tenderly touching her cheek again to his.

"Oh yes, ma'am," he said, in a quiet voice and with the same bit of a smile. That was what Faith wanted. Then she looked up.

"Are you going to school now, Reuben?"

"I didn't expect to this morning, Miss Faith," Reuben said with a sober glance at his little comrade.

"Then you can wait here a bit for me."

Leaving Reuben once more in charge, Faith went on a rummaging expedition over the house to find some woman inmate. Not too easily or speedily she was found at last, the housekeeper and all-work woman deep in *all work* as she really seemed, and in an outer kitchen of remote business, whither Faith had traced her by an exercise of determinate patience and skill. Having got so fur, Faith was not balked in the rest; and obtaining from her some of Johnny's clean linen which she persuaded her to go in search of, she returned to the room where she had left Reuben; and set about making the sick child as comfortable as in his sickness he could be.

It was a day or two already since Johnny had lain there and had had little effectual attention from anybody, till Mr. Linden came last night. The child might well look at his new nurse, for her neat dress and gentle face and soft movements were alone a balm for any sick place. And in her quiet way, Faith set about changing the look of this one. There was plenty of wood, and she made a glorious fire. Then tenderly and dextrously she managed to get a fresh nightgown on Johnny without disturbing him more than pleasantly with her soft manipulations; and wrapping him in a nice little old doublegown which she had brought with her and which had been a friend of her own childish days, Faith gave him to Reuben to hold while she made up the bed and changed the clothes, the means for which she had also won from the housekeeper. Then having let down the chintz curtains to shield off the intense glare of the sunny snow, Faith assumed Johnny into her own arms. She had brought vinegar from home, and with it bathed the little boy's face and hands and brushed his hair, till the refreshed little head lay upon her breast in soothed rest and comfort.

"There, Johnny!"—she whispered as her lips touched his brow,—"Mr. Linden may come as soon as he pleases—we are ready for him!"

The child half unclosed his eyes at the words, and then sunk again into one of his fits of feverish sleep, the colour rising in his cheeks a little, the breath coming quick. Reuben knelt down at Faith's side and watched him.

"I used to wonder, Miss Faith," he said softly, "what would become of him if Mr. Linden ever went away"—and the quiet pause told what provision Reuben thought was fast coming for any such contingency.

"You can't think what Mr. Linden's been to Johnny, Miss Faith," he went on in the same low voice,—"and to all of us," he added lower still. "But he's taken such care of him, in school and out. It was only last week Johnny told me he liked coming to school in the winter, because then Mr. Linden always went home with him. And whenever he could get in Mr. Linden's lap he was perfectly happy. And Mr. Linden would let him, sometimes, even in school, because Johnny was so little and not very strong,—and he'd let him sit in his lap and go to sleep for a little while when he got tired, and then Johnny would go back to his lessons as bright as a bee. That was the way he did the very first day school was opened, for Johnny was frightened at first, and a mind to cry—he'd never had anybody to take much care of him. And Mr. Linden just called him and took him up and spoke to him—and Johnny laid his head right down and went to sleep; and he's loved Mr. Linden with all his heart ever since. I know we all laughed—and he smiled himself, but it made all the rest of us love him too."

Reuben had gone on talking, softly, as if he felt sure of sympathy in all he might say on the subject. But that "first day school was opened!"—how Faith's thoughts sprang back there,—with what strange, mixed memories the vision of it came up before her! That day and time when so many new threads were introduced into her life, which were now shewing their colours and working out their various patterns. It was only a spring there and back again, however, that her thoughts took; or rather the vision was a sort of background to Reuben's delineations, and her eye was upon these; with what kind of sympathy she did not care to let him see. Her cheek was bent down to the sick child's head and Faith's face was half hidden. Until a moment later, when the door opened and Johnny's father came in to see what was become of him; and then Mr. Fax had no clue to the lustrous softness of the eyes that looked up at him. He could make nothing of it.

"What!" said he. "Why who's Johnny got to look after him now?"

"I am his teacher, sir."

"His teacher, be you? Seems to me he's a lot of 'em. One teacher stayed with him last night. How many has he got, among you?"

"Only two—" said Faith, rejoicing that she was *one*. "I am his Sunday school teacher."

"Well what's your name, now?"

"Faith Derrick."

"*That's* who you be!" said Mr. Fax in surprise. "Don't say! Well Johnny's got into good hands, aint he? How's he gettin' along?"

Faith's eye went down to the little boy, and her hand passed slowly and tenderly over his hair; she was at a loss how to answer, and Reuben spoke for her.

"He's been sleeping a good deal this morning."

The father stooped towards the child, but his look went from him to Faith, with a mixture of curiosity and uneasiness as he spoke.

"Sleepin', is he?—Then I guess he's gettin' along first-rate—aint he?"

Again Faith's look astonished the man, both because of its intent soft beauty and the trembling set of her lip. But how to answer him she did not know. Her head sunk over the child's brow as she exclaimed,

"His dear Master knows what to do with him!"

Jonathan Fax stood up straight and looked at Reuben.

"What does she mean!"

"She means that he is in God's hands, and that we don't know yet what He will do," Reuben answered with clear simplicity.

Yet it was a strange view of the subject to Mr. Fax; and he stood stiff and angular and square, looking down at Faith and her charge, feeling startled and strange. Her face was bent so that he could not see that quiver of her lip now; but he did see one or two drops fall from the lowered eyelids on Johnny's hair. Perhaps he would have asked more questions, but he did not; something kept them back. He stood fixed, with gathering soberness growing over his features. Little he guessed that those tears had been half wrung from Faith's eyes by the contrast between his happy little child and him. It was with something like a groan at last that he turned away, merely bidding Reuben Taylor to call for anything that was wanted.

The morning wore on softly, for Johnny still slept. Reuben went quietly about, giving attention where it was needed; to the fire, or to the curtains—drawn back now as the sun got round—or bringing Faith a footstool, or trying some other little thing for her comfort; and when he was not wanted remaining in absolute stillness. As it neared midday, however, he took his stand by the window, and after a short watch there suddenly turned and left the room. And a moment after Mr. Linden came in.

Faith met him with a look of grave, sweet quiet; in which was mingled a certain joy at being where she was. She waited for him to speak. But something in her face, or her office, moved him,—the gravity of his own look deepened as he came forward—his words were not ready. He sat down by her, resting his arm on the back of her chair and giving her and Johnny the same salutation—the last too softly to rouse him.

"Has the doctor been here?" he said first.

"No."

He was silent again for a minute, but then Johnny suddenly started up—waking perhaps out of some fever dream; for he seemed frightened and bewildered, and almost ready to cry; turning his head uneasily away from everything and everybody as it seemed, until his eyes were fairly open, and then giving almost a spring out of Faith's arms into those of Mr. Linden; holding him round the neck and breathing little sobbing breaths on his shoulder, till the resting-place had done its work,—till Mr. Linden's soft whispered words had given him comfort. But it was a little wearily then that he said, "Sing."

Was it wearily that the song was given? Faith could not tell,—she could not name those different notes in the voice, she could only feel that the octave reached from earth to heaven.

"'How kind is Jesus, Lord of all!
To hear my little feeble call.
How kind is Jesus, thus to be
Physician, Saviour, all to me!

'How much he loves me he doth shew;
How much he loves I cannot know.

I'm glad my life is his to keep,
Then he will watch and I may sleep.

'Jesus on earth, while here I lie;
Jesus in heaven, if I die:
I'm safe and happy in his care,
His love will keep me, here or there.

'An angel he may send for me,
And then an angel I shall be.
Lord Jesus, through thy love divine,
Thy little child is ever thine.'"

Faith had drawn her chair a little back and with her head leaning on the back of Mr. Linden's chair, listened—in a spirit not very different from Johnny's own. She looked up then when it was done, with almost as childlike a brow. It had quieted him, as with a charm, and the little smile he gave Faith was almost wondering why she looked grave.

"You've been here a good while," he said, as if the mere announcement of the fact spoke his thanks.

"Has she?" Mr. Linden said. "What has Miss Faith done with you, Johnny, if she has been here a good while?"

"All sorts of things," Johnny answered, with another comprehensive expression of gratitude.

"I thought so!" said Mr. Linden. "I shouldn't wonder a bit if she had dressed you up in something she used to wear herself."

"She wasn't ever so little," the child said softly.

Faith had been preparing for him a cup of some light nourishment which he was to take from time to time, and now coming to Mr. Linden's side kneeled down there before Johnny to give it to him. The child took the delicate spoonfuls as she gave them, turning his fair eyes from her to Mr. Linden as if he felt in a very sweet atmosphere of love and care; and when she went away with the cup he said in his slow fashion,

"I love her very much."

And Faith heard the answer—

"And so do I."

Coming up behind Mr. Linden she laid her hand on his shoulder.

"Endecott—where are you going to take dinner and rest to-day?"

"O I will take rest by the way," he answered lightly, and with a smile at her. "There is dinner enough in my supper basket—I have not much time for it, neither."

"School again this afternoon?"

"Yes I must be there for awhile."

Faith moved away, remarking in a different tone, "Your supper basket is at home, sir!"—and busied her energies about serving him as she had just served Johnny. With something more substantial however. Faith had brought a lunch basket, and in five minutes had made Mr. Linden a cup of home tea.

"Now how shall we manage?" she said;—"for Johnny must have you every minute while you are here—and there is no such thing as a little table. I shall have to be table and dumb waiter for you—if you won't mind."

And so Faith pulled up her chair again and sat down, with the basket open on her lap and Mr. Linden's cup in her hand.

"I only hope," she said, "that Dr. Harrison will not choose this particular minute to come in! If he does, catch the cup of tea, Endecott!—for I won't answer for anything."

"I don't know whether I should be most sorry or proud, in case of such event," said Mr. Linden, —"however, I do not wish the doctor anything so disagreeable. But I will promise to catch the cup of tea

—and everything else, down to his displeasure. Only you must not be a *dumb* waiter; for that will not suit me at all."

It was one of those pretty bits of sunshine that sometimes shew themselves in the midst of a very unpromising day, the time when they sat there with the lunch basket between them. The refreshment of talk and of lunch (for lunch *is* refreshing when it is needed) brightened both faces and voices; and Mr. Linden's little charge, in one of his turns of happy rest and ease, watched them—amused and interested—till he fell asleep. By that time Mr. Linden's spare minutes were about over. As he was laying Johnny gently down on the bed, Faith seized her chance.

"You'll let me stay here to-night—won't you, Endecott?"

"It would not be good for you, dear child,—if you stay until night it will be quite as much as you ought to do. But I will see you again by that time."

"I am strong, Endecott."

"Yes, you are strong, little Sunbeam," he said, turning now to her and taking both her hands,—"and yet it is a sort of strength I must guard. Even sunbeams must not be always on duty. But we'll see about it when I come back."

Mr. Linden went off to his other sphere of action, and soon after Reuben came softly in, just to let Faith know that he was at hand if she wanted anything, and to offer to take her place.

"Reuben!" said Faith suddenly, "have you had any dinner?"

"O yes, ma'am—enough," Reuben said with a smile. "I brought something with me this morning."

Faith put her lunch basket into his hand, but her words were cut short; for she saw Dr. Harrison just coming to the house. She moved away and stood gravely by the fire.

The doctor came in pulling off his glove. He gave his hand to Faith with evident pleasure, but with a frank free pleasure, that had nothing embarrassing about the manner of it; except the indication of its depth. After a few words given with as easy an intonation as if the thermometer were not just a few degrees above zero outside where he had come from, the doctor's eye went over to the other person in the room; and then the doctor himself crossed over and offered his hand.

"I shall never see you, Reuben,"—said he with a very pleasant recollective play of eye and lip, —"without thinking of a *friend*."

The doctor had a more full view of Reuben's eyes, thereupon, than he had ever before been favoured with,—for one moment their clear, true, earnest expression met his. But whatever the boy read—or tried to read—or did not read, he answered simply, as he looked away again,

"You have been that to me, sir."

"I don't know—" said the doctor lightly. "I am afraid not according to your friend. Mr. Linden's definition. But reckon me such a one as I *can* be, will you?"—He turned away without waiting for the answer and went back to Faith.

"Do you know," he said, "I expected to find you here?"

"Very naturally," said Faith quietly.

"Yes—it is according to my experience. Now how is this child?"—

He turned to see, and so did Faith. He looked at the child, while Faith's eye went from Johnny to him. Both faces were grave, but Faith's grew more grave as she looked.

"How is this child?" she repeated.

"He is not worse," said the doctor; "except that not to be better is to be worse. Are you particularly interested in him?"

Faith looked down at the sweet pure little face, and for a minute or two was very still. She did not even think of answering the doctor, nor dare speak words at all. Her first movement was to push away softly a lock of hair from Johnny's forehead.

"What can I do for him, Dr. Harrison?"

"Not much just now—go on as you have been doing. I will be here to-night again, and then perhaps I

shall know more."

He gave her a new medicine for him however; and having said all that was needful on that score, came back with her to the fire and stood a little while talking—just so long as it would do for him to stay with any chance of its being acceptable; talking in a tone that did not jar with the place or the time, gravely and pleasantly, of some matters of interest; and then he went. And Faith sat down by the bedside, and forgot Dr. Harrison; and thought of the Sunday school in the woods that evening in October, and the hymn, "I want to be an angel"; and looked at Johnny with a very full heart.

Not a very long time had passed, when Faith heard sleigh bells again, and a person very different from the doctor came softly in; even Mrs. Derrick. She smiled at Reuben and Faith, and going close up to the bed folded her hands quietly together and stood looking at the sick child; the smile vanishing from her face, her lips taking a tender, pitiful set—her eyes in their experience gravely reading the signs. She looked for a few minutes in silence, then with a little sorrowful sigh she turned to Faith.

"Pretty child," she said, "can't you take a little rest? I'll sit by him now."

"O mother I'm not tired—much. I have not been very busy."

Mrs. Derrick however took the matter into her own hands, and did not content herself till she had Faith on a low seat at her side, and Faith's head on her lap; which was a rest, to mind and body both. Reuben replenished the fire and went out, and the two sat alone.

"Faith," her mother said softly, "don't you think he'd be content with me to-night? I can't bear to have Mr. Linden sit up."

"I want to stay myself, mother, if he would let me."

"I don't believe he'll do that, Faith—and I guess he's right But you must make him go home to tea, child, and he might rest a little then; and I'll stay till he comes back, at least."

There was not much more to be said then, for Johnny woke up and wanted to be taken on Faith's lap, and talked to, and petted; answering all her efforts with a sort of grateful little smile and way; but moving himself about in her arms as if he felt restless and uneasy. It went to her heart. Presently, in the low tones which were music of themselves, she carried his thoughts off to the time when Jesus was a little child; and began to give him, in the simplicity of very graphic detail, part of the story of Christ's life upon earth. It was a name that Johnny loved to hear; and Faith went from point to point of his words, and wonders, and healing power and comforting love. Not dwelling too long, but telling Johnny very much as if she had seen it, each gentle story of the sick and the weary and the troubled, who came in their various ways to ask pity of Jesus, and found it; and reporting to Johnny as if she had heard them the words of promise and love that a little child could understand. Mrs. Derrick listened; she had never heard just such a talk in her life. The peculiarity of it was in the vivid faith and love which took hold of the things as if Faith had had them by eyesight and hearing, and in the simplicity of representation with which she gave them, as a child to a child. And all the while she let Johnny constantly be changing his position, as restlessness prompted; from sitting to kneeling and lying in her arms; sometimes brushing his hair, which once in a while he had a fancy for, and sometimes combing it off from his forehead with her own fingers dipped in the vinegar and water which he liked to smell. Nothing could be more winning—nothing more skilful, in its way, than Faith's talk to the sick child that half hour or more. And Johnny told its effect, in the way he would bid her "talk," if she paused for a minute. So by degrees the restless fit passed off for the time, and he lay still in her arms, with drooping heavy eyelids now.

Everything was subsiding;—the sun sank down softly behind the wavy horizon line, the clouds floated silently away to some other harbour, and the blasts of wind came fainter and fainter, like the music of a retreating army. Swiftly the daylight ebbed away, and still Faith rocked softly back and forth, and her mother watched her. Once in a while Reuben came silently in to bring wood or fresh water,—otherwise they had no interruption. Then Mr. Linden came, and sitting down by Faith as he had done before, asked about the child and about the doctor.

"He came very soon after you went away," said Faith. "He said that he was no better, and that to be no better was to be worse." It was plain that she thought more than she said. Faith had little experience, but there is an intuitive skill in some eyes to know what they have never known before.

Mr. Linden bent down over the child, laying cheek to cheek softly and silently, until Johnny rousing up a little held up his lips to be kissed,—and he did not raise his head then.

"Have you been asleep, Johnny?" he said.

"I don't know," the child said dreamily.

"Has Miss Faith taken care of you ever since I went?"

"Yes," Johnny said, with a little faint smile—"and we've had talk."

"I wish I had been here to hear it," said Mr. Linden. "What was it about?—all sorts of sweet things?"

"Yes," Johnny said again, his face brightening—"out of the Bible."

"Well they are the sweetest things I know of," said Mr. Linden. "Now if you will come on my lap, I am sure Miss Faith will get you something to eat—she can do it a great deal better than I can."

Faith had soon done that, and brought the cup to Johnny, of something that he liked, and fed him as she had done at noon. It seemed to refresh him, for he fell into a quieter sleep than he had had for some time, and was oftly laid on the bed.

"Now dear Faith," Mr. Linden said coming back to her, "it is time for you to go home and rest."

"Do you mean to send me?" she said wistfully.

"Or take you—" he said, with a soft touch of his fingers on her hair.
"I don't know but I could be spared long enough for that."

It was arranged so, Mrs. Derrick undertaking to supply all deficiencies so far as she could, until Mr. Linden should get back again. The fast drive home through the still cold air was refreshing to both parties; it was a still drive too. Then leaving Mr. Linden to get a little rest on the sofa, Faith prepared tea. But Mr. Linden would not stay long after that, for rest or anything.

"I am coming very early to-morrow, Endecott," Faith said then.

"You may, dear child—if you will promise to sleep to-night. But you must not rouse yourself *too* early. You know to-morrow is Saturday—so I shall not be called off by other duties."

He went, and Mrs. Derrick came; but Faith, though weary enough certainly, spent the evening in study.

CHAPTER XII.

There is no knowing what Mr. Linden would have considered "too early," and Faith had prudently omitted to enquire. She studied nothing but her Bible that morning and spent the rest of the time in getting ready what she was to take with her; for Mr. Linden would not come home to breakfast. And it was but fair day, the sun had not risen, when she was on her way. She wondered, as she went, what they would have done that winter without Jerry; and looked at the colouring clouds in the east with a strange quick appreciation of the rising of that other day told of in the Bible. Little Johnny brought the two near; the type and the antitype. It was a pretty ride; cold, bright, still, shadowless; till the sun got above the horizon, and then the long yellow faint beams threw themselves across the snow that was all a white level before. They reached Faith's heart, as the commissioned earnest of that other Sun that will fill the world with his glory and that will make heaven a place where "there shall be no night."

The room where little Johnny was,—lay like the chamber called Peace, in the Pilgrim's Progress—towards the sunrising; but to reach it Faith had first to pass through another on the darker side of the house. The door between the two stood open, perhaps for fresher air, and as Faith came lightly in she could see that room lit up as it were with the early sunbeams. It was an old-fashioned room;—the windows with chintz shades, the floor painted, with a single strip of rag carpet; the old low-post bedstead, with its check blue and white spread, the high-backed splinter chairs, told of life that had made but little progress in modern improvement. And Jonathan Fax himself, lean, long-headed, and lantern-jawed, looked grimmer than ever under his new veil of solemn feeling. He sat by the window.

The wood fire in the low fireplace flickered and fell with its changing light, on all; but within the warm glow a little group told of life that *had* made progress—progress which though but yet begun, was to go on its fair course through all the ages of eternity!

Little Johnny sat in his teacher's lap, one arm round his neck, and his weary little head resting as securely on Mr. Linden's breast as if it had been a woman's. The other hand moved softly over the cuff of that black sleeve, or twined its thin fingers in and out the strong hand that was clasped round him.

Sometimes raising his eyes, Johnny put some question, or asked for "talk;" his own face then much the brighter of the two,—Faith could see the face that bent over him not only touched with its wonted gravity, which the heavenly seal set there, but moved and shaken in its composure by the wistful eyes and words of the little boy. The answering words were too low-spoken for her to hear. She could see how tenderly the child's caresses were returned,—not the mother whose care Johnny had never known, could have given the little head gentler rest. Nay, not so good,—unless she could have given the little heart such comfort. For Johnny was in the arms of one who knew well that road to the unseen land—who had studied it; and now as the child went on before him, could still give him words of cheer, and shew him the stepping-stones through the dark river. It seemed to Faith as if the river were already in sight,—as if somewhat of

"that strange, unearthly grace
Which crowns but once the children of our race—"

already rested upon Johnny's fair brow. Yet he looked brighter than yesterday, bright with a very sweet clear quietness now.

Faith stood still one minute—and another; then pulling off her hood, she came in with a footfall so noiseless that it never brought Mr. Fax's head from the window, and knelt down by the side of that group. She had a smile for Johnny too, but it was a smile that had quite left the things of the world behind it and met the child on his own ground; and her kiss was sweet accordingly. A look and a clasp of the hand to Mr. Linden; then she rose up and went round to the window to take the hand of Mr. Fax, who had found his feet.

"I'm very much beholden to ye!" said he in somewhat astonished wise.
"You're takin' a sight o' trouble among ye."

"It's no trouble, sir."

Mr. Fax looked bewildered. He advanced to Mr. Linden. "Now this girl's here," said he, "don't you think you hadn't better come into another room and try to drop off? I guess he can get along without you for a spell—can't he?"

"I am not quite ready to leave him," Mr. Linden said,—"and I am not at all sleepy, Mr. Fax. Perhaps I will come by and by."

"We'll have breakfast, I conclude, some time this forenoon. I'll go and see if it's ever comin'. Maybe you'll take that first."

He went away; and Faith, rid of her wrappers, came up again behind Johnny, passing her fingers through his hair and bending down her face to his; she did not speak. Only her eye went to Mr. Linden for intelligence, as the eye will, even when it has seen for itself!

"Dr. Harrison is coming this morning," was all he said. She did not need to ask any more.

"May Johnny have anything now?"

"O yes—and he will like it," Mr. Linden said in a different tone, and half addressing the child. "He asked me some time ago when you were coming—but not for that."

Faith brought something freshly prepared for Johnny and served him tenderly. Meanwhile her own coffee had been on the fire; and after making two or three simple arrangements of things she came back to them.

"Will you sit with me now, Johnny, and let Mr. Linden have some breakfast?"

"In here?" the child said. But being reassured on that point, he came to Faith's arms very willingly, or rather let Mr. Linden place him there, when she had drawn her chair up nearer the table so that he could look on. And with her arms wrapped tenderly round him, but a face of as clear quiet as the morning sky when there are no clouds before the sunrise, she sat there, and she and Johnny matched Mr. Linden's breakfast. There was no need to talk, for Johnny had a simple pleasure in what was going on, and in everything his friend did. And if the little face before him hindered Mr. Linden's enjoyment of breakfast, that was suffered to appear as little as possible. Breakfast was even rather prolonged and played with, because it seemed to amuse him; and the word and the smile were always ready, either to call forth or to answer one from the child. Nor from him alone, for by degrees even Faith was drawn out of her silence.

Mr. Linden had not yet changed his place, when on the walk that led up to the house Faith saw the approach of Dr. Harrison. The doctor as he came in gave a comprehensive glance at the table, Mr.

Linden who had risen, and Faith with Johnny in her lap; shook hands with Mr. Linden, and taking the chair he had quitted sat down in front of Faith and Johnny. A question and answer first passed about her own well-being.

"You've not been here all night?" said he.

"No, sir. I came a while ago."

The doctor's unsatisfied eye fell on the child; fell, with no change of its unsatisfied expression. It took rapid and yet critical note of him, with a look that Faith knew through its unchangingness, scanned, judged, and passed sentence. Then Dr. Harrison rose and walked over to Mr. Linden.

"There is nothing to be done," he said in a low tone. "I would stay—but I know that it would be in vain. *She* ought not to be here."

For the first remark Mr. Linden was prepared,—the second fell upon a heart that was already keeping closer watch over her strength and happiness than even the doctor could. He merely answered by a quiet question or two as to what could be done for the child's comfort—as to the probable length of time there would be to do anything.

"He may have any simple thing he likes," said the doctor—"such as he has had. I need not give you directions for more than to-day. I am sorry I cannot stay longer with you—but it does not matter—you can do as well as I now."

He went up to Faith and spoke with a different manner. "Miss Faith, I hope you will not let your goodness forget that its powers need to be taken care of. You were here yesterday—there is no necessity for you to be here to-day."

"I don't come for necessity, Dr. Harrison."

"I know!" said he shaking his head,—"your will is strong! but it ought not to have full play. You are not wanted here."

Faith let him go without an answer to that. As soon as the doctor was gone, Mr. Linden came and sat down by Johnny again, kissing the child's brow and cheek and lips, with a face a little moved indeed, and yet with its clear look unclouded; and softly asked what he should do for him. But though Johnny smiled, and stroked his face, he seemed rather inclined to be quiet and even to sleep; yielding partly to the effect of weakness and fever, partly to the restless night; and his two teachers watched him together. Faith was very silent and quiet. Then suddenly she said,

"Go and take some rest yourself, won't you, Endecott—now."

"I do not feel the need of it—" he said. "I had some snatches of sleep last night."

She looked at him, but the silence was unbroken again for some little time longer. At length, pushing aside a lock of hair from the fair little brow beneath which the eyelids drooped with such unnatural heaviness, Faith said,—and the tone seemed to come from very stillness of heart, the words dropped so grave and clear,—

"The name of Christ is good here to-day, Endecott."

"How good! how precious!" was his quick rejoinder. "And how very precious too, is the love of his will!"—and he repeated softly, as if half thinking it out—

> "'I worship thee, sweet will of God!
> And all thy ways adore!
> And every day I live, I seem
> To love thee more and more.'"

An earnest, somewhat wistful glance of Faith's eye was the answer; it was not a dissenting answer, but it went back to Johnny. Her lip was a child's lip in its humbleness.

"It was very hard for me to give him up at first—" Mr. Linden went on softly; and the voice said it was yet; "but that answers all questions. 'The good Husbandman may pluck his roses, and gather in his lilies at mid-summer, and, for aught I dare say, in the beginning of the first summer month.'"—

Faith looked at the little human flower in her arms—and was silent.

"Reuben was telling me yesterday—" she said after a few minutes,—"what you have been to him."

But her words touched sweet and bitter things—Mr. Linden did not immediately answer,—his head drooped a little on his hand, and he did not raise it again until Johnny claimed his attention.

The quiet rest of the little sleeper was passing off,—changing into an unquiet waking; not with the fear of yesterday but with a restlessness of discomfort that was not easily soothed. Words and caresses seemed to have lost their quieting power for the time, though the child's face never failed to answer them; but he presently held out his arms to Mr. Linden, with the words, "Walk—like last night."

And for a while then Faith had nothing to do but to look and listen; to listen to the soft measured steps through the room, to watch the soothing, resting effect of the motion on the sick child, as wrapped in Mr. Linden's arms he was carried to and fro. She could tell how it wrought from the quieter, unbent muscles—from the words which by degrees Johnny began to speak. But after a while, one of these words was, "Sing."—Mr. Linden did not stay his walk, but though his tone was almost as low as his foot-steps, Faith heard every word.

"Jesus loves me—this I know,
For the Bible tells me so:
Little ones to him belong,—
They are weak, but he is strong.

"Jesus loves me,—he who died
Heaven's gate to open wide;
He will wash away my sin,
Let his little child come in.

"Jesus loves me—loves me still,
Though I'm very weak and ill;
From his shining throne on high
Comes to watch me where I lie.

"Jesus loves me,—he will stay
Close beside me all the way.
Then his little child will take
Up to heaven for his dear sake."

There were a few silent turns taken after that, and then Mr. Linden came back to the rocking-chair, and told Faith in a sort of bright cheerful way—meant for her as well as the child—that Johnny wanted her to brush his hair and give him something to eat. Which Johnny enforced with one of his quiet smiles. Faith sprang to do it, and both offices were performed with hands of tenderness and eyes of love, with how much inner trembling of heart neither eyes nor hands told. Then, after all that was done, Faith stood by the table and began to swallow coffee and bread on her own account, somewhat eagerly. Mr. Linden watched her, with grave eyes.

"Now you must go and lie down," he said.

"Not at all!" Faith said with a smile at him. "I hadn't time—or didn't take time—to eat my breakfast before I came away from home—that is all. It is you who ought to do that, Endy,"—she added gently.

She put away the things, cleared the table, made up the fire, and smoothed the bed, ready for Johnny when he should want it; and then she came and sat down.

"Won't you go?" she said softly.

"I would rather stay here."

Faith folded her hands and sat waiting to be useful.

Perhaps Mr. Linden thought it would be a comfort to her if he at least partly granted her request, perhaps he thought it would be wise; for he said, laying his cheek against the child's,—

"Johnny, if you will sit with Miss Faith now, I will lay my head down on one of your pillows for a little while, and you can call me the minute you want me."

The child was very quiet and resting then, and leaning his head happily against Faith, watched Mr. Linden as he sat down by the bedside and gave himself a sort of rest in the way he had proposed; and then Faith's gentle voice was put in requisition. It was going over some things Johnny liked to hear, very softly so that no ears but his might be the wiser,—when the door opened and Jonathan Fax came in again. He glanced at Mr. Linden, and advanced softly up to Faith. There stood and looked down at his

child and her with a curious look—that half recognized what it would not see.

"You're as good to him as if he belonged to ye!—" said Jonathan, in a voice not clear.

"So he does—" was Faith's answer, laying her cheek to the little boy's head. "By how many ties," she thought; but she added no more. The words had shaken her.

"How's he gettin' on?" was the uneasy question next, as the father stooped with his hands on his knees to look nearer at the child.

Did he not know? Faith for a minute held her breath. Then she lifted her face and looked up—looked full into his eyes.

"Don't you know, Mr. Fax, that Johnny cannot go any way but *well?*"

The words were soft and low, but the man stood up, straightening himself instantly as if he had received a blow.

"Do you mean to say," he asked huskily, "that he is goin' to *die?*"

It startled Faith fearfully. She did not know how much Johnny would understand or be moved by the words. And she saw that they had been heard and noted. With infinite softness and quietness she laid her cheek to the little boy's, answering in words as sweet as he had ever heard from her voice—as unfearful—

"Johnny knows where he is going, if Jesus wants him."

"Jesus is in heaven," the child said instantly, as if she had asked him a question, and with the same deliberate manner that he would have answered her in Sunday school, and raising his clear eyes to hers as he had been wont to do there. But the voice was fainter.

Faith's head drooped lower, and her voice was fainter too—but clear and cheery.

"Yes, darling—and we'll be with him there by and by."

"Yes," the child repeated, nestling his head against her in a weary sort of way, but with a little smile still. The father looked at Faith and at the child like one mazed and bewildered; stood still as if he had got a shock; then wheeling round spoke to nobody and went out. Faith pressed her lips and cheek lightly to Johnny's brow, in a rush of sorrow and joy; then began again some sweet Bible story for his tired little spirit.

Mr. Linden did not long keep even his resting position, though perhaps longer than he would but for the murmuring talk which he did not want to interrupt. But when that ceased, he came back to his former seat, leaning his arm on Faith's chair in a silence that was very uninterrupted. There were plenty of comers and goers in the outer room,—Miss Bezac, and Mrs. Stoutenburgh, and Mrs. Derrick, and Mrs. Somers, were all there with offers of assistance; but Mr. Linden knew well that little Johnny had all he could have, and his orders to Reuben had been very strict that no one should come in. So except the various tones of different voices—which made their way once in a while—the two watchers had nothing to break the still quiet in which they sat. Their own words only made the quiet deeper, as they watched the little feet which they had first guided in the heavenward path, now passing on before them.

"We were permitted to shew him the way at first, Faith," Mr. Linden said, "but he is shewing it to us now! But 'suffer them to come'! in death as in life."

Much of the time the child slumbered—or lay in a half stupor, though often this was uneasy unless Mr. Linden walked with him up and down the room. Then he would revive a little, and look and speak quite brightly, asking for singing or reading or talk,—letting Faith smooth his hair, or bathe his face and hands, or give him a spoonful or two from one of her little cups; his face keeping its fair quiet look, even though the mortal began to give way before the immortal.

In one of these times of greater strength and refreshment, when he was in Mr. Linden's arms, he looked up at him and said,

"Read about heaven—what you used to."

Mr. Linden took his little Bible—remembering but too readily what that "used" to be, and read softly and clearly the verses in Revelation—

"'And he shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem.—And the city had no need of the sun, neither

of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. And the nations of them that are saved shall walk in the light of it, and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour unto it. And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day, for there shall be no night there. And there shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth, or whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie, but they that are written in the Lamb's book of life.'"

The child listened, with his eyes upon his teacher's face and his arm round him, as he had been "used," too, and when the reading was finished lay quiet for a little time; while his friends too were silent—thinking of "the city that hath foundations."

"That's the same gate," Johnny said in his slow, thoughtful way, as if his mind had gone back to the morning hymn.

"Yes," Mr. Linden said, with lips that would not quite be controlled, and yet answering the child's smile, "that is the gate where his little child shall go in! And that is the beautiful city where the Lord Jesus lives, and where my Johnny is going to be with him forever—and where dear Miss Faith and I hope to come by and by."

The child's hands were folded together, and with a fair, pure smile he looked from one face to the other; closing his eyes then in quiet sleep, but with the smile yet left.

It was no time for words. The gates of the city seemed too near, where the little traveller's feet were so soon to enter. The veil between seemed so slight, that even sense might almost pass beyond it,—when the Heaven-light was already shining on that fair little face! Faith wiped away tears—and looked—and brushed them away again; but for a long time was very silent. At last she said, very low, that it might be quietly,—

"Endecott—it seems to me as if I could almost hear them!"

He half looked the question which yet needed no answer, looking down then again at the little ransomed one in his arms, as he said in the same low voice, wherein mingled a note of the church triumphant through all its deep human feeling,—

"'And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book and to open the seals thereof, for thou wast slain: and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people and nation'!"

"And," said Faith presently, lower still,—"can't you, as Bunyan says, hear the bells of the city ringing for joy!—"

Those "choral harmonies of heaven, heard or unheard," were stilling to mortal speech and even mortal feeling. Very quietly the minutes and the hours of that day succeeded each other. Quietly even on the sick child's part; more so than yesterday; nature succumbed gently, and the restless uneasiness which had marked the night and the preceding day gave place gradually before increasing faintness of the bodily powers. There was little "talk" called for after that time—hardly any, though never a word met his waking ear that did not meet the same grateful, pleased manner and smile. But the occasions became fewer; Johnny slumbered gently, but more plainly a sleep that was nearing the end, in the arms of his best friend, who would let him even when unconscious have no worse resting-place—would let every faint waking minute find the same earthly love about him that had been his dearest earthly refuge and stay. But earth was having less and less of her little immortal tenant; and as the hours of the afternoon began to tell of failing light and a fading day, it was plain that the little spirit was almost ready to wing its way to the "city that hath no need of the sun."

Mr. Fax came in sometimes to look at the child, but never staid long—never offered to take him out of the hands he perhaps unconsciously felt were more of kin to him, spiritually, than his own. Out of the room, he sat down in the midst of his visitors and said nothing. He seemed bewildered—or astounded. "I never knowed," he said once, "till that girl told me. I heard what the doctor said at night—but I didn't think as he was any wiser than other doctors—and their word's about as good one side as 'tother."

At the edge of the evening Reuben came in to say that Mr. Skip was there with the sleigh.

"Let him put Jerry in the stable and go home," Faith said softly to Mr.
Linden. "One of Mr. Fax's men can harness him any time."

"Dear Faith!" he said, "you had better go with him."

"I can't go, Endecott. Don't tell me to go,"—she said with a determinate quietness.

"How can I let you stay?—you ought not to watch here all night—unless there were something for you

to do."

"There may be something for me to do," she said, but not as if that were what she wanted to stay for.

"I think not," he said softly, and looking down again,—"Faith—it is near the dawning!—and yet it may not be till the dawning. And dear child, you ought not to watch here."

"It will not hurt me," she said under her breath.

"I know—" he said with a gentle admission of all her reasons and full sympathy with all her wishes, —"but I think you ought not."

"Do you mean," she said after a minute's pause,—"that you wish me to go?"

It was hard for him to say yes—but he did.

She sat still a moment, with her face in the shade; then rose up and arranged everything about the room which her hands could better; made a cup of tea and brought it to Mr. Linden; and prepared herself for her ride. When she came at last, ready, with only her hood to put on, her face was almost as fair as Johnny's. There was no shadow on it of any kind, but clear day, as if a reflection from the "city" she had been looking towards. She put her hand in Mr. Linden's and knelt down as she had done in the morning to kiss Johnny. Her lips trembled—but the kisses were quietly given; and rising to her feet without speaking or looking, Faith went away.

If quietness was broken on the ride home, it was restored by the time she got there; and with the same clear look Faith went in. That Mrs. Derrick was much relieved to see her, was evident, but she seemed not very ready to ask questions. She looked at Faith, and then with a little sigh or two began softly to unfasten her cloak and furs, and to put her in a comfortable place by the fire, and to hasten tea, but all in a sort of sorrowful subdued silence; letting her take her own time to speak, or not speak at all, if she liked it better. Faith's words were cheerfully given, though about other things. And after tea she did in some measure justify Mr. Linden's decision in sending her home; for she laid herself on the couch in the sitting-room and went into a sleep as profound and calm as the slumbers she had left watching. Her mother sat by her in absolute stillness—thinking of Faith as she had been in her childhood and from thence until now; thinking of the last time she herself had been in that sick room, of the talk she had heard there—of the silence that was there now: wiping away some tears now and then —looking always at Faith with a sort of double feeling; that both claimed her as a child, and was ready to sit at her feet and learn. But as it came to the hour of bedtime, and Faith still slept, her mother stooped down and kissed her two or three times to wake her up.

"Pretty child," she said, "you'd better go to bed."

Faith started with a recollective look and asked what time it was; then sank down again.

"I'll wait an hour yet."

"Had you better?" her mother said gently. "I'll sit up, dear, and call you if you're wanted. Did you think they'd send?"

"Send?—O no, mother!"

Mrs. Derrick was silent a minute. "Mr. Linden wouldn't come home to-night, dear."

"Wouldn't he?" said Faith startling; and for a minute the sorrowful look came back to her face. But then it returned to its high quiet; she kissed her mother and they went up stairs together.

No, he did not come home,—and well assured that he would not, Faith ceased to watch for him, and fatigue and exhaustion again had their way. The night was very still—the endless train of stars sweeping on in their appointed course, until the morning star rose and the day broke. Even then Faith slept on. But when the more earthly light of the sun came, with its bestirring beams, it roused her; and she started up, in that mood where amid quick coming recollections she was almost breathless for more tidings—waiting, as if by the least noise or stir she might lose something.

It was then that she heard Mr. Linden come in—even as she sat so listening,—heard him come in and come up stairs, with a slow quiet step that would have told her all, if the fact of his coming had not been enough. She heard his door close, and then all was still again, except what faint sounds she might hear from the working part of the house below. Faith sat motionless till she could hear nothing more up stairs—and then kept her position breathlessly for a second or two longer, looking at the still sunbeams which came pouring into her room according to their wont, with their unvarying heavenly message;— and then gave way—rare for her—to a burst of gentle sorrow, that yet was not all sorrow, and which for

that very mingling was the more heart-straitening while it lasted. The light of the fair clear Sunday morning bore such strange testimony of the "everlasting day" upon which her little charge of yesterday had even entered! But the sense of that was quieting, if it was stirring.

Not until the breakfast hour was fully come did Mr. Linden make his appearance; but then he came, looking pale indeed, and somewhat worn, yet with a face of rest. He gave his hand to Mrs. Derrick, and coming up to Faith took her in his arms and kissed her, and gently put her in her chair at the table; waiving all questions till another time. There were none asked; Mrs. Derrick would not have ventured any; and the tinge in Faith's cheeks gave token of only one of various feelings by which she was silenced. Yet that was not a sorrowful breakfast—for rest was on every brow, on two of them it was the very rest of the day when Christ broke the bars of death and rose.

Breakfast had been a little late, and there was not much time to spare when it was over.

"You had better not try to go out this morning, dear Faith," Mr. Linden said as they left the table and came round the fire in the sitting-room.

"O yes! I can go.—I *must* go"—she added softly.

"I have not much to tell you,"—he said in the same tone,—"nothing, but what is most sweet and fair. Would you like to go up there with me by and by?"

"Yes.—After church?"

"After church in the afternoon would give us most time."

The Sunday classes were first met—*how* was not likely to be forgotten by scholars or teachers. It was an absorbing hour to Faith and her two little children that were left to her; an hour that tried her very much. She controlled herself, but took her revenge all church time. As soon as she was where nobody need know what she did, Faith felt unnerved, and a luxury of tears that she could not restrain lasted till the service was over. It lasted no longer. And the only two persons that knew of the tears, were glad to have them come.

After the afternoon service, when people were not only out of church but at home, Mr. Linden and Faith set out on their solitary drive—it was too far for her to walk, both for strength and time,—the afternoon was well on its way.

The outer room into which Faith had first gone the day before, had a low murmur of voices and a little sprinkling of people within; but Mr. Linden let none of them stop her, and merely bowing as he passed through, he led her on. In the next room were two of the boys, but they went away at once; and Mr. Linden put his arm round Faith, letting her lean all her weight on him if she chose, and led her up to the bedside. They stood there and looked—as one might look at a ray of eternal sunlight falling athwart the dark shadows of time.

The child lay in his deep sleep as if Mr. Linden had just laid him down; his head a little turned towards them, a little drooping, his hands in their own natural position on breast and neck. A faint pink-tinted wrapper lay in soft folds about him, with its white frills at neck and wrists,—on his breast a bunch of the first snowdrops spoke of the "everlasting spring, and never withering flowers!"

With hearts and faces that grew every moment more quiet, more steady, Johnny's two teachers stood and looked at him,—then knelt together, and prayed that in the way which they had shewed him, they might themselves be found faithful.

"You shouldn't say *we*"—said Faith when they had risen and were standing there again. "It was *you*—to him and me both." And bending forward to kiss the little face again, she added, "He taught me as much as he ever learned from me!"

But the words were spoken with difficulty, and Faith did not try any more.

They stood there till the twilight began to fall, and then turned their faces homewards with a strange mingling of joy and sorrow in their hearts. How many times Mr. Linden went there afterwards Faith did not know—she could only guess.

There was no school for the next two days. Tuesday was white with snow,—not falling thick upon the ground, but in fine light flakes, and few people cared to be out. Mr. Linden had been, early in the morning,—since dinner he had been in his room; and now as it drew towards three o'clock, he came down and left the house, taking the road towards that of Jonathan Fax. Other dark figures now appeared from time to time, bending their steps in the same direction,—some sturdy farmer in his fearnought coat, or two of the school-boys with their arms round each other. Then this ceased, and the

soft falling snow alone was in the field.

The afternoon wore on, and the sun was towards the setting, when a faint reddish tinge began to flush along the western horizon, and the snowflakes grew thinner. Then, just as the first sunbeams shot through their cloudy prison, making the snow a mere white veil to their splendour, the little carriage of Mr. Somers came slowly down the road, and in it Mr. Somers himself. A half dozen of the neighbouring farmers followed. Then the little coffin of Johnny Fax, borne by Reuben Taylor and Sam Stoutenburgh and Phil Davids and Joe Deacon, each cap and left arm bound with crape; followed by Johnny's two little classmates—Charles Twelfth and Robbie Waters. Then the chief mourners—Jonathan Fax and Mr. Linden, arm in arm, and Mr. Linden wearing the crape badge. After them the whole school, two and two. The flickering snowflakes fell softly on the little pall, but through them the sunbeams shot joyously, and said that the child had gone—

"Through a dark stormy night,
To a calm land of light!"—

"Meet again? Yes, we shall meet again,
Though now we part in pain!
His people all
Together Christ shall call,
Hallelujah!"

"Child," said Mrs. Derrick in a choked voice, and wiping her eyes, when the last one had long passed out of view, "it's good to see him and Jonathan Fax walking together! anyway. I guess Jonathan 'll never say a word against *him* again. Faith, he's beautiful!"

CHAPTER XIII.

It seemed to Faith as if the little shadow which February had brought and left did not pass away—or rather, as if it had stretched on till it met another; though whence that came, from what possible cloud, she could not see. *She* was not the cloud—that she knew and felt: if such care and tenderness and attention as she had had all winter *could* be increased, then were they now,—every spare moment was given to her, all sorts of things were undertaken to give her pleasure, and that she was Mr. Linden's sunbeam was never more clear. Yet to her fancy that shadow went out and came in with him—lived even in her presence,—nay, as if she had been a real sunbeam, grew deeper there. And yet not that,—what was it? The slight change of voice or face in the very midst of some bright talk, the eyes that followed her about the room or studied her face while she studied her lesson—she felt if she did not see them,—even the increased unwillingness to have her out of his sight,—what did they all mean? So constant, yet so intangible,—so going hand in hand with all the clear, bright activity that had ever been part of Mr. Linden's doings; while the pleasure of nothing seemed to be checked, and yet a little pain mingled with all,—Faith felt puzzled and grieved by turns. She bore it for a while, in wondering and sorrowful silence, till she began to be afraid of the shadow's spreading to her own face. Nay, she felt it there sometimes. Faith couldn't stand it any longer.

He had come in rather late one evening. It was a bleak evening in March, but the fire—never more wanted—burned splendidly and lit up the sitting-room in style. Before it, in the easy-chair, Mr. Linden sat meditating. He might be tired—but Faith fancied she saw the shadow. She came up behind his chair, put both hands on one of his shoulders and leaned down.

"Endecott"—she said in some of her most winning tones,—"may I ask you something?"

He came out of his muse instantly, and laying his hand on hers, asked her "what she thought about it herself?"

"I think I may, if you'll promise not to answer me—unless you have a mind!"

"*Do* you suppose I would?" Mr. Linden said laughing. "What trust you have in your own power!"

"No, not a bit," said Faith. "Then shall I ask you?"

"You are beginning to work upon my timid disposition!—of which I believe I once told you. What are you going to ask me?—to challenge Dr. Harrison?—or to run for President?"

"Would you like to do either of those two things?"

"I was only putting myself at your disposal—as I have done before."

"Would you do either of 'em if I asked you?" said Faith softly.

"I suppose I am safe in saying yes!" said Mr. Linden smiling. "Little bird—why do you keep on the wing?"

"I wanted to make sure of lighting in a right place," said Faith. "Endy"—and her voice came back to the rich softness of the tones of her first question, a little dashed with timidity,—"has anybody been putting 'nonsense' into your head?"

He lifted her hand from its resting place, bringing it round to his cheek and lips at first in silence,

"Do you know," he said, "that is just the point over which I thought you were hovering?"—But the certainty had changed his tone. And rising up quick and suddenly, he drew her off to the sofa and seated her there, keeping his arm still about her as if for a shield.

"Faith," he said, "do you remember that I promised some time to tell you a long story?"

She looked up into his face gravely and affectionately, reading his look. "But you won't have time for it now, Endecott—tea will be ready directly. We must wait till by and by."

"My little Sunbeam," he said, looking at her and gently pushing back her hair, "do you know I love you very much!—What made you think there was anything in my head but the most profound and abstract sense?"

Faith shook her head with a little bit of a smile.

"I saw that you were growing either more sensible of late—or *less*,—and I wanted to know which it was."

"Please to explain yourself! How could I grow more sensible?—and in what way did I grow less?"

"I am talking nonsense," said Faith simply. "But if it *was* sense in your head, Endy, there was a little too much of it; and I had seen nonsense look so—so I wanted to know."

"Faith," Mr. Linden said, "you remind me often of that Englishman
Madame D'Arblay tells about,—who to the end of his life declared that
his wife was the most beautiful sight in the world to him! Do you know
I think he will have a successor?"

Her colour rose bright, and for a minute she looked down at her diamonds. Then looked up demurely, and asked who Madame D'Arblay was?

"She was an English woman, an authoress, a maid of honour to the Queen.
Do you wish to know anything about the other two persons I alluded to?"

One sparkling flash of Faith's soft eye, was all she gave him. "No, I don't think I do," she said.

"You know enough already?—or too much? Faith—are Christmas roses to be in season all the year round?"

"I don't know,—but tea is. Suppose I go and see about it—Monsieur?"

"Eh bien—Mademoiselle," he said gravely but holding her fast,—"suppose you do!"

"Then we should have it."

"Undoubtedly, Mademoiselle! Vous avez raison."

"And what have you?" said Faith laughing.

"I have *you!*—Love and Reason did meet once, you know."

"Did they?" said Faith looking up. "How should I know?"

"You never found it out in your own personal experience?"

"You say it's a fact," said Faith. "I thought you referred to it as a former fact."

"Like tea—" said Mr. Linden.

"Like tea, Endecott!—what are you talking of?"

"Former facts."—

"I wonder what I shall get you to-night, Endecott"—she said merrily twisting round to look at him,—"you must want something! Is a thing properly said to be former, as long as it is still present?"

"What is present?"

"Tea isn't past"—said Faith with another little flash of her eye.

"If you are going to set up for Reason," said Mr. Linden, "there is no more to be done; but as for me, I may as well submit to my fate. Shakspeare says, 'To love, and to be wise, exceeds man's might.'"

"I don't think I set up for reason," said Faith,—"only for tea; and you obliged me to take reason instead. I guess—Shakspeare was right."

"Unquestionably!" said Mr. Linden laughing. "Faith, did you ever hear of 'Love in a Cottage'?"

"I believe I have."

"I hope you don't think that includes tea?"

"I never thought it included much good," said Faith. "I always thought it was something foolish."

"There spoke Reason!" said Mr. Linden,—"and I shall not dare to speak again for ten minutes. Faith, you will have time to meditate." And his eyes went to the fire and staid there. Faith meditated—or waited upon his meditations; for her eyes now and then sought his face somewhat wistfully to see if she could read what he was thinking of—which yet she could not read. But her exploring looks in that direction were too frequent to leave room for the supposition that Reason made much progress.

"Faith," Mr. Linden said, suddenly intercepting one of these looks, "now let us compare results—before we meditate any further. What have you to shew?"

"Nothing"—said Faith frankly.

"I on my part have made a great discovery, which will perhaps answer for us both. It is very simple, as most great discoveries are, being merely this: that I prefer other things than reproofs from the lips of Reason. Will you have an illustration?"

"Can't I understand without?" said Faith laughing, but with also a little rising colour. And very smilingly she had her answer—the only answer she could expect.

"I believe you are principled against saying yes!" said Mr. Linden.
"The most encouraging thing you ever said to me was 'Oh no!'"

What swift recollection, what quick sympathy with that time, spoke in the crimson of Faith's cheeks! It was something to see "the eloquent blood." Eyes were not to be seen. Mr. Linden smiled, touching his hand softly to her cheeks.

"O Mignonette!" he said—"or I should rather say, O Roses! or O
Carnation! Is there anything beyond that in your Flora?"

In the emergency Faith took possession of the hand that invaded her carnations and turning the full display upon him asked if he would not like to have something more substantial. Apparently "the display" was approved, though there were no words to that effect.

"I suppose I must let you go," he said, "because if we are to study all the evening after tea, it will not do to talk away the whole evening before. You shall choose your own time for hearing my story, dear child—only let me know when the time comes."

There was no shadow upon the tea hour, on Faith's part, nor on the hours of study that followed. The wind swept round the house, March fashion, but the fire and the open books laughed at him. There seemed even a little more than usual of happy gayety in Faith's way of going through her work; she and the fire played at which should get ahead of the other; and between whiles she was obliged to use a little caution to obviate Mr. Linden's surprise at finding how far she was getting ahead of herself. For Faith's early morning studies were not now by any means confined to the lessons he set for her and expected her to do; her object and endeavour was to prevent his requirements, and so prepare the ground *before* his teachings that without finding out how it came to be so ready, he should simply occupy more of it and cultivate higher. It was rather a nice matter! not to let him see that she had done

too much, and yet to make him know that he might take what harvests he pleased off the ground; with such keen eyes too, that knew so well all the relative forces of soil and cultivation and could estimate so surely the fruits of both. Faith managed by not managing at all and by keeping very quiet, as far as possible shewing him nothing he did not directly or indirectly call for; but sometimes she felt she was grazing the edge of discovery, which the least lifting of the veil of Mr. Linden's unsuspiciousness would secure. She felt it to-night, and the fire and she had one or two odd little consultations. Just what Mr. Linden was consulting with himself about at those times, she did not know; but she half fancied it was something. Once the fire called her off at the end of a lesson, and when she came back to the table he had the next book open; but it was not till this set of questions and answers and explanations was half through, that Faith discovered he had opened the book at a different place from the one where it had been closed the day before,—then it suddenly flashed upon her; but whether it had been by accident, or of intent, she did not know.

One last consultation Faith held with the fire while Mrs. Derrick was gathering her work together to go to bed. Then she brought a low seat to Mr. Linden's feet. "Now, Endy,—I am ready." A little smile—a soft, lingering touch upon her forehead, came with his words.

"My little Mignonette, what do you suppose I came to Pattaquasset for?"

She looked rather wondering at him, and then said, "I supposed—to teach the school."

"Yes, but to what end?—I mean in my intent. I know now what I came for, in one sense," he said, securing one of her hands.

"Why—Endecott, do you want me to tell you?"

"If you know or guess."

"I don't know nor guess anything. I supposed merely that you did that as other people do other things—and for the same reason."

"It was for a very commonplace reason," Mr. Linden said, watching her face with two or three things at work in his own: "it was to get money to finish my studies for your favourite profession."

"My favourite profession!—Which do you mean?"

"Have you forgotten Miss Essie's question? I have not—nor the dear child who was so unwilling to answer it."

Faith's mind went back to Miss Essie, the question and answer,—and took the round of the subject,—and even as she did so her face changed, a sort of grave light coming into it,

"Do you mean *that*, Endy?" she said half under her breath.

"I mean that, and no other."

The light brightened and deepened—her colour flushed like a morning sky,—till at last the first sunbeam struck athwart her face, in the shape of a smile. It was not a lip smile—it was on eye and brow and lip and cheek together. Mr. Linden bent down by her, lifting her face to meet his eyes, which through all their intentness smiled too.

"Faith, I want to hear every word of that."

"Of what?"

"Of all that is in your mind and face just now."

Her two little answering sentences evidently only gave the key of very deep tones.

"I think it is good, Endy. I am glad."

"I thought you would be. But that does not satisfy me, dear Faith—I want you to say to me all the different things that your thoughts were saying to you. You are not afraid of me at this time of day?" he said bringing her face closer.

"I have nothing to say I need be afraid to say," Faith answered slowly,—"but it is hard to disentangle so many thoughts. I was thinking it is such great and high work—such happy work—and such honour—and then that you will do it right, Endecott—" she hesitated.—"How could I help but be glad?"

"Do you like your new prospective position, little Sunbeam?"

A deep colour came over her face, and the eyes fell Yet Faith folded her hands and spoke.

"I was glad to think—" She got so far, but the sentence was never finished.

"Glad to think what, dear child?"

Faith glanced up. She did not want to answer. Then she said with the greatest simplicity, "I am glad if I may do something."

"Glad that I should realize my ideal?" Mr. Linden said with a smile, and softly bringing her face round again. "Faith, do you know what a dear little 'minister's wife' you will make?—Mignonette is so suitable for a parsonage!—so well calculated to impress the people with a notion of the extreme grave propriety which reigns there! For is not Mignonette always sweet, demure, and never—by any chance!—high coloured?"

She would not let her face be held up. It went down upon her lap—into her hands, which she pressed close to hide it.

"Oh Endecott!—" she said desperately.—"You'll have to call me something else."

"O Faith!" was his smiling reply,—"I will, just so soon as I can.
Don't you want to come over to the sofa and hear the rest of my story?"

"Your story! Oh yes!"—

And first having a sympathizing interview with the fire, Faith went over to the sofa and sat down; but hid her face no more. Much as he had done before tea, Mr. Linden came and sat down by her,—with the same sort of gentle steadiness of manner, as if some strong thread of feeling had wrapped itself round an equally deep thread of purpose,—his gay talk now as then finding always some contrast in his face. But of this Faith had seen little or nothing—her eyes had not been very free to look. She did notice how silently he stood by her as she put the fire in order, she did notice the look that rested on her as she took her seat, but then he began his story and she could thing of nothing else.

"It was given to me, dear Faith," he said, "to spend my boyhood in an atmosphere more like the glow of that firelight than anything I can compare it to, for its warmth and radiance; where very luxurious worldly circumstances were crowned with the full luxury of earthly love. But it was a love so heaven-directed, so heaven-blessed, that it was but the means of preparing me to go out into the cold alone. That was where I learned to love your diamonds," he added, taking the jewelled hand in his,—"when I used to see them not more busy among things of literature and taste, than in all possible ministrations to the roughest and poorest and humblest of those whom literature describes and taste shrinks from!—But I used to think," he said speaking very low, "that the ring was never so bright, nor so quick moving, as when it was at work for me."

Faith's eye fell with his to the diamonds. She was very still; the flash all gone.

"That time of my life," Mr. Linden presently went on, "was passed partly in Europe and partly here. We came home just after I had graduated from a German University, but before I went away again—almost everything I had in the world went from me." He was silent for a little, drawing Faith's head down upon his shoulder and resting his lightly upon it, till she felt what she was to him. Then he looked up and spoke quietly as before.

"Pet and I were left alone. A sister of my father's was very anxious to take her, but Pet would not hear of it, and so for a year we lived together, and when I went to the Seminary she went too,—living where I lived, and seeing what she could of me between times. It was not very good for her, but it was the best we could do then. I suppose there was some mismanagement on the part of my father's executors—or some complication in his affairs, I need not trouble you with details; but we were left without much more than enough to give her the income I wished her to have for her own private use. Of course I would not touch that for our joint expenses. But until a year ago we did still live together—by various means. Then this sister of my father's set her heart upon taking Pet with her to Europe—and I set mine almost as much; I could better bear to live alone, than to have her; and her life then amounted to that. And so between us both she consented—very unwillingly; and she went to Italy, and I studied as long as I had ways and means, and then came here to get more. So you see, dear child," Mr. Linden said with a smile, "it is not my fortune I have asked you to share, but my fortunes."

She gave him a smile, as bright and free as the glancing of a star; then her look went away again. And it was a good little while before perhaps she dared speak—perhaps before she wanted to speak. So very steady and still her look and herself were, it said that they covered thoughts too tender or too deep to be put into words. And the thoughtfulness rather deepened as minutes rolled on—and a good

many of them rolled on, and still Faith did not speak. Mr. Linden's watch ticked its remarks unhindered. Words came at last.

"Endecott—you said something about 'means' for study. How much means does it want?—and how much study?" The interest at work in the question was deeper than Faith meant to shew, or knew she shewed.

He told her the various expenses, ordinary and contingent, in few words, and was silent a moment. But then drawing her close to him, with that same sort of sheltering gesture she had noticed before, he went on to answer her other question; the voice and manner giving her a perfect key to all the grave looks she had mused over.

"Do you remember, dear Faith, that I once called you 'a brave little child'?"

"Yes."

"You must be that now," he said gently,—"you and I must both be brave, and cheerful, and full of trust. Because, precious child, I have two years' work before me—and the work cannot be done here."

She looked in his face once, and was silent;—what her silence covered could only be guessed. But it lasted a little while.

"It must be done at that place where you were with your sister?"

"Yes, little Mignonette, it must be done there."

"And when must you begin the work, Endecott?" If the words cost her some effort, it only just appeared.

"I came for a year, dear Faith—and I ought not to stay much beyond that."

Faith mentally counted the months, in haste, with a pang; but the silence did not last long this time. Her head left its resting place and bending forward she looked up into Mr. Linden's face, with a sunny clear look that met his full. It was not a look that could by any means be mistaken to indicate a want of other feeling, however. One might as soon judge from the sunshine gilding on the slope of a mountain that the mountain is made of tinsel.

"Endecott—is that what has been the matter with you?"

She needed no answer but his look, though that was a clear as her own.

"I could easier bear it if *I* could bear the whole," he said. "But you can understand that Dr. Harrison's proposal tried, though it did not tempt me."

She scarce gave a thought to that.

"There is one thing more I wanted to ask. Will there be—" she paused, and went on,—"no time at all that you can be here?"

"Dear Faith!" he said kissing her, "do you think I could bear that? How often I shall be able to come I cannot quite tell, but come I shall—from time to time, if I live. And in the meanwhile we must make letters do a great deal."

Her face brightened. She sat quietly looking at him.

"Will that shadow come any more,—now that you have told me?"

"I will give you leave to scold me, if you see it," Mr. Linden said, answering her smile,—"I ought not to be in shadow for a minute—with such a sunbeam in my possession. Although, although!—do you know, little bright one, that the connexion between sunbeams and shadows is very intimate? and very hard to get rid of?"

"Shall I talk to you about 'nonsense' again?"—she said half lightly, resting her hand on his arm and looking at him. Yet behind her light tone there was a great tenderness.

"You may—and I will plead guilty. But in which of the old classes of 'uncanny' folk will you put me?—with those who were known by their having no shadow, or with those who went always with two?"

"So I suppose one must have a *little* shadow, to keep from being uncanny!"

"You and I will not go upon that understanding, dear Faith."

Faith did not look like one who had felt no shadow; rather perhaps she looked like one who had borne a blow; a look that in the midst of the talk more than once brought to Mr. Linden's mind a shadowy remembrance of her as she was after they got home that terrible evening; but her face had a gentle brightness now that then was wanting.

"I don't know"—she said wistfully in answer to his last words.—"Perhaps it is good. I dare say it is, for me. It is a shame for me to remind you of anything—but don't you know, Endecott—'all things are ours'? *both* 'things present and things to come?'" And her eye looked up with a child's gravity, and a child's smile.

Bear it alone?—yes, he could have done that—as he had borne other things,—it tried him to see her bear it. It touched him to see that look come back—to see any tempering of the bright face she had worn so long. Faith hardly knew perhaps with what eyes he had watched her through all the conversation, eyes none the less anxious for the smile that met hers so readily; she hardly guessed what pain her bright efforts at keeping up, gave him. To shelter and gladden her life was the dearest delight of his; and just now duty thwarted him in both points. And he knew—almost better than she did—how much she depended on him. He looked down at her for a moment with a face of such grave submission as Faith had never seen him wear.

"My dear little child!" he said. But that sentence was let stand by itself. The next was spoken differently. "I do know it, dear Faith,—and yet you do well to remind me. I need to be kept up to the mark. And it is not more true that each day has sufficient evil, than that each has sufficient good—if it be only sought out. There cannot much darkness live in the light of those words."

"How far have you to go," she said with demure archness,—"to find the good of these days?"

"You are quick at conclusions"—said Mr. Linden,—"how far do you think it is between us at present?"

"Endecott"—she said gravely—"it will never be further!"

He laughed a little—with a half moved half amused expression, wrapping her up like some dainty piece of preciousness. "Because every day that I am away will bring us nearer together? I suppose that is good measurement."

"You know," she said, "you have told me two things to-night, Endecott; and if one makes me sorry, the other makes me glad."

"I was sure of that!—And it is such great, great pleasure to think of the times of coming back—and of leaving you work to do, and of writing to you about it,—and then of finding out how well it is done! You must keep my books for me, Mignonette—mine, I say!—they are as much yours as mine—and more."

"Your books?"—she said with a flush.

"Yes—there are but a few of these that I shall want with me,—the most of *my* study books I did not bring here."

"But won't you want these with you?"

"As far from that as possible. Do you think you could make up your mind to let me tell Reuben a secret?—and give him a reason for being even more devoted to you than he is now?"

She coloured very brightly again. "I am willing—if you wish it. Why,
Endecott?"

"The chief reason is, that I do not wish to lose any of your letters, nor have you lose any of mine. And small postoffices are not so safe as large ones, nor are their managers proverbially silent. I should like to make Reuben a sort of intermediate office."

"And send your letters to him?"

"Yes. Would you mind that?"

"And my letters?"

"And yours in like manner, little Mignonette. He could either enclose them to me, or put them in some neighbouring office,—I think Reuben would enjoy an eight miles walk a day, taken for me. Or you could hide your envelope with another, and let him direct that. You need not be afraid of Reuben,"—Mr. Linden said smiling,—"you might give him forty letters without his once daring to look at you."

"But I thought—you said—he was going to college next summer?"

"That was talked of, but I think he will stay another year at home, and then enter a higher class. It will save expense, and he will be longer with his father. Reuben and I hope to be brother ministers, one day, Faith."

"Do you! Does he!"—said Faith astonished. "That is good! I am glad of it. But what will *he* do for money, Endecott?"

"We shall see—part of the way is clear, so we may hope the rest will be. Perhaps I may let him do some of his studying with me. Do you think you would object to that?"

"Object to it! How could I? What do you mean, Endecott?"

"O little Mignonette!" he said smiling, "how sweet you are!—and what joy it would be to see you wear the only title I can give you! Don't you know, pretty child, that if I gave Reuben Hebrew you might be called upon to give him—tea!"

Faith's eyes went down and her colour mounted, and mounted. But her next remark was extremely collected. "How good it was Dr. Harrison's money came!"—

"I believe you stipulated that we were to have tea ourselves," said Mr. Linden, "but the question remains whether you would dispense it to any one else."

Faith was only restrained from covering her face again by the feeling that it would be foolish; and withal a little laughter could not be prevented. She did shield one side of her face with her hand, and leaning upon it looked into the fire for suggestions. Finally answered sedately, "I should think you and he might have it together!"

"Have it—yes, if we could get it; but I am ignorant of any but the chemical properties of milk and sugar."

"I thought you said you knew cream when you saw it!" said Faith from behind her shield.

"That is knowing its appearance—not its properties, Miss Reason."

"What does reason want to know more, for a cup of tea?"

"But you have declared once to-night that I am not Reason," said Mr. Linden laughing. "For instance—I once made the sudden acquaintance of a particular person, who made as sudden an impression on my mind,—after those three minutes I should have known her by sight (like cream) to the end of my life. But I went on trying experiments—(as one might taste successive drops of cream) finding out more and more sweetness each time; until (like cream again) I discovered that she was perfectly indispensable to my cup of tea!"

Faith bowed her glad little head, laughing, though feeling much deeper was at work.

"After this," she said, "I shall always be greatly at a loss what you are thinking of when you are looking at me."

"Will your reflections be carried on with such a face?" said Mr. Linden. "Do you remember that afternoon, Faith?—when I so nearly laid hold of you—and you wanted to laugh, and did not dare?"

"What afternoon?"—

"The one wherein I first had the pleasure of seeing you. How demurely you eyed me!—and wondered in your little sensible heart what sort of a person I could possibly be!"

"How did you know I wondered?" said Faith colouring.

"By your very gentle, modest, and fearful examinations, your evident musings over my words, and the bright look now and then that told of progress."

Faith laughed.

"You made me begin to think and wish immediately," she said.—"It was no wonder I wondered."

"Yes, and how I longed to give you your wish, so far as I could,—and how afraid I was to offer my services,—and how you would persist in thanking me for pleasing myself, do you remember, little Sunbeam?—and your fright when I asked about Prescott?"

She looked up with the prettiest, rosiest remembrance of it all; and then her face suddenly changed,

and turning from him she shielded it again with her hand, but not to hide the rosy colour this time. Mr. Linden drew her close to him, resting his face upon her other cheek at first without words.

"Dear child!" he said,—"my own little Mignonette!—you must not forget what you said to me,—and you must not forget that I hope to come home quite often. There was a time, when I thought I might have to go away and never have the right to come and see you again. And you must think to yourself—though you will not speak of it to me—that after this bit of time, all our life will be spent together. You need not expect me to wait for anything—not even the cottage you like so much."

She did not answer immediately, as was natural, his last suggestions not being very word-provoking with her. But when she did speak, it was in a clear, cheerful tone.

"I'll bear my part, Endy—I should be very ungrateful if I couldn't. And you can bear your part—I am glad to think of that!—for you are working for a Master that always gives full pay."

"We can always bear God's will," he said, a little gravely,—"it is only our own that points the trial and makes it unbearable."

CHAPTER XIV.

Faith had no chance to think that night. She went to sleep conscientiously. And a chance the next morning was out of the question. She dared not come down as early as usual, if her own strength would have let her. The few minutes before breakfast were busy ones; and the few hours after breakfast. Faith went about with the consciousness of something on her heart to be looked at; but it had to bide its time. Her household duties done, her preparations for Mr. Linden being already in advance, she had leisure to attend to this other thing. And alone Faith sat down and looked at it.

It was the first real steady trial her life had known. Her father's death had come when she was too young to feel deeply any want that her mother could not fill. To be away from anything she much loved was a sorrow Faith hardly knew by experience. But a two years' separation was a very, very heavy and sharp pain to think of; and Faith had an inward assurance that the reality would be heavier and sharper than her thoughts beforehand could make it. Perhaps it was too great a pain to be struggled with; for Faith did not struggle—or not long. She sat down and looked at it,—what she had not dared to do the night before;—measured it and weighed it; and then bowed her heart and head to it in utter submission. With it came such a crowd of glad and good things, things indeed that made the trial and were bound up with it,—that Faith locked the one and the other up in her heart together. And remembering too the sunshine of joy in which she had lately lived, she humbly confessed that some check might be needed to remind her and make her know that earth has not the best sunshine, and that any gain would be loss that turned her eyes away from that best, or lessened her sense of its brightness.

So there came no shadow over her at all, either that day or afterwards. The clear light of her face was not clouded, and her voice rung to the same tune. There was no shadow, nor shade of a shadow. There *was* a little subdued air; a little additional gravity, a trifle more of tenderness in her looks and ways, which told of the simpleness of heart with which she had quietly taken what God gave and was content with it.

To Mr. Linden the trial was not new, and to sorrow of various kinds he was wonted; but it was new to him to see her tried, and to that he found it hard to accustom himself. Yet he carried out his words,—Faith could feel a sort of atmosphere of bright strength about her all the time. How tenderly she was watched and watched over she could partly see, but pain or anxiety Mr. Linden kept to himself. He set himself to work to make her enjoy every minute. Yet he never shunned the subject of his going away,—he let her become used to the sound of the words, and to every little particular connected with it—they were all told her by degrees; but told with such bright words of hope and trust, that Faith took the pain as it were diluted.

Before all this had gone far—indeed not many days after the first telling of his story, Faith had come down as usual one early morning to her work. She had been down about an hour, when she heard the door open and Mr. Linden came in. He had two seconds' view of the picture before she rose up to meet him. There was no lamp yet burning in the room. A fire of good hard wood threw its light over everything, reflected back from the red curtains which fell over the windows. In the very centre of the glow, Faith sat on a low cushion, with her book on a chair. She was dressed exactly, for nicety, as if she might have been going to Judge Harrison's to tea. And on the open pages, and on Faith's bright hair, edging her ruffles, and warming up her brown dress, was the soft red fall of the firelight. She rose up

immediately with her usual glad look, behind which lay a doubtful surmising as to his errand. It was on her lips to ask what had brought him down so early, but she was prudently silent. He came forward quick and quietly, according to his wont, not at all as if she were about anything unusual, and giving her one of those greetings which did sometimes betray the grave feeling he kept so well in hand, he brought her back to the fire.

"Little bird," he said, "what straws are you weaving in at present?"

"I don't know. Not any—unless thoughts."

"Will it please you to state what you are doing?"

"I was reading. I had just got to the end of the story of Moses blessing Israel. I was thinking of these words—" and she took up her book and shewed him. "Happy art thou, O Israel, saved of the Lord, the shield of thy help, and who is the sword of thy excellency."

"Did you ever look out any of the answering passages in other parts of the Bible?"

"Not often. I don't know them. Once in a while I think of one. And then they are so beautiful!"

Mr. Linden took the book from her hand, turning from place to place and reading to her.

"'Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the Lord his God: which made heaven, and earth, the sea, and all that therein is: which keepeth truth forever.' That is what David said,—then hear how Isaiah answers—'Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the LORD JEHOVAH is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation.'—And again—'Israel shall be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation: ye shall not be ashamed nor confounded, world without end.'"

Faith drew a little quick breath.

"Doesn't it seem," she said, "as if words were heaped on words to prevent our being afraid?"

"I think it really is so; till we have a shield of promises as well as protection. After Abraham had gone out of his own country, 'not knowing whither he went', 'the word of the Lord came to him, saying, Fear not, Abraham, I am thy shield and thy exceeding great reward.' Then David takes that up and expatiates upon it,—finding in it 'both things present and things to come,' dear Faith."

"'For the Lord God is a sun and a shield: the Lord will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly. O Lord of hosts, blessed is the man that trusteth in thee.'"

She looked down at the words, then up at him with a glad, sunshiny light in her eyes. Her comment on the whole was heartfelt, and comprehensive. "How good it was you came down this morning!"

"Would you like to have me come every morning?"

"Oh how much!—But that's no use, Endecott."

"Why not?"

"I mustn't get to depending upon you too much," she said with a smile.

"What had you been musing about—to make you so glad this morning?" he said looking at her.

"Nothing!—but those passages as you read them one after the other were so beautiful, and felt so strong.—It was a great pleasure to hear you read them,"—she said dropping her voice a little in confession.

"It shall be as you like, darling, about my coming again. But dear Faith, of this other morning work you must let me say a word."

"What, Endecott?"

"You are doing too much."

"No. What makes you think so?"

Significantly Mr. Linden laid his hand on the pile of study books.

"Well?"

"Well.—For the future please to let these gentry rest in peaceful seclusion until after breakfast."

"Oh no, Endy!"

"My dear, I shall have you turning into a moonbeam. Just imagine what it would cost me to call you 'pale Cynthia'!"

"You needn't imagine it, Endecott."

"Only so far as to prevent the reality. Do you know I have been afraid of this for some time."

"Of what?"

"Afraid that you were disregarding the bounds I have laid down for study and the sun for sleep."

"I didn't know you had laid down any bounds," she said gaily again—"and I never did mind the sun."

"Well won't you mind me?" said he smiling. "I have a right to expect that in study matters, you know."

"Don't try me—" said Faith, very winningly, much more than she knew. He stood looking at her, with the sweet unbent expression which was her special right.

"Faith, don't you mean to love to have me take care of you?"

That brought a change of look, and it was curious to see the ineffectual forces gather to veil what in spite of them wreathed in her smile and laid an additional roseleaf upon each cheek. The shy eyes retreated from view; then they were raised again as she touched his arm and said, with a demure softness, "What must I do, Endy?"

"Be content with the old study hours, my dear child. They are long enough, and many enough."

"Oh Endy!—not for me."

"For thee."

Faith looked down and looked disturbed.

"Then, Endecott, I sha'n't be as wise as I want to be,—nor as you want to have me."

"Then you will be just as wise as I want you to be," he said with a smile. "As to the rest, pretty child,—do you mean that my wife shall deprive me of my scholar?"

Faith turned away and said rather quickly, "Endy, how did you know?"

"From some lesson evidence. And I always hear you come down—and whiles
I see a face at breakfast which has not lately come from rest."

Faith's secret thought was that it was better than rest. But after folding her hands with a grave face, she looked up at Mr. Linden with a smile which yielded the whole question.

"To prove to you what a naughty child you have been," said Mr. Linden, "I shall give you an increase of outdoor lessons, and take you off on an expedition the first mild day. On which occasion you may study me—if you have any of Miss Essie's curiosity."

"Don't I?" said Faith. "And I am going to do it more. What expedition are you going on, Endecott?"

"Up to Kildeer river—I have business there. Will you trust yourself to me in a boat—if I will let you steer?"

"I'll do anything to go," said Faith. "And I suppose if I steered wrong, the helm would come about pretty quick!" And so ended her last early morning studies.

It was in the afternoon of the same day that Faith put in practice what she had been thinking of when she avowed her determination of further studying Mr. Linden. He had come home from school, and it was the dusky hour again; the pleasant interregnum between day and night when even busy folk take a little time to think and rest. Mr. Linden was indulging in both apparently; he was in one of those quiet times of doing nothing which Faith chose for making any of her very gentle attacks upon him. One seemed to be in meditation now. She stole up behind him and leaned down on the back of his chair, after her wont.

"Endecott"—she said softly.

Faith's voice was in ordinary a pleasant thing to hear; but this name from her lips was always a concretion of sweetness, flavoured differently as the case might be. Sometimes with mere gladness, sometimes with the spirit of fun, often enough with a little timidity, and sometimes with a rose-drop from the very bottom of her heart's well; with various compounds of the same. But this time it was more than timidity; Faith's one word was spoken as from lips that were positively afraid to follow it with others.

"That note," said Mr. Linden smiling, "seems to come from the top of a primeval pine tree—with a hawk in sight! Little bird, will you please come down into the lower regions of air?—where you can be (comparatively) safe."

Faith laughed; but the hawk remained in sight—of her words.

"You said this morning I never asked you any but impossible things."

"Most sorrowfully true!—have you another one ready?"

"If I ask you something possible, what will you do?" she said, softly touching the side of his head with her hand. It was Faith's utmost freedom; a sort of gentle admiring touch of her fingers which the thick locks of hair felt hardly more than a spider's feet.

"That depends so much upon the thing!" he said, half turning to give her the look which belonged to his words. "There are such a variety of ways in which I might deal with it—and with you."

"I am not going to ask you anything but what would be right."

"You do not doubt that my answer will be conformable?"

"Yes I do. It will be your 'right,' but it may not be my 'right,' you know."

"If you get what is not your right, you ought to be contented," said Mr. Linden.

"Now you have turned me and my meaning round! Endecott—you know Aunt Dilly gave me something?—mayn't I—won't you let me lend it to you?"

Very low and doubtfully the words came out! But if Faith had any more to say, she had little chance for a while. One quick look round at her Mr. Linden gave, but then he sprang up and came to where she stood, lifting her face and giving her her "right" in one sense at least. Other answer he made none.

"Endy—have I asked a possible thing this time?" she said under breath.

"My precious child!—Do you think it possible?"

"It ought to be possible, Endecott." And if ever an humble suggestion of a possibility was made, Faith made it then.

"I shall have to go back to my first answer," said Mr. Linden,—"I have no words for any other. Faith, dearest—don't you know that it is not needful? Will that content you, little sweet one?"

A soft "no."

"Why not?" he said, making good his threat. "What do you want me to have more than I need?"

"I fear the ways you will take to make that true. I should think you might, Endecott!"—The ellipsis was not hard to supply.

"I shall not take any unlawful means—nor any unwise ones, I hope," he said lightly. "What are you afraid I shall do?"

"Get up early in the morning," she whispered.

"But that is so pleasant! Do you suppose I get up late now, little bird?"

"Not late, with breakfast at seven. How early do you?"

"Philosophically early! Do you know you have not had your poem to-day?—what shall it be? sunrise or sunset?"

"Which you please," she said gently, with the tone of a mind upon something else. Mr. Linden looked down at her in silence for a minute.

"Dear Faith," he said, "I told you truly that there is no need. This year's work has done quite as much as I thought it would. What are you afraid of?"

"I am not afraid of much," she said, looking up at him now with a clear brow. "But Endy, I have changed my mind about something. Could you easily come down and read with me a little while every morning?—or are you busy?"

"I am never too busy to spend time with you, my child,—that is one piece of pleasure I shall always allow myself. At what hour shall I come?"

"At six o'clock, can you?" said Faith. "If you gave me a quarter of an hour then, I should still have time enough for breakfast work. This morning I was afraid—but I was foolish. This evening I want all I can get. And when you read me a *ladder of verses* again," she said smiling, "I shall mark them in my Bible, and then I shall have them by and by—when you are gone."

"Yes, and I can send you more. It is good to go up a ladder of Bible verses when one is afraid—or foolish," he said gently and answering her smile. "One end of it always rests on earth, within reach of the weakest and weariest."

"That is just it! Oh Endy," she said, clasping her hands sadly and wishfully before her and her eyes tilling as she spoke—"I wish there were more people to tell people the truth!"

CHAPTER XV.

It was a fair, fair May morning when Mr. Linden and Faith set forth on their expedition to Kildeer river. After their early rising and early breakfast, they took their way down to the shore of the Mong, where the little sail-boat lay rocking on the incoming tide, her ropes and streamers just answering to the morning breeze. The soft spring sunlight glinted on every tree and hillside. The "Balm of a Thousand Flowers"—true and not spurious—was sprinkled through the air, under the influence of which unseen nectar the birds became almost intoxicated with joy; pouring out their songs with a sort of spendthrift recklessness,—the very fish caught the infection, and flashed and sparkled in the blue water by shoals at a time.

In the sailboat now stood baskets and shawls, a book or two, an empty basket for wild flowers, and by the tiller sat Faith—invested with her new dignity but not yet instructed therein. Mr. Linden stood on the shore, with the boat's detaining rope in his hand, looking about him as if he had a mind to take the good of things as he went along. Up the hill from the shore, trotted Jerry and Mr. Skip.

"Endecott," said Faith joyously,—"Goethe would have more than enough if he was here."

She was not a bad part of the picture herself; fair and glad as she looked, as fair as the May morning and the birds and the sunlight.—

"Isn't this air sweet?"

"Very! But Goethe would choose my point of view. So much depends, in a picture, upon the principal light!"

"I wonder which is the principal light to-day!" said Faith laughing. "How it sparkles all over the river, and then on the young leaves and buds;—and then soft shining on the clouds. And they are all May! Look at those tiny specks of white cloud scattered along the horizon, up there towards Neanticut."

"The principal light to-day," said Mr. Linden, "is one particular sunbeam, which as it were leads off the rest. It's a fair train, altogether!" and he threw the rope into the little vessel, and jumped in himself; then lifting Faith a little from her place, and arranging and disposing of her daintily among shawls and cushions, and putting her unwonted fingers upon the tiller.

"Now Miss Derrick," he said, "before we go any further, I should like to know your estimate and understanding of the power at present in your hands."

"I know what a rudder is good for," said Faith merrily. "I know that this ship, 'though it be so great, and driven of fierce winds, yet is it turned about with a very small helm whithersoever the governor listeth.' That is what you may call theoretical knowledge."

"Clearly your estimate covers the ground! But you perceive, that while you take upon yourself the guiding of the boat—(if I might venture to suggest!—our course lies up the Mong, and not out to sea)—

I, with my sail, control the motive power."

"You mean that if I don't go right, you'll drop the sail?"—

"Not at all!—I shall navigate, not drift. Do you suppose I shall surrender at the first summons?"

"What would you consider a 'summons'?" said Faith with a funny look. "I don't think your sail can do much against my rudder."

"My sail regulates the boat's headway—which in its turn affects the rudder. (If we run down those fishermen the damages may be heavy.) But you see I have this advantage,—I know beforehand your system of navigation—you don't know mine. Let me inform your unpractised eyes, Miss Derrick, that the dark object just ahead of us is a snag."

"My eyes don't see any better for that information," said Faith; with great attention however managing to guide their little craft clear of both snag and fishermen, and almost too engaged in the double duty to have leisure for laughing. But practice is the road to excellence and ease; Faith learned presently the correspondence between the rudder and her hand, and in the course of a quarter of an hour could keep the north track with tolerable steadiness. The wind was fair for a straight run up the Mong. The river stretching north in a diminishing blue current (pretty broad however at Pattaquasset and for some miles up) shewed its low banks in the tenderest grading of colour; very softly brown in the distance, and near the eye opening into the delicate hues of the young leaf. The river rolled its bright blue, and the overarching sky was like one of summer's. Yet the air was not so,—spicy from young buds; and the light was *Springy*; not Summer's ardour nor Summer's glare, but that loveliest promise of what is coming and oblivion of what is past. So the little boat sailed up the Mong. Mr. Linden's sail was steady, Faith's rudder was still.

"Faith," Mr. Linden said suddenly, "have you made up your mind to my letter plan?"

"About Reuben? O yes. I am willing."

"You know you are to send me every possible question that comes up in the course of your studies, and every French exercise, and every doubt or discomfort of any kind—if any should come. I shall not be easy unless I think that."

"But you won't have time for my French exercises!"

"Try me. And you are to take plenty of fresh air, and not a bit of fatigue; and in general are to suppose yourself a rare little plant belonging to me, which I have left in your charge for the time being. Do you understand, Mignonette?"

Her blush and smile, of touched pleasure, shewed abundance of understanding.

"But I want you to tell me, Endecott, all the things in particular you would like to have me do or attend to while you are away—besides my studies. I have been thinking to ask you, and waiting for a good time."

"'All the things'?—of what sort, dear child?"

"Aren't there some of your poor people you would like to have particularly attended to? I could get Reuben to go with me, you know, where it was too far for me to go alone—or mother."

"Yes, there are some things you might do," said Mr. Linden, "for me and for them, though more in the way of sending than going; the places are too far off. But I should like to know that Mrs. Ling's mother had a bunch of garden flowers now and then, and that another went to that little lame girl on the Monongatesak road; and once in a great while (not often, or they will lose their charm) you may send the Roscoms two fresh eggs!—not more, on any account. Reuben will go for you, anywhere—and the Roscoms are old protégées of his."

"I didn't mean to forget the Roscoms," said Faith. "But must one manage with them so carefully?"

"In matter of favours, yes. And even in matter of visits, to a certain degree,—their life is so monotonous that novelty has a great charm. Reuben used to go and read to them almost every day on his way from school, but I found it best to make my coming an event."

"Can I do anything for Reuben?"

"Nothing new that I know of, at present—you are doing something for him all the while,—and it will be a wonderful delight to him to bring you letters. Then if you are ever driving down that Monongatesak road, with nothing to hinder, take the little lame child with you for a mile or two,—she

so pines to be out of the house and moving. Would it be disagreeable to you?—there is nothing but what is pleasant in her appearance."

"What if there were?" she said with a wistful look at him. "Do *you* mind disagreeablenesses? and do you want to have me mind them?"

"No, dear child, but you must get wonted by degrees,—and some temperaments can never bear what others can. What if we were to overhaul those fishermen?"

"What do you want?" said Faith, as she carefully set the boat's head that way. "A fish for dinner?"

"No"—said Mr. Linden,—"I have too much respect for that basket at my feet. But you know, Faith, we are having a sort of preliminary play-practice at seeking our fortune, to-day—we must carry it out. Just imagine, my dear, that we are adrift in this boat, with nothing at all for dinner, and supper a wild idea! —not the eastern fisherman who for four fish received from the Sultan four hundred pieces of gold, would then appear so interesting as these."

"If you wanted dinner from them—but you say you don't," said Faith laughing. "Endecott, I don't understand in the least! And besides, you said you wouldn't 'drift' but navigate!"

And her soft notes rolled over the water, too soft to reach the yet somewhat distant fishermen.

"And so because I turn navigator you turn Siren!" said Mr. Linden. "But
I have you safe in my boat—I need not stop to listen."

"But what did you mean?"

"By what?"

"All that."

"Short and comprehensive!" said Mr. Linden—"come up on the other side, Faith, the current is less strong. All about seeking our fortune, do you mean? Did you never hear of any other extraordinary prince and princess who did the same?"

"If I am not adrift in the boat, I am in my wits!" said Faith,—"and with no sail nor rudder either. Why are those fishermen interesting, Endecott?"

"Why my child," he said, "in the supposititious case which I put, they were interesting as having fish, while we had none. But in the reality—they were picturesque in the distance,—what they are near by we will see," he added with a smile at her, as the sail came round and the little boat shot up alongside of her rough-looking relation. "Well friends, what cheer?—besides a May morning and a fair wind?"

The fishermen slowly dragging their net, hoarsely speculating on its probable weight of fish, paused both their oars and tongues and looked at him. One of the men had the oars; the other at the end of the boat was hauling in, hand over hand.

"That's about all the cheer you want, I guess,—aint it?" said this man. It was said freely enough, but with no incivility.

"Not all *I* want," said Mr. Linden,—while the oarsman, rolling his tobacco in his mouth, came out with —

"Shouldn't wonder, now, if 'twan't much in your line o' business!—guess likely you be one o' the mighty smart folks that don't do nothin'."

"I've no objection to being 'mighty smart'," said Mr. Linden, belaying his rope with a light hand, "but I shouldn't like to pay such a price for it. Smartness will have to come down before I'm a purchaser."

The man looked at him with a queer little gleam crossing his face—

"Shouldn't wonder if you hadn't took it when it was down!" he said.

"It's a great thing to know the state of the market," said Mr. Linden.
"I suppose you find that with your fish."

"Gen'lly do, when we take 'em,"—said the man at the net, who never took his eye off the overhauling boat and its crew. He was not a young man, but a jovial-looking fellow. "What fish be *you* arter, stranger?"

"Somewhat of a variety," Mr. Linden said with a smile. "What makes the fish come into your net?"

"Haven't an idee!" said the man—"without it bees that fish is very onintelligent creturs. I don't suppose fish has much brains, sir. And so they goes further and fares worse." Which statement of the case he appeared to think amusing.

"But then why do they sometimes stay out?" said Mr. Linden,—"because I have read of men who 'toiled all the night and caught nothing'."

"Wall, you see," said the fisher, "they goes in shoals or flocks like, and they's notional. Some of 'em won't come at one time o' tide, and some won't come at another—and they has their favourite places too. Then if a man sets his nets where the fish *aint*, all creation might work and catch nothin'. This side the river is better now than over there."

"These men that I was talking of," said Mr. Linden, "once found a difference even between the two sides of their ship. But the other time, when they had caught nothing all the night, in the morning they caught so many that their net broke and both their ships began to sink."

"What kind o' folks was them?" said the oarsman a little scornfully.

"Why they were fishermen," said Mr. Linden. "They followed your calling first, and then they followed mine."

"What's yourn?" said the other, in his tone of good-humoured interest.
"Guess you're a speaker o' some sort—aint ye?"

"Yes—" Mr. Linden said, with a little demure gesture of the head,—"I am—'of some sort,' as you say. But I've got an account of these men in my pocket—don't you want to hear it?—it's more interesting than any account you could have of me."

"Like to hear it well enough—" said the man at the net, setting himself astride the gunwale to listen, with the net hanging from his hand.

"I wouldn't mind knowing how they worked it—" said the other man, while Mr. Linden threw a rope round one of the thole-pins of the fishing boat and gave the other end to Faith, and then took out his book. And Faith was amused at the men's submissive attention, and the next minute did not wonder at all!—as she noted the charm that held them—the grace of mingled ease, kindliness, and power, in Mr. Linden's manner and presence. Nothing could have greater simplicity, and it was not new to Faith, yet she looked at him as if she had never seen him before.

"A great many years ago," he said, "when the Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, was in this world, he went about healing sick people, and teaching every one the way to heaven; and the people came in great numbers to hear him.

"'And it came to pass, that, as the people pressed upon him to hear the word of God, he stood by the lake of Gennesareth, and saw two ships standing by the lake; but the fishermen were gone out of them, and were washing their nets.'"

"We wash our'n by pullin' 'em through the water," said the net man.

"The Lord entered one of the ships, which belonged to a man named Simon, and asked him to push out a little from the shore. 'And he sat down, and taught the people out of the ship. Now, when he had left speaking, he unto Simon, Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught. And Simon answering, said unto him, Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing; nevertheless, at thy word I will let down the net.'"

"In course! whether 'twas any use or not,"—the man with the net said approvingly. "So he had oughter."

"Yes, and he knew it would be of use in some way, for God never gives a command without a reason. And when they had let down the net, 'they enclosed a great multitude of fishes: and their net brake. And they beckoned unto their partners, which were in the other ship, that they should come and help them. And they came, and filled both the ships, so that they began to sink.'"

"That was a bigger haul than ever I see, yet," remarked the man.

"Neither had Simon ever seen anything like it—he knew that it was brought about by the direct power of God.

"When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, 'Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord.' For he was astonished, and all they that were with him, at the draught of the fishes

which they had taken."

"Can't see what he said *that* fur," said the oarsman.

"No more don't I!" said the other. "He had got a good haul o' fish, anyway—if he was ever so!—and we aint none of us white lilies."

"But then Peter knew that he ought to be a white lily—and such a new view of God's power and greatness made him feel it more than ever. So that he was both afraid and ashamed,—he thought himself unworthy to have the Lord in his ship, and was afraid to have him stay there."

"I wouldn't have asked him to go out, if he had been in mine,—*I* don't think!"—said the elder fisher slowly. "I don't see as that chap need to ha' been afeard—he hadn't done nothin' but good to him."

"But it's what we do ourselves that makes us afraid," said Mr. Linden. "So it was with Adam and Eve in the garden, you know—God had talked to them a great many times, and they were never afraid till they disobeyed him—then the moment he spoke they ran and hid themselves."

The oarsman was silent, the other man gave a sort of grunt that betokened interest.

"What shines had this feller been cuttin' up?"

"Why!" said Mr. Linden, starting up and taking his stand by the mast, as the little boat curtseyed softly over the waves, "if you tell one of your boys always to walk in one particular road, and you find him always walking in another—I don't think it matters much what he's doing there, to him or to you."

"Wall?"—said the man, with a face of curiosity for what was to come next, mingled with a certain degree of intelligence that would not confess itself.

"Well—Peter knew he was not in the way wherein the Lord commands us all to walk."

"I guess every feller's got to pick out his own road for himself!" said the fisher, pulling up a foot or two of his net carelessly.

"That's what Peter had thought,—and so he had lived, just as he chose. But when he saw more of the glory of God, then he was afraid and confessed his sin. And what do you suppose the Lord said to him then?"

"What did Peter own up to?"

"The account gives only the general confession—that he was a sinful man, not worthy to have the Lord look upon him except in anger. You see he falls down at his feet and prays him to depart—he could not believe that the Lord would stay there to speak good to him."

"Well—what *did* he say to him?"

"'He said unto him, Fear not'. And no one need fear, who humbly confesses his sins at the feet of Jesus, 'for if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.' Then the Lord bade Simon and all his companions to follow him—and they obeyed. And now I want to tell you what this following means."

He put one arm round the mast, half leaning against it, and gave them what Faith would have called a 'ladder'—passing from the 'Follow me,' spoken to Peter,—to the young man who being bid to follow, 'went away sorrowful',—to the description of the way given in the tenth chapter of John,—to the place whither the flock follow Christ—

"'And I looked, and lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Zion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father's name written in their foreheads.' 'These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth.'"—

The men listened, open-mouthed and with intent eyes;—partly to the speaker, it was evident, and partly to what the speaker said. And that his words took hold, it was also evident. When he ceased, the man at the net dropped his eyes for a moment, a curious look of meditation covering his face.

"It's easy to talk of follerin'," he said with a half laugh which was not of carelessness,—"and one might like to,—but it's plaguey hard to know where to start!—"

"It's easy for God to teach you and easy to ask him to do it. If it was anything else you wanted to do, you would not stop trying till you found out," said Mr. Linden—"and that is just the way here. Now I am going to give you a copy of all this," he said, throwing his own little Bible softly into Faith's lap and

stepping forward to the prow of the boat (which she thought held only lunch baskets)—"and I shall turn down a leaf at the story of the net full of good fishes—and another at a place that tells of a net full 'of every kind, both bad and good.' And I want you to read them, and think about them, and find out how to follow Christ—and then come on!" He took his seat once more in the stern of the boat, and held out the Bible to the fisherman. The other man, slowly dipping his oars in and out, met his look too, but made no answer.

The man at the net took the book and turned over the leaves with a wondering, considering air.

"What do you reckon this here's worth?" he said somewhat awkwardly, without raising his eyes from it.

"Worth daily reading and study—worth all you have in the world, if you will use it right," said Mr. Linden. "You need not think about any other value—I had it in trust to give away."

"I'm much obleeged to you,—I'll take a look at it now and then. Do you live along here, anywheres?"

"In Pattaquasset, just now," Mr. Linden said, as he prepared to make sail again. "I don't very often come to this part of the river."

"Well hold on!" said the man, beginning to pull in his net with great vivacity,—"I'm bound to give you a fish—if I've got one here. Bear a hand, Dick! Haint you got a place on board there that you can stow it, without skeerin' the lady?"—

"I'll try to find one!" said Mr. Linden, answering the proposal just as it was meant. "If the lady is scared she shall turn her face the other way."

"She'll turn it which way you say?—" ventured the fisher insinuatingly.

Faith did not seem afraid of the fish, by the way she leaned over the stern of the boat and eyed the up-coming nets which the men were drawing in. She had listened to the foregoing talk, to the full as intently as those for whom it was meant, and with a multitude of interests at work in her mind and heart of which they had never dreamed. And now her eye was bent on the net; but her thoughts were on that other kind of fishing of which she had just seen an example—the first she had ever seen of Mr. Linden's!—and her full heart was longingly thinking, among other thoughts, of the few there were to draw those nets, and the multitude to be drawn! What Faith saw in the meshes the man's hands were slowly pulling up!—

But the fisherman only saw—what pleased him greatly, some very fine fish; shad they were for the greater part; from which he selected a noble specimen and cast it over into Mr. Linden's boat. Then standing up in his own he wiped his hands on the sleeves of his coat.

"Hope you'll come along again some day," said he. "And" (waggishly) "don't come without the lady!"—

The rope was drawn in and the little skiff shot ahead smoothly and silently from the great brown fishing boat and her equally brown owners. Gliding on—watched for a little by the fishers, then their attention was claimed by the flapping shad in the net, and the sail boat set her canvas towards Kildeer river. Mr. Linden went forward and bestowed his prisoner a little more out of sight and sound in some place of safety, and then sitting down in the prow dipped his hands in the blue water and took a survey of Faith, as she sat in the stern—the tiller in her hand, the shadow of the sail falling partly across; the spring zephyrs playing all about her.

"Little bird," he said, "why don't you sing?"

A smile of much and deep meaning went back from the stern to the prow; but she presently made the somewhat obvious remark that "birds do not always sing."

"A melancholy fact in natural history! the truth of which I am just now experiencing. What shall be done with them at these times—are they to be coaxed—or chidden or fed with sponge cake? Have you got any in your basket?"

"Are you hungry?" said Faith.

"Only for words—or songs—or some other commodity of like origin," Mr. Linden said, coming back to his old place. "What shall I have?—if I cannot get the two first?"

"You might have a little patience?—"

"'Patience', my dear, 'is a good root'—but nothing akin to sugar canes."

"There's no need of it, either," said Faith laughing,—"for *you* can sing if I can't."

"No, there is no need of it, and therefore—Now, little bird, will you please not to fly past the outlet of Kildeer river?"

Laughing, colouring, Faith nevertheless bent a very earnest attention upon this difficult piece of navigation. For the opening of Kildeer river was as yet but slightly to be discerned;—a little break in the smooth shore line,—a very little atmospheric change in the soft leafy hues of the nearer and further point. Faith watched, as only a young steersman does, for the time and place where her rudder should begin to take cognizance of the approaching change of course. A little wider the break in the shore line grew,—more plain the mark of a break in the trees,—and almost suddenly the little stream unfolded its pretty reach of water and woodland, stretching in alluringly with picturesque turns of its mimic channel. Faith needed a little help now, for the river was not everywhere navigable; but after a few minutes of pretty sailing among care-requiring rocks and sand-banks, where the loss of wind made their progress slow, the little skiff was safely brought to land at a nice piece of gravelly shore. It was wonderful pretty! The trees with their various young verdure came down to the water's edge, with many a dainty tint; here one covered with soft catkins of flower,—there one ruddy with not yet opened buds. The winding banks of the stream on one hand; and on the other the little piece of it they had passed over, with the breadth of the Mong beyond. Through all, May's air and Spring's perfume, and the stillness of noonday.

"Inverted in the tide
Stand the grey rocks, and trembling shadows throw.
And the fair trees look over, side by side,
And see themselves below."

So Mr. Linden told Faith, as he was putting his sail in trim repose, and then—telling her that the guiding power was still in her hands, requested to know what they should do next.

"Why," said Faith merrily, "I thought you had business to attend to?"

"I had—" said Mr. Linden,—"but I reflected that you would probably give me full occupation, and so got rid of the business first."

"Then you have nothing to do here?"

"A great deal, I suppose; but I know not what."

Faith fairly sat down to laugh at him.

"What do you think of having lunch, and then going after flowers?"

"I consider that to be a prudent, bird-like suggestion. Do you expect me to cook this fish for you? or will you be content to take it home to your mother, and let us feast upon—

"'Herbs, and such like country messes,
Which neat-handed Phyllis dresses'?"

"*Have* you all the books in the world in your head?"—said Faith, laughing her own little laugh roundly. "How plain it is Mr. Linden has nothing to do to-day!—Would you like to help me to gather some sticks for a fire, sir? I think you had better have something on your hands."

"Do you?" he said lifting her out of the boat in his curiously quick, strong, light way,—"that was something on my hands—not much. What next?—do you say we are to play Ferdinand and Miranda?"

Faith's eye for an instant looked its old look, of grave, intelligent, doubtful questioning: but then she came back to Kildeer river.

"I haven't played that play yet," she said gaily; "but if you'll help me find some dry sticks—your reward shall be that you shall not have what you don't like! I can make a fire nicely here, Endecott; on this rock."

"Then it was not about them you were reading in that focus of sunbeams?"

"What?—" she said, looking.

"Once upon a time—" Mr. Linden said smiling,—"when you and Shakspeare got lost in the sunlight, and wandered about without in the least knowing where you were."

"When, Endecott?"

"Leave that point," he said,—"I want to tell you about the story. Ferdinand, whom I represent, was a prince cast away upon a desert shore—which shore was inhabited by the princess Miranda, whom you represent. Naturally enough, in the course of time, they came to think of each other much as we do—perhaps 'a little more so' on the part of Miranda. But then Miranda's father set Ferdinand to carrying wood,—as you—acting conscientiously for Mrs. Derrick—do me."

"I wonder if I ever shall understand you!" exclaimed Faith desperately, as her laugh again broke upon the sweet air that floated in from the Mong. "What has my conscience, or Mrs. Derrick, to do with our lunch fire? Why was the other prince set to carrying wood?"

"For the same reason that I am!" said Mr. Linden raising his eyebrows.
"To prove his affection for Miranda."

How Faith laughed.

"You are mistaken—O how mistaken you are!" she exclaimed. "It shews that though you know books, you don't know everything."

And running away with her own armful of sticks and leaves, back to the rock spoken of near where the vessel lay, Faith was stopped and relieved of her load, with such an earnest—

"'No, precious creature,
I'd rather crack my sinews, break my back,
Than you should such dishonour undergo'—"

that she could do nothing but laugh, till the sticks were fairly on the rock. Then Faith went to laying them daintily together.

"I hope you've no objection to my making the fire," she said; "because I like it. Only, Endecott! the matches are in the basket. Could you get them for me? Indeed I shall want the basket too out of the boat."

Whereupon Mr. Linden—

"'The very instant I saw you, did
My heart fly to your service: there reside,
To make me slave to it; and for your sake,
Am I this patient log man'!—"

But anything less like those two last words than the way in which he sprang into the boat, and brought the basket, and got out what she called for, could hardly be.

"How many matches do you want?" he said, looking demurely at her as he gave her one.

"All of them,—basket and all, Endecott. You are so patient that you do not hear."

"And you so impatient that you do not see—'basket and all' are at your side, fair princess.—Stand back,—it may be very well for the winds to 'blow, and crack their cheeks,' but I think it should be confined to them." And she was laughingly held back, where she could only use her eyes about the fire.

"That's my province," said Faith. "I think any effort to make a princess of me, will—fail. Did Miranda pick up any wood herself?"

"You can't help being a princess if I am a prince," said Mr. Linden.

"I don't see how it follows," said Faith. "Only let me get at that fire, and the fancy will pass away. Endecott!—it is absolutely necessary that some wood should be put on; and I don't believe princes know how."

"Princes," said Mr. Linden, holding her a little off with one hand, while with the other he replenished the fire, "are especially famed for their power of doing impossible things in desert places. And the princess will follow—whether you can see it or not. Is that blaze aspiring enough for you?"

"Yes, but it needs to be kept up—I want a good bed of coals."

A fine fire was on its way at last, and while waiting for it to burn down to the desired bed of coals, the temporary prince and princess sat down on the rock to feast their eyes in the mean time. A little past

midday, it was not the picturesque hour for another season; but now, in the freshness of Spring, the delicate beauties of colour and light could bear the full meridian sun and not ask for shadows to set them off; other than the tender shade under the half-leaved trees. It was a warm enough day too, and those same leaves were making a great spring towards their full unfolding. Birds were twittering all around, and they only filled up the silence.

"Isn't it worth coming for!—" said Faith, when they had taken it all in for a few minutes without interrupting the birds.

"More than that—and the 'it' is very plural. Faith, do you see that butterfly?"—A primrose-winged rover was meandering about in the soft air before them, flitting over the buttercups with a listless sort of admiration.

"Poor thing, he has come out too soon," said Faith. "He will have some frost yet, for so summery as it is to-day." But Faith gave a graver look at the butterfly than his yellow wings altogether warranted.

"Among the ancients," said Mr. Linden, "the word for a butterfly and the word for the soul were the same,—they thought the first was a good emblem of the lightness and airiness of the last. So they held, that when a man died a butterfly might be seen flitting above his head. I was thinking how well this one little thing shews the exceeding lowness of heathen ideas."

"Did they think the butterfly was his very spirit, in that form?"

"I suppose so—or thought they did. But look at that creature's wavering, unsteady flight; his aimless wanderings, anywhere or nowhere; and compare it with the 'mounting up with wings as eagles', which a Christian soul may know, even in this life,—compare it with the swift 'return to God who gave it'—with the being 'caught up to meet the Lord' which it shall surely know at death."

"And the butterfly isn't further from that," said Faith clasping her hands together,—"than many a real, living soul in many a living person!"—

"No, not further; and so what the old Greeks made an emblem of the immortal soul, gives name, with us, to those persons who are most tied down to mortality. What were you thinking of, a minute ago, when I shewed you the butterfly?"

"I was thinking of somebody that I am afraid a butterfly will always remind me of,"—Faith answered with a slight colour;—"and of the time he got the name."

"He got it by favour of his office, you know—not otherwise."

"I know—"

But with that, Faith jumped up to see to the state of the fire; and then after some conjuration in her basket produced a suspicious-looking tin vessel, for which the proper bed of coals was found. Leaving it and the fire to agree together, Faith came back to the rock and Mr. Linden and stood a little while silently looking and breathing the sweetness.

"I always did love everything in the world, that my eyes could see," she said gravely. "But I love them so much more now!—now that the hand that made them is not such a strange far-off hand to me. It makes a kind of new world to me, Endecott."

"Yes—and you can understand how—even without physical changes—when we 'shall know as we are known,' the 'heavens and earth wherein dwelleth righteousness' may be preëminently 'new'."

Faith stood without reply a few minutes longer, then ran back to her fire; and after a short space called to Mr. Linden to ask if he would like to come and see what the prince had been picking up wood for?

To which the prince responded with very un-royal alacrity, bringing a well-put-together knot of buttercups to adorn one side of Miranda's head; which he declared looked better than gold beads, if they didn't cost as much.

A napkin was spread on the rock, conveniently near to the fire; on which plates and bread and a bottle of cream and a dainty looking pasty were irregularly bestowed. Mr. Linden threw himself down on the moss; and Faith had got a cup and saucer out of her basket and was just sugaring and creaming the prince's reward before applying to her dish on the fire for the crowning coffee; when her eye was caught by a spectator lately come upon the scene. No other than a somewhat ragged little boy, who eyeing them from the bank had been irresistibly lured nearer and nearer, by the grace of the preparations and the steam of the hot coffee perhaps, till he now stood by the trunk of the nearest tree.

"What are you doin'?" he said.

"What are you?" said Mr. Linden, turning to look at the boy—not just as *he* looked at the coffee, but very much as the coffee looked at him. "Did you never see people eat dinner?"

The boy stood his ground with, "What you got?"

"When was the last time?" said Mr. Linden. ("Princess—this may turn out to be a subject!")

"Last time *what?*" said the "subject" stoutly.

"The last time you saw people eating dinner," said Mr. Linden. "Did you ever go to the Museum?"

"I've went to Pettibaug!"—

"When is the last time you saw people eating dinner?" said Faith.

"We haint got none to our house."

"What's the matter?"

"Mintie said there warn't nothin' to eat and I might go a blackberryin'."

"You've come to the right place," said Mr. Linden,—"I don't believe they're ripe anywhere else. Who is 'Mintie'? and who stays with her while you're after blackberries?"

"Mintie's sissy. There aint nobody stayin' with her—she's stayin' along o' mother—when she's up."

"Where is she?—I mean where does she live—and you, and Mintie. Where is your house?"

"Round there—'Taint fur. What you got?"

Faith set down her cup and looked at Mr. Linden.

"What is the matter with your mother?"

"She's sick."

"Well if I give you a basket, and this lady puts some dinner in it for your mother and Mintie and you, do you think you can carry it home?"

"Is your sister sick too?" said Faith.

"She's got the fever nagur."

"Endecott," said Faith softly,—"shall we go and see them?"

"Yes, of course. What's your name, child?"

"My name's Bob Tuck."

Mr. Linden looked at him.

"How comes it that you and Dromy are no more alike?" he said.

"Mother says Dromy aint like nothin' *I* be."

"Well Bob Tuck," said Mr. Linden smiling, "have you got a broom at home?"

"There's two old ones."

"Then if you will go home and sweep the floor as well as you can, with the two old brooms, and set the table, I'll bring this lady to see you and we'll carry the basket—(which means, Princess, that *I* will!)—and you can let the blackberries hang on till they get ripe. Do you understand?"

"If I'll sweep the floor, you'll fetch the basket?" said Bob.

"Yes. And you can wash your hands nicely and be ready to help me take the things out of it."

Bob started. "How soon 'll you come?"

"As soon as I finish my dinner."

"How good it is I brought the whole pie!" said Faith, as she poured the delayed coffee upon the cream

and sugar. "And there's your shad, Endecott! unless you prefer to take that home, and we'll send something else.—Now you see what you picked up sticks for?"

"I see—" Mr. Linden said, looking at her. "And you see, Princess, what royalty is apt to meet if it will go wandering round the world."

"What?"

"Bob Tuck!—"

"Well—it's a good thing for Bob Tuck to meet with royalty,"—said
Faith, looking at the pie Mr. Linden was cutting.

"Princess," said Mr. Linden, "have you any 'Queen Anne' in your basket?"

Faith looked, her merry, puzzled, grave look of inquiry,—and then there was nothing for it but a ringing laugh again.

"I would rather have that at a venture, if I were the sick one," said Mr. Linden. "But the specific most prized by that class of the population who have 'fever nagur', is called in their vernacular 'Queen Anne'—anglice, quinine. Faith, you have no idea how those buttercups are beautified!"

"Flowers always are, that you handle," said Faith.

"You see how appropriate they are to my Sunbeam—for

'The buttercup catches the sun in his chalice'."

"What is a chalice?"

"A sort of cup—a church service cup, generally. Did you admire so much the head of clover I gave you once down at the shore?"

Faith gave him a curious glance of recollection; but though there was a half smile on her face too, she remained silent.

"Well, little bird?" he said smiling. "Of what is that look compounded?"

"Various things, I suppose. Let me have your cup, Endecott?"

"Do you know," he said, "that for a scholar, you are—remarkably—unready to answer questions?"

"I didn't know it."

"Are you not aware of any class of recollective remarks or inquiries which now and then break forth, and which you invariably smother with a thick blanket of silence?"

There was another quick glance and smile, and then Faith said as she handed him his cup,—

"What do you want to know, Endecott?"

"I want to know where there was ever just such another princess. And by the way, speaking of the shore—I have something that belongs to her."

"To me?"

"Oui, mademoiselle."

"May I know what?"

"You may, yet not just now. You may guess what it is."

But Faith gave up guessing in despair at one of Mr. Linden's puzzles.

The basket was repacked when the lunch was done; and they set out on their walk. The way, following Bob's direction, led along the bank under the trees, turning a little before the Mong was reached. The house was soon found; standing alone, in an enclosed garden ground where no spade had been struck that season; and at the end of a farm road that shewed no marks of travel.

Bob had not only swept the room, but his tidings had roused apparently his sister to prepare herself also; for Mintie met them as they came in. She was a handsome girl, with a feverish colour in her

cheeks that made her appearance only more striking. There was pride and poverty here, clearly. Faith's simple words neither assumed the one nor attacked the other. The girl looked curiously at her and at the other visiter.

"Who be you?"

"We do not live in this neighbourhood," said Faith. "We came up to Kildeer river to-day, and met your little brother down by the shore."

"What did he say to you?"

"He told us you were sick and in want of help."

Another look laid the girl's jealousy asleep. She told her story—her father had died six months ago; she and her mother and brother lived there alone. It was an "unlikely place to get to," and no neighbours very near. Her mother had been sick abed for a number of weeks; and she had had all to do, and now for a week past had been unable to do anything, go to Pettibaug or anywhere else, to get what they wanted. And so they "had got out of 'most everything." Dromy Tuck, Mr. Linden's scholar, lived at Farmer Davids' in the capacity of farm-boy; Mrs. Davids being a far-off connexion.

So much was all pride permitted to be told. Without much questioning, her visiters contrived to find out what they could do for her. Faith put the coffee-pot on the fire, declaring that it would do Mintie good like medicine; and served it to her when it was hot, with some bread and chicken, as if it had been indeed medicine and Faith a doctor. Then while Bob and she were dining, Faith went in to see the sick woman. *She* was much more communicative, and half avowed that she believed what she wanted now was "nourishing things"—"but with me lyin' here on my back," she said, "'taint so easy to find 'em." Faith gave her a cup of coffee too and some bread; she had hardly drunk any herself at lunch; and leaving her patient much inspirited, came back to Mr. Linden in the other room. Apparently his words and deeds had been acceptable too,—Bob's face was shining, not only with dinner but with the previous cold water applications which Mr. Linden had insisted on, and Mintie's mind was evidently at work upon various things. The basket was soon emptied of all but its dishes, and the prince and princess went on their way down the hill.

"Faith," said Mr. Linden, "shall we go and sit in the boat for half an hour, considering various things, and then have our wild flower hunt? Or would you prefer that first?"

"O no! I would rather have the half hour in the boat."

It was good time yet in the afternoon, and though the little boat now lay partly shadowed by the hill, it was none the worse resting place for that. Again Faith was seated there in all the style that shawls and cushions furnished, and just tired enough to feel luxurious in the soft atmosphere. Mr. Linden arranged and established her to his liking; then he took out of his pocket a letter.

It was one which had been opened and read; but as he unfolded it, there appeared another—unopened, unread; its dainty seal unbroken, and on the back in fair tracery, the words, "Miss Faith Derrick." As Faith read them and saw the hand, her eye glanced first up at Mr. Linden with its mute burden of surprise, and then the roses bloomed out over her cheeks and even threw their flush upon her brow. Her eye was cast down now and fixed on the unopened letter, with the softest fall of its eyelid.

"Shall I read you a part of mine first?"

"If you please. I wish you would."

"Only a little bit," he said smiling—thinking perhaps that she did not know to what she gave her assent so readily,—"you shall read the whole of it another time." The "little bit" began rather abruptly.

"'I have written to your darling, Endy—Not much, tell her; because what I have in my heart for her cannot be told. I know how precious any one must be whom you love so much. But make her love me a little before she reads my letter—and don't let her call me anything but Pet—and then I shall feel as if I had a sister already. And so I have, as you say. What a glad word!—I could cry again with the very writing of it.

'Endy—I did cry a little over your letter, but only for joy: if it had been for sorrow I should have cried long ago; for I knew well enough what was coming. Only I want more than ever to be at home,—and to see you, and to see Faith—don't let her think I am like you!

'My letter wouldn't hold much, as I told you. But I give you any number of (unspeakable!) messages for her, John Endy. I suppose you will take charge of them? I may feel sure they have all reached their destination?'"

Long before the reading was finished, Faith's head had sunk—almost to the cushions beside her. The reader's voice and intonation had given every word a sort of ring in her heart, though the tone was low. One hand came round her when she put her head down, taking possession of her hand which lay so still, with the unopened letter in its clasp. But now she was gently raised up.

"Precious child," Mr. Linden said, "what are you drooping your head for?"

"For the same reason she had, I suppose,—" said Faith half laughing, though witnesses of another kind were in her eyes.

"Who are you talking about?"

"Your sister."

"Why don't you begin to practise your lesson?"

Perhaps Faith thought that she *was*. She looked at nothing but her letter.

"Will you wait for your messages till we get home?—this place not being absolute seclusion."

"Shall I read this now?" said Faith rather hastily.

"I should think there would be no danger in that."

With somewhat unsteady fingers, that yet tried to be quiet, Faith broke the seal; and masking her glowing face with one hand, she bent over the letter to read it.

"My very dear, and most unknown, and most well-known little sister! I have had a picture sent me of you—as you appeared one night, when you sat for your portrait, hearing Portia; and with it a notice of several events which occurred just before that time. And both picture and events have gone down into my heart, and abide there. Endecott says you are a Sunbeam—and I feel as if a little of the light had come over the water to me,—ever since his letter came I have been in a state of absolute reflection!

"I thought my love would not be the first to 'find out the way'—even then when I wrote it! Faith—do you know that there is nobody in the world just like him? because if you do not—you will find it out!—I mean! like Endecott—*not* like Love. My dear, I beg pardon for my pronoun! But just how *I* have loved you all these months, for making him so happy, I cannot tell you.

"And I cannot write to-day—about anything,—my thoughts are in too uneven a flow to find their way to the end of my pen, and take all possible flights instead. Dear Faith, you must wait for a *letter* till the next steamer. And you cannot miss it—nor anything else, with Endecott there,—it seems to me that to be even in the same country with him is happiness.

"You must love me too, Faith, and not think me a stranger,—and let me be your (because I am Endy's)

"PET."

Faith took a great deal more time than was necessary for the reading of this letter. Very much indeed she would have liked to do as her correspondent confessed she had done, and cry—but there was no sign of such an inclination. She only sat perfectly moveless, bending over her letter. At last suddenly looked up and gave it to Mr. Linden.

"Well?" he said with a smile at her as he took it.

"You'll see—" she said, a little breathlessly. And still holding her hand fast, Mr. Linden read the letter, quicker than she had done, and without comment—unless when his look shewed that it touched him.

"You will love her, Faith!" he said as he folded the letter up again,—"in spite of all your inclinations to the contrary!"

"Do you think that is in the future tense? But I am afraid," added Faith,—"she thinks too much of me now."

"She does not think as much of you as I do," Mr. Linden said, with a look and smile that covered all the ground of present or future fear. "And after all it is a danger which you will share with me. It is one of Pet's loveable feelings to think too much of some people whom she loves just enough."

Humility is not a fearful thing. Whatever had been in Faith's speech, her look, bright, wistful, and happy, had no fear, truly bumble though it was. "There is no danger of my loving this letter too much"—she said as she carefully restored it to its envelope; said with a secret utterance of great gratification.

The promised half hour was much more than up, and the broadening shadow on Kildeer river said that the time which could be given to wild flowers was fast running away. Perhaps, too, Mr. Linden thought Faith had mused and been excited enough, for he made a move. Everything in the boat was put up in close order, and then the two went ashore again, flower basket in hand.

The long shadows heightened the beauty of the woods now, falling soft and brown upon the yet browner carpet of dry leaves, and the young leaves and buds overhead shewed every tint, from yellow to green. Under the trees were various low shrubs in flower,—shad-blossom, with its fleecy stems, and azalia in rosy pink; and the real wild flowers—the dainty things as wild in growth as in name, were sprinkled everywhere. Wind flowers and columbine; orchis sweet as any hyacinth; tall Solomon's seal; spotless bloodroot; and violets—white, yellow, and purple. The dogwood stretched its white arms athwart hemlock and service; the creeping partridge berry carried its perfumed white stars over rocks and moss in the deep shade below. Yellow bellwort hung its fair flowers on every ridge; where the ground grew wet were dog's-tooth violet and chick wintergreen. There the red maples stood, with bunches of crimson keys,—at the edge of the higher ground their humbler growing sister the striped bark, waved her green tresses. There seemed to be no end to the flowers—nor to the variety—nor to the pleasure of picking.

"Faith—" said Mr. Linden.

Faith looked up from a bunch of Sanguinaria beside which she was crouching.

"I find so much Mignonette!—do you?"

Faith's eye flashed, and taking one of those little white stars she threw it towards Mr. Linden. It went in a graceful parabolic curve and fell harmlessly, like her courage, at his feet.

"What has become of the princess?"

"You ought rather to ask after the prince!" said Mr. Linden, picking up the Sanguinaria with great devotion. "Is this the Star of the Order of Merit?"

"I am not Queen Flora. I don't know."

"As what then was it bestowed?"

"It might be Mignonette's shield, which she used as a weapon because she hadn't any other! Endy, look at those green Maple flowers! You can reach them."

He gathered some of the hanging clusters, and then came and sat down where she was at work and began to put them into her basket, arranging and dressing the other flowers the while dextrously.

"Do you know, my little Sunbeam," he said, "that your namesakes are retreating?"

"I know it, Endy," she said hastening her last gatherings—"and I am ready."

They began their homeward way to the boat, wandering a little still, for flowers, and stopping to pick them, so that the sun was quite low before Kildeer river was reached. There Mr. Linden stood a moment looking about.

"Do you see the place where we sat, Faith?" he said,—"over on the other bank?"

She looked, and looked at him and smiled—very different from her look then! A glance comprehensive and satisfactory enough without words, so without any more words they went on their way along the shore of the river. As they neared their boat, the rays of the setting sun were darted into Kildeer river and gilded the embayed little vessel and all the surrounding shores. Rocks and trees and bits of land glowed or glistened in splendour wherever a point or a spray could catch the sun; the water in both rivers shone with a long strip of gold. They had had nothing so brilliant all day.

In the full glow and brightness Faith sat down in the boat with her flowers near her, and Mr. Linden loosened the sail. How pretty the bank looked as they were leaving it! the ashes of their fire on the rock, and the places where they had sat or wandered, and talked—such happy words!

"I shall always love Kildeer river," said Faith with little long breath, "because I read my letter here."

"And so shall I," said Mr. Linden,—"but my love for it dates back to the first piece of reading I ever did in its company." He looked back for a minute or two—at the one shore and the other—the sunlight, the trees, the flowery hillside, and it was well then that his face was not seen by Faith—there fell on it such a shadow of pain. But he presently turned to her again with just the former look.

"Now," he said, "do you think you can steer home in the twilight?"

"I don't know. Can I? I can follow directions."

"And I can give them."

And with that arrangement they ran out from the clean woody shores of Kildeer river, and set their sail for Pattaquasset. How fair, at that point of weather and day! a little quieter than the morning spring-tide of everything, but what was less gay was more peaceful; and against a soft south wind the little boat began to beat her way down, favoured however by the tide. These tacks made Mr. Linden's counsels more especially needed, but the short swift runs back and forth across the river were even more inspiriting than a steady run before the wind, and the constant attention which helm and sail required made talk and action lively enough.

"This is good, Endecott!" said Faith as the little boat came about for the fifth or sixth time.

"Faith," he said, smiling at her, "you look just as fresh as a rose!—the day does not seem to have tired you one bit."

"Tired!" she said,—"yes, I am a little bit tired—or hungry—but was there ever such a day as we have had?—since the first of January!"

"My dear little Mignonette!" Mr. Linden said—but if it was a "message" Faith had then, it came from somewhere nearer than across the water. "If you are tired, dear child, give up the rudder to me, and lay down your head and rest. Do you see after what a sleep-inviting fashion the lights are twinkling all down the shore?"

"I'm not sleepy a bit;" said Faith,—"nor tired, except just enough; and I like this small portion of power you have put in my hands. How beautiful those lights look!—and the lights overhead, Endy. How beautiful every thing is!"—

"Yes," said Mr. Linden, "when there is light within.—

'He that hath light within his own clear breast,
May sit i' the centre and enjoy bright day.'"

"That's beautiful!" said Faith after a pause.

And now the brush and stir of "coming about" again claimed their attention, and in a minute more they were stretching away on a new tack, with another set of constellations opposite to them in the sky. The breeze was fresh, though as mild as May; the boat made good speed; and in spite of beating down the river the mouth of the Mong was neared fast. Pattaquasset lights, a little cluster of them, appeared unmistakably; for down by the point there was a little knot of houses, variously concerned in trade or fisheries. Mr. Linden had to put his hand upon the tiller sometimes then, till they got in. Mr. Skip and Jerry were in waiting; had been, "a sight o' half hours," the former stated. Baskets and shad and passengers were transferred to the wagon, and within a moderate time thereafter welcomed (the latter) by Mrs. Derrick and supper—wherein, after a little delay therefor, the shad played a conspicuous and most satisfactory part.

Now there are no shad like the shad that come out of the Mong.

CHAPTER XVI.

So passed the days. Not indeed all at Kildeer river, but all in sweet, peaceful, bright occupations, whether of work or play. The trustees had received their notice, with much dismay; a little alleviated by the fact that Mr. Linden was willing to stay at his post for a few weeks after the end of the year.

It was almost a wonder, as the weeks went on, that Mr. Linden kept down the shadows as well as he did,—to leave Faith in the morning, and go to his devoted set of scholars—every one of whom had some particular as well as general hold on him and love for him; and then to get away by the hardest from their words and looks of sorrow and regret, and come back to the presence of her brave little face—Mr. Linden was between two fires. And they wrought a sort of deepening of everything about him which was lovely or loveable—which did not make it easier for Pattaquasset to let him go.

As far as anybody could be a help to him, Faith was one. In a gentleness of spirit that was of no kin to weakness, she took to her heart the good that she had, and was quite as much of a sunbeam as ever. How it would be when Mr. Linden was gone, Faith did not know; but she did know that that was one of to-morrow's cares, with which she had no business to-day. If the thought ever came up in its strength, strong enough to bring down her heart and head,—if there were times when Faith shewed herself to herself—the revelation was made to no other person. And therefore it is probable that it was a view she did not often indulge in.

Dr. Harrison was not much at Pattaquasset these days He found it convenient to be away.

Dr. Harrison was a man who did not like to throw away his ammunition. He by no means absented himself because of any failing in his fancy for somebody in Pattaquasset; the working of cause and effect was on a precisely opposite principle. The truth was, the fancy had grown to a strength that would not well bear the doubtful kind of intercourse which had been kept up between the parties; yet doubtful it remained, and must remain for the present. With Mr. Linden there in the family; with the familiar habits that naturally grow up between hostess and guest, friend and friend, fellow inmates of the same house—it was very difficult for the doctor to judge whether those habits had any other and deeper groundwork. It was impossible, with his scanty and limited chances of observation. At the same time there was too great a possibility—his jealousy called it more,—for him to be willing to take any forward and undoubtful steps himself. He did not find sea-room to put in his oar. In this state of things, all that his pride and his prudence would suffer him to do, was to wait—wait till either by Mr. Linden's stay or departure the truth might be made known. But to abide in Pattaquasset and watch patiently the signs of things, was more than Dr. Harrison's feeling,—for it was far more than fancy,—could bear. Just now, in despair or disgust, he had taken a longer enterprise than usual; and was very far indeed from Pattaquasset when the news of Mr. Linden's going set all the country in a flame. So, greatly to Faith's satisfaction, he could not for some time be there to add any flame of his own.

The morning readings with Mr. Linden were great and chief treasures to her all these days. She was always ready for him before six o'clock. Not now in a firelit room, with curtains drawn against the cold; but in the early freshness of the spring and summer mornings, with windows open and sweet air coming in. Duly Faith noted every "ladder of verses"—till her Bible grew to be well dotted with marks of red ink. They looked lovely to her eyes. So they might; for they were records of many very deep and sweet draughts from that well of water which the word is to them that love it; draughts deeper and sweeter than Faith could have drawn by herself—or she thought so. No quarter of an hour in the day Faith loved so well. It was often more.

One morning the "ladder" began with the silver trumpets made for the service of God in the hands of the priests of Israel. Faith, looking quietly out of the window, went roving in thought over the times and occasions Mr. Linden read of, when their triumphal blast had proclaimed the name and the glory of God in the ears of the thousands of Israel; times of rejoicing, of hope, of promise and of victory. Scenes of glory in the old Jewish history floated before her—with the sublime faith of the actors in them, and the magnificent emblematic language in which they read the truth. Faith only came fairly back to New England and Pattaquasset at David's declaration—

"Blessed are the people that know the joyful sound; they shall walk, O
Lord, in the light of thy countenance."

The words thrilled her. She thought of the many who had never heard the sound at all; and entered into Isaiah's foresight of a day when "the great trumpet shall be blown, and they shall come that were ready to perish in the land of Assyria, and the outcasts in the land of Egypt."—

"How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good; that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!"

Then came Isaiah's own blast of the trumpet, and then the sweet enlargements and proclamations of the gospel, and the Lord's own invitation to all who are "weary and heavy laden." But also—

"How shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of

whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? and how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!"—

"And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

Faith sat by the open window, no sound abroad but the stir in the leaves and the low music of birds. The very still peace without, rather seemed to heighten and swell the moving of thoughts within, which surged like the sea. Mr. Linden stopped reading and was silent; and so was she, with nothing of all this appearing otherwise than in the fixed, abstracted look which went out into Pattaquasset but also went far beyond. And when she spoke, it was earnestly and with the same clear quiet.

"Endy—I am *glad* to have you go, for the reason you are going for. I wouldn't have you be anything else than what you mean to be,—not for the pleasure of having you here."

Her voice did not tremble, though indeed it told of feelings that were less assured.

"Dear Faith!" Mr. Linden said, with a bright flash of pleasure at her words, which changed even while he spoke, "you do not know what a comfort it is to me to feel that! And do you realize, little Sunbeam, what joy it is, that however far apart we can still work together—in the same cause, for the same master? The work which I take upon me by name, belongs as really to you,—for the call should be given by every one that heareth to every one that is athirst."

"I know—" she said quietly. "How grand those words are you have been reading!"

"Faith," Mr. Linden said presently, "have you any special attachment to this particular little Bible?"

"I have my red notes in it," she said with a bright smile.

"I am not quite satisfied with the paper and type, for your eyes—by firelight and twilight. Shall I break up any train of old association if I send you another?"

She gave him a look of what Dr. Harrison might have called "compound interest"; but assured him at the same time with sedate earnestness that the one she had would do very well.

This was but a day or two before Mr. Linden's leaving Pattaquasset. He had paid his many farewell visits before the last week came, and before that, too, had given up his weekday scholars,—those last days were all given to Faith. Given to her in every possible way—out of doors and within; in that fair summer weather the open air was the best of all places for talking, and the least liable to intrusion. It was a great relief to get away from village sights and sounds to the still woods, or the fresh shore,—it was a great help towards cheerfulness. And the help was needed. Wherever Mr. Linden went, among people, he met nothing but sorrow for his going away,—wherever he went, to house or woods, he carried the deep-hidden double sorrow in his heart, which no one guessed of all who so loudly bewailed his departure. Faith herself perhaps hardly realized what his part of that sorrow was; but he knew hers, and bore it—as one bears the trials of the dearest friend one has on earth.

He was to go very early in the morning, but when the late evening talk had impinged upon the night as much as it could be allowed to do, he gave Faith the unexpected promise of coming down to read with her just as usual next day.

It was very, very early this time, in the summer twilight dawn, when the kildeers were in their full burst of matins, and all the other birds coming in one by one. Faith did not say many words, but she was as quiet as the hour. Then she went to the breakfast-room to arrange and hasten matters there; and Mr. Linden followed, and stood watching her—she did not know how,—she only knew how he talked.

But he took her into the sitting-room the moment breakfast was over and stood by her, giving her the mute caresses he could not put in words. And for words there was little time. The morning light came up and up into the sky, the candles burned dim, as they stood there; and then he bade her "'be perfect, be of good comfort,'" and so went away.

CHAPTER XVII.

When Mr. Linden was out of sight from the porch, Faith went to the deserted room.

It was in the latter end of summer. The windows were open, and the summer wind blowing the muslin curtains flutteringly in. The maple shaded Faith's old reading window, the leaves not changing yet; one cupboard door a little open, shewed the treasures of books within. The chintz couch stood empty, so it always stood when Faith saw it, except only in those days of Mr. Linden's confinement with his wound. But now her mind leaped back to that time; and the couch and the table and the books, the very windows and fireplace, looked deserted. The red maple leaves floating in—the dancing flames in the chimney—her lessons by the side of that couch—her first exercise, which she had been sent to do at that table;—all that and everything beside seemed to make its passage through Faith's mind in tumultuous procession. She sat down on the couch and leaned her head on the back of it; but only a few nervous tears came, and oppressed sobbing breaths took the place of them. For a little while then Faith fell on her knees, and if she could not speak connectedly, nor think connectedly, she yet poured out her heart in the only safe channel; and grew quiet and self-possessed. After an hour she left the couch and turned to go down and join her mother.

Passing the table on her way out, with a glance which had been called off by other things as she came in, Faith's eye was caught and stayed. There was no exercise left there for her, but the very gold pen with which she had written that first one—and which she had used so many times since, lay there; and by the pen a letter. The blood rushed to Faith's heart as if Mr. Linden had come back again, or rather as if he had not taken quite all of himself away. In a flood of gladness and thankfulness and sorrow, Faith took up the letter and standing there by the table read it.

MY OWN LITTLE PRECIOUS MIGNONETTE,

I have a love for this sheet of paper, because it will be in your hands when I cannot touch them nor see them,—how often they have ministered to me just where I am writing this! just where you will find it. I know *you* will find it, Faith—I know where you will go as soon as I am out of sight,—but dear child, do not let any sight or association in this room make you anything but glad: they are all very dear to me. That first day when you came in here to see me—and all the days that followed,—and all the sweet knowledge I gained of my little Mignonette, while she was learning other things. Faith, I can even forgive Dr. Harrison his questions that day, for the delight it was to me to shield you. Dear child, you must let me do that now whenever I can,—it is one of the griefs of this separation that I cannot do it all the time.

I must go back to our Bible verses!—Do you remember that first 'ladder' we went up together? 'The Lord God is a sun and a shield; the Lord will give grace and glory.'—In that sunlight I shall think of you as abiding,—I will remember that you are covered by that shield. I know that the Lord will keep all that I have committed to him!

Now darling, if I could leave you 'messages,' I would; but they must wait till I come and deliver them myself. Take, in the mean while, all possible love and trust; and all comfort from the cause of my absence, from our mutual work, from my expected coming home now and then—from the diamonds on your finger and what they betoken! The diamonds stay with you, Faith, but their light goes with me.

My child, I have too much to say to write any longer!—I shall be drawn on too far and too long,—it is not far from daybreak now. Take the best possible care of your self, and 'be strong and of a good courage,' and 'the Lord that made heaven and earth, bless thee out of Zion'!

Precious child, you do not know how deeply I am

Always your own—

ENDECOTT."

The first lines of the letter wrung some tears from Faith's eyes, but afterwards the effect of the whole was to shake her. She sat down on the couch with the letter fast in her hand, and hid her head; yet no weeping, only convulsive breaths and a straitened breast. Faith was wonderful glad of that letter! but the meeting of two tides is just hard to bear; and it wakened everything as well as gladness. However, in its time, that struggle was over too; and she went down to Mrs. Derrick looking much like her wonted self.

She went about so, all the day; nervously busy, though never more orderly about her business. In the kitchen and dairy and storeroom, and with her mother, Faith seemed as usual, with a very little of grave thoughtfulness or remembrance thrown over her natural pleasantness; only she gave books a wide berth, and took care to see no face that came to the house. One would have thought her—perhaps Mrs. Derrick even did—quietly composed and patiently submitting to trial, as if Mr. Linden had been already weeks away. Perhaps Faith herself thought so. A little thing shewed how much this quiet was

worth.

The day had been gone through; the tea was over, as it might, with the two alone; and mother and daughter had gone into the other room. Faith lit the lamp, and then began a sentence to her mother about laying the Bible in its place for prayer—when she stopped short. For a moment she stood still with the revulsion; then she fell on her knees and hid her face in Mrs. Derrick's lap, and the tears that had kept back so long came in a stormy flood; clearing the sky which had not been clear before. She was quiet really after that; she had no more fear of her books; and the first thing Faith did was to take pen and paper and pour out an answer to her morning's letter; an answer in which she gave Mr. Linden the history of her whole day, with very little reservation.

Her mother watched her,—sat and looked at her as she wrote, with eyes very glistening and tremulous in their fond admiration. Indeed that had been their character all day, though Mrs. Derrick had followed Faith in her busy work, with no attempt to check her, with no allusion to what they both thought of uninterruptedly. Now, however, that Faith's tears had made their own way, her mother's heart was easier; and she watched the pretty writer by the lamp with all sorts of sweet and tender thoughts.

A day or two passed, in great quiet and tender ministering to each other of the mother and daughter. Faith had taken deep hold of her studies again and every minute of the day was filled up as busily as ever. So the sitting-room wore in all things minus one its wonted aspect, when, the third evening, it received Dr. Harrison.

He came in looking remarkably well, in his light dainty summer dress, and with that gentle carelessness of movement and manner that suited the relaxing persuasions of a hot summer day. He came in, too, a little like a person who through long absences has forgotten how wonted he used to be in a certain place or how fond he was of what he found there. Nothing further from the truth!

He accosted both ladies after his usual gay fashion, and talked for a while about nothings and as if he cared about nothing. He could make nothing of Faith, except perhaps that she was a trifle shy of him. That did not mean evil necessarily; it was natural enough. He wouldn't disturb her shyness!

"I have a sympathetic feeling for you, Mrs. Derrick," he remarked. "I miss Mr. Linden so much in Pattaquasset, I can't think how you must do in the house."

"No, doctor, you can't," was Mrs. Derrick's quiet rejoinder.

"How do you?"

"Why I can't tell you, either," said Mrs. Derrick.

"Mrs. Derrick," said the doctor, "I shouldn't like to be a lawyer and have to examine you as a witness. Unless it wasn't August!"

"Well I suppose we should agree upon that, doctor," said Mrs. Derrick.
"I don't know what August has to do with it."

"My dear madam, it would be too much trouble!—Apparently it isn't August everywhere!"—A very peremptory rap at the front door came in the train of footsteps that were loud and brisk as by authority, and that had quite survived the enervating effects referred to by the doctor.

"Miss Faith," said Cindy appearing at the parlour door, "here's a man's got something—and he won't give it to me without I'll take oath I'm you—which of course I dursn't. I'm free to confess, I can't even get sight of it. Shall I fetch him in—thing and all?"

Faith went to the door. It was nobody more terrific than an express-man, who seemed to recognize "Miss Faith Derrick" by instinct, for he asked no questions—only put a package into her hands, and then gave her his book to sign. Faith signed her name, eagerly, and then ran up stairs with her treasure and a beating heart, and struck a light.

There was no need to ask where it came from—the address was plain enough; nor much need to ask what it was—she knew that it must be her Bible. Yet that only heightened the pleasure and interest, as she took off one wrapping paper after another, till its own beautiful morocco covers appeared. Within was the perfection of type and paper, with here and there a fine coloured map; in size and shape just that medium which seems to combine the excellencies of all the rest. There was no letter in the package, but a slip of paper with a new "ladder of verses" marked the place where they began; and on the fly leaf, below the inscription, was written the first verse of the ninety-first psalm. This was the leading reference on the slip of paper.

Has any one—with any heart—ever received such a package? To such a one there is no need to tell the glow of pleasure, the rush of affection and joy, which filled Faith's heart and her face; to anybody else it's no use. She had to exercise some care to prevent certain witnesses of the eyes from staining the morocco or spotting the leaves. The paper of references she left, to be enjoyed more leisurely another time; and went on turning over the pages, catching glimpses of the loved words that she had never seen so fairly presented to the eye before; when after a good deal of this sort of delectation, through half of which she was writing a letter to Mr. Linden, Faith suddenly recollected Dr. Harrison! Softly the paper wrappers enfolded her treasure, and then Faith went down stairs with the high colour of pleasure in her cheeks. The doctor took several observations.

He had not been profiting by any opportunity to "examine" Mrs. Derrick. On the contrary, he had talked about everything else, somewhat August fashion, in manner, but yet so cleverly that even Mrs. Derrick confessed afterwards she had been entertained. Now, on Faith's reappearance, he went on with his subject until he came to a natural pause in the conversation; which he changed by remarking, in a simple tone of interest,

"I haven't learned yet satisfactorily what took Mr. Linden away?"

"His own business," said Mrs. Derrick. "You must have heard what he is about now, doctor?"

"I have heard—but one hears everything. It is true then?"

"O yes, it's true," said Mrs. Derrick with an even play of her knitting-needles.

"But then follows another very natural question," said the doctor.—"Why did he come here at all?"

"I dare say he'd tell you if he was here—as I wish he was," said Mrs. Derrick,—"Mr. Linden always seemed to have good reasons for what he did."

"I think that too," said the doctor. "I am not quite so sure of his telling them to me. But Pattaquasset has reason to be very sorry he is gone away! What sort of a preacher will he make, Mrs. Derrick?"

"He's a good one now—" said Mrs. Derrick with a smile that was even a little moved. "Don't you think so, doctor?"

"How dare you ask me that, Mrs. Derrick?" said the doctor with slow funny utterance. "But I will confess this,—I would rather have *him* preach to me than you."

"What sort of a bad reason have you got for that?" she said, looking at him.

"Miss Faith," said the doctor with the mock air of being in a dilemma,—"you are good at definitions, if I remember—what is the proper character of a *bad reason!*"

Faith looked up—he had never seen her look prettier, with a little hidden laughter both on and under her face and that colour she had brought down stairs with her. But her answer was demure enough.

"I suppose, sir, one that ought not to be a reason at all,—or one that is not reason enough."

"Do you consider it a bad reason for my not liking Mrs. Derrick's preaching, that I am afraid of her?"

"I shouldn't think it was reason enough," said Faith.

"Do you like preaching from people that you are afraid of?"

"Yes. At least I think I should. I don't know that I ever really was afraid of anybody."

These words, or the manner which went with them, quite obliterated the idea of Mrs. Derrick from the doctor's head. But his manner did not change. He only addressed his talk to Faith and altered the character of it. Nothing could be more cool and disembarrassed. He had chosen his tactics.

They were made to regulate likewise the length of his visit, though the short summer evening had near run its course before he (in parliamentary phrase) "was on his legs" not to speak but to go. Then strolling on to the front door, he there met Reuben Taylor; flush in the doorway. The boy stept back into the hall to let him cone out; whence, as the doctor saw through the open window,—he went at once to Faith's side. But either accidentally or of design, Reuben stood so directly before her, that Dr. Harrison could see neither face—indeed could scarce see her at all. The little business transaction that went on then—the letter which Reuben took from his pocket and then again from its outer enveloppe,—the simple respect and pleasure with which he gave it to Faith—though colouring a little too,—all this was invisible, except to Mrs. Derrick. Faith's face would have told the doctor the whole. The pretty colour—the dropped eyes—and the undertone of her grateful, "I am very much obliged to you, Reuben!"

Reuben made no verbal answer, and staid not a minute longer, but the pleasure of his new trust was wonderful!

CHAPTER XVIII.

Faith did not have as uninterrupted a time for studies as she had counted upon for the next few months. In the first place, letters took a great many hours. In the second place, her studies were pretty frequently broken up of an evening by Dr. Harrison.

He certainly came often; whether it was because of the strength of attraction in that particular house, or the failure of any attraction beside in all the coasts of Pattaquasset, was a problem which remained unsolved by anything in the doctor's manner. His manner was like what it had been the evening just recounted. He amused himself, after his nonchalant fashion, and amused his hearers; he did not in the mean time call upon them for any help at all. He discerned easily that Faith had a little shyness about her; that might mean one thing or it might mean another; and Dr. Harrison was far too wise to risk the one thing by endeavouring to find out whether it was the other. The doctor was no fisher had no favour for the sport; but if he had been, he might have thought that now he was going to give his fish a very long line indeed, and let it play to any extent of shyness or wilfulness; his hand on the reel all the time.

The talk that would do for Miss Essie would not please Faith. The doctor knew that long ago. He drew upon his better stores. His knowledge of the earth we live on; his familiarity with nature's and art's wonders; history and philosophy; literature and science; and a knowledge of the world which he used as a little piquant spice to flavour all the rest of his knowledge. Thrown in justly, with a nice hand, so as not to offend, it did rather serve to provoke a delicate palate; while it unmistakably gratified his own. It was the salt to the doctor's dish.

But everything wants breaking up with variety, and variety itself may come to be monotonous. He asked Faith one evening if she knew anything of chymistry; and proceeded upon her reply to give her sundry bits of detail and some further insight into the meaning and bearing of the science. It was not August then, but it might have been, for the leisurely manner in which the doctor "unwound his skein" of talk, as if he were talking to himself or *for* himself; and yet he was, and he knew it, filling Faith's ears with delight. He took up the same subject afterwards from time to time; beginning from any trifle of suggestion, he would go off into an exquisite chymical discussion, illustrated and pointed and ornamented, as no lecturer but one loving both his subject and his *object* could ever make it. After a while the doctor began to come with bits of metal and phials of acids, and delight Faith and astonish Mrs. Derrick by turning her sitting-room into an impromptu laboratory. Such fumes! such gaseous odours! such ominous "reports", were never known in and about Mrs. Derrick's quiet household; nor were her basins and tumblers ever put to such strange, and in her view hideous, uses. But Dr. Harrison rather seemed to enjoy what appeared at first sight inconveniences; triumphed over the imperfections of tools and instruments, and wrought wonders over which Faith bent with greater raptures than if the marvels of Aladdin's lamp had been shewn before her. The doctor began by slow degrees; he let all this grow up of itself; he asked only for a tumbler the first time. And insensibly they went on, from one thing to another; till instead of a tumbler, the doctor would sometimes be surrounded with a most extraordinary retinue and train of diversified crockery and china. An empty butter-tub came to do duty for a water-bath; bottles and jars and cups and glasses, of various shapes and dimensions, attended or waited upon the doctor's operations; and with a slight apology and assurance to Mrs. Derrick he on more than one or two occasions appropriated the clock-shade for his use and behoof as a receiver. Then siphons began to come in the doctor's pocket; and glass tubes, bent and straight, open and sealed, in the doctor's hand; and one of his evenings came to be "better than a play." A most beautiful and exquisite play to Faith. Yet Dr. Harrison never forgot his tactics; never let his fish feel the line; and to Faith's joyous "How shall I ever thank you, Dr. Harrison!"—would reply by a dry request that she would induce Mrs. Derrick to have muffins for tea some evening and let him come.

And what did Dr. Harrison gain by all this? He did gain some hours of pleasure—that would have been very exquisite pleasure, but for the doubt that haunted him, and respecting which he could get no data of decision. The shyness and reserve did pass away from Faith; she met him and talked with him as a pleasant intimate friend whose company she enjoyed and who had a sort of right to hers; the right of friendship and kindliness. But then he never did anything to try her shyness or to call up her reserve. He never asked anything of her that she *could* refuse. He never advanced a step where it could with decency be repressed. He knew it. But he bided his time. He did not know what thorough and full accounts of all his evenings went—through the post-office.

He knew, and it rather annoyed him, that Reuben Taylor was very freely admitted and very intimately

regarded in the house. There was perhaps no very good reason why this should have annoyed the doctor. Yet somehow he always rather identified Reuben Taylor with another of his friends. He found out, too, that Reuben much preferred the times when he, the doctor, was not there; for after once or twice coming in upon sulphuric acid and clock shades (from which he retreated faster than if it had all been gun-powder) Reuben changed his hour; and the doctor had the satisfaction of wishing him good evening in the porch—or of passing him on the sidewalk—or of hearing the swing of the little gate and Reuben's quick bound up the steps when his own feet were well out in the common ground of the road.

Mrs. Derrick expressed unequivocally (to Faith, not the doctor) her dislike of all chymical "smells" whatever, and her abhorrence of all "reports" but those which went off after the doctor's departure; the preparation of which Mrs. Derrick beheld with a sort of vindictive satisfaction. Mr. Linden enjoyed his letters unqualifiedly, sometimes wrote chymical answers—now and then forestalling the doctor, but rarely saying much about him. Faith was in little danger of annoyance from anything with her mother sitting by, and for the rest Dr. Harrison was at his own risk. Letters were too precious—every inch of them—to be much taken up with discussing *him*. Other things were of more interest,—sometimes discussion, sometimes information, oftenest of all, talk; and now and then came with the letter some book to give Faith a new bit of reading. Above all, the letters told her—in a sort of indefinable, unconscious way, how much, how much her presence was missed and longed for; it seemed to her as if where one letter laid it down the next took it up—not in word but in atmosphere, and carried it further. In that one respect (though Faith never found it out) the chymical accounts gave pain.

Faith in her letters never spoke directly of this element of his; but she made many a gentle effort to meet it and soothe what could be soothed. To this end partly were her very full accounts of all the course of her quiet life. As fearlessly and simply as possible Faith talked, to him; quite willing to be found wrong and to be told so, wherever wrong was. It was rather by the fulness of what she gave him, than by any declaration of want on her own part, that Mr. Linden could tell from her letters how much she felt or missed in his absence. She rarely put any of that into words, and if it got in atmospherically it was by the subtlest of entrances. When she spoke it at all, it was generally a very frank and simple expression of strong truth.

Of out-door work, during all this time, she had a variety. For some time after Mr. Linden's going away, neither Mrs. Stoutenburgh nor the Squire had been near the house; but then they began to amuse themselves with taking her to drive, and whenever Faith could and would go she was sure of a pleasant hour or two out in the brisk autumn air, and with no danger of even hearing Mr. Linden's name mentioned. The silence indeed proved rather too much, but it was better than speech. Then she and Reuben had many excursions, short and long. Sometimes the flowers or eggs or tracts were sent by him alone, but often Faith chose to go too; and he was her ever ready, respectful, and efficient escort,—respect it was truly, of the deepest and most affectionate kind. And thus—on foot or with Jerry—the two went their rounds; but at such houses Faith must both hear and speak of Mr. Linden—there was always some question to answer, some story to hear.

It happened, among Dr. Harrison's other pleasures, that he several times met them on these expeditions; generally when he was driving, sometimes when they were too; but one late November afternoon—not late in the month but late in the day, fortune favoured him. Strolling along for an unwonted walk, the doctor beheld from a little hill Faith and Reuben in the valley below,—saw them go up to the door of a cottage, saw Faith go in, and Reuben sit down in the porch and take out his book. It was a fair picture,—the brown woodland, the soft sunlight, the little dark cottage, the pretty youthful figures with their quick steps and natural gestures, and the evening hue and tone of everything. But the doctor did not admire it—and went down the hill without even taking off his hat to the chickadees that bobbed their black caps at him from both sides of the road. By the porch the doctor suddenly slackened his pace, looked within, nodded to Reuben, and came to a halt.

"Have I accidentally found out where you live, Reuben?"

"I live down by the shore, sir," said Reuben standing up.

"I thought—" said the doctor, "I had got an impression that you were not a thorough-going Pattaquasseter—but you looked so much at home there.—Where *do* you live? whereabouts, I mean; for the shore stretches a long way."

Reuben gave the vernacular name of the little rocky coast point which was his home, but the point itself was too much out of the doctor's 'beat' to have the name familiar.

"How far off is that?"

"About four miles from here, sir."

"May I ask what you are studying so diligently four miles from home at this hour?"

Reuben coloured a good deal, but with not more than a moment's reluctance held out his book for the doctor's inspection. It was a Bible. The doctor's face changed, ever so little; but with what feeling, or combination of feelings, it would have taken a much wiser reader of men and faces than Reuben to tell. It was only a moment, and then he stood with the book in his hand gravely turning it over, but with his usual face.

"I once had the pleasure of asking you questions on some other matters," he remarked,—"and I remember you answered well. Can you pass as good an examination in this?"

"As to the words, sir? or the thoughts?—I don't quite know," said Reuben modestly.

"Words are the signs of thoughts, you know."

"Yes, sir—but nobody can know all the Bible thoughts—though some people have learned all the Bible words."

The doctor gave a little sort of commenting nod, rather approving than otherwise. "You are safe here," he paid as he handed the book back to Reuben; "for in this study I couldn't examine you. What are you pursuing the study for?—may I ask?"

"If you don't know!" was in the boy's full gaze for a moment. But he looked down again, answering steadily—"'Thy word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against thee!'—I love it, Dr. Harrison—and it shews me the way to serve God."

"Well," said the doctor rather kindly—"if I hadn't interrupted you, how much more study would you have accomplished before you thought it time to set oft for that four miles' walk home—to that unpronounceable place?"

"I don't know, sir—I am not obliged to be there by any particular time of night."

"No, I know you are not. But—excuse my curiosity!—are you so fond of the Bible that you stop on the way home to read it as you go along? or are you waiting for somebody?"

The words brought the colour back with a different tinge, but Reuben simply answered, "No, sir—I did not stop here to read. I am waiting."

"For Miss Derrick, are you not?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then I dare say Miss Derrick will release you for this time, and allow me to attend her home, whither I am going myself."

"I must wait till she comes out, sir," Reuben said, with the respectful intractability which the doctor remembered.

"Of course!" he said. "Did you ever take lessons of anybody but Mr. Linden?—" But at this point the house door opened and Faith came out.

"Miss Faith," said the doctor, after his greeting which was thoroughly in character, "if you will tell your escort here—who I am sure is a staunch one—that you need him no longer, he will feel free to begin his long walk to the shore,—and I shall have the rare pleasure and honour of going home with you."

Faith turned frankly. "Do you want to go home, Reuben?"

"No, Miss Faith"—was the equally frank, low-spoken answer,—"not unless you want me to go." Reuben could but speak the truth—and he did try to speak it with as little offence as possible; though with an instinctive feeling that the time "when truth will be truth and not treason," had not yet arrived. "I mean, that I want to do just what you wish," he added looking up at her.

"I don't want you to go, then," said Faith laughing, "for I mean that you shall come home to tea with me. Dr. Harrison, I will invite you too," she said turning her bright face towards him. "I *believe*—there are muffins to-night."

"Miss Faith,"—said the doctor,—"you are an angel!"

"What is the connexion between that and muffins?" said Faith merrily, for Reuben was at her side and she felt free.

"You mistake the connexion," said the doctor gravely. "Angels are supposed to be impartial in their attentions to the human race, and not swayed by such curious—and of course arrogant—considerations as move the lower herd of mortals. To an immaterial creature, how can the height of a door be material!"

"But I think you are mistaken," said Faith gently. "I don't believe any creatures mind more what they find inside the door."

"What did you find inside that door?" said the doctor.

Faith hesitated. "Do you know to-morrow is Thanksgiving day, Dr. Harrison?"

"I am not quite sure that I ought to say I know it—though my father did read the proclamation. I suppose I know it now."

"I found inside of that door some people who could not make pumpkin pies—and Reuben and I have been carrying them one of mother's."

"What a day they will have of it!" said the doctor,—"if Mrs. Derrick's pies are made in the same place as her muffins. But can *you* find nothing better to do than running round the country to supply the people that haven't pies?"

"Not many things pleasanter,"—said Faith looking at him.

"I see I was right," said he smiling. "I have no doubt angels do that sort of thing. But it is a sort of pleasure of which I have no knowledge. All my life I have pleased only myself. Yet one would wish to have some share in it, too. I can't make pies! And if I could, I shouldn't know in the least where to bestow them. Do you think you could take this now," said he producing a gold eagle, "and turn it into pumpkins or anything else that you think will make people happy—and see that they get to the right places?—for me?"

"Do you mean it seriously, Dr. Harrison?"

"If you will have the condescension!"

"Oh thank you!" said Faith flushing with joy,—"oh thank you! I am very glad of this, and so will many others be. Dr. Harrison, I wish you could know the pleasure this will give!—the good it will do."

"I don't think a ten-dollar piece ever gave *me* so much pleasure," said he looking a little moved. "About the good I don't know; that's not so easy."

Faith left that point for him to consider, though with many a wish in her own heart. But the walk home brightened into a very pleasant one after that.

CHAPTER XIX.

The soft grey clouds which had hung about the setting sun only waited his departure to double their folds and spread them all over the sky. Then the wind rose, sweeping gustily through the bare branches, and heavy drops of rain fell scatteringly on the dead leaves. But when wind and rain had taken a little more counsel together, they joined forces in a wild stormy concert which swept on with increasing tumult. It did not disturb Faith and her mother, at their quiet work and reading,—it did not deter Cindy from going over night to spend Thanksgiving day with her friends,—but it was a wild storm nevertheless; and while the hours of the night rolled on over the sleepers in Mrs. Derrick's house, still wind and rain kept up their carousal, nor thought of being quiet even when the morning broke.

"But rather, giving of thanks."—That was the motto of the day—the one answer to the many vexed questions of life and care. Care was pressing, and life distracting, and everywhere was something that seemed to call for tears or complaints. To all of these the day answered—"But rather, giving of thanks."

It was dark enough when Faith awoke; and she sat up in bed a minute or two, listening to the wild blasts of wind and the heavy pattering of the rain,—hearing the screech of the locomotive as the train swept by in the distance, with a pang at the thought of its freight of homeward-bound and expected

dear ones,—then taking the day's motto, and gently and quietly going about the day's work. But the first of its work for her, was to cancel the bit of work it had already done by itself; and for that Faith went to her Bible,—went first to the list of texts that had come with it; endeavouring to realize and make sure her ground on that verse of the 91st Psalm—then on from that to its following—

"For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion."

It was not a "time of trouble." Faith would not call it so. Never so bright a Thanksgiving day had risen upon her, spite of its clouds. But trouble might come; in the course of life-experience she knew it was pretty sure to come; and she sought to refuge herself beforehand in the promise of that pavilion of hiding. The driving wind and storm that emblematized another kind, gave emphasis also to the emblem of shelter. How Faith blessed her Bible!

The next verse enlarged a little.—

"Thou shalt hide them in the secret of thy presence from the pride of man: thou shalt keep them secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues."

Then followed the joyful acceptance of that promise—

"Thou art my hiding place; thou shalt preserve me from trouble; thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance."

Then its result—

"I am like a green olive tree in the house of God: I trust in the mercy of God for ever and ever."

"From the end of the earth will I cry unto thee, when my heart is overwhelmed: lead me to the rock that is higher than I. For thou hast been a shelter for me, and a strong tower from the enemy. I will abide in thy tabernacle for ever; I will trust in the covert of thy wings."

What strong refuge! what riches of trust!—How very bright Faith's fire-lit room looked, with the wind whistling all about, and the red light on her open Bible. She turned on. And like the full burst of a chorus after that solo, she seemed to hear the whole Church Militant say,—

"Lord, thou hast been our dwelling-place in all generations."

Her mind swept back to the martyr ages,—to times when the church's road has been in darkness and in light, and the long train of pilgrims have gone over it in light and in darkness, each with that staff in his hand. Faith looked long at those words, seeming to see the great "cloud of witnesses" pass in procession before her. How true the words were to Abraham, when he left his home. How true to Daniel when he was thrown to the lions. How true they were to Stephen when he uttered his dying cry! —how true to the little child whom she had seen go to be with Christ for ever!—"In all generations."

The prophets, true to their office, threw the light for ward.—

"He shall be for a sanctuary."

"Although I have cast them far off among the heathen, and although I have scattered them among the countries, yet will I be to them as a little sanctuary in the countries where they shall come."

"I will be as the dew unto Israel: he shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon. His branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as the olive tree, and his smell as Lebanon."

The next words gave the whole description, the whole key of entrance.

"Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him and he in God. And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him."

Here was the "Sanctuary" on earth,—the foreshewing image of the one on high.

"I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it."

How far Faith had got from the earthly Thanksgiving day—even to that finished and everlasting one on high! She had of course read and studied these passages all before—once; and then she had shut them up as a particular casket of treasures that she would not grow too familiar with suddenly, but would keep to enjoy their brightness another time. Something this Thanksgiving morning had made Faith want them. She now sat looking at the last words, feeling as if she wanted nothing.

The wind and the rain still raged without, drowning and merging any sounds there might be in the road, though truly few animate things were abroad at that hour in that weather. Mr. Skip had roused himself, indeed, for his day's pleasure, and after lighting the kitchen fire had gone forth—leaving it to take care of itself; but when the door closed after him, Faith and her fire looked at each other in the same stillness as before. Until she heard the front door open and shut,—that was the first sound, and the last,—no unwonted one, either; that door opened and shut twenty times a day. What intangible, well-recognized modification in its motions now, made Faith's heart bound and sink with sudden belief —with swift denial? Who was it? at that hour! Faith sprang to the parlour door, she did not know how, and was in the dark hall. A little gleam of firelight followed her—a little faint dawn came through the fanlight of the door: just enough to reveal to Faith those very outlines which at first sight she had pronounced "pleasant." One more spring Faith made; with no scream of delight, but with a low exclamation, very low, that for its many-folded sweetness was like the involutions of a rosebud.

"Faith!" he exclaimed. "Don't touch me till I get out of the rain!"—which prohibition Faith might consider useless, or might think that—shuttlecock fashion—it had got turned round in the air.

"The best place to get out of the rain is in here," she said trying to draw him along with her. "Oh Endy! how came you in it?"

"If you say three words to me, I shall give you the benefit of all the remaining raindrops," said Mr. Linden, disengaging himself to throw off his overcoat,—"how can one do anything, with you standing there? How came I in it?—I came in it! Precious child! how do you do?" And she was taken possession of, and carried off into the next room, like a rosebud as she was, to have the same question put a great many times in a different way. More words for her, just then, Mr. Linden did not seem to have. Nor Faith for him. She stood very still, her face in a glow of shy joy, but her eyes and even her lips grave and quiet; except when sometimes a very tiny indicatory smile broke half way upon them.

"When did you come?"

"I came in the night train. Mignonette—are you glad to see me?"

The smile shewed her teeth a little. They would bear shewing, but this was only a glimmer of the white enamel.

"Then you have been travelling all night?"

"Yes. How are you going to prove your position?"

"What position, Endy?"

"That you are glad to see me."

"I don't know,"—she said looking up at him.

"You cannot think of any proof to give me?"

"I can think of a great many."

"I am ready to take them!" said Mr. Linden demurely.

"Then if you will sit down and let me leave you for a few minutes, I will see what I can do."

"Thank you—the proofs that I mean would by no means take you further off. Suppose you see what you can do without going away."

She laid her head down for a minute, colouring too, even the cheek that was high-coloured before; but she looked up again.

"Stoop your high head, then, Endy!"—she said;—and she gave him two kisses, as full and earnest as they were soft. There was no doubt Faith had proved her position!

"Faith, darling," he said, "have you been growing thin?—or is it only that I have had to do with such substantial humanity of late. Look up here and let me see—are you anything but the essence of Mignonette?"

The face she shewed was aptly named; about as pure as that. With grave, loving intentness—not the less grave for its little companion smile—Mr. Linden studied her face for a minute,—pushing back her hair.

"Do you think,"—she said then in a light soft tone—a departure from the last words,—"do you think you won't want the essence of something else by and by, Endecott?"

"No,"—decidedly,—"I want nothing but you—so you may as well make up your mind to want nothing but me."

"Do you know what that would end in?"

"Not necessarily in such a simple duet," said Mr. Linden smiling,—"people do not always realize their ideal. Mignonette, you are just as lovely as you can be!—and you need not bring Miss Reason to keep me in order. I suppose if *she* were in the house it would end in her wanting her breakfast."

"I don't like Miss Keason," said Faith, "and the only thing I am thinking of putting in order is the kitchen fire. Would you like to go there with me? Nobody's in the house—Cindy went yesterday to a wedding, and Mr. Skip is gone home to keep Thanksgiving."

"That is the best thing I ever heard of Cindy," said Mr. Linden. "Of course I will go!—and play Ferdinand again Faith, would the doctor call me an 'acid'—come to dissolve all his crystals?"

"Dr. Harrison gave me ten dollars yesterday for the poor people," said Faith as she led the way to the kitchen. Arrived there, she placed a chair for Mr. Linden and requested him to be seated; while she examined into the state of the fire. The chair was disregarded—the fire received double attention.

"Faith," he said laughingly, "I bear the curb about as well as Stranger. I have a great mind to tell you how that eagle stands in the doctor's memorandum book!"

Faith dropped her hands for the moment and looked at him, with grave eyes of wide-open attention. The look changed Mr. Linden's purpose,—he could not bear to take away all the pleasure the eagle had brought on his gold wings.

"I don't believe there is such a book in existence," he said lightly. "Miranda, what would you like to have me do for you now?—the fire is ready for anything."

"I haven't anything ready for it yet," said Faith, "but I will have—if you'll wait a bit."—She left him there, and ran off—coming back in a little while. And then Mr. Linden was initiated, if he never was before, in kitchen mysteries. Faith covered herself with a great apron, rolled up her sleeves above the elbows, and with funny little glances at him between whiles, went round the room about various pieces of work. Almost noiselessly, with the utmost nicety of quick and clean work, she was busy in one thing after another and in two or three at the same time; while Mr. Linden stood or sat by the fire looking on. Two things he comprehended; the potatoes which were put over the fire to boil and the white shortcakes which finally stood cut out on the board ready for baking. The preliminary flour and cream and mixing in the bowl had been (culinary) Sanscrit to him. He had watched her somewhat silently of late, but none the less intently: indeed in all his watching there had been a silent thread woven in with its laughing and busy talk,—his eyes had followed her as one follows a veritable sunbeam, noting the bright gleams of colour here, and the soft light there, and thinking of the time when it must quit the room.

"Faith," he said as she cut out her cakes, "are these what you made for me the first night I came here?"

"I believe so!"

"What do you suppose you look like—going about the kitchen in this style?—you make me think irresistibly of something."

"I should like to know," said Faith with an amused laugh.

"I shall make you blush, if I tell you," said Mr. Linden.

That was enough to do it! Faith gave him one look, and went on with her shortcakes.

"You don't care about knowing, after all?" said Mr. Linden. "Well,—Faith, do you expect ever to make such things in my house?—because if you do, I think it will ensure my coming down stairs before breakfast."

How she flushed—over cheek and brow,—then remarked gravely that, "she was glad he liked it."

"Yes, and you have no idea what effects my liking will produce!" said Mr. Linden. "You see, Faith, it may happen to us now and then to be left without other hands than our own in the house (there is no reliance whatever to be placed upon cottages!) and then you will come down, as now, and I shall come too—taking the precaution to bring a book, that nobody may suspect what I come for. Then enter one of my parishioners—Faith, are you attending?"

Faith had stopped, and poising her rolling pin the reverse way on the board—that is, on end,—had leaned her arms upon it,—giving up shortcakes entirely for the time being.

"You will not be in that position," said Mr. Linden, "but going on properly with your cakes—as you should be now. Then enter one of my parishioners who lives six miles off, to ask me to come over to his house and instruct him in the best way of hanging his gate,—which I of course promise to do, notwithstanding your protestations that I know nothing of that—nor of anything else. Parishioner goes away and reports. One part of the people say how economical we are!—to make one fire do our cooking and studying. Another part have their suspicions that you keep me at hand to lift off the teakettle (much strengthened by report of your protest.) And the charitable part at once propose to raise my salary—so that we may have as many fires as we like. Faith—what should we do in the circumstances?"

Faith was biting her lips and rolling out cakes with the swiftest activity, not allowing Mr. Linden a sight of her face.

"If you hung the gate, I should think you would take the money"—she answered demurely.

"I said you would say I could not do it!" said Mr. Linden. "Which being duly reported and considered by certain other people, will cause them to shake their heads, and wish in half audible (but most telegraphic!) whispers, 'that Mr. Linden were half as smart as his wife'!"

Faith stopped again. "Oh Endy!"—she exclaimed between laughing and pleading.

"Que voulez-vous, Mademoiselle?"

But Faith went at her cakes and finished the few that were left.

"I think you must be very much in want of your breakfast," she said coming to the fire. "You have played Prince Ferdinand—do you think you would mind acting the part of King Alfred, for once?"

"My dear, I will play any part for you whatever!—in our duet. Shall I practise taking off the kettle to begin with?"

"I don't think you had better,"—Faith said with a kept down laugh,—"for it doesn't boil."

"Shall I take you off then? What are you going to do while I play
Alfred?—I will not answer for my solo performances."

"I shall not be gone but a few minutes. Do you think you could take this little skillet from the fire if it *did*—boil?"

Mr. Linden might have got into a reverie after she ran away;—but certain it is that the skillet was in imminent danger of "boiling over" when Faith appeared at his side and with a laughing look at him gently lifted it off.

"You are an excellent Alfred!"

"What version of Alfred have you learned?" he said laughing, and catching it from her hand before it reached the hearth. "I thought hot water was his reward—not his work."

"I thought, Endy, you would like to go up to your room before breakfast. Mother will be down presently."

"And am I to find the perfection of a fire, as usual?" said Mr. Linden, taking both her hands in his and looking at her. "Little Sunbeam!—you should not have done that! Do you know what you deserve?"

She stood before him rather soberly, glancing up and down; but he little guessed what her quietness covered. Though the lines of her lip did give tiny indication that quietness was stirred somewhere. He drew her to him for a moment, with one or two unconnected words of deep affection, then turned and went away. Faith listened to hear the well known run up the stairs—the familiar closing of that door,—how strange it sounded! how gladsome, how sorrowful. She stood still just where Mr. Linden had left her, as if sorrow and joy both held her with detaining hands.

"Why child? Faith!"—said Mrs. Derrick coming into the kitchen, "what *are* you about? What made you get up so early, Faith? What's the matter?—breakfast ready at this time of day! Couldn't you sleep, pretty child?" she added tenderly.

"I didn't get up very much earlier than usual, mother. Don't you want breakfast?"

"Whenever you like, child," said her mother, taking hold in her turn,—"but what's made you in such a hurry? And what makes you look so, Faith?—You're not pale, neither,—how *do* you look?"

Faith came so close that her mother could not see, and kissed her.
"Mother, Mr. Linden is here."

"Here!" said Mrs. Derrick with a little sympathetic start—it was not all surprise, nor all joy.—"Pretty child! how glad I am! But why didn't you call me, Faith?—and why don't you go and sit down and be quiet—now you've just been tiring yourself, and I could have done the whole! And of all things, how could he get here in such weather? No wonder you're in a hurry, child!"—and Mrs. Derrick began to work in earnest.

Faith gave her the word or two more that she could give, and went to the dairy. It was Faith's domain; she was alone, and her industry fell from her hands. Breakfast and all might wait. Faith set down her bowl and spoon, sat down herself on the low dairy shelf before the window, cold and November though it was, and let the tears come, of which she had a whole heartful in store; and for a little while they fell faster than the raindrops which beat and rattled against the panes. But this was a gentler shower, and cleared the sky. Faith rose up from the shelf entirely herself again.

So busy, skimming off the smooth cream, she felt the light touch of hands on her shoulders—felt more than that on her cheek. Had the tears left any trace there?—that Mr. Linden brought her face round into view. He asked no such question, however, unless with his eyes.

"Mignonette, what are you about?"

"King Alfred's breakfast. I forgot you knew the way to the dairy!"

"Or could find it if I did not. What shape does my breakfast take in these regions?"

"It takes the shape—Let us go back to the kitchen and we will see."

It was spry work in the kitchen now! How Faith's fingers went about. But Mr. Linden could make nothing of the form his breakfast was taking—nothing of Faith's mysterious bowl, in which the cream he had seen her skim went into compound with the potatoes he had seen boiling and with also certain butter and eggs. The mixture went into the oven, and then Faith went off to set the table in the parlour. As they were alone to-day the fire in the dining-room was not to be kindled.

The storm beat so differently upon the windows now!—now, when it was only a barrier against people who were not wanted to come in. Mr. Linden followed Faith in her motions, sometimes with eye and voice, sometimes with his own steps; confusing both her and her arrangements, making her laugh, and himself the cause of various irregularities in the table-setting, which he was very quick to point out.

"Mignonette," he said, "I think it is a perfect day! Do you hear how it storms?"

"And aren't you glad Cindy went to a wedding? And oh, Endy!—how many people will be coming after you to-day?" Faith stopped, knife in hand.

"Did you suppose that I would come here to see you, and then be obliged to see half Pattaquasset instead? I stopped at Patchaug station,—there Reuben met me, and we had as pleasant a four mile drive in the rain as I ever remember. As to the wedding—I think there can never be more than one other so felicitous."

Faith ran off.

And presently the breakfast came in, variously, in her hands and in Mrs. Derrick's. It was broad light now, and the curtains drawn back, but the red firelight still gave the hue of the room; and the breakfast-table and the three people round it wanted for no element or means of comfort. There were the shortcakes, which Mr. Linden might more readily recognize now in their light brown flakiness—his coffee was poured upon the richest of cream; the potatoes came out of the oven in the shape of a great puff-ball, of most tender consistency; and the remains of a cold chicken had been mystified into such a dish of delicacy as no hands but a Frenchwoman's—or Faith's—could concoct. It's a pleasant thing to be catered for by hands that love you. Mr. Linden had found that pleasure this morning before. But both Faith and he were undoubtedly ready for their breakfast!

After breakfast came the consideration of a basketful of things Mr. Linden had brought her. Very simple things they were, and unromantic enough to be useful; yet with sentiment enough about them,—if that name might be given to the tokens of a care that busied itself about all the ins and outs of her daily life, and sought out and remembered the various little things that she wanted and could not get; for the various papers of sugarplums in which the whole were packed, Mr. Linden declared them to be nothing but epithets and adjectives.

The weather held on its way into the afternoon; but what was most unexpected, the afternoon brought a visiter. Mr. Linden and Faith, deep in talk, heard the sound of a foot on the scraper and then of a knock at the door, which made them both start up. Faith went to the door. But before she could open it, Mrs. Derrick came up behind her with swift steps and remanded Faith to the parlour.

"I'll open it, child," she said,—"it's no use for you to run the risk of seeing anybody you don't want to." So Faith returned to Mr. Linden. But the first word set all fears at rest—it was only Reuben Taylor. He presented himself with many apologies, and would fain have told his errand to Mrs. Derrick, but as it was for Faith, the good lady opened the parlour door and bade Reuben go in,—which, as he could not help it, Reuben did. But the colour of his face as he came in!—Mr. Linden took the effect of it—Faith was partly occupied with her own; and Reuben, thinking the sooner the quicker—walked straight up to her.

"Miss Faith," he said, trying to speak as usual, "I beg your pardon—but I was sent here with this,"—and Reuben presented a moderately large round basket, without a handle.

"Reuben, come up to the fire," said Mr. Linden; while Faith took the basket and exclaimed, "This! Who in the world sent you, Reuben?—Yes, come to the fire."

"I am not cold, sir," Reuben said with a look towards where Mr. Linden stood by the mantelpiece, as if his desire was to get out of the room—instead of further in, though he did follow Faith a step or two as she went that way. "I didn't mean to come here to-day, Mr. Linden, but—"

"Didn't mean to come here?" said Mr. Linden smiling,—"what have you been doing, to be afraid of me? Faith, has your postman been remiss?"

They were a pair, Reuben and Faith! though the colour of the one was varying, while Reuben's was steady. Faith nevertheless seized the boy's hand and drew him with gentle violence up to the fire.

"Who sent you with this, Reuben?"

"Dr. Harrison, Miss Faith. I was off on an errand after church, and one of his men came after me and told me to come to the house. And there I saw the doctor himself—and ho told me to bring you this basket, ma'am, and that he didn't like to trust it to any one else. And—" but there Reuben hesitated.

"And that you were the only person he knew who would go through fire and water for him?" said Mr. Linden.

"No, sir, but—I suppose I've got to say it, since he told me to,—Dr. Harrison said, Miss Faith, that—" the message seemed to stir both Reuben's shame and laughter—"that he had begged a cake of his sister, to go with your Thanksgiving pies—and that it was in the basket. And that I needn't tell anybody else about it."

"Reuben," said Mr. Linden laughing, "you needn't tell him that I shall eat half the cake."

"No, sir"—Reuben said,—and tried not to laugh, and couldn't help it.

The third member of the trio shewed no disposition at all to much laughter. She had put the basket down on the table and looked at it from a distance, as if it had contained the four and twenty live blackbirds—or a small powder magazine. The effect of his message Reuben did not stay to see. He went round to Mr. Linden to ask if the morning orders were unchanged, clasped hands with him—then bowed low to Faith and went out.

With very demure face Mr. Linden seated himself in one of the easy-chairs, and looked towards the table, with the air of one who expects—something! And not demurely but with grave consciousness, Faith stood looking in the same direction; then her eyes went to Mr. Linden. But his face did not relax in the least.

"Do you suppose that basket holds a kitten?" he said contemplatively.

Faith did not answer but walked over to the table and began the work of investigation. Mr. Linden came too. "If you are to make feline discoveries, I must stand by you, little bird," he said.

The basket was carefully tied with a network of strings over the top; then followed one paper after another, a silk paper at last,—and the cake was revealed. The low exclamation that burst from Faith might be characterized as one of mingled admiration and dismay.

Certainly Dr. Harrison had amused himself that Thanksgiving day! perhaps in terror of his old enemy, ennui. At least his basket looked so.

The cake lay upon a white paper in the basket, with a little space all around. It was a rather small loaf with a plain icing. But round the sides of it were trailed long sprays of ivy geranium, making a beautiful bordering. The centre was crowned with a white camellia in its perfection. From the tip edge of each outer petal depended a drop of gold, made to adhere there by some strong gum probably; and between the camellia and the ivy wreaths was a brilliant ring of gold spots, somewhat larger, set in the icing. Somebody, and it was probably the doctor, for want of better to do,—had carefully prepared the places to receive them, so that they were set in the white like a very neat inlay. It was presently seen that quarter eagles made the inlay, and that the camellia was dropped with gold dollars.

On the ivy lay a note. Faith looked at Mr. Linden as she took it up; broke the seal, and hastily running over the paper gave it to him—

"MY DEAR MISS FAITH,

My yesterday's speculation in pumpkins proved so successful, that like a true speculator it made me want to plunge deeper—into the pumpkin field! I find myself this morning dissatisfied with what I have done—and beg to send a cake to go along with the pies—to be apportioned of course as your judgment shall suggest. I begged the cake from Sophy, who I am sure would not have given it to me if she had known what I was going to do with it.

Your pleasure, personal and representative, last night, is a reproach to me whenever I think of it. Yet my unwonted hand knows neither how to cut up cake, nor what to do with it when it is cut—except —*avaler!* Am I wrong in hoping that you will do me the grace to make available what I should only—if I tried to do better with it—throw away? and that as a token of your forgiveness and grace you will on the next opportunity bestow a piece of pumpkin pie, such as you carried the other night, on

Your very respectful and most obedient servant,

JULIUS HARRISON."

PATTAQUASSET, Nov. 15, 18—.

Mr. Linden read the note more deliberately than Faith had done, but his face, the while, she could not read; though (fascinated by the difficulty) her glances changed to a steady gaze. It was quietly grave—that was all and not all,—and the note was given back to her with a smile that spoke both "thoughts" of the doctor, and pleasure for any pleasure Faith might have from his basket. But then some of the deeper feeling came out in his comments—and they were peculiar. He had stood still for a second after reading the note,—his eyes looking down at the cake—gravely; but then they came to her; and suddenly taking her in his arms Mr. Linden gave her—it would be hazardous to say, as many kisses as Dr. Harrison had gold pieces—but certainly as many as he had put in the basket, and more. Faith did not read them, either, at first,—till the repetition—or the way of it, told what they were; the glad saying that she was his, beyond any one's power to buy her,—more than all, an indemnification to himself for all the gold he could not lay at her feet! There needed no speech to tell her both.

A word or two had answered his demonstrations, first a wondering word, and then afterwards a low repetition of his name, in a tone of humble recognition and protest. Now she looked up at him with a child's clear face, full of the colour he had brought into it.

"Little darling," he said, "you will have your hands full of business!"

"Oh Endy—I am very sorry!"

"Sorry?" Mr. Linden said. "What about?"

"I'm sorry that basket has come here!"

"It gives you the means of making other people glad."

"Yes—but,"—Faith looked uncomfortably at the basket. Then brought her eyes back to Mr. Linden's face. "What ought I to do, Endecott?"

"The most good and the least harm you can in the circumstances."

"How shall I,—the last?"—she said with a manner like a beautiful child, truth struggling through embarrassment.

"If you could contrive to make yourself disenchanting!"

Faith passed that, and waited, her eyes making a grave appeal. Mr.
Linden smiled.

"I am afraid you can only be yourself," he said. "And if Dr. Harrison will not remove himself to a safe distance, there is not much to be done, except with the money. Let him understand that you consent for once to be his almoner, merely because you know better than he where the need is,—that you take from him, as from anybody, a donation for your poor and sick neighbours."

"Must I write?"

"No."

"But, Endecott—is that all?"

"All that I need say. You never did encourage him, Faith,—it may be a long time before he gives you a chance to _dis_courage. There is one thing I can do, if you wish."

She had stood with an awakened, sorrowful look, the colour burning all over face and brow. Now she startled and asked "What?"

"Something you do *not* wish. I can tell him that you belong to me."
But that indeed Faith did not wish.

"Oh no, Endecott—I would rather manage it some other way. Now don't let us lose any more of our afternoon with it—but come and tell me what will be the best things to do with this money."

"It is hard to tell all at once," Mr. Linden said as they once more took their seats by the fire. "What have you thought of yourself?"

"I know where one or two blankets are wanting. And O, Endy! there is one place where I should like to send a rocking-chair—ever so common a one, you know."

"And if Ency Stephens had one of those little self-locomotive carriages, she could go about by herself all day long."

"How good that would be! as soon as the spring opens. You could send one up from New York, Endecott. Do they cost much?"

"I think not. And what do you say to taking a little portion of this for the beginning of a free library for the poor people? If the thing were once begun, Mr. Stoutenburgh would give you what you please to carry it on,—and Mr. Simlins would help,—and so would I."

"I was thinking of books!" said Faith, her eye dancing in an unknown "library";—"but these would be books to *lend*. I think a great many would like that, Endecott! O yes, we could get plenty of help. That is a delightful plan!—I don't think I ought to be sorry that basket came, after all," she added smiling. Mr. Linden smiled too—she was a pretty Lady Bountiful!

"Faith," he said, "suppose (it is a very presumptuous supposition, but one may *suppose* anything) suppose when my hands are free to take care of my Mignonette, that I should have the offer of two or three different gardens wherein to place her. How should I choose?"

She coloured and looked at him somewhat inquiringly, then turned away with a kept-in but very pretty smile. "I know," she said, "how you would choose—and you would not ask me."

"Yes I should, little unbeliever—I ask you now."

"You would go," she said gravely—"where your hands were most wanted."

"There spoke a true Sunbeam!" said Mr. Linden. But perhaps the word—or something in the changing light of the afternoon—carried his thoughts on to the night train which was to bear him away; for he left Dr. Harrison, and baskets, and schemes, in the background; and drawing her closer to his side talked of her affairs—what she had been doing, what she meant to do, in various ways,—trying to leave as it were a sort of network of his care about her. Then came twilight, and Mrs. Derrick and tea; with Faith's light figure flitting to and fro in preparation; and then prayers. And then—how fast the clock ticked! how fast the minutes began to run away!

The storm did not rest,—it blew and beat and poured down as hard as ever, eddying round the house in gusts that made every word and every minute within doors seem quieter and sweeter. And the words were many, and the minutes too—yet they dropped away one by one, and the upper glass was empty!

CHAPTER XX.

Faith fortified herself with a triple wall of mental resolves against Dr. Harrison's advances. But when the doctor came again, a night or two after Thanksgiving, there did not seem to be much that she could do—or hinder. The doctor's lines of circumvallation were too skilfully drawn for an inexperienced warrior like Faith to know very well where to oppose him. He was not in a demonstrative mood at all; rather more quiet than usual. He had just pushed an advanced work in the shape of his golden cake; and he rested there for the present.

To Faith's great joy, midway in the evening the doctor's monopoly was broken by the entrance of Squire Stoutenburgh and a very round game of talk. Faith seized the opportunity to present her claim for a free library—answered with open hand on the spot. And when he was gone, she sat meditating a speech, but she was prevented. The doctor, as if unconsciously amusing himself, started a chymical question; and went on to give Faith a most exquisite analysis and illustration. It was impossible to listen coldly; it was impossible to maintain reserve. Faith must be herself, and delight shone in every feature. Now could Dr. Harrison enjoy this thoroughly and yet give no sign that he did so; his eye watched hers, while Faith thought he was looking into depths of science; his smile was a keen reflection of that on her lips, while she fancied it called forth only by his own skill, or success, or scientific power. He had produced the very effect he wanted; for the moment, he had her all to himself.

"Miss Faith," he said gently, as his demonstration came to an end,—"you may command me for that library."

Faith drew back and her mind returned to business again. The doctor saw it, and was instantly sorry he had started the subject.

"I was going to speak to you about that, Dr. Harrison. If you have no objection, I shall take a little of that money you entrusted to me, for it—the beginning of it. Only a little. The rest shall go as I suppose you meant it to go."

"I knew it was very sure to go right after it got into your hands. I don't think I followed it any further."

"It will make a great many people happy this winter, Dr. Harrison."

"I hope it will," said he very sincerely; for he knew that if it made *them* it would her.

"You have little notion how much," Faith went on gravely. "I will do the best I can with it,—and if you had patience to hear, I would let you know what, Dr. Harrison."

"You do me less than justice, Miss Faith. You can hear me rant about philosophical niceties,—and yet think that I would not have patience to listen to a lecture from you upon my neglected duties!"

"I didn't mean that, sir."

He gave her a genial, recognizing little smile, which was not exactly in his "part"—but came in spite of him.

"Do you know, I should like to hear it, Miss Faith. I always like lectures illustrated. What have you done already?"

"There is an almost bed-ridden woman two miles off, who will bless somebody all winter for the comfort of a rocking-chair—all her life, I may rather say;—a common wooden one, Dr. Harrison."

"That is a capital idea," said the doctor. "She will bless *you*, I hope."

"No, certainly! I shall tell her the money is not mine,—I am only laying it out for a kind somebody."

"Miss Faith," said the doctor,—"I am not kind!"

"I think you are,"—was her gentle, somewhat wistful answer. The doctor sprung up.

"Mrs. Derrick," said he with all his comicality alive,—"Miss Faith promised me a piece of pumpkin pie."

He had it, and taking his old place on the rug slowly demolished it, qualifying every morsel with such ridiculous correlative remarks, allusions, and propositions,—that it was beyond the power of either Mrs. Derrick or Faith to retain her gravity. But the moment the door closed upon him, Faith looked sober.

"Well, child?" said her mother.

"Well, mother—I haven't written my French."

And she sat down to write it, but studied something else. "Manage it some other way"—she had said she would; it was not easy! What was she going to do? the doctor asked nothing of her but ordinary civility; how could she refuse him that? It was a puzzle, and Faith found it so as the weeks went on. It seemed to be as Mr. Linden had said; that she could do little but be as she had been, herself. That did not satisfy Faith.

It was a great relief, when about the middle of December the family went to New York for a few weeks, and Dr. Harrison went with his family. Once more she breathed freely. Then Faith and Reuben made themselves very busy in preparing for the Christmas doings. Means enough were on hand now. Reuben was an invaluable auxiliary as a scout;—to find out where anything was pressingly wanted and what; and long lists were made, and many trains laid in readiness against Mr. Linden's arrival. And then he came!

It was for a good week's holiday this time, and how it was enjoyed two people knew—which was enough. Studies went on after the old fashion during that week, and dinners and teas out made some unavoidable interruptions, yet not on the whole unpleasant. And sleigh rides were taken, day and night; and walks and talks not to be mentioned. Then the Newyear's visiting—with such a budget of new varieties!—how pleasant it was to go that round again together; and it was hard to make short visits, for everybody wanted to see and hear so much of Mr. Linden. He stayed one extra day after that—to see Faith when he had done seeing everybody else, but then he went; and the coldness and quiet of winter set in, broken only by letters.

There was a break of another kind when Dr. Harrison came back, in the middle of January; such a break to Faith's quiet that the coldness was well nigh forgotten. She had doubly resolved she would have as little as possible to do with him; and found presently she was having quite as much as ever.

The plan of rendering him a grave account of what she had done or was doing with his money, so far as the plan regarded keeping him at a distance, was a signal failure. Very simply and honestly it was done, on her part; but it suited the doctor admirably; nothing could better serve his purposes. Dr. Harrison heard her communication about some relieved family or project of relief, with a pleasant sort of attention and intelligence; and had skill, although really and professedly unwonted in the like things, to take up her plans and make the most happy suggestions and additions—often growing a large scheme upon a small one, and edging in the additional means so insensibly, so quietly, that though Faith saw he did it she could not tell how to hinder and did not know that she ought. Mr. Linden had sent, as he promised, his help for the library,—indeed sent from time to time some new parcel; and without inquiring whether the money he had left for *his* poor people was exhausted, had sent her a fresh supply. But she had none too much, from all sources. It was a winter of great severity among the poorer portion of the community; work was hard to come by, and the intense weather made food and clothing and tiring doubly in demand. There were few starving poor people in Pattaquasset; but many that winter lacked comforts, and some would have wanted bread, without the diligent care of their better-off neighbours. And there as everywhere, those who gave such care were few. Faith and Reuben had plenty to do. But indeed not merely, nor chiefly, with the furnishing of food to the hungry and firing to the cold; neither were those the points where Dr. Harrison's assistance came most helpfully in.

Little Ency Stephens wanted a flower now and then, as well as a velocipede; and Dr. Harrison gave—not to Faith, but to Faith's hands for her—a nice little monthly rose-bush out of the greenhouse. How it smiled in the poor cottage and on the ailing child!—and what could Faith do but with a swelling heart to wish good to the giver. A smoky chimney was putting out the eyes of a poor seamstress. Dr. Harrison

quietly gave Reuben orders to have a certain top put to the chimney and send the bill to him. He even seemed to be undertaking some things on his own account. Faith heard through Reuben that he had procured the office of post-mistress in Pattaquasset to be given to the distressed family she and Mr. Linden had visited at Neanticut; and that Mrs. Tuck and Mintie were settled at the post-office, in all comfort accordingly. But worst of all! there were some sick people; and one or two for whom Faith dared not refuse his offer to go with her to see them. Dared still less after the first time he had actually gone; so great and immediate she found the value, not of his medicines only, but of the word or two of hint and direction which he gave her towards their help and healing. Faith began to look forward to May with a breath of almost impatience. But a change came before that.

CHAPTER XXI.

The spring came, with all its genial influences. Not now with such expeditions as the last spring had seen, but with letters to take their place, and with walks of business and kindness instead of pleasure. Yes, of pleasure too; and Faith began to find her "knight" not only a help and safeguard, but good company. Reuben was so true, so simple and modest—was walking in such a swift path of improvement; was so devoted to Faith and her interests, besides the particular bond of sympathy between them, that she might have had many a brother and fared much worse. The intercourse had not changed its character outwardly—Reuben's simple ceremonial of respect and deference was as strict as ever; but the thorough liking of first acquaintanceship had deepened into very warm affection on both sides. With Dr. Harrison Reuben gained no ground—or the doctor did not with him. Though often working for him and with him, though invariably courteous with the most respectful propriety, Faith could see that Reuben's old feeling was rather on the increase.

With the spring thaw came a freshet. It came suddenly, at the end of the week; every river and stream rising into a full tide of insurrection with the melting snows of Saturday, and Saturday night bridges and mill dams went by the board. Among the rest, one of the railway bridges near Pattaquasset gave way, and a full train from the east set down its freight of passengers in Pattaquasset over Sunday. They amused themselves variously—as such freight in such circumstances is wont to do. Faith knew that the church was well filled that Sunday morning, but the fact or the cause concerned her little—did not disturb the quiet path of her thoughts and steps, until church was out and she coming home, alone that day, as it happened. Then she found the walk full and *her* walk hindered. Especially by two gentlemen—who as the others thinned off, right and left, still went straight on; not fast enough to get away from Faith nor slow enough for her to pass them. They were strangers, evidently, and town bred. One of them reminded Faith of Dr. Harrison, in dress and style—both belonged to a class of which she had seen few specimens. But she gave them little heed (save as they detained her,) nor cared at all for their discussion of the weather, or the place. Then suddenly her attention was caught and held.

"By the way!" said one—"this is the very place where Linden was so long."

"Who? Endecott Linden?" said Dr. Harrison's likeness. "What was he here for?"

"Teaching school."

"Teaching school!" echoed the other,—"Endecott Linden teaching school!—Pegasus in pound!—How did the rustics catch him?"

"Pegasus came of his own accord, if I remember."

"Pshaw, yes!—but Linden. For what conceivable reason did he let himself down to teach school?"

"He didn't—" said the other a little hotly. "He wouldn't let himself down if he turned street-sweeper."

"True—he has a sort of natural dais which he carries about with him,—I suppose he'd make the crossing the court end. But I say, what did he do *this* for?"

"Why—for money!" said the first speaker. "What an ado about nothing!"

"Inconceivable! Just imagine, George, a man who can sing as he does, teaching a, b, ab!"

"Well—imagine it," said George,—"and then you'll wish you were six years old to have him teach *you*."

"How cross you are," said his friend lazily. "And despotic. Was there nothing left of all that immense property? I've just come home, you know."

"Not much," said George. "A little—but Endecott wouldn't touch that—it was all put at interest for Miss Pet. He would have it so, and even supported her as long as she staid in the country. What he works so hard for now I don't understand."

"Works, does he? I thought he was studying for the church—going to bury himself again. It's a crying shame! why he might be member, minister, Secretary, President!"

"He!" cried George in hot disdain,—"he soil his fingers with politics!
No—he's in the right place now,—there's no other pure enough for him."

"I didn't know you admired the church so much," said his friend ironically.

"I don't—only the place in it where he'll stand. That's grand."

"And so he's at work yet?"

"Yes indeed—and it puzzles me. That year here ought to have carried him through his studies."

"Why what can he do?—not teach school now,—he's no time for it."

"He can give lessons—and does. Makes the time, I suppose. You know he has learned about everything *but* Theology. Olyphant was telling me about it the other day."

"What a strange thing!" said the other musingly, "such a family, so swept overboard! What a house that was! You remember his mother, George?"

"I should think so!—and the way Endecott used to sing to her every night, no matter who was there."

"Yes," said the doctor's confrère—"and come to her to be kissed afterwards. I should have laughed at any other man—but it set well on him. So did her diamond ring in his hair, which she was so fond of handling. How did he make out to live when she died?"

"I don't know—" said George with a half drawn breath—a little reverently too: "I suppose he could tell you. But all that first year nobody saw him—unless somebody in need or sorrow: *they* could always find him. He looked as if he had taken leave of the world—except to work for it."

"How courted he used to be!"—said the other—"how petted—*not* spoiled, strange to say. Do you suppose he'll ever marry, George? will he ever find any one to suit his notions? He's had enough to choose from already—in Europe and here. What do they say of him off yonder—where he is now?"

"They say he's—rock crystal,—because ice will melt," said George. "So
I suppose his notions are as high as ever."

"You used to admire Miss Linden, if I remember," said his friend. "What a ring that was!—I wonder if she's got it. George—I sha'n't walk any further in this mud—turn about."

Which the two did, suddenly. Both stepped aside out of Faith's way, in surprise—her light footfall had not made them lower their voices. But in that moment they could see that she was a lady; in acknowledgment of which fact the one gentleman bowed slightly, and the other lifted his hat. Faith had thrown back her veil to hear better what they were saying, not expecting so sudden an encounter; and as she passed, secure in being a stranger, gave them both a view of as soft a pair of eyes as they had either of them ever looked into, which also sought theirs with a curious intentness, borne out by the high bright tinge which excitement had brought into her cheeks. Both of them saw and remembered, for swift as it was, the look was not one to forget. But the glance added little to what Faith knew already about the strangers, and she went on her way feeling as if a stricture had been bound tight round her heart.

The words about Mr. Linden's fastidiousness she knew quite enough of him to verify; and in the light of these people's talk it almost seemed to Faith as if there had been some glamour about her—as if she should some day prove to be "magician's coin" after all. But though the old sense of unworthiness swept over her, Faith was not of a temper to dwell long or heavily upon such a doubt. Her heart had been strangely stirred besides by what was said of his mother, and his old way of life, and his changes. She knew about them of course before; yet as a trifle, the touching of a single ray, will often give a new view of an old scene,—those side words of strangers set all Mr. Linden's time of joy and sorrow with such vivid reality before her, that her heart was like to break with it. That effect too, more or less, passed away from her mind,—never entirely. Another thing staid.

"What he works so hard for now"—Then he was working hard! and doing his own studies and correcting her French exercises, and giving her lessons all the while, as well as to other people; and

bringing her gifts with the fruit of his work! And not an atom of it all could Faith touch to change. She pondered it, and she knew it. She doubted whether she could with any good effect venture so much as a remonstrance; and the more Faith thought, the more this doubt resolved itself into certainty. And all the while, he was working hard! Round that fact her thoughts beat, like an alarmed bird round its nest; about as helplessly.

Mrs. Derrick thought Faith was more grave and abstracted than usual that day, and sometimes thought so afterwards; that was all Faith made known.

Dr. Harrison thought the same thing on the next occasion of his seeing her, and on the next; or rather he thought she held off from him more than usual; what the root of it might be he was uncertain. And circumstances were unfavourable to the exactness of his observations for some time thereafter.

It was yet early in March, when Mrs. Stoutenburgh took a very troublesome and tedious fever, which lasted several weeks. It was reckoned dangerous, part of the time, and Mrs. Derrick and Faith were in very constant attendance. Faith especially, for Mrs. Stoutenburgh liked no one else so well about her; and gratitude and regard made her eager to do all she might. So daily and nightly she was at Mrs. Stoutenburgh's bedside, ministering to her in all the gentle offices of a nurse, and in that line besides where Mr. Linden had declared Dr. Harrison but half knew his profession. And there, and about this work, Dr. Harrison met her.

Their meetings were of necessity very often; but no lectures, nor discussions, nor much conversation, were now possible. Faith felt she had a vantage ground, and used it The doctor felt he had lost ground, or at the least was not gaining; and against some felt but unrecognized obstacle in his way his curiosity and passion chafed. He could see Faith nowhere else now; she contrived not to meet him at home. She was out with Reuben—or resting—or unavoidably busy, when he came there. And Dr. Harrison knew the resting times were needed, and could only fume against the business—in which he sometimes had some reason.

One day he found her at her post in the sick room, when Mrs. Stoutenburgh had fallen asleep. It was towards the end of the afternoon. An open Bible lay on the bed's side; and Faith sat there resting her head on her hand. She was thinking how hard Mr. Linden was working, and herself looking somewhat as if she were following his example.

"What are you doing?" said the doctor softly.

"I have been reading to Mrs. Stoutenburgh."

"Feverish—" whispered the doctor.

"No;—she has gone to sleep."

"Tired her!—"

"No," said Faith with a smile, "it's resting. The Bible never tired any one yet, that loved it—I think."

"Well people—" said the doctor.

"Sick people! You're mistaken, Dr. Harrison. Sick people most of all."

"Do you know that you will be sick next," said he gravely, "if you do not take more care?"

A fair little smile denied any fear or care on that subject, but did not satisfy the doctor.

"I do not approve of what you are doing," said he seriously.

"Reading this?"

"Even the same."

"But you are mistaken, Dr. Harrison," she said gently. "There is nothing so soothing, to those that love it. I wish you loved it! Don't you remember you confessed to me once that somebody had told you you had but half learned your profession?"

Faith trembled, for she had said those last words wittingly. She could not have spoken them, if the light in the room had not been such as to hide her change of colour; and even then she dared not speak the name she alluded to. But she had said it half as a matter of conscience.

It drew forth no answer from the doctor, for Mrs. Stoutenburgh just then stirred and awoke. And Faith little guessed the train she had touched. There were no indications of manner; and she could not,

as Dr. Harrison went leisurely down the stairs, see the tremendous bound his mind made with the question,—

"Is it *that book* that stands in my way?—or HE!"

CHAPTER XXII.

Mrs. Stoutenburgh got well. And it was in Faith's mind then, by some means to see very little more of Dr. Harrison till Mr. Linden should be in Pattaquasset again. So much for human intentions. Faith fell sick herself; and instead of being kept at a distance Dr. Harrison saw her twice at least in the twenty-four hours.

It was a doubtful privilege to see those soft eyes lustrous with fever and a steady glow take place of the changing and flitting hues which were as much a part of Faith's language, at times, as the movements of a horse's ears are part of his. But as after a few days it became evident that there was nothing dangerous about Faith's attack, it is probable that the doctor rather enjoyed his position than otherwise. The freedom and authority of his office were a pleasant advance upon the formalities of ordinary intercourse; and to see Faith and speak to her and touch her hand without any ceremonial but that of friendship, was an advantage great enough to desire the prolonging thereof. Faith was a gentle patient; and Dr. Harrison's care was unbounded; though it was not alarming, even to Mrs. Derrick, as he assured her there was no cause.

For a week however Faith kept her bed, and even Dr. Harrison was glad when at the end of a week she was able to be up again. Especially perhaps as it was only in her wrapper and an easy chair; his office was not at an end; the fever, in a remittent or intermittent form, still hung about her and forbade her doing anything but taking care of herself.

Not precisely in this category of duty were the letters Faith had written all that week. She had written them, how was best known by an aching head and burning fingers and feverish vision. But an interruption of them would have drawn on Mr. Linden's knowing the reason; and then Faith knew that no considerations would keep him from coming to her. It was towards the end of the study term; he was working hard already; she could not endure that any further bar should be placed in his way. None should for her. And so, bit by bit when she could do but a bit at a time, the letters were written. Exercises had to be excused. And Faith was at heart very thankful when at the end of a sick week, she was able to get up and be dressed and sit in the easy-chair and see the diamonds sparkling against her brown wrapper again.

It was April now, and a soft springy day. A fire burned gently in the chimney, while a window open at a little distance let in Spring's whispers and fragrances; and the plain old-fashioned room looked cosy and pretty, as some rooms will look under undefinable influences. Nothing could be plainer. There was not even the quaint elegance of Mr. Linden's room; this one was wainscotted with light blue and whitewashed, and furnished with the simplest of chintz furniture. But its simplicity and purity were all in tone with the Spring air and the cheer of the wood fire; and not at all a bad setting for the figure that sat there in the great chintz chair before the fire; her soft hair in bright order, the quiet brown folds of the wrapper enveloping her, and the flash of the diamonds giving curious point and effect to the whole picture. Faith was alone and looking very happy.

It wanted but a few weeks now of Mr. Linden's coming home,—coming home for a longer rest and sight of her; and Faith had not seen him since January. Mrs. Stoutenburgh's illness and Faith's consequent fatigue had in part accounted to him for the short letters and missing French exercises, but she could see that such excuse would not long be made for her,—his last one or two letters had been more anxious, more special in their inquiries: how glad she was that he need have no further cause for either. Partly musing on all this, partly on what she had been reading, Faith sat that afternoon, when the well-known single soft knock at her door announced Reuben Taylor. He came in with a glad face—how sad it had lately been Faith had seen, sick as she was,—and with both hands full of pleasant things. One hand was literally full, of cowslips; and as he came up and gave her his other hand, it seemed to Faith as if a great spot of Spring gold was before her eyes.

"Dear Miss Faith," Reuben said, "I wonder if anybody can ever be thankful enough, to see you better! You feel stronger than yesterday, don't you, ma'am?"

"*I* can't be thankful enough, Reuben—I feel that to-day. How good you are to bring me those cowslips! O yes,—I am stronger than I was yesterday."

That Faith was not very strong was sufficiently shewn by the way her hands lay in her lap and on the arm of the chair, and by the lines of her pale quiet face. *Bodily* strength was not flourishing there. Reuben looked at her wistfully, with a half-choked sigh, then knelt down beside her chair, as he often did.

"I didn't bring them all, Miss Faith—I mean, I didn't *pick* them all. Charlie and Robbie saw me in the meadow, and nothing would do but they must help. I don't think they always knew which to pick—but I thought you wouldn't mind that," he said as he laid the cowslips on the table, their fair yellow faces shewing very fair in the sick room. Faith's face was bright before, but it brightened still.

"They look lovely to me—tell Charlie and Rob I will thank them when I can. I don't thank *you*, Reuben,"—she said turning from the flowers to him.

"No, ma'am, I should hope not," he said, answering her smile gratefully. "But that's not all, Miss Faith—for Ency Stephens sent you one of her rosebuds,"—and Reuben took a little parcel carefully from his pocket. "It's only wrapped up in brown paper, because I hadn't time to go home for white. And she told me to tell you, Miss Faith," he added, both eyes and cheek flushing—"that she prays every day for you to get well and for Mr. Linden to come home."

The smile died on Faith's face and her eyes fell. "He ought to have this," she said presently, with a little flush on her own cheek. "I don't feel as if it should come to me. Reuben, does she want anything?" It was very rare, even now, for Faith to speak directly to Reuben of Mr. Linden, though she was ready enough to hear Reuben speak of him.

"No, ma'am, I think not," he said in answer to net question. "You know—did you ever hear, Miss Faith?—that when Mr. Linden first went there she was kept in the house the whole time,—nobody knew how to take her out—or took the trouble; and Mr. Linden carried her half a mile down the lane that very first day. And you can guess how he talked to her, Miss Faith,—they said she looked like another child when she came back. But is there anything I can do for you, ma'am, before I go to the post-office?—it's almost time."

"If you'll fill that glass with water for me, Reuben—that I mayn't let my sweet cowslips fade—that's all. They'll do me good all to-morrow."

Reuben went off, his place presently supplied by Mrs. Stoutenburgh; who against all persuasion had insisted upon coming down to see Faith. And then Faith was left to the calm companionship of her cowslips till Reuben came back from the post-office.

He came up to Faith's chair, and taking out the letter broke the outer seal, (a ceremony he generally performed in her presence) and was just removing the envelope when the doctor came in for his evening visit. The doctor saw a tableau,—Faith, the cowslips, and Reuben,—Mrs. Derrick by the window he hardly saw, nor what the others were about. But that he had interrupted *something* was clear—the very atmosphere of the room was startled; and though Reuben's position hid both letter and hands, it was certain the hands were busy. What was in them, and what became of it, the doctor could not tell. Before he was fairly in the room the letter had retreated to Reuben's pocket, and Reuben stepped back and stood behind Faith's chair.

The doctor laid a hand on his shoulder with a "How do you do" as he passed; and accosted Faith with all the free kindliness which his office of physician permitted him to add to the friend. The doctor took all his advantage; he did not take more; and not Faith herself could see that there was any warmer feeling behind his pleasant and pleased eye and smile. But it is true Faith was a simpleton. She did not see that his pleasantness covered keen scrutiny. The scrutiny found nothing.

"How do you do?" he said.

"I don't suppose I need say a word to tell you," Faith answered smiling. "I am well enough to enjoy cowslips."

The doctor's eye fell slightingly upon them, which was not wonderful.

"I think you must be very well!" he said with some trifle of addenda from lip and eye. "You see you are mistaken. I shouldn't have known how well, except from your words."

"*You* are mistaken now, Dr. Harrison," said Faith in the slow quiet way in which she spoke to-day. "You think these are not splendid—but they are bits of spring!"

"They are not Spring's best bits, I hope," said the doctor.

"What do you think of that?"

The doctor took the rosebud and looked at it.

"If I were to tell you what I think of it," he said with a sort of grave candour, "you would dismiss me, and I should come here no more!"

"Reuben brought me that, Dr. Harrison, from the little lame girl you sent the rosebush to, in the winter. I wish you knew how much good that rosebush has done!"

"I sometimes wish," said the doctor, "that I had been born in a cottage!"

"Why, in the world?"

"It would be so pleasant to have people come and bring me rosebushes!"

"Or cowslips?" said Faith. "Then you would have a taste for cowslips."

"But then the people might get sick," said the doctor, waiving the "bits of spring;"—"so I am content. How are you to-day?" He took Faith's hand and felt it, and looked at her. The result did not seem to be unsatisfactory on the whole.

"You mustn't read too much in that book," said he, glancing over at it.

"Why not?"

"You must keep quiet."

"For how long?"

"It depends. There is a little enemy of fever hanging about your skirts, that I will oppose with something else; but all you can oppose to him is quietness."

Faith thought of the words—"The rock of my defence and my refuse"—what quietness was like that of their giving; but she said nothing to the doctor.

Dr. Harrison gave Mrs. Derrick her directions on various points; then taking his old-fashioned stand on the rug, surveyed the easy-chair and its occupant and Reuben still behind it.

"By the way, Mrs. Derrick," said he carelessly,—"I have heard a pretty story of your friend Mr. Linden." He noticed, but only that Faith had glanced at him and was to all appearance quietly looking down at her cowslips.

"I dare say, doctor," said Mrs. Derrick placidly. "I've heard a great many."

"Have you heard it?"

"Heard what?" said Mrs. Derrick. "It's an old pretty story that everybody loves him."

"I heard this only the other day," said the doctor. "It's not of that kind. But stories will be stories—and people will tell them."

How the colour flushed and paled in Reuben's cheek!—he stood resting his hands lightly on the back of Faith's chair, looking down. The colour on Faith's cheek did not change.

"Who told this?" said Mrs. Derrick.

"People that have known the family. They say, he has managed to run through a very large property, and that he leaves his sister now to live upon charity."

It was impossible to tell from the doctor's manner whether he put any faith in his story himself. It was as much like delivering a report as bringing a charge. It might have been either! He saw Reuben's colour become fixed and very high, but though the doctor could almost have sworn that there was a rush of hid tears under the boy's drooping eyelids, yet the lines about the mouth took the curl of an irrepressible smile. Mrs. Derrick picked up two stitches, made a third—then answered.

"So that's what *you* call a pretty story! It was hardly worth remembering to tell us, doctor,—you and I, and Reuben, and Faith, know better." Now could not the doctor tell for the life of him, whether the words were simply innocent, or—simply malicious! Mrs. Derrick was so imperturbable there, at her knitting! Neither did the doctor much care. It sounded to him just like Mrs. Derrick. He looked at Faith; and remarked lightly that "he didn't know anything!"

Faith was very quiet; he could not see that her colour had risen more than a little, and a little was not

enough to judge by in her face. But in an instant more after he had spoken, she looked full and gravely up at him.

"Do you believe everything about everybody, Dr. Harrison?"

"On the contrary! I don't believe anything of anybody—Except you," he added with a little smile.

"Do you believe such a story?"

Her steady soft eyes, which did not move from him, gave him an uncomfortable feeling—perhaps of undefined remembrance. "I don't believe it," he said returning her gaze. "I don't do anything with it. Such things are said of everybody—and of almost everybody they are true. I take them as they come. But about this particular case," he said with one of his gentle looks, "I will do just what you say I must do."

Faith smiled.

"I don't say you must do anything. I am sorry for you, Dr. Harrison."

"I am glad you are sorry!" he said sitting down by her. "And there is reason enough; but what is this one?"

"You lose a great pleasure."

"What one?"—

"You don't know how to trust."

"Do I not?" said the doctor, looking at the rosebud still in his hand. "Well—you shall teach me!" And springing up he bowed to Mrs. Derrick and went off—rosebud and all.

Reuben stood still for about half a minute—then came round, and silently gave Faith her letter.

"Reuben Taylor!"—said Faith, as he was going after the doctor. "You have been standing so long—suppose you sit down for a minute?"

Whatever Reuben thought of the request, he said nothing, but obeyed her, bringing a foot cushion to her chair and bestowing himself upon it. Faith smiled at him as she spoke again, though there was an unwonted fire in her owe eyes; and the blood came fast now to her face.

"Reuben, I wanted to ask you what all that colour is in your cheeks for?"

Reuben hesitated—there seemed a stricture across his breast which made speaking hard work; but at last he said frankly, though in none of the clearest tones,

"Because I'm angry, Miss Faith—and hurt too."

Faith's next words fell like pearls—

"It isn't worth the while."

"No, Miss Faith," he answered without looking up.

"It's too much honour to something that doesn't deserve it,—and—Reuben—it's too little to something that does."

"O no, ma'am! it's not *that!*" Reuben said, raising his eyes to her face with the old earnest look. "But Miss Faith, there are some things he can't bear to hear said—and said *so*," he added a little lower, and looking down again. "And then—he's Dr. Harrison, and I'm only a poor boy and mayn't answer him—and that fretted me; and it isn't the first time, neither," Reuben said, as if he were making a clean breast of it. "Oh Miss Faith! I'd rather have had him knock me down, than speak such words!" Tears were getting the upper hand in the boy's voice.

"Dear Reuben," said Faith, very quietly, though her cheeks were two carnations,—"what I am most sorry for is Dr. Harrison."

Reuben drew a long breath, with his "Yes, ma'am—I'm sorry for him too, very often—when he talks about other things. But I don't believe even you know just—just how false that was." Reuben spoke as if the words choked him. "It's maybe never come in your way to know all he did here for everybody, and—for me."

There was a quick pulsation at that instant from Faith's heart to the hand that held her letter,—but she only said, "Tell me!"

"I couldn't begin to tell you all, ma'am," Reuben said, a smile coming over his face now,—"nobody could but himself—and *he* wouldn't remember. I couldn't even tell you all he's done for me; but one thing"—Reuben's eyes and voice fell and he spoke very low. "You know, Miss Faith, the rate of schooling here is fixed by the trustees. And the first day I came father told me to say he didn't know that he could find the money for more than one quarter, but he had so much all ready, and he wanted me to have so much. I thought it would be hard to ask, but it was so easy—of him," Reuben said with that same smile. "Mr. Linden didn't say much about it—only yes—but then he spoke to father (that very day we were at the shore Miss Faith) and told him I should come all the time—for the pleasure of teaching me." (Reuben thought the compliment went all to Mr. Linden, or he would not have told it.) "But father wouldn't do that,—he said Mr. Linden should have the money as fast as he could get it; and if he didn't take it I shouldn't come. And it was paid all the year, regularly. But then, Miss Faith——" there was a pause.

"What, Reuben?" she whispered.

"Then instead of keeping it for himself, he put it all in the bank for me.—And I never knew it till I opened the letter he gave me when he was going away."

The brightness of the hidden diamonds danced in Faith's face for a minute—half hidden too, but it was there.

"Reuben," she whispered, as he was starting up to go,—"what we have to do is to pray for Dr. Harrison."

"Miss Faith, how do people live who do not pray?"

"I don't know!"

But Faith's voice did not speak the thanksgiving which bounded in her heart to Reuben's words. She sat back in her chair looking tired, with her letter clasped fast in her hand. Reuben stepped forward and arranged the fire softly—then giving her another wistful look he bowed and went lightly out of the room. With gentle step Mrs. Derrick came up to Faith, to kiss her and ask how she felt. Faith's eyelids unclosed.

"Very happy, mother,—and tired too. Don't you think I could have a light presently?"

"This minute, pretty child. But lie down on the couch, Faith, and I'll bring up the little table."

That was done, and then Faith read her letter, with first a rapid and then a slow enjoyment of it, making every word and sentence do more than double duty, and bring the very writer near. And then she lay with it clasped upon her bosom, thinking those flowing trains of half feverish thought which are so full of images, but which in her case flowed with a clear stream over smooth channels, nor ever met a rough break or jar. Even Dr. Harrison did not make an exception, for Faith's thought of him was constantly softened by her prayer for him. Her mother drew near when the letter was at last folded up, and watched her from the other side of the stand; but though mind and heart too were full enough, she rightly judged that Faith needed no more excitement; and so never mentioned Dr. Harrison's name, nor even asked how he came to carry off the rosebud.

Faith's trains of thought ended at last in a sleep which lasted till past her tea-time. Mrs. Derrick was still by her side when she awoke, and Faith opening her eyes as quietly as she had shut them, remarked,

"Mother!—letters are great things."

"Why child," said her mother smiling, "what have you been dreaming about?"

"Nothing.—That isn't a dream; it's a reality."

Blessing in her heart the sender of the reality which gave such pleasure, Mrs. Derrick answered, "Yes, child, it's real—and so's he."

Faith said nothing to that except by her smile. She only spoke the hope that she might be stronger the next day; a sentiment which though at first sight it might seem to have nothing to do with the former subject, was really in very close connexion with it.

But Faith was not stronger the next day. The fever was not driven away and strength was in the grip

of it yet. The doctor gave her no new directions, but insisted very much on quietness and care. There was nothing to be apprehended of the fever but tediousness, and the further and prolonged loss of strength; but that was quite enough to have to avoid. For that she must take all sorts of care. He also said that the case might go on without his oversight for a day or two, and that for that space of time in the middle of the week he should be absent from Pattaquasset, having a very urgent call of business elsewhere.

And whether for that reason or needing no fresh one, the doctor having stated so much went on to tell about other things, and made a long visit. The talk came upon the Bible again, Faith didn't know how, and grew very animated. Dr. Harrison had brought with him this morning one of his pleasantest moods, or manners; he thought yesterday that Faith's eyes had given him a reproof for slander, and he had no intent to offend in the like way again. He was grave, gentle, candid, seemingly—willing to listen, but that he always was to Faith; and talked sense or feeling in a most sensible and simple way. Yet the conversation ended with giving Faith great pain. He had asked her to read something confirmatory or illustrative of the statement she was making, out of the Bible; and Faith had complied with his wish. That was nothing strange. She had often done it. To-day the reading had been followed by a little observation, acutely put, which Faith felt raised a barrier between him and the truth she had been pressing. She felt it, and yet she could not answer him. She knew it was false; she could see that his objection was foundationless—stood on air; but she did not see the path by which she might bring the doctor up to her standing-point where he might see it too. It was as if she were at the top of a mountain and he at the bottom; her eye commanded a full wide view of the whole country, while his could see but a most imperfect portion. But to bring him up to her, Faith knew not. It is hard, when feet are unwilling to climb! And unskilled in the subtleties of controversy, most innocent of the duplicities of unbelief, Faith saw her neighbour entangled, as it seemed, in a mesh of his own weaving and had not power to untie the knot. It distressed her. Other knots of skepticism or ignorance that he had presented to her she had cut easily with the sword of truth if she could not untie; he had offered her one to-day that she could cut indeed as easily for herself,—but not for him. To do that called for not better wits, but for far greater controversial acumen and logical practice than Faith knew. He did not press his point, not even for victory; he gave the objection to her and left it there; but while to her it was mere rottenness of reasoning, she knew that for him it stood. It grieved her deeply; and Mrs. Derrick saw her worn and feverish all the day, without knowing what special reason there had been. She tried to stop Faith's working; but though not fit for it, Faith would not be stopped. She dared not trust Mr. Linden with any more excuses or put-offs; and a feverish cheek and hand that day and the next went over her exercise and letter. And enjoyed both, in spite of fever. But when they were done, late in the next day, Faith lay down wearily on the couch and consoled herself with the thoughts of the letter to come; it was the evening for one.

It was the evening for one and yet one came not. Other letters came—the great leather bag was tossed out on the station-house steps, and thence borne off to the post-office, where five minutes later Reuben Taylor came to wait for his share of the contents. But when with the assurance which has never yet known disappointment, Reuben applied at the window, Mintie gave him a rather coquettish—

"No, Mr. Taylor—you're not in luck to-day,—there's nothing for you."

In his surprise Reuben tried every means to make himself and her believe that she was mistaken; and urged a new examination of all the letters, till Mintie made—or feigned to make—it, with the same success.

Reuben turned away from the office in real sorrow of heart. He had not now to learn what store was set by those letters—especially now, when Faith was sick,—he had noticed her holding of that very last one which had come. And then, not merely to lose the pleasure, but to have the disappointment!—Then too, what had hindered the letter? One sometimes came out of time, but the expected one had never yet failed. Was Mr. Linden sick?—and what would Miss Faith think?—the letter might fail from other causes (hardly, Reuben thought) but what would *she* think?—herself so far from well. And then, should he go at once and tell her—or let her find it out from his non-appearance?

That last idea was promptly rejected,—she should at least not be in suspense, and Reuben was soon at her door, as soon admitted. But he came in very quietly, without that spring of step which had so often brought a letter, and standing by her chair said gently,—

"Miss Faith, I didn't find anything to-night—but I thought I'd come and tell you, for fear you'd be expecting."

"Not find anything!"—said Faith raising herself half up, with the start of colour into her pale cheeks.

"No, ma'am,—they said at the office there was nothing. Maybe it will come to-morrow."

It hurt him to see the little patient droop of each feature as Faith laid herself down again.

"Thank you, Reuben," she said. "O yes, maybe it will."

Words of consolation Reuben did not presume to offer, but there was a great deal in his face and quiet low-spoken "Can I do anything to-night, Miss Faith?"

"No," she said cheerfully. "There's nothing. Isn't it time Mr. and Mrs.
Roscom had some fresh eggs, Reuben? Mother will give you them."

Reuben only said he would stop there and see them.

The letter did not come next day. Reuben came, as usual, in the afternoon, but only to tell his bad success. He had not the heart to bring cowslips again, and ventured no words to Faith but about some of her poor people. That subject Faith went into fully. After Reuben was gone she lay quiet a while; and took her indemnification in the evening by getting Mrs. Derrick to read to her one or two of those strings of passages which Faith called ladders. Whether she could mount by them or not just then, her mother might; and hearing them Faith went to sleep. She said nothing about her letters, except to tell Mrs. Derrick they had not come.

That day and the next were quiet days, being the days of Dr. Harrison's absence. And if some accident had befallen Wednesday's letter, there was good hope of one Friday. And as Friday wore away, Faith did not know that she was counting the hours, and yet could at any time have answered any question as to the time of day. It was one of those calm days, within doors and without, which ebb away so noiselessly, that only the clock tells their progress. Faith's little clock—(Mr. Linden had amused himself with sending her one about as big as a good-sized watch on a stand)—ticked musically on the table, suggesting a good many things. Not merely the flight of time—not merely that the train would soon be in, not merely that she might soon have a letter; nor even that it, the clock, had seen Mr. Linden since she had. All these thoughts mingled, but with them something else. They would tick on, those minutes, relentlessly, no matter what they were to bring or take away,—steady, unalterable, unchecked,—like the old idea of Fate. She tried to be steady too—tried to have that fixedness of heart which says confidently, "I will sing and give praise." But she was weak yet, with the effect and even the presence of fever, and through all her thoughts she seemed to feel those minutes tracking with light steps across her breast. She lay with her hands clasped there, to still them.

The sun began to slant his beams in at the window, and then with one long screeching "Whew!"—the afternoon train flew through Pattaquasset, tossing out the letter bag on its way. Then Faith waited—watching intently for Reuben's step on the stairs.

Reuben on his part had watched the letter-bag from the moment it was thrown out, had followed it to the office, and there posted himself near the window to have the first chance. But his prize was a blank.

Sick at heart, Reuben drew back a little, giving way before Mintie's rather sharp "I tell you no, Mr. Taylor," and other people's earnest pressing forward to the window. But when the last one had gone—those happy people, who had got their letters!—Reuben again presented himself, and braved Mintie's displeasure by further inquiries; which produced nothing but an increase of the displeasure. He turned and walked slowly away. It might have been any weather—he might have met anybody or heard anything; but when Reuben reached Mrs. Derrick's the whole walk was a blank to him. What was the matter—how would Miss Faith bear it—these two questions lay on his heart. In vain he tried to lay them down,—for the very words which told him that "the Lord doth not afflict willingly," said also that he doth afflict; and Reuben's heart sank. He stood for a moment in the porch, realizing "how people live who do pray"—then went in and straight upstairs, walked up to Faith's couch when admitted, and without giving himself much time to think, told his news.

"Dear Miss Faith, you must wait a little longer yet. May I write by to-night's mail and ask why the letter hasn't come?—it may have been lost."

Faith started up, with first a flush and then a great sinking of colour, and steadying herself with one hand on the back of the couch looked into her messenger's face as if there she could track the missing letter or discern the cause that kept it from her. But Reuben's face discovered nothing but his sorrow and sympathy; and Faith sank back on her pillow again with a face robbed of colour beyond all the power of fever's wasting to do.

"Yes—write!" she said.

Reuben stood still, his hands lightly clasped, his heart full of thoughts he had perhaps no right to utter, if he could have found words.

"I wish you'd write, Reuben," she repeated after a moment.

"Yes, ma'am," he said, "I will. Only—dear Miss Faith! you know 'the darkness and the light are both alike to Him.'" Reuben was gone.

Faith lay for a few minutes as he had left her, and then slipped off the couch and kneeled beside it; for she felt as if the burden of the time could be borne only so. She laid her head and heart down together, and for a long time was very still; "setting her foot on the lowest step" of some of those ladders, if she could not mount by them. A foot-hold is something.

She was there yet, she had not stirred, when another foot-step in the passage and other fingers at the door made her know the approach of Dr. Harrison. Faith started up and met him standing. The doctor looked at her as he came up. So pale, so very quiet, so purely gentle, and yet with such soft strength in her eye,—he had not seen her look just so, nor anybody else, before.

"How do you do?" he said reverentially as he took her hand.

"I am—well,"—said Faith.

"Are you?" said the doctor gravely, eyeing the mark of unconquered fever and its wasting effects even on her then.—"I am very glad to hear it, indeed!"

"I mean, that I feel—well," said Faith correcting herself.

"You will feel better if you will take a more resting position," said the doctor putting her into the chair. And then he stood and looked at her; and Faith looked at her little clock, with her foot on that step of her "ladder."—"He knoweth thy walking through this great wilderness."

"What have you been doing to yourself these two days?" said the doctor.

"Nothing—" she said;—"more than usual."

He laid her appearance all to the account of the fever, she was so quiet; and proceeded to a new examination of the state of her hand, and to give her various professional orders.

"Miss Faith, can you do anything in the way of eating?"

Her very face as well as her tongue seemed to answer him, "Not much."

"Do you think of anything you could fancy?"

"No."—

"I brought some birds home with me that I believe I can answer for. Try to demolish the pinion of one of them—will you? It is a duty you owe to society."

"I will try,"—she said gravely.

The doctor wondered whether she had laid up against him any of his former conversation.

"What do you think," he said with a kind of gentle insinuation,—"of that argument I ventured to advance the other day, on the matter we were speaking of?"

"I don't like to think of it at all, Dr. Harrison."

"May I know why not?"

"Because I know it is false, and yet I cannot make you see it."

"Can you make yourself see it?"

"I don't need to take any pains for that. I see it very well."

"Perhaps you will find the way to make me see it," said the doctor pleasantly.

"That would be easy," said Faith, "if—"

"If what? May I not know the difficulty?"

"If you really cared about it."

"I do care about it. You mistake me when you think that. But you must not think about anything now.

Did you know I carried off your rosebud the other night?"

"Yes."

It was impossible to tell from the doctor's accent how *he* viewed the transaction, and equally impossible from Faith's answer to tell what she thought of it. Extremes meet—as Mr. Linden had once remarked.

"I'll endeavour to atone for that presumption to-morrow," said he rising, for Mrs. Derrick now entered the room. To her Dr. Harrison repeated his orders and counsels, and to Faith's relief took himself away. Her mother came up to the easy-chair with a smothered sigh on her lips, and laid her gentle hand on Faith's forehead and wrist.

"Child," she said, "has that man talked you into a fever again? I've a great mind not to let him come any more—I guess I could cure you better myself. If you'd send word to somebody else, Faith, we'd have you well in no time."

"I haven't heard from him to-night, mother." Faith felt the little start of her mother's hand.

"Maybe he's coming then," said Mrs. Derrick,—"he might have meant to come yesterday and been hindered." Faith did not think that.

"We shall know," she said to her mother. "We have only to wait and be quiet." And she carried out both parts of her stated duty to perfection.

There is a strange sort of strength in a certain degree of weakness—or it may be that weakness runs sooner to its refuge, while strength stands outside to do battle with the evil felt or feared. Faith's gentle and firm temper was never apt for struggling, with either pain or fear; it would stand, or yield, as the case called for; and now, whether that her mind had been living in such a peaceful and loving atmosphere, both earthly and heavenly, that it could settle upon none but peaceful views of things, or that bodily weakness made her unable to bear any other, she did mount upon one of those "ladders" and left her burden on the ground. She thought she did. She was as quiet outwardly as before; she told Mrs. Derrick, who looked at her in misery,—and told her with a steady cheerful little smile, that "she dared say the letter would come to-morrow." But it is true that Faith had no power to eat that night nor the next day; and that she did not know the hidden slow fever—not of disease—which was running through all her veins and making the other fever do its work again, bright in her cheek and eye and beating at her temples and wrist. But she was as still and quiet through it all—quiet in voice and brow—as if letters had been full and plenty.

CHAPTER XXIII.

It was about midday of Saturday, when Reuben Taylor, proceeding up the main street of Pattaquasset on some business errand for his father, was joined by Phil Davids—no wonted or favourite associate or companion. But Phil now walked up the street alongside of the basket which had come "into town" with fish.

"I say, Reuben," said Phil after some unimportant remarks had been made and answered,—"does Mr. Linden ever write to you?"

Reuben started—as if that touched some under current of his thoughts, and answered "yes."

"I wish he'd write to me," said Phil. "I know I'd like it. I say,
Taylor, what does he send you such thick letters about?"

"Such thick letters!" Reuben repeated, with a quick look at his companion. "People put a great many things in a letter, Phil."

"I guess likely. That's what I say. What does he write to you about?"

"Maybe I'll bring up one of 'em for you to read," said Reuben. "You've heard him talk, Phil—he writes just so."

"Does he? I guess you wouldn't like to miss one of his letters then,
Reuben,—would you?"

"No."

"I s'pose it would be a worse job yet to miss two of 'em—wouldn't it?" said Phil with a perfectly grave face.

"Phil Davids!" Reuben exclaimed, facing round upon him, with such a flash of joy and hope and surprise and eagerness, as made Phil wonder. "What do you mean?" he added checking himself. "Just turn your pockets inside out, Phil, before we go any further."

"When were you at the post-office?"

"Last night—and this morning." Reuben forced himself to be quiet.

"Well look here,—when you go there, don't you ask for letters?"

"Ask!—I've asked till they were all out of patience."

"Suppose you come to the right shop next time!" said Phil, importantly producing the missing papers.

"Phil! Phil!—" was all Reuben said. He caught the letters—and stood looking at them with a face that made Phil look. "Mr. Linden will love you all his life for this. But how in the world did you get them?"

"That's exactly what I'd like somebody to tell me!" said Phil. "I know who put the monkey's paw in the fire—but how the chestnuts got there, I'm beat!"

"What do you know?" said Reuben,—"where did you get these? Oh Phil! I never can thank you enough!"

"It was because they were *his* letters I did it," said Phil bluntly. "I wasn't going to let Mintie Tuck have 'em. But I say, Reuben! what have you done to spite her? or has she a spite against Mr. Linden? or who has she a spite against?"

"I don't know. Did *she* give 'em to you, Phil?"

"Not by a precious sight nor to anybody else. Dromy saw 'em in her drawer, and for all the gumph he is, he knew the writing; and I made him get 'em for me this morning while they were at breakfast. Now Taylor," said Phil settling his hands further down in his pockets as they rapidly walked along,—"what bird's on *that* nest?"

Reuben listened—with an intentness that spoke of more than wonder. "In her *drawer?*" he repeated, —"what, down in the office?"

"Not a bit of it! Stowed away with her earrings and ribbands upstairs somewhere."

"Phil," said Reuben when he had pondered this strange information in silence for a minute, "will you be in the office when the mail comes in for a night or two?—and don't tell this to any one till Mr. Linden sends word what should be done."

"You expect more letters?" said Phil, with a not stupid glance at his fellow.

"Yes," Reuben said, too frankly to increase suspicion; "and if one should come it's very important that I should get it. And of course *I* can't watch."

"*She* sha'n't get it!" said Phil. "I'll be there. I'll be Sinbad's old man of the mountain for Mintie. I won't sit on her shoulders, but I'll sit on the counter; and if there's a scratch of Mr. Linden's in the mail-bag, I'll engage I'll see it as fast as she will. I know his seal too."

"*Could* she have done it to tease me?" Reuben said,—"I've never had the least thing to do with her but through that post-office window."

"What did you ever give her through the post-office window?" Phil asked half laughingly.

"Questions enough—" Reuben said, his thoughts too busy to notice any underhand meaning,—"and lately she's given me rather cross answers. That's all."

"Well what do you suppose she stole your letters for?"

"I don't know enough about her to guess," Reuben said frankly.

"Well," said Phil, "*I* guess Dr. Harrison won't appoint the postmaster of Pattaquasset when I am President. I rather think he won't."

"I wish you'd make haste and be President," Reuben said. "But if he didn't know anything about Mrs.

Tuck, Phil, other people did—and thought she was honest at least. And you know *she*'s postmaster, by right."

"*She*—is the female of Dromy!" said Phil with intense expression. "But Mintie aint a fool, and it's *she*'s post-master—anyhow Dromy says it's she that's Dr. Harrison's friend;—so that makes it. But that don't tell why she wants the letters."

"Dr. Harrison's friend?" said Reuben,—"what does she have to do with him?"

"I aint a friend of either of 'em, so I don't know," said Phil. "But girls with pretty faces will make friends with anybody!"

A very high degree of masculine charity and correctness of judgment was expressed in Phil's voice and words. Reuben made no reply—his charity, of any sort, was not in a talkative mood, and the two parted kindly at Phil's cross road.

Not home to dinner now, for Reuben! The minutes of talk had seemed long to his impatience; he had borne them, partly to get information, partly to keep down suspicion. But now with Phil out of sight, he turned short about and took the way to Mrs. Derrick's with almost flying steps. True, he was not dressed for "Miss Faith's" room—but Reuben Taylor was always neat and in order, and she must not wait. He hurried into Mrs. Roscom's—there to leave his basket and every removable trace of his work, —then on!

Faith had spent the early morning upon her couch;—no need to ask if she felt stronger than yesterday,—every line and feature shewed prostration—and patience. Breakfast had been passed over nominally. What Mrs. Derrick could do for her was done; what she could not, lay heavy on the hearts of both as the one went down to make the days arrangements, and the other lay still to endure. Reuben had not come after the morning train—there was nothing even to expect till night, and Faith lay listening to her little clock and watching the passage of the April sunbeams through her room.

Suddenly a loud startling rap at the front door. But she was powerless to go and see, and after that one sound the house seemed to sink into perfect stillness. Then the door of her room opened, and Mrs. Derrick came in bearing a large basket. A heavy one too, but Mrs. Derrick would have spent her last atom of strength before she would have let any one else bring it up. Her face looked quite radiant.

"Pretty child!" she said, "here's something for you!"

It was needless to ask questions,—Mrs. Derrick's face could have but one meaning. Faith neither asked nor answered, except by the sudden start of the blood into cheeks which were pale enough before. Slipping from the couch she was on her knees by the basket, pulling out the ends of the knots by which it was tied, with just a tiny beautiful smile at work on her changed lips. Her mother went softly away (she thought the first sight of anything in *that* line belonged to Faith alone) and the April sunbeams took a new view of things.

The knots gave way, and the basket cover swung round, and the white wrapping paper came off; and within lay something for her truly!—most appropriate! A great stem of bananas and another of plantains, thick set with fruit, displayed their smooth green and red coats in very excellent contrast, and below and around and doing duty as mere packing, were sunny Havana oranges, of extra size, and of extra flavour—to judge by the perfume. But better than all, to Faith's eye, was a little slip of blackmarked white paper, tucked under a red banana—it had only these words—

'Sweets to the sweet.'

"Faith, I should put in more, but the basket refuses. It is the measure of only one part of the proverb —do you understand?"

Faith knew oranges, she had never seen bananas or plantains before. It was all one; for the time being they were not bananas or oranges but hieroglyphics; and the one fruit looked as much like Mr. Linden's handwriting as the other. She sat with her arm resting on the couch supporting her head, and looking at them. Not the finest picture that Goethe ever viewed, or bade his friends view as part of their "duty," was so beautiful as that basket of red and yellow fruit to Faith's eye. And all the more for that foreign look they were like Mr. Linden; for the common things which they said, it was like him to say uncommonly. How very sweet was the smell of those oranges! and how delicious the soft feeling of peace which settled down on all Faith's senses. Very different from the sort of quiet she was in a quarter of an hour ago. She did not trouble herself now about the missing letters. This told that Mr. Linden was well, or he could hardly have been out to buy fruit and pack it and pack it off to her. So

Mrs. Derrick found her—reading not words, but oranges and bananas; with a face it was a pity Mr. Linden could not see.

It may be remarked in passing that the face was not lost upon the one who did see it. Mrs. Derrick came and stooped down by Faith and her basket in great admiration and joy and silence for a moment—the sight almost put everything else out of her head; but then she exclaimed, "Child, the doctor's coming!—I saw him driving up to the door."

Faith put the cover on the basket, and while Mrs. Derrick set it out of sight, she received the doctor as yesterday, standing. But with a nice little colour in her cheeks to-day, in place of yesterday's sad want of it. Dr. Harrison came up with one hand full of a most rare and elegant bunch of hothouse flowers.

"My amends-making—" he said as he presented it.

It was not in Faith's nature not to look pleasure and admiration at such bits of kindred nature. They were very exquisite, they were some of them new to her, they were all most lovely, and Faith's eyes looked love at them. Dr. Harrison was satisfied, for in those eyes there was to-day no shadow at all. Their gravity he was accustomed to, and thought he liked.

"How do you do?" he said.

"I am—a great deal better. O mother—may I have a glass of water for these?"

"You said yesterday you were well, Miss Faith."

"You saw I wasn't," said Faith as she put her flowers in the glass.

"That is very true. And I see also that your statement to-day is not of much juster correctness. How came you to say that?"

"I said, it without knowing—what I said," Faith answered simply. "What is this, Dr. Harrison?"

The doctor puzzled over her answer and could make nothing of it.

"That is a Fuchsia—and that is another."

"How beautiful!—how beautiful. They are not sweet?"

"You cannot *always* have sweetness in connexion with everything else," he said with a slight emphasis. Faith's mind was too far away from the subject to catch his innuendo; unless other lips had spoken it.

"Mrs. Derrick," said the doctor, "I should like as a professional man, to know what portion of the wing of a robin this lady can manage for her breakfast?"

"Some days more and some days less," said Mrs. Derrick. "She was not very hungry this morning." (A mild statement of the case.)

"Some days less than the wing of a robin!" said the doctor. "The robin himself is a better feeder. Mrs. Derrick, what fancies does this bird live upon?"

The allusion drew a smile to Faith's face, which Mrs Derrick did not understand.

"She don't tell all her fancies,—she has *seemed* to live on tea and toast, for eatables."

The doctor smiled, and went back to Faith who was busy with the flowers; or as Mrs. Derrick said, seemed to be busy with them.

"Are those better than cowslips?" he asked lightly.

"They are more wonderfully beautiful—they are not better in their place."

"How is that?"

"I told you cowslips were bits of spring," said Faith smiling. "These are not that. I think everything in the world—I mean, the natural world—has its place, that it fills."

"Better than any other would?"

"I suppose so. Yes."

"That is admirable philosophy," said the doctor. "Excellent to keep one contented. Three feet of snow is then as good as May zephyrs! Daisies and dandelions are fair substitutes for geraniums and cacti! And these barren granite fields, where the skeleton rock has hardly covered itself skin deep with soil, are better than flowery prairies of rolling land, and fertile wildernesses of roses!"

"Well," said Faith; "you needn't laugh. I think they are."

"By what transmutation of philosophy?"

Faith's philosophy was put to the test by certain sounds which just then came to her ear; the hall door opened and shut quick though softly, and Reuben came lightly upstairs—two stairs at a time!—but his knock at Faith's door was almost as quiet as usual. Whatever spirit of energy was at work in him, however, calmed itself down at sight of Dr. Harrison—whom he did not then stay to greet, but coming up with a swift steady step to Faith's chair, knelt down there and gave her his hand with, "Miss Faith, are you better to-day?"

If a rosebud yesterday shut up in the cold had opened all its beams to the sun,—that was Faith to-day, as she took Reuben's hand and held it.

"That is a very devoted servant of yours, Miss Faith," said the doctor pointedly. "I notice he gives you homage in true chivalric style. Does the transmuting philosophy extend thus far also?"

Faith turned the light of her face upon him as she answered, "I shouldn't be worthy of one of those knights or of this, Dr. Harrison, if I would change one for the other."

Reuben had risen to his feet as the doctor spoke, and as he quitted Faith's hand laid his own, with the slightest possible gesture, upon the left breast of his coat; which did not mean (as it would with Sam Stoutenburgh) that there was his heart—but that there were the letters! Then stepping back with a bow acknowledging Dr. Harrison's presence, Reuben went over to the window to speak to Mrs. Derrick. The doctor had seen him before that morning from the window, as with some ordered fish Reuben entered Judge Harrison's gate, and his dress was the same now as then,—how the different offices could be so different and so reconciled—or what *this* office was, were matters of study. But clearly Faith was as strong for her knight as her knight was for her.

"I didn't understand the transmuting philosophy in the former case," the doctor remarked.

"It is not that," said Faith with rising colour, for she had seen
Reuben's hand gesture. "It is just taking things as they are."

"That is a philosophy deeper than that of transmutation!" said the doctor. "I give it up. But what is the philosophy in this case?—" and he nodded slightly towards Reuben.

"If you ever know him, you'll know, Dr. Harrison," Faith said softly.

"Is he so trustworthy?" said the doctor thoughtfully looking at him; but then he gave his attention to Faith, and talked of herself and what she was to do for herself; until seeing no prospect of the doctor's being out of his way, Reuben was again passing them on his way out. The doctor arrested him by a slight but pleasant gesture.

"What are you doing now, Taylor?"

"Nothing new, sir,—a little for my father and a little for myself."

"I saw you doing something for your father, I think to-day. Doesn't that hinder your studies?"

"Mr. Linden used to say that one duty never *really* hinders another, sir."

"Pleasant doctrine!" said the doctor. "I am tempted to try it now. If you bestow a little time upon me, it will not perhaps interfere with your going to dinner afterwards. Does Mr. Linden continue to hold some of his supervision over you? Do you hear from him sometimes?"

"Yes sir—both,"—was Reuben's prompt answer.

"Then you have something to do with the post-office occasionally?"

"Yes sir."

"And know pretty well what everybody in Pattaquasset says of every other body,—don't you?"

"I don't need to go to the post office for that, sir," Reuben said quietly.

"No—I mean by virtue of another office—that which you exercise for your father. But it is true, isn't it?"

"Not quite, sir. Some people do not talk to me—and some I never stop to hear."

The doctor smiled a little, along with an acute look of approving intelligence.

"Well—do you happen to know what is said or thought of the people I was the means of putting into the post-office, half a year ago?"

"Not very well, sir. I haven't heard much said about them."

"As far as your knowledge goes, they seem to be doing their duty?"

"I make no complaint, sir."

Dr. Harrison glanced at Faith with a not pleased expression, and back again. "Does that mean that you have none to make, or that you will make none? I am asking, you surely must know, not officially nor judicially; but to gain private information which it is desirable I should have; and which I ask, and expect to receive, confidentially."

"Sir," Reuben said gravely, though with a manner perfectly respectful, "why do you ask *me?* The gentlemen of Pattaquasset should know more about their own post-office, than the poor fishers of Quapaw. There is a clannishness among poor people, sir,—if I had heard anything, I should not like to tell you."

The doctor got up and took his old position on the carpet rug, a very slight air of haughty displeasure mixing with his habitual indolent gracefulness.

"This is your knight, Miss Derrick! Apparently the proverb of 'friends' friends' does not hold good with him. When you are a little older, sir, you will know—if you grow correspondingly wiser—that the fishers of Quapaw or of any other point are precisely the people to know in such a matter what the gentlemen whom it more nearly concerns, cannot get at; and you have yourself given the reason."

Faith looked at Reuben with a little inquiring wonder. But he made no answer, either to her look or the doctor's words; indeed perhaps did not see the former, for his own eyes were cast down. He stood there, the fingers of both hands lightly interlaced, his face quiet to the last degree of immovability. The doctor's first words, to Faith, had brought a moment's flush to his cheeks, but it had passed with the moment; gravity and steadiness and truth were all that remained. The doctor recognized them all, but all as adverse or opposition forces.

"I will not detain you longer, sir!—I told you, Miss Faith," he said sitting down and changing his tone, "that I did not know how to cut up cake—still less how to administer it. I found this family—very poor—over at Neanticut, on some of my excursions;—and somewhat carelessly thought they could perform the duty of taking papers out of a bag, as well as wiser people. There is a girl too, the daughter, who seemed clever enough. But I have had reason to doubt my own wisdom in the proceeding, after all."

Faith heard the door close after Reuben with the first of the doctor's words to her. She listened to the rest with a divided interest. Her mind had gone off to her basket of bananas, and was besides occupied with a little lurking wonder at Reuben's impracticability. But with nothing strongly, the feeling of weakness and lassitude was so taking the upper hand of every other. The relaxing now began to tell of the great tension she had borne for a day or two; the relaxing was entire, for what the basket had begun Reuben's appearance had finished. Faith was sure he had a letter for her, and so sat and looked at the doctor like one whose senses were floating away in a dream—one of those pleasant dreams that they do not wish to break.

"You are faint!" said the doctor suddenly. "Mrs. Derrick, have you any wine in the house? I should like some here."

But Mrs. Derrick's first step (it seemed but that) was to Faith—taking her out of the easy-chair and putting her on the couch before any one had time to say ay or no. There she left her while she opened the closet and got out the wine; bringing it then to Faith and setting the doctor aside most unceremoniously. Faith had not quite reached the fainting point, though she was near it from mere inanition. She drank the wine, and smiled at them both like one who had a secret wine of her own that she was taking privately.

"What *will* she eat, Mrs. Derrick?" said the doctor in real concern.
"Tea and toast won't do!"

"I will take something presently," Faith said with another of those childlike satisfied looks. They made Dr. Harrison very unlike himself, always. He stood so now.

"Doctor," said Mrs. Derrick, in her odd, free, rather blunt and yet kindly way, "you are a very good doctor, I dare say, but you're not much of a nurse. Now I am—and I'll find her something to eat,—you needn't be uneasy."

He looked at her with one of the best smiles that ever came over his face; bright, free and kindly; then turned to Faith.

"What made your knight so cross with me?" he said as he bent over her to take her hand.

"I don't know—" said Faith. "I am sure he had some good reason."

"Reason to be cross!"—

"He didn't mean to be cross. You don't know Reuben Taylor."

The doctor was inclined to be of a different opinion, for his brows knit as soon as he had closed her door.

"Now mother!" said Faith half raising herself,—"please let me have my basket. I am going to try one of those queer things. That is what I want."

"Do you know what I want?" said Mrs. Derrick as she brought up the basket. "Just to have Dr. Harrison find Mr. Linden here some day!" Which severe sentence was so much softened down by the weight of the basket, that it sounded quite harmless.

Faith was too eager to get the cover off to pay present attention to this speech. There they were again! the red and yellow strange, beautiful, foreign-looking things which she was to eat; too handsome to disturb. But finally a red plump banana was cut from the stem, and Faith looked at it in her fingers, uncertain how to begin the attack. Looking back to the little empty space where it had been, Faith became "ware" of an end of blue ribband beneath said space. Down went the banana and down went Faith. The loop of ribband being pulled gently suggested that it was not able to contend with an unknown weight of bananas; but when Faith partly held these up, the ribband yielded to persuasion, and tugged after it into the daylight a tiny package—which being unwrapped revealed a tiny oval case; wherein lay, last of all, a delicate silver knife. Faith's face of overflowing delight it was good to see.

"O mother!—how just like him!—Mother!" exclaimed Faith,—"this is to eat those with!"

Could anything more be wanting to give bananas a flavour? They happened moreover to hit the fancy the doctor had been so anxious to suit. Faith liked her first one very much, and pronounced it very nearly the best of all fruits. But being persuaded to try one, Mrs. Derrick avowed that she could not eat it and wondered how Faith could; declaring that in her judgment if a thing was sweet at all, it ought to be sweeter.

If Dr. Harrison could have seen the atmosphere of peace and delight his knit brows had left behind them!

As soon as he was gone, Reuben brought up the letters. And with sunshine all round her, Faith read them and went to sleep, which she did with the little case that held her knife clasped in her hand. Sleep claimed her while fever took its turn and passed away for the day. Faith woke up towards evening, weak and weary in body, unable to make much lively shew of the "merry heart" which "doeth good like a medicine".

"My studies don't get on very fast at this rate, mother," she remarked as she sat in the easy-chair at her tea, unable to hold her head up.

"This has been a hard day," her mother said sadly as she looked at her. "Faith, I won't let Dr. Harrison pay any more such long visits! he tires you to death."

"It wasn't that. Mother—I think I'll have one of those things out of my basket—I wish Mr. Linden had told me what to call them."

Mrs. Derrick brought the basket and looked on intently.

"When is he coming, child?" she said.

Faith did not certainly know. Under the influence of a plantain and the silver knife she revived a little.

"Mother—what made you wish Dr. Harrison might meet Mr. Linden here?"

"It would save him a world of trouble," said Mrs. Derrick kindly. "And besides, child, I'm tired seeing him buzz round you, myself. Faith, Mr. Linden would say that *he* ought to be told you're sick."

"I can judge for him once in a while," Faith said with a little bit of a triumphing smile.

"Well—" said her mother,—"you'll see what he'll say. I guess he'd rather you'd judge for him about something else."

From that time letters went and came through the Patchaug post-office.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Faith rallied somewhat from the prostration that succeeded those days of anxiety; but then the fever again asserted its empire, and strength, little by little but daily, lost ground rather than gained it. Though not ever very high, the fever came back with persevering regularity; it would not be baffled; and such always recurring assaults are trying to flesh and blood and to spirit too, be they of what they may. Faith's patience and happy quiet never left her; as the weeks went on it did happen that the quiet grew more quiet, and was even a little bordering on depression. One or two things helped this uncomfortably.

The sense of the extreme unpleasantness of such a meeting as her mother had wished for, perhaps startled Faith to a fresh sense of what she had to do in the premises. She resolved to be as grave and cool as it was possible to be, in Dr. Harrison's presence. She would keep him at such a distance as should wean him from any thoughts of her. Faith tried faithfully to do what she had purposed. But it was very difficult to keep at a distance a person who did not pretend to be near, or only pretended it in a line where he could not be repulsed. He must see her every day as her physician. He must be allowed the kindly expression of kind feelings; he could not be forbidden to bring to his patient, as her friend and physician, such things as he thought her strength, or weakness, needed. These instances of thoughtfulness and care for her were many. Birds, old wine from his father's cellar, flowers from the greenhouse, and fruit from nobody knows where, came often; and the manner of offering them, the quiet, unobtrusive, unexacting kindness and attention, it was scarce possible to reject without something that would have seemed churlishness. Faith took them as gravely as she could without being unkind. Her illness helped her, and also hindered the effect she wished to produce. Feeling weak and weary and unable for any sort of exertion, it was the easier for her to be silent, abstracted, unresponsive to anything that was said or done. And also her being so signified the less and testified the less of her real purpose. Faith knew it and could not help it. She could not besides be anything but natural; and she felt kindly towards Dr. Harrison; with a grave kindness, that yet was more earnest in its good wishes for him than any other perhaps that existed for Dr. Harrison in the world. Faith could not hide that, careful as she was in her manner of shewing it. And there was one subject upon which she dared not be unresponsive or abstracted when the doctor brought it up. He brought it up now very often.

She did not know how it was, she was far from knowing why it was; but the pleasant talk with which the doctor sought to amuse her, and which was most skilfully pleasant as to the rest, was very apt to glance upon Bible subjects; and as it touched, to brush them with the wing of doubt—or difficulty or—uneasiness. Dr. Harrison did not see things as she did—that was of old; but he contrived to let her see that he doubted she did not see them right, and somehow contrived also to make her hear his reasons. It was done with the art of a master and the steady aim of a general who has a great field to win. Faith did not want to hear his suggestions of doubt and cavil. She remembered Mr. Linden's advice long ago given; repeated it to herself every day; and sought to meet Dr. Harrison only with the sling stone of truth and let his weapons of artificial warfare alone. Truly she "had not proved these," and "could not go with them." But whatever effect her sling might have upon him, which she knew not, his arrows were so cunningly thrown that they wounded her. Not in her belief; she never failed for a moment to be aware that they were arrows from a false quiver, that the sword of truth would break with a blow. And yet, in her weak state of body and consequent weak state of mind, the sight of such poisoned arrows flying about distressed her; the mere knowledge that they did fly and bore death with them; a knowledge which once she happily had not. All this would have pained her if she had been well; in the feverish depression of illness it weighed upon her like a mountain of cloud. Faith's shield caught the darts and kept them from herself; but in her increasing nervous weakness her hand at last grew weary; and it seemed to Faith then as if she could see nothing but those arrows flying through the air. But there was one human form before which, she knew, this mental array of enemies would incontinently

take flight and disappear; she knew they would not stand the first sound of Mr. Linden's voice; and her longing grew intense for his coming. How did she ever keep it out of her letters! Yet it hardly got in there, for she watched it well. Sometimes the subdued "I want to see you very much,"—at the close of a letter, said, more than Faith knew it did; and she could not be aware how much was told by the tone of her writing. That had changed, though that too was guarded, so far as she could. She could not pour out a light, free, and joyous account of all that was going on within and about her, when she was suffering alternately from fever and weakness, and through both from depression and nervous fancies. Most unlike Faith! and she tried to seem her usual self then when she came most near it, in writing to him. But it was a nice matter to write letters for so many weeks out of a sick room and not let Mr. Linden find out that she herself was there all the while. His letters however were both a help and a spur; Faith talked a good deal of things not at Pattaquasset; and through all weakness and ailing sent her exercises prepared with utmost care, regularly as usual. It hurt her; but Faith would not be stopped. Her sickness she knew after all was but a light matter; and nothing could persuade her to break in upon Mr. Linden's term of study with any more interruptions for her. And even to Mrs. Derrick she did not tell the keen heart-longing, which daily grew more urgent, for that term to come to an end.

Mrs. Derrick did sometimes connect the cause of her weariness with Dr. Harrison, and was indignant in proportion. Faith looked at him with different eyes, and her feeling was of very gentle and deep sorrow for him. It was by the appeal to that side of her character that Dr. Harrison gained all his advantage.

Faith's shield caught his arrows of unbelieving suggestion and threw them off from her own heart; she could not put that shield between them and the doctor, and that was her grief. It grieved her more than he thought. And yet, it was with a half conscious, half instinctive availing himself of this feeling that he aimed and managed his attacks with such consummate tact and skill. Faith would not have entered into controversy; she would not have taken up a gauntlet of challenge; did he know that? His hints and questions were brought into the subject, Faith knew not how; but the point of view in which they always presented themselves was as troublers of his own mind—difficulties he would willingly have solved—questions he would like to see answered. And Faith's words, few or many, for she was sometimes drawn on, were said in the humble yearning desire to let him know what she rejoiced in and save him from an abyss of false fathomless depth. It was more than she could do. Dr. Harrison's subtle difficulties and propositions had been contrived in a school of which she knew nothing; and were far too subtle and complicate in their false wit for Faith's true wit to answer. Not at all for lack of wit, but for lack of skill in fencing and of experience in the windings of duplicity. So she heard things that grieved her and that she could not shew up to the doctor for what she knew them to be.

"I am no better than this little knife!" she thought bitterly one day, as she was looking at her favourite silver banana-carver;—"it can go through soft fruit well enough, but it isn't strong enough or sharp enough to deal with anything harder!—"

Faith did herself injustice. It takes sometimes little less than Ithuriel's spear to make the low, insidious, unobtrusive forms of evil stand up and shew themselves what they are—the very Devil!

"Reuben," said Faith one time when they were alone together,—"did you ever hear any of the mischievous talk against the Bible, of people who don't love it?"

"Yes, Miss Faith,—I never heard a great deal at a time—only little bits now and then. And I've felt some times from a word or two what other words the people had in their hearts."

"Don't ever let people talk it to you, Reuben, unless God makes it your duty to hear it," she said wearily. Reuben looked at her.

"Do you think he *ever* makes it our duty, Miss Faith?"

"I don't know!" said Faith, a little as if the question startled her.
"But you might be where you could not help it, Reuben."

He was silent, looking rather thoughtfully into the fire.

"Miss Faith," he said, "you remember when Christian was going through the Valley of the Shadow of Death, the fiends came and whispered to him all sorts of dreadful things which he would not have thought of for the world. 'But,' as Mr. Bunyan says, 'he had not the discretion either to stop his ears, or to know from whence those blasphemies came.'" Reuben blushed a little at his own advice-giving, but made no other apology.

There was much love and respect and delight in Faith's swift look at him. Her words glanced. "Reuben, I am glad you are going to be a minister!"—She added with the sorrowful look stealing over her face, "I wish the world was full of ministers!—if they were good ones."

His face was very bright and grateful, and humble too. "Miss Faith," he said, taking up her words, "don't you love to think of that other definition of minister?—you know—'ye ministers of his, that do his pleasure.'"

"In that way the world is full now," said Faith; "in all things except men. But by and by 'the great trumpet will be blown' and 'they that were ready to perish' shall come, from everywhere. It's good to know that."

"It's such a beautiful thing to know, just by believing!" Reuben said,—"don't you think so, Miss Faith? And then whatever people say or do, and if we can't find a word to answer them, we *know* down in our hearts, that the Bible is true. And so 'by faith we stand.'"

"But we ought to find words to answer them, Reuben—or else, though *we* stand, they fall!"

"Yes, ma'am—sometimes," Reuben said rather hesitatingly. "Only—I've heard Mr. Linden say that a Christian must take care of his own standing *first*, and do nothing to shake that; or else he may have his own light blown out while he's trying to light other people's. You know, Miss Faith, the five wise virgins would not give their oil to the others. I've heard Mr. Linden talk about it very often," Reuben added softly, as if he wanted to screen himself from the charge of presumption.

If Faith was bringing charges, it was against herself, for she sat very silent and thoughtful, and weary also; for when for the fifth or sixth time Reuben brought his eyes from the fire to her face he saw that she had fallen asleep.

Mr. Linden's letters about this time told two or three things, among the rest that he might soon be looked for instead of letters. Moreover that he felt sure he was wanted—and further, that Faith's letters had changed. These two last things were not said in words, but Faith read them none the less surely—read thus first that her letters really *were* different. Just what cause Mr. Linden assigned to himself, she did not know, nor whether he had fixed upon any; but it was clear that nothing but the fact that his freedom was so close at hand, kept him from freeing himself at once and coming to Pattaquasset. And second only to Faith did Mrs. Derrick long for his appearance.

She had heard bits of the doctor's talk from time to time, but for a while with some doubt of their meaning,—as whether he was reporting what other people said, or whether she had heard him correctly. But when by degrees the goodness of her hearing attested itself, *then* Mrs. Derrick's indignation began to follow suit. The doctor's object she did not at first guess (perhaps made it, if possible, worse than it was) but that made little difference.

On this particular afternoon, when Faith woke up she found Reuben gone and her mother keeping watch. The fair look that always greeted Mrs. Derrick was given her, but otherwise the face she was studying was not satisfactory. The roundness of the cheek was much lessened, the colour was gone, and the lines of expression were weary though she had slept. Or rather perhaps they were too gravely drawn.

"Faith," said her mother decisively, "you want your tea. Can you eat a broiled pigeon, if I broil it myself?"

"I can eat a piece of one, if you'll take the rest, mother," she said with a smile at her. "I eat a whole banana just before I went to sleep."

"Well this ain't the doctor's pigeon, so I guess it will be good," said Mrs. Derrick. "Sam Stoutenburgh brought it.—And I'm going to cook it here, pretty child, because I want to be here myself. I suppose the smoke won't trouble you if it goes up chimney?"

"I'd like it, smoke and all, mother," said Faith, changing the resting-place for her head. "But you needn't slight the doctor's birds—they were as fine birds as could be—when I could eat them."

"'Birds of a feather'"—said Mrs. Derrick laconically. And she drew out some of the glowing and winking embers, and set thereon the tiny gridiron with its purplish plump pigeon. "Sam's home now, Faith, and you'd think he'd been through every degree of everything. But the first thing he did was to go off and shoot pigeons for you."

Faith was inclined to think he had not got above one degree. She sat in her easy-chair and watched the play cookery with amused pleased eyes.

"I should like to be in the kitchen again, mother—doing something for you."

"You shall do something for me presently," said her mother, as the pigeon began to send out little puffs of steam and jets of juice, which the coals resented. "*This* one's fat, anyway—and there's a half

dozen more. The fun of it is, child, that Sam was afraid there weren't enough!—he wanted to know if I was *sure* they'd last till to-morrow!—so I guess *he's* not in a fainting away state. I told him we'd roast beef in the house, for you to fall back upon, child," she added with a little laugh, as she turned the pigeon. But her face was very grave the next moment, with the sorrowful reality. "Pretty child," she said tenderly, "do you feel as if you could eat a muffin or a biscuit best?"

"Mother, that pigeon is making me hungry, it smells so nice. I am sure I can eat anything."

"Well I *made* muffins," said Mrs. Derrick, bustling softly about with the little table and the tea-things. "Faith, I'm afraid to have Mr. Linden come home and find your cheeks so thin."

"I'm not," said Faith quietly.

"My!" said her mother, "you never were afraid of anything he'd a mind to do, child. But for all *I* know, he may carry you off to Europe in the next steamer. He's up to 'most anything," said Mrs. Derrick stooping down by the pigeon, and giving it the persuasion of a few more coals.

Faith said languidly that she did not think there was much danger, and Mrs. Derrick for the present concentrated her attention upon the tea preparations. Cindy came up with a little teakettle, and Mrs. Derrick made the tea, and then went down stairs to superintend the first baking of the muffins, leaving the teakettle to sing Faith into a very quiet state of mind. Then presently reappearing, with a smoking plate of cakes in her hand, Mrs. Derrick took up the pigeon, with due applications of butter and salt and pepper, and the tea was ready. It was early; the sunbeams were lingering yet in the room, the air wafted in through the window the sweet dewy breath of flowers and buds and springing grass over the pigeon and muffins; and by Faith's plate stood the freshest of watercresses in a little white bowl. These Reuben brought her every day, wet from the clear stream where they grew, shining with the drops of bright water, and generally sprinkled too with some of the spring flowers. To-day the plate on which the bowl stood had a perfect wreath or crown of mouse-ear,—the pale pink blossoms saying all sorts of sweet things. The room was well off for flowers in other respects. Dr. Harrison's hothouse foreigners looked dainty and splendid, and Mrs. Stoutenburgh's periwinkle and crocuses and daffodils looked springlike and fresh; while in another glass a rich assortment of dandelions spoke a prettier message yet, from Charles twelfth and his little compeers.

"And the mouse-ear is come!" said Faith as she applied herself to the refreshment of salt and watercresses. "I wonder whether Reuben does this because he loves flowers him self, or because he knows I do. I guess it's both. How lovely they are! How my dairy must want me, mother." Which was said with a little recollective patient sigh.

"I guess it can wait," said her mother cheerfully. "And I guess it'll have to. You needn't think you'll be let do anything for one while, Faith."

"I guess I shall, mother. I am sure I am stronger to-day,—and Dr. Harrison said I had less fever. And your pigeon is good. Besides, I *must,*—if I can,"—said Faith, with an anticipative glance this time.

"It's my belief, child," said her mother, "that if Dr. Harrison had staid away altogether—or never staid here more than five minutes at a time, you'd have been better long ago. But I think you *are* better—in spite of him."

Of the two subjects Faith preferred the pigeon to Dr. Harrison, and discussed it quite to her mother's satisfaction. But if silent, she thought never the less. Both Reuben Taylor's words and her mother's words quickened her to thinking, and thinking seemed of very little use. The next day when the doctor came she was as grave and still and unresponsive as she could be. And it had no effect on him whatever. He was just as usual, he talked just as usual; and Faith could but be grieved, and be silent. It did not enter her gentle imagination that the very things which so troubled her were spoken on purpose to trouble her. How could it? when they made their way into the conversation and into her hearing as followers of something else, as harpies that worried or had worried somebody else, as shapes that a cloud might take and be a cloud again—only she could not forget that shape. It was near now the time for Mr. Linden to come home, and Faith looked for his coming with an hourly breath of longing. It seemed to her that his very being there would at once break the mesh Dr. Harrison was so busy weaving and in which she had no power to stop him.

But the doctor's opportunity for playing this game was nearing an end, and he knew it. He did not know that Mr. Linden was coming; he did know that Faith was getting well.

A day or two after the talk with Reuben it happened that Mrs. Derrick was detained down stairs when the doctor came up to see Faith. The room was full of a May warmth and sweetness from the open windows; and Faith herself in a white dress instead of the brown wrapper, looked May-like enough. Not

so jocund and blooming certainly; she was more like a snowdrop than a crocus. Her cheeks were pale and thin, but their colour was fresh; and her eye had the light of returning health,—or of returning something else!

"You are getting well!" said the doctor. "I shall lose my work—and forgive me, my pleasure!"

"I will give you some better work to do, Dr. Harrison."

"What is that? Anything for you!—"

"It is not for me. That little lame child to whom you sent the rose-tree, Dr. Harrison,—she is very sick. Would you go and see her?"

"Did you think I would not?" he said rather gravely.

"I want to see her very much myself," Faith went on;—"but I suppose I could not take so long a ride yet. Could I?"

The doctor looked at her.

"I think the mother of the Gracchi must have been something such a woman!" he said with an indescribable grave comic mien;—"and the other Roman mother that saved Rome and lost her son! Or that lady of Sparta who made the affectionate request to *her* son about coming home from the battle on his shield! I thought the race had died out."

Faith could not help laughing. He had not been sure that she would understand his allusions, but his watchful eye saw that she did.

"Were you educated in Pattaquasset?" he said. "Pardon me!"—

All Faith's gravity returned, and all her colour too. "No, sir," she said, "I have never been educated. I am studying now."

"Studying!" said he gently. "You have little need to study."

"Why, sir?"

"There are minds and natures so rich by their original constitution, that their own free growth is a fuller and better harvest than all the schoolmasters in the world can bring out of other people."

Again Faith's cheek was dyed. "I was poor enough," she said bowing her head for a moment. "I am poor now,—but I am studying."

In which last words lay perhaps the tiniest evidence of an intention not to be poor always. A suspicious glance of thought shot from the doctor's mind. But as it had happened more than once before, the simplicity of Faith's frankness misled him, and he dismissed suspicion.

"If you want an illustration of my meaning," he went on without change of manner, "permit me to remind you that your paragon of character,—the Rhododendron—does no studying. My conclusion is plain!"

"The Rhododendron does all it can."

"Well—" said the doctor,—"it is impossible to trace the limits of the influences of mignonette."

Faith looked grave. She was thinking how very powerless her influences had been.

"Don't you see that I have made out my position?"

"No."

"What sort of studying—may I ask it?—do you favour most?" he said with a smile.

"I like all kinds—every kind!"

"I believe that. I know you have a love for chymistry, and Shakspeare, and natural history. But I should like to know Mignonette's favourite atmosphere."

"The study I like best of all is the one you like least, Dr. Harrison."

"What may that be, Miss Faith?"

"The study of the Bible."

"The Bible! Surely you know that already," he said in an interested voice.

"Did you think so?" said Faith quickly and with secret humbleness. "You made a great mistake, Dr. Harrison. But there is nothing I take such deep lessons in;—nor such pleasant ones."

"You mistake me too, Miss Faith. I do like it. You are strong enough for it to-day—I wish you would give me one of those lessons you speak of?"

"If you loved it, sir, you would not ask me. You would find them for yourself."

"Another mistake!" said the doctor. "I might love them, and yet ask you. Won't you give me one?"

She lifted to his a look so gentle and grave that he could not think she was displeased, or harsh, or even unkind. But she answered him, "No."

"Don't you feel strong enough for it?" he said with a shade of concern.

"Yes."

"You think you have given me one lesson already," he said smiling, "which I am not attending to. I will go and see your little sick child immediately. But I don't know the way! I wish you were well enough to pilot me. I can't find her by the sign of the rosebush?"

"Reuben Taylor will take you there, Dr. Harrison, if you will let him.
He goes there often."

"If I will let him! Say, if he will let me! Your knight does not smile upon me, Miss Faith."

"Why not?"

"I'm sure I'm not qualified to give evidence," said the doctor half laughing at having the tables turned upon him. "Unless his chivalric devotion to you is jealous of every other approach—even mine. But you say he will guide me to the rosebush?"

"I am sure he will with great pleasure, Dr. Harrison."

"And I will go with great pleasure—for you."

He was standing before her, looking down. There was something in the look that made Faith's colour come again. She answered seriously, "No sir—not for me."

"Why not?"

"I can't reward you," said Faith; trembling, for she felt she was speaking to the point. "Do it for a better reason."

"Will you shew me a better?"

She answered instantly with a bright little smile, "'Give, and it shall be given unto you; full measure, pressed down, heaped up, and running over, shall men give into your bosom.'"

"In another world!—" said the doctor.

"No—in this. The promise stands for it."

"It's your part of this world—not mine; and unless you shew me the way, Miss Faith, I shall never get into it."—Then more gently, taking her hand and kissing it, he added, "Are you tired of trying to help me?"

Faith met his keen eye, reddened, and drooped her head; for indeed she felt weak. And her words were low and scarce steady. "I will not be tired of praying for you, Dr Harrison."

What swift electric current along the chain of association moved the doctor's next question. He was silent a minute before he spoke it; then spoke in a clear even voice. "May I ask you—is it impertinent—what first led you to this way of thinking?—Sophy says you were not always so."

The colour deepened on Faith's cheek, he saw that, and deepened more.

"The teaching is always of heaven, sir. But it came to me through the hands of the friend who was so long in our house—last year."

"And has that adventurer counselled you to trust no friend that isn't of his way of thinking?" the doctor said with some haughtiness of accent.

Faith raised her eyes and looked at him, the steady grave look that the doctor never liked to meet from those soft eyes. It fixed his, till her eyes fell with a sudden motion, and the doctor's followed them —whither? To that gloved forefinger which he had often noticed was kept covered. Faith was slowly drawing the covering off; and something in her manner or her look kept his eyes rivetted there. Slowly, deliberately, Faith uncovered the finger, and in full view the brilliants sparkled; danced and leapt, as it seemed to Faith, whose eyes saw nothing else. She did not dare look up, nor could, for a double reason. She sat like a fair statue, looking still and only at the diamond sign, while the blood in her cheeks that bore witness to it seemed the only moving thing about her. That rose and deepened, from crimson to scarlet, and from her cheeks to the rim of her hair.

She never saw the changes in her neighbour's face, nor what struggles the paleness and the returning flush bore witness to. She never looked up. She had revealed all; she was willing he should conceal all,—that he could. It was but a minute or two, though Faith's measurement made it a more indefinite time; and Dr. Harrison took her hand again, precisely in his usual manner, remarked that it was possible he might be obliged to go south in a day or two *for* a day or two, but that he rather thought he had cured her; and so went off, with no difference of tone that any stranger could have told, and Faith never raised her eyes to see how he looked.

CHAPTER XXV.

Dr. Harrison sent away his curricle and walked home,—slowly, with his hands behind him, as if the May air had made him lazy. To any one that met him, he wore as disengaged an air as usual; his eye was as coolly cognizant of all upon which it fell, and his brow never looked less thoughtful. While his head never had been more busy. He kept the secret of his pride—he had kept and would keep it, well; no one should guess what he bore; but he bore a writhing brain and a passion that was heaving with disappointment. To no end—except to expose himself—he had worked at his mining operations all these months; nothing could be more absolute than the silence of Faith's answer; nothing could be more certain than the fixedness of her position. Against the very impassableness of the barrier the doctor's will chafed, even while his hope gave way. He ruthlessly called himself a fool for it too, at the minute. But he was unused to be baffled; and no man pursues long with such deliberate energy a purpose upon which he has set his heart, without having all the cords of his will and his passion knit at last into a cable of strength and tenacity. The doctor's walk grew slower, and his eyes fell on the ground. How lovely Faith had looked—even then, when she was putting him and herself to pain; how speakingly the crimson hues had chased each other all over her face, and neck; how shyly her eyelashes had kept their place on her cheek; with how exquisite grace her still attitude had been maintained. And withal what a piece of simplicity she was! What a contrast those superb diamonds had made with the almost quaint unadornedness of her figure in its white wrapper. A contrast that somehow was not inharmonious, and with which the doctor's artistic taste confessed itself bewitched, though Faith's only other remotest ornament was that very womanly one of her rich brown hair. A piece of simplicity? Could she be beyond his reach? With duty between,—yes; otherwise,—no! as all the doctor's experience told him. And he walked leisurely past his own door, past the houses of the village, on almost to the entrance of the woody road; then turned and came with a brisker pace back. He still called himself a fool, secretly; but he went into the library and wrote a letter. Which in course of time was received and read by Mr. Linden between two of his pieces of work.

It appeared the next day that Dr. Harrison had changed his mind, or his plans, about going south; for he came as usual to see Faith. In every sense as usual; to her astonishment no traces remained of the yesterday's conversation. The ease and kindliness of his manner had suffered no abatement, although a little touch of regretfulness, just allowed to appear, forbade her to doubt that she had been understood. Spite of herself, she could not help being presently again almost at ease with him. Nevertheless Faith wished he had gone south.

She did not feel sure that Mr. Linden would be pleased with the state of matters, as days went on, and she was sure she was not pleased herself. There was something she did not understand. The doctor's manner was not presuming, in a way; neither did he obtrude even his sorrow upon her; yet he took the place of a privileged person—she felt that—and she was obliged to see his pain in the very silence and in the play of words or of face which she thought assumed to conceal it. She was very sorry for him, and in the same breath thought she must have been wrong in something, though she could not see how, or things would never have come to such a point.

She could not guess—how could she!—that the doctor was playing a desperate game and had thrown his last stake on the chance of a flaw in Mr. Linden's confidence towards her or in hers towards him, or of a flaw in the temper of either of them, or a flaw in their pride, or affection! There are flaws in so many characters! Did but either of them lack moral courage, or truth, or trust, or common sense, like a great many of the rest of the world—and the doctor had gained his ground! For Dr. Harrison had determined that Faith's religious opinions should not stand in his way; she should think as he did, or—he would think with her!

Of all this Faith knew nothing. She had only an intuitive sense that something was not right; and doubt and annoyance kept her strength back. She lost ground again. All summed itself up in a longing for Mr. Linden to come.

Meanwhile Mr. Linden had received and read the following despatch, and studied and taught before and after it as best he might.

Pattaquasset, April, 18—.

"MY DEAR LINDEN,

I do not know what impulse prompts me to write this letter to you—A very strong one, probably, that makes fools of men—Yet even with my eyes open to this, I go on.

I have unwittingly become your rival. Not in fact, indeed, but in character. I have been so unfortunate as to love a person you are somehow concerned in—and before I knew that you had any concern of the kind. That is a very simple story, and only one to be smothered—not to be brought to open air,—were it all. But the course of the months past, which has too late brought me this knowledge of myself, has also made me believe that—had I a fair field—were there no contrary ties or fetters of conscience—I should not love in vain. What those ties are I know nothing—I have not asked—but the existence of *some* obligation I have been given to understand. With certain natures of truth and duty, that is a barrier impassable. You would be safe, were I to act out of honour.

I am a fool, I believe; but I am not yet such a fool as not to know that there is but one man in the world to whom I could write such a confession. Nothing better prompts it than pure selfishness, I am aware—but with me that is strong. I have that notion of you that you would not care to keep what you held *only* by priority of claim. I may be wrong in the supposition upon which I am going—yet it is my chance for life and I cannot yield it up. That were the lady *free*—in conscience as well as in fact—she might be induced to look favourably on me. I ought to add, that I believe such a consciousness has never shaped itself to her mind—the innocence with which she may at first have entered into some sort of obligation, would not lessen or alter its truth or stringency to her pure mind. The game is in your own hands, Linden—so is

Your unworthy friend

JULIUS HARRISON.

P.S.—One thing further I ought to add—that a somewhat delicate state of nerves and health, over which I have been for some time watching, would make any rash broaching of this subject very inexpedient and unsafe. I need not enforce this hint."

CHAPTER XXVI.

The spring opened from day to day, and the apple blossoms were bursting. Mr. Linden might soon be looked for, and one warm May afternoon Faith went in to make his room ready. It was the first day she had been fit for it, and she was yet so little strong that she must take care of her movements. With slow and unable fingers she did her pleasant work, and then very tired, sat down in her old reading window-

seat and went into a long dream-meditation. It was pleasant for a while, in harmony with the summer air and the robins in the maple; it got round at last into the train of the last weeks. A fruitless reverie ended in Faith's getting very weary; and she went back to her own room to put herself on the couch cushions and go to sleep.

Sleep held on its way after a peaceful fashion, yet not so but that Faith's face shewed traces of her thoughts. Mrs. Derrick came softly and watched her, and the spring air blew back the curtains and fanned her, and brushed her hair with its perfumed wings; and one or two honey bees buzzed in and sought honey from the doctor's flowers, and forsook them again for the fields.

Up there at last, following Mrs. Derrick, came Mr. Linden. With few reasons asked or told of his sudden appearance; with little said even of Faith's illness but the mere fact, he went up to the sunlit room and there staid. Not restingly in Faith's easy-chair, but standing by the low fire-place, just where he could have the fullest view of her. Mrs. Derrick came and went,—he never stirred. The sunbeams came and went—wrapped Faith in their bright folds and lay at his feet, then began to withdraw altogether. They had shewed him the unwontedly pale and worn face, and lit up the weary lines in which the lips lay asleep; and just when the sunbeams had left it all, Mr. Linden became aware that two dark eyes had softly opened and were gazing at him as if he were a figure in a dream. So perhaps for a minute he seemed, touched with the light as he was, which made a glorification in the brown locks of his hair and gleamed about "pleasant outlines" standing as fixed and still as a statue. But they were not statue eyes which looked into hers, and Faith's dreamlike gaze was only for a moment. Then every line of her face changed with joy—and she sprang up to hide it in Mr. Linden's arms. He stood still, holding her as one holds some rescued thing. For Faith was too weak to be just herself, and weariness and gladness had found their own very unusual expression in an outflow of nervous tears.

Something seemed to have taken away Mr. Linden's power of words. He did place her among the cushions again, but if every one of her tears had been balm to him he could not have let them flow more unchecked. Perhaps the recollection that they *were* tears came suddenly; for with very sudden sweet peremptoriness he said,

"Faith, hush!—Are you so glad to see me?"

She was instantly still. No answer.

"What then?" The intonation was most tender,—so, rather than by any playfulness, cancelling his own question. She raised her head, she had dismissed her tears, yet the smile with which her glance favoured him was a sort of rainbow smile, born of clouds.

"That is a very struggling and misty sunbeam!" said Mr. Linden. "Is that why I was kept out of its range so long?"

Faith's head drooped. Her forehead lay lightly against him; he could not see what sort of a smile she wore.

"Whereupon it goes into seclusion altogether. Mignonette, look up and kiss me—how much longer do you suppose I can wait for that?"

He had no longer to wait at that time, and the touch of her lips was with a tremulous gladness which was tale-telling. And then the position of the lowered head and the hand which kept its place on his shoulder shewed him that she was clinging, though with shy eagerness, like a bird that with tired wing has found her nest. With one of those quick impulses which to-day seemed to have taken the place of his usual steadiness, Mr. Linden bent down and blessed her; in words such as she never remembered from other lips. Not many indeed, but deep and strong,—as the very depth and strength of his own human and religious nature; words that stilled Faith's heart as with the shadowing of peace; so that for the time she could not wonder, but only rest. They made her tremble a moment; then she rested as if the words had been a spell. But the rest wrought action. Faith drew back presently and looked up at Mr. Linden to see how he looked. And then she could not tell. Her puzzled eyes found nothing to remark upon.

"Endy—I thought you would not be here for two or three days yet."

"It was nearly impossible. My child, when did you get sick?"

"O—a good while ago."

"'A good while,'"—Mr. Linden repeated with grave emphasis. "Well do you think it would have lengthened the time to have me come and see you?"

Faith's heart was too full, and her answer, looking down, was a tremulous, quiet and tender,

"I don't think it would."

"Then wherefore was I not permitted?"

"I didn't want you to come then."

"And again, wherefore?"

"Why you know, Endy. I couldn't want you till you were ready to come."

"I should have been most emphatically ready! What sort of medical attendance have you had?"

"Good, you know. I had Dr. Harrison."

"And he did his duty faithfully?"

"I guess he always does—his medical duty," said Faith somewhat quietly.

"Duty is a sort of whole-souled thing, to my mind," said Mr. Linden.
"Do you think all his ministrations did you good?"

There was pain and wonder, and even some fear in Faith's eyes as she looked at Mr. Linden.

"They ought not to have done me any harm"—she said meekly.

"*Did* they, Faith? I thought—" Very softly and thoughtfully his fingers came about her hair, his eyes looking at her, Faith could hardly tell how. The pain of those weeks stung her again—the sorrow and the shame and the needlessness. Faith's head sunk again upon Mr. Linden's breast, for the tears came bitterly; though he could not know that. He only knew that they came. Holding her with a strong arm—as if against some one else; soothing her with grave kisses, not with words, Mr. Linden waited for her to speak.

"Child," he said at last, "you will do yourself harm. Has *he* brought on this state of the nerves that he talks about? And in what possible way?"

"Don't talk about it, Endy!—" said Faith struggling for self-command—"I am foolish—and wrong—and weak. I'll tell you another time."—But Faith's head kept its position.

"Do you think I can wait, to know what has made my coming home such a tearful affair?"

"Yes. Because it's all over now."

"What is over?"

"All—that you wouldn't like."

"Faith, you talk in perfect riddles!—It is well that what I can see of this very pale little face is less puzzling. Did you tell Dr. Harrison of your claim upon me?"

"What?—" she said looking up.

"Well.—You know what that claim is. Did you tell him, Faith?"

Her eyes fell again. "Yes—at least—I shewed him my ring."

"In answer to his suit, Faith?"

"No.—He was talking as I did not like, one day."—Faith's cheeks were growing beautifully rosy.

"Was it to protect yourself, or me?" said Mr. Linden watching her.
Faith's glance up and down, was inexpressibly pretty.

"Myself, I think."

"You have a strange power of exciting and keeping down my temper, at one and the same time!" said Mr. Linden. "What did he dare say to you?"

"Nothing about me. It was something—about you—which I did not choose to have him say."

Mr. Linden smiled, and called her a little crusader, but the grave look came back. Dr. Harrison had known, then, just what ties he was trying to break,—had felt sure—*must* have felt sure—that they were

bonds of very deep love and confidence; and thereupon, had coolly set himself to sow mistrust! Mr. Linden was very silent,—the keen words of indignation that rose to his lips ever driven back and turned aside by Faith's face, which told so plainly that she could bear no excitement. He spoke at last with great deliberation.

"You may as well shew it to all Pattaquasset, Mignonette!—for all Pattaquasset shall know before I have been here much longer."

"What?—why?" she said startling.

"For what you will, love. I think you need the protection of my name."

Faith could not deny it; howsoever she looked quaintly grave upon the proposition.

"Do you know how you will have to scour the country now, and make yourself as much as possible like cowslips and buttercups and primroses and mouse-ear?" said Mr. Linden smiling. "One day you may be a Spring beauty, and the next Meadow-sweet, and when I see you a wild pink I shall feel comparatively happy."

Faith with a very little laugh remarked that she did not feel as if she ever should be anything *wild*.

"What is your definition of wild?"

"Not tame."

"Does that meek adjective express the kind of pink you intend to be?"

"I didn't say what I should be—I only spoke of what I am."

"Shall I tell you the future tense of this very indicative mood?" he said touching her cheeks.

"If you know it!"

"If I know it!—You will be (some months later) a Linden flower!—whether wild or tame remains to be been."

Unless Linden flowers can be sometimes found a good deal deeper-coloured than pinks, there was at least very little present resemblance. The only notice Faith took of this prophecy was an involuntary one. The door softly opened at this point, and Mrs. Derrick came in to announce tea. She stood still a moment surveying them both.

"How do you think she looks, Mr. Linden?"

His eyes went back to Faith, giving a quick reply which he did not mean they should. "She looks like a dear child—as she is, Mrs. Derrick. I cannot say much more for her. But I shall take her down to tea."

Mrs. Derrick went joyfully off for shawls and wrappers. Mr. Linden was silent; his eyes had not stirred. But he amused himself with taking some of the violets from the table near by and fastening them in her belt and hair; the very touch of his fingers telling some things he did not.

"Sunbeam, do you feel as if you could bear transportation?"

"Not as a sunbeam. I could walk down, I think," said Faith. Mr. Linden remarked that the truth of that proposition would never be known; and then she was muffled in a large soft shawl, and carried down stairs and laid on the sofa in the sitting-room. The windows were open for the May wind, but there was a dainty little fire still—everything looked strangely familiar; even Mr. Linden; though his face wore not just its most wonted expression. He had laid her down among the cushions and loosened her wrapping shawl, and paid a little attention to the fire; and now stood in Dr. Harrison's favourite place, looking at her,—perhaps trying to see whether she looked more like herself down stairs than she had done above. He could not find that she did. Faith felt as if a great cloud had rolled over and rolled off from her; yet in her very happiness she had a great desire to cry; her weakness of body helped that. Her head lay still upon the cushions with fingers pressed upon her brow. She hardly dared look at Mr. Linden; her eye wandered over less dangerous things; yet it saw him not the less. How sweetly the wind blew.

Mr. Linden went off to the window and picked three or four of the May roses that grew there, and then coming to sit down by Faith's sofa softly pushed one of the buds in between her fingers, and made the rest into a breast knot which he laid on the white folds of her dress. He put other roses in her cheeks then, but it was all done with a curious quietness that covered less quiet things. Faith took the flowers and played with them, venturing scarce a look of answer. With the wasted cheek, the delicate flush on it, and all the stirred fountain of feeling which she was not so able as usual to control, Faith

was very lovely; to which effect the roses and violets scattered over her lent a help of their own. Mr. Linden looked at her,—giving now and then a little arranging touch to flowers or hair—with an unbending face, which ended at last in a very full bright smile; though just why it rouged her cheeks so instantly Faith did not feel quite sure. She felt the rouge.

"I am glad you feel like yourself again," she remarked.

"How do you know that I do?"

"I think you look so."

"Quite a mistake. I am only bewitched. That is somewhat like myself, I must own."

Faith's face made a remonstrance, not at all calculated to be successful.

"Please don't bewitch me then!" said Mr. Linden answering the look. "You know I cannot help it—and on the whole you don't wish I could. What do you think of her now, Mrs. Derrick?" he added, getting up to roll the tea-table close to the sofa. The folding of Mrs. Derrick's hands was significant.

"Yes, but you must not look at her *so*," said Mr. Linden demurely arranging the table and sofa angles in harmonious relation. "You should look with cool unconcern—as I do."

"*You!*" said Mrs. Derrick. "Well I should like to see that for once."

Faith laughed again, and was ready for her supper after a new fashion from what she had known for many a day past. There is no doubt but cresses and broiled pigeon were good that night!

CHAPTER XXVII.

What a twitter of birds was in Faith's ears as she awoke next morning! Perhaps they were not really more noisy than usual, but she seemed to hear them more; and then it was a soft balmy morning, with a joyous spring sunshine and a dancing spring air, which gave full effect to all the bird voices. Faith listened to the chorus, the choir, the concert, the solos, with a charmed ear. The minute's hush; the low twitter—answered softly from bush and tree; the soft chiming in of other notes; the swelling, quickening, increasing song—till every sparrow and kildeer in all Pattaquasset drew his bow and clattered his castanets with the speed and the eagerness of twenty fiddlers. Only in this orchestra the heads turned gracefully on swelling throats, and for the angular play of elbows there was the lifting flutter of joyous wings; and the audience of opening leaves "clapped their little hands" for an encore.

Such were the sounds that came to Faith from without;—within her room, Mrs. Derrick moved silently about, lighting the fire, arranging the window curtains, the table and couch, laying out Faith's dressing gown to air, but not saying a word to her yet, lest she might be asleep. Faith could see the relief and gladness in every step her mother took—and well knew why. On the white spread before her lay a glowing little bunch of spring flowers, the last night's dew yet hiding in the depths of the violets, and sprinkling the leaves of the May roses, and making the windflowers look at her with wet eyes. Faith grasped these and held a considerably long conversation with them; then found it in her heart to speak otherwise.

"Mother," said she, with a little smile upon the contented languor of convalescence,—"you feel better!"

Mrs. Derrick came quick to her side, and kissed her and stroked her face. "Pretty child," she said, "so do you."

Which fact Faith confirmed by setting about the business of dressing with more energy and good will than she had for many a day brought to it. The pale cheeks were not quite so pale this morning. The white dress was tied round the waist with *that* blue ribband of long ago—never yet spoiled with wearing; and in it the roses and violets made a spot of warmer colour. When at last she was ready, and had stepped out into the hall, Mr. Linden met her there as he had done the night after the fire; and as then, stayed her for a minute and scanned her face: with a different look from then, with a different sort of gravity, which gladness did not quite cover up. He asked no questions but with his eyes, and did not say much but with his lips; then carried her down to the breakfast-room.

"Mignonette," he said, "what time to-day will it please you to take a drive?"

The pleasure of the idea brought the colour to Faith's cheeks. "I suppose I had better ask Dr.

Harrison first whether I may go," she said gravely.

"Not at all. He has nothing whatever to say about it."

"Then as soon as he is gone, I am ready."

"We will not wait for him," said Mr. Linden.

"But Endy, later will do just as well, won't it?"

"No, love—not half so well."

"Why?"

"Principally, because I want you to be out when Dr. Harrison comes." And quitting that subject, Mr. Linden wheeled her round to the nearer consideration of biscuits and coffee; leaving Dr. Harrison, for the time, quite out of sight. Out of his own sight, that is; for Faith plainly did not forget him. She was a delicious thing to take care of this morning; in that delicacy of bodily condition to which the strong love to minister, and a tenderness of spirit which grew out of other things and which to-day she had no force to hide. And there was an apprehension which Mr. Linden could see behind her eyes every time they came to his face. Faith was gathering her powers for a struggle. Yet she had no mind to begin it, and waited after breakfast till Mr. Linden should bring up the subject again. He seemed in no haste to bring it up. For some reason or other, he was in a mood that could not do enough for her. It was a mood Faith must try.

As the morning had worn on and she saw some preliminary movement on Mr. Linden's part, which looked like action, she put her hand in his and lifted her eyes to his face, with a gentle plea in them, speaking in musical softness. "Endy, will you let me wait till Dr. Harrison has made his visit?" The little hand was clasped and held fast.

"He would not wish to see you with me, Mignonette—and I certainly will not let him see you without."

"O why, Endy?"

"Because—Mignonette I cannot tell you. Don't ask me."

Faith flushed and looked troubled but somewhat timid too, and asked no more. She puzzled over the subject.

"Then, Endy, suppose we don't go out to drive to-day?"

"Suppose we do. What are you rouging your cheeks for?" he added smiling. "Faith, I know I have no legal right to control your actions—and yet in this case you must let me say for you what I should for my sister or my wife."

How Faith wished to know why. The rouge grew bright; but forbidden to ask, she dared not ask. "Would you care if we did not go out to-day?" she said with some timid hesitation.

"Very much."

She was silenced. That Mr. Linden had some strong reason it was plain; not the less the thought of Dr. Harrison grieved her. But she said nothing. Nor did he, upon that subject,—threw it to the winds apparently. The first move was to take her up stairs again and bestow her daintily among cushions, then to sit by her and spice her cup of chicken broth with pepper and talk, till both it and Faith were warm, and Mrs. Derrick in a state of delight. The good, sweet effect of which mode of treatment, was shewn in the way "the fringed curtains" of Faith's eyes were by and by dropped by sleep herself. When she awoke Mr. Linden was gone; and Mrs. Derrick sat there keeping watch.

"Has the doctor been here, mother?"

"Why child," said her mother, "he's slipped off Stranger, in some of his capers, and hurt his ancle,—so Reuben says he won't come till to-morrow. Shall I tell Mr. Linden he may come up?"

"Yes." Faith felt it a relief.

Mr. Linden came to tell her the carriage was ready.

It seemed to Faith as if Jerry knew his old driver, with such good will did he set forth, with such little snorts of high spirit and tossings of head and mane. Down the old farm road, among fields of fresh grain and fresh ploughing, where blue birds sat on the fences, and jocund dandelions sunned

themselves by the wayside. The breeze came fresh into Faith's face, tossing back her hair; and presently with the scent of buds and flowers and ploughed land came a mingling of the sea breeze, for Mr. Linden was driving that way. He was right to make her come!—Faith felt it in her heart, and so did he. There had been few words spoken hitherto, but now he turned to her with a smile of great satisfaction, saying,

"Mignonette, this breeze is telling upon your cheeks."

"It is going all through me!" said Faith, drawing an eager breath of appreciation. Mr. Linden gave her shawls and cushions some arranging touches, and to her a glad word or two of answer, then drove on down to the shore. Not at their usual bathing and picnic place, but at the further out Barley Point; where the breeze came in its full freshness and the waves rolled in white-crested. There he made Jerry stand still for a while, and made Faith lean upon him and so rest.

They were somewhat elevated above the sea, where the barren face of the land broke down suddenly some twenty feet. With what a sweet dash the waves broke upon the beach, chasing up the wet sand and laying down a little freight of seaweed here and there: how the water sparkled and glittered, and was blue and white and green and neutral tint,—how the gulls soared and stooped and flapped their wings in the gay breeze, before which the white-winged vessels flew on a more steady course. Jerry pawed the turf, and shook his head in approbation, and Faith's head lay very still. Perhaps Mr. Linden thought she had done talking enough that day, for he was rather silent; only watching her lest she should be tired, or have too much of the air. What he watched her for all the rest of the time, was best known to himself. Her brow had its old quiet again now, though her face was grave beyond its old wont; and the eyes, as he could see them, were softly grave and softly glad together, intently going from the white-tipped water to the white-winged gulls and the clouds grey and white that sailed above them. Suddenly, after a long roaming over the fresh life that was abroad there, the eyes were lifted to his face.

"Endecott—if I don't say anything, it is because I can't say anything good enough!"

"Faith," he said with that same glad look at her, "your face says that you are getting better every minute. Not tired yet?"

"I feel as if I was in a grand dream."

"Do you?" said Mr. Linden,—"I am glad I do not. It brings me out of a dream to see you begin to look like yourself. I have not felt so real before since I came home."

"You are real enough," said Faith; "and so is everything else. It is only my feeling that is dreamy. And this air will wake me up, if I stay here a little while longer. How good it is!"

"Do you see that dark rock out in the midst of the waves? and how the waves half cover and then leave it bare?"

"Yes."

"I was thinking of what Rutherford says of the changing, swaying, unsteady tide of life-joys and sorrows,—'Our rock doth not ebb and flow, but our sea.'"

Faith thought her own life had not been much like that changing tide; then remembered his had, in nearer measure. The next question was not far off; she put it, looking up anxiously and regretfully. "Endecott, what are you working so hard for?"

A very gay change of face answered her.

"So hard as what?"

"As you do."

"What makes you think I am working 'so hard,' little Mignonette?—have
I given you that impression? I did not mean it. Do I look overworked?"

"No—" said Faith—"I think not,—but that is not the thing. Why do you, Endecott?"

It was a very gently put question, but put with eyes and lips as well as the sweet voice, dainty in its half timidity mixed with the sweetness. Mr. Linden looked down at her till the question was finished, but then he looked off at the dancing water; the smile which had been dawning upon his lips breaking out into very full sunshine. It was a strange smile—very enjoying and yet a little moved.

"Mignonette," he said looking down at her again, "do you know what a dear little child you are?"

Her eyes wavered, then faced him again with a sort of smiling gravity, as not relinquishing their answer.

"You will be dreadfully shocked if I tell you."

"Shall I?"—she said, not believing him.

"Yes. But what do you suppose I am doing?—what has put all this into your head?"

"I heard it," said Faith.

"From whom?"

"I don't know. But somebody that wondered what you were doing it for."

"Most enigmatical information! What 'it' did somebody say I was doing?"

"Working hard—giving lessons," said Faith dropping her voice.

"Well—what else was I doing when I was here? *That* should not shock you, dear child."

"You were *not* doing anything else when you were here—that is the very thing, Endecott."

"Mignonette—I have done nothing to hurt myself, as you may see. I am very strong to work."

She gave a little grave glance at him, grave with a background of regretfulness, and placed herself back in her former position; pushing her questions no further. But Mr. Linden did not look grave.

"I am quite willing to tell you all about my work," he said,—"that I did not long ago was for two or three reasons which you will understand. I told you once, dear Faith—upon a night which I shall never forget—that I had means enough to carry me through my studies; but two things made me take measures to earn a good deal more. One was, that I would always rather work than not to have what I want to spend in various good and pleasant ways."

"Yes—?" she said a little eagerly. He looked at her with that same smile coming over his face.

"It will shock you," he said,—"however—The other reason was this. We agreed how I should choose between two gardens wherein to place my Mignonette. But it may chance that for even the offer of one I shall have to wait—and for Mignonette I cannot. Voyez-vous, Mademoiselle?"

Yes, plainly enough; as he could tell by the bright flush which mounted up to her forehead and made her a Rhodora again. And doubtless Faith would have said several things, only—she could *not!* and so sat like the stillest of scared mice; with no more words at command. Mr. Linden laughed telling her he thought there was no hope of benefitting her cheeks any further that day, and that to judge by her eyelids sleep would be the next thing; and so turned the little carriage round and Jerry's head towards home.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

Dinner was ready when they reached home, so that Faith was taken at once to the table; and when dinner was over, up stairs to go to sleep. And sleep held her well nigh all the afternoon. The sunbeams were long, the light of day was growing gentle, when Faith at last awoke and arose, with a tinge in her cheeks and a face getting to be itself again. She put her hair and her dress in fresh order, and went softly about doing the same office for several things in the room; thinking all the while what Mr. Linden had been working for, and how shut her mouth was from saying anything about it.

"Where is Mr. Linden, mother?"

"Down stairs."

"I am going down too. I am quite well enough without being carried.
Come, mother."

"He won't like it, child,—you'd better let me call him."

"No indeed," said Faith. "I'll just take your arm, mother. It will do me good."

So softly and with a little wilful pleasure on Faith's part, the stairs were descended; and not content with that, Faith went into the tea-room and began as of old to give a delicate hand to the tea-table arrangements. Then when all was done, slowly made her entrance into the other room. But there, to Faith's dismay, were two gentlemen instead of one, standing in the middle of the floor in earnest conversation. Both turned the minute she opened the door, and Squire Stoutenburgh came towards her, exclaiming, "Why Miss Faith!—nobody gave me any hope of seeing you. My dear, are you as well as you look?"

Faith's instant extreme desire was to quit the field she had so rashly ventured upon. Her answer to Mr. Stoutenburgh, if made, was too unintelligible to be understood or remembered; and meanwhile she was as the Squire had hinted, looking very well, and a picture of dainty confusion. It might not help the confusion, though it did put her face more out of sight, to be rescued from the Squire's hands and placed in the easy-chair.

"No, she is not as well as she looks, Mr. Stoutenburgh, and therefore you must not keep her standing."

"I won't keep her—nor you neither—long," said the Squire. "Miss Faith, I hope you'll keep *him*—standing or kneeling or something—all summer. How long are you going to stay, sure enough?"

"Till I must go." Faith heard the smile with which it was spoken.

"Then I shall go home a happy man!" said Mr. Stoutenburgh, with a sort of earnest heartiness which became him very well. "My dear, I'm as glad as if you were my own daughter—and you'll let me say that, because your father and I were such friends." With which original and sincere expression of feeling the Squire went off.

"You naughty child," Mr. Linden said, coming back to Faith's chair, "who gave you leave to come down stairs? I shouldn't be at all surprised if you had been after cream."

"No I haven't, Endy,"—said Faith lifting up her face which was in a sort of overwhelmed state.

"What is the matter?" he said smiling.

"Don't mind me," said Faith passing her hands over her face. "I am half ashamed of myself—I shall be better in a day or two."

"How do you feel, after your ride and your sleep?"

"O well!—nicely,"—she said in happy accents.

"What made you try to walk down stairs?"

"I thought I could do it."

"And knew I would not let you. Will you be in a talking mood after tea?"

"I am now. I have been wanting to talk to you, Endecott, ever since you got home."

"What about?"

"About these weeks."

The summons to tea came then, however; but when tea was disposed of, and Faith had come back to her sofa in the sitting-room, Mr. Linden took his place at her side.

"Now I am ready for 'these weeks,'" he said.

Faith was less ready than he, though she had wished for the talk. Her face darkened to something of the weary look with which he had found her.

"Endecott, I have wanted to see you dreadfully!" He looked pained—not merely, she knew, because of that: but the thought had no further expression.

"What has been the matter, my dear child?"

Faith's hand and head went down on his shoulder, as on a rest they had long coveted. "I am afraid you will be ashamed of me, Endecott,—but I will tell you. You know since I have been sick I have seen a great deal of Dr. Harrison—every day, and twice a day. I couldn't help it."

"No."

"And Endy,—he used to talk to me."

"Yes,"—the word was short and grave.

"I don't know why he did it; and I did not like it, and I could not help it. He would talk to me about Bible things."

"Well?—He used to do that long ago."

"And long ago you told me not to let him talk to me of his doubts and false opinions. Endecott, I didn't forget that—I remembered it all the while,—and yet he *did* talk to me of those things, and I could not tell how to hinder it. And then, Endecott—the things were in my head—and I could not get them out!"—The manner of Faith's slow words told of a great deal of heart-work.

Mr. Linden did not start—but Faith felt the thrill which passed over him, even to the fingers that held hers. Clearly *this* was not what he expected.

"Faith,"—he said,—"has he touched *your* faith?"

Faith's head drew nearer to his, with a manner half caressing, half shrinking, but the answer was a low, "No—never."

"Child!" he said with a sort of deep terror in his voice,—"I think I could not have borne that. I would rather he had won away your heart from me!"

Faith did not move, and seemed to herself scarce to breathe, such a spasm of various feelings was upon her heart. "It did not, Endy,"—she whispered.

He stooped to kiss her, as if that was the only answer he could give just then; merely saying, "Tell me all about it."

"I don't know how he did it"—Faith went on hesitatingly, as if the words were not easy to her;—"and always before I knew it was coming, it was said,—something that troubled me; almost every time he came. I don't know whether it troubled him too, or whether—But no matter what it was said for! He would tell me of some question that had occurred to him, or some difficulty that he could not understand; or else it was a contrary fact that somebody else had stated, or a cunning explanation that somebody had found out, or a discovery that was against the truth, or some train of consequences and inferences that would undermine it. And these things were always so curiously put, that though I knew they were false, Endy—I never doubted that—I knew they were not the truth;—yet I could not shew him that they were not; and that hurt me. It pained me by day and by night;—but that was not all." Faith hesitated. "These things never did touch my faith, Endecott—but it seems to me now as if they had shut it up in a fortress and besieged it. I hadn't a bit of comfort of it except by snatches—only I knew it was there—for ever so long. When I tried to read the Bible, often I could think of nothing but these thoughts would push themselves in between—like a swarm of gnats humming in my ears;—and often I had no good of prayer,"—she added in a yet lower voice.

"Have you now?" Mr. Linden said. "Has that passed away?"

She hesitated again, perhaps struggling with some emotion which she would not let get the better of her. Her words were quiet. "It is passing. Earth and sky are all cleared since you came—as I knew they would be."

Mr. Linden was silent and motionless,—looking down at her, curbing as he best might the grief and indignation which were by turns as much as he could manage. He did not speak for some time.

"I think, Endy," said Faith, "I shouldn't have felt so if I had been well and strong. I am almost sure it was partly that. I wasn't strong in mind or body—and how I wanted you!"

"And where *was* my place in the world if not here!"

"I didn't want you till you came," she said in a very sweet low tone.

"Ah, child! you do not know what you are talking of,—nor what a snare was spread for you."

"Do you think that, Endy?" she said in a scared way.

"What else?"

"But he always seemed—I always hoped, he was really interested in those things himself."

"No man carries truth in one hand and falsehood in the other," said Mr. Linden sternly.

Faith was sitting upright, looking very thoughtful and very grieved. "But you do not think, Endecott,—you do not think—there was no truth in it?"

His face caught her grieved look,—he answered slowly, "Child, you must leave all that. I only know that he tried to get rid of every barrier in his way."

"And how in this, Endecott?—What?"

"He doubtless thought your belief stood between him and your favour."

"And that if he could change that!"—Faith's head sank with a low word of pain. Mr. Linden was silent. She looked up again, with a face of yearning sorrow which it was a pity perhaps Dr. Harrison could not see. "And now," she said, "we never can do anything more for him!"

But Mr. Linden was not ready for the wish,—the sternness of his face did not relax this time even under the power of hers. Until as he looked, with the sight of all her loveliness and the thought of all the wrong done her, came the keen realization of why it had been done;—then his look changed and saddened.

"Endecott," she said after a while, humbly, "do you think any one who loves Christ could be brought to disbelieve him?"

"No—not really and permanently. The promise says, 'Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him.'"

"Then what did you fear so much for me, Endy?"

She had cause for the question; he had spoken and looked and listened with that intentness of sense which shews some hidden anxiety,—measuring jealously every look and word of hers by some old well-remembered standard.

"You remember, dear Faith," he said, "that when the thieves set upon one of the pilgrims, though he made out to keep his jewels yet they took from him all his spending money; and in the want of that he went to the end of his life."

But the smile that answered him was an answering smile. Though there was sorrow in it, and humbleness, and even fear, its fullest burdens were the free guaranty that she was not hurt, and an untold wealth of affection, that almost breathed out of the moving and parted lips. "Endy,—it was only a cloud—I knew at the time it would scatter away just as soon as you came. I knew it was a cloud, but I wasn't well."

Mr. Linden lifted her face, gazing at it intently. "My little Mignonette," he said, "are you sure that you 'hold fast the beginning of your confidence?' Are you sure he has not dimmed the light that used to shine so bright in your heart?—that he has not made heaven seem less real, nor the promises of less effect? Are you sure, Faith?—If he has, find it out now!"

She had never seen him look so—never heard him speak with such earnestness. The words seemed to come from the very depths of his heart; freighted not only with their own moment, but with the pain which the raising such questions had stirred in him. Faith knew little of even the pictures of angels—if she had she might have thought of one then. Her child nature would have thrown itself into his arms to give the answer; as it was, the woman drew a little back and spoke with veiled eyes.

"If he has, I don't know it, Endecott. It was a cloud that hindered all enjoyment from me,—I knew at the time it was no more. It is gone, or almost. It was wrong to be on me at all—but I was weak and not well." Her speech was very humble, and the innocent trembling of the lips was as one might answer an angel.

His eyes changed as she spoke, watching her still, but less clearly; and bringing her where she had not dared to place herself, Mr. Linden kissed her again and again—as one rejoices over what has been lost or in deadly peril. Not many words—and those low and half uttered, of deep thanksgiving, of untold tenderness. But Faith hid her face in her hands, and though she did not shed any tears, shook and trembled.

"This will not do, for you nor for me," said Mr. Linden. "Mignonette—have my words grieved you? they need not—there was not a breath in them harsher than a summer wind."

"I didn't think it, Endy."

"What are you thinking of, my child?"

"Nothing—Never mind me,—" she said deprecatingly.

"Tell me, Faith," he repeated.

But she did not. The quivering emotion passed away or was overcome; and then her answer was a very grave and sweet look and smile; still such a one as might without any force have been given to an angel.

"Faith, what will make you speak?—this?—Tell me what you were trembling about—I shall begin to think you have grown afraid of me."

"I don't think I have,—" she said very quietly.

"You are a sort of willowbranch,—so very pliant that you glide out of reach on the very breath that comes after you. Now I think the very profound confidence I reposed in you this morning, deserves some return. I'm afraid I cannot ask for it with such persuasive eyes."

"It's no confidence—" said Faith. "I didn't know I had been in such danger; and"—she spoke with some difficulty—"I didn't know what it would be to offend you."

"Did you think you could?"

"If I did wrong—?"

"Faith," he said, "do you know what I should expect 'if I did wrong,' as you say?—that you would break your heart, perhaps, but never that you would be offended. I should expect to find you more than ever my sweet ministering spirit."

A look of intense grave earnestness followed and echoed his thought with one or two of her own; then her gravity broke in a radiant little smile. "I am not exactly like you, Endecott," she said.

"What is the precise bearing of that remark?"

"You might be offended—where I should have no right,—" she said with slow utterance and consideration of her words.

"But *why*—little Arabic poem?"

The colour started into Faith's cheeks, but she answered. "You are better than I,—and besides,—you know, Endy!—it would be right for you to do what it wouldn't be right for me to do." Her colour deepened to brightness and her eyes were very cast down. Mr. Linden looked at her—smiling a grave sweet smile.

"Faith," he said, "I have heard—or imagined—that a man might have an angel for his wife, but I never heard yet of a woman who had an angel for her husband—did you?"

Faith endeavoured to shield her eyes and cheek with a very insufficient hand. "You put me in the witness-box,—what can I do?" she said.

"You can do one thing as well as anybody I ever saw," Mr. Linden said, taking her hand down. "Faith, where did you get such pink cheeks?"

"What is an Arabic poem?" said Faith gravely.

"A pretty thing that requires translating. Faith, I have a great desire to take you all about Pattaquasset and tell everybody what you are to be."

"Endecott!"—said Faith with a startled glance.

"What?" he answered laughing.

"Why do you say so?"

"Just imagine the delight of all Quapaw, and the full satisfaction of the Roscoms. Shouldn't you like to see it?"

Faith looked at him in a sort of frightened mood of mind, discerning some earnest in the play. Mr.

Linden's face did not reassure her, though he carried the play at that time no further.

CHAPTER XXIX.

If the fears of the night before had not quite been slept off, if the alarming ideas had not all been left in dreamland, still it was hard for anything but peace and pleasure to shew its head that morning. In at Faith's window came the sunbeams, the tiny panes of glass shewed each a patch of the bluest sky, and through some unseen open sash the morning air swept in full sweetness. When Faith opened her own window, the twitter and song of all manner of birds was something to hear, and their quick motions were something to see. From the sweetbriar on the house to the trees in the orchard,—from the mud nest under the eaves to the hole in the barn wall,—what darting and skimming and fluttering! Off in the orchard the apple trees were softly putting on their nonpareil dress of blossoms, feeding the air with nectar till it was half intoxicated; and down in the garden a little bevy of bells stood prim and soft and sweet, ringing their noiseless spring chimes under Faith's window.

Under her window too, that is within close sight of it, stood Reuben Taylor and Mr. Linden. Not watching for her just then as it appeared, but intent upon their own concerns. Or rather, Reuben—in his usual dark, neat dress and straw hat, with hands neither busy nor at rest, but waiting and ready—was intent upon Mr. Linden—and Mr. Linden upon his work. His hat was off, on the grass beside him, and he himself—half sitting half leaning upon an old crooked apple tree, had his hands full of cowslips—though what he was doing with them Faith could not tell. Only from a fluttering end of blue ribband that appeared, she could guess their destination. The two friends were talking busily and merrily, with little cowslip interludes, and the yellow blossoms sprinkled the grass all about the tree, some having dropped down, others been tossed off as not worthy a place in the ball. For that was the work in Mr. Linden's hands—something which Faith had never seen.

It was so very pretty a picture that Faith sat down to look at it, and thoughtless of being found out, looked on in a dream. Mr. Linden's threats of yesterday did come back to her shrinkingly, but she threw them off; the time was too happy to bear the shadow of anything weightier than apple blossoms. Faith looked out through them admiringly, marvelling anew how Mr. Linden had ever come to like her; and while her soft eyes were studying him, her heart made many a vow before the time. She only felt the birds fly past; her mind was taking strange glimpses into the future.

Stepping jauntily out from the house, Sam Stoutenburgh came next upon the scene, the springtime of his man's attire suiting well enough with his years but not so well with his surroundings; too desperately smart for the cowslips, bright and shining as they were there in the sun, too *new* for the tulips—though they had been out of the ground but a few days. For

> In a little bit of garden ground
> Where many a lovely plant was found,
> Stood a tulip in gay attire!
> His pantaloons green as ever were seen,
> His cap was as red as fire.

But the tulip was at least used to his cap—which was more than could be said of Sam and his hat.

"Mrs. Derrick told me to come out here and find you, sir," he said. "But what *are* you doing, Mr. Linden?"

"I am making a ball."

"A ball!"

"Yes," said Mr. Linden,—"gratifying one of my youthful tastes. Sam, I'll lend you my hat."

"Why! what for, sir?" said Sam, a little confused and a good deal puzzled, while Reuben smiled.

"Just to save you from the headache while you stand there in the sun," said Mr. Linden, tying the ends of his ribband together. "It's a man's hat, Sam—you need not be afraid of it. That's a good lesson in whistling!" he said, looking up into the tree over his head, where a robin had just come to exercise his powers. But as Mr. Linden's eyes came back from the robin they caught sight of Faith at her window, and instantly he was on his feet and made her a most graceful and low reverence. Instinctively the two boys turned and followed suit—the one with his straw hat the other with his beaver.

Faith's contemplative quiet was broken up, and her face grew shy and flushed as she gave her tiny grave signs of recognition; but a soft "good morning" floated down to them, followed—nobody knows why—by a more particular "Good morning, Sam."

"Miss Faith!" said Sam affectingly, "are you always going to stay up stairs?"

"No—I am coming down presently. You are early to-day, Sam."

"Not earlier than I've been some other days, Miss Faith."

Faith nodded at him and left the window; threw round her the light shawl which she was expected to wear because she had been sick, rather than because the May air called for it, and prepared to go down. But in the second of time which all this took, she heard her name called from the orchard—not very loud but very distinct.

"Faith!"

She knew who called, and it was with a little startled thrill that she presented herself at the window to answer the summons. Mr. Linden stood close beneath it.

"Can you catch this?" he said, looking up at her with laughing eyes. And the soft cowslip ball came whirling up to bury its golden head in her hands. If Faith saw anything else, it was the very evident astonishment of one of the standers-by. But nevertheless she bravely put her bright blushing face out again.

"Thank you, Mr. Linden," she said. "It's too pretty to be thrown more than once."

"Are you ready to come yourself?"

"Yes, I'm coming."

He bowed and turned away, passing on into the house with so quick a step that he was at the head of the stairs as soon as she was.

"You are not going to carry me down to-day!"—said Faith starting back. "I can walk down as well as you can—or at least I can as well walk down."

"There is no one in the parlour, Mignonette."

"Then I'll not go there," said Faith smiling.

"I'll take you to the garden, if you prefer it. Is the supposed fact of your being able to walk down stairs any reason why you should not bid me good morning?"

There was neither that nor any other existing reason, to judge by the quiet grace with which Faith drew near to give the required good morning, or rather to permit Mr. Linden to take it; and then placed her hand in his, as willing to have so much aid from him as that could give. He held it fast, and her too, for a minute, while his other hand busied itself with fastening in her belt a dewy, sweet, sonsie looking little sprig of May roses.

"How do you feel this morning?" he said when he was gravely considering the effect.

"Very much like Spring!"—Faith looked so, with her other hand full of primroses.

"And otherwise?"

"I don't feel otherwise!" said Faith laughing; the first really free merry look of laughter he had seen on her face since he came home.

"You are the sweetest of all spring blossoms," Mr. Linden said, carrying her off with perfect disregard of the supposed fact of her being able to walk. At the foot of the stairs, however, she was permitted to find her feet again. "Where will you go, dear child?—the orchard is very wet, but you may venture as far as the door."

"No, I have something to do," said Faith.

"What have you to do?"

"What I used to take care of—part of it. I'm so glad to do it again."

"Not to-day—you ought not!—nor to-morrow. You must come in here and sit quiet till breakfast, and

for a few days more be content to be 'Love in idleness' as well as Mignonette. Will you promise?" he said, seating her in the easy-chair, with open window, and breakfast table, and a gay little fire to make the captivity pleasant.

"But I like work, Endy—and a little won't hurt me. Those boys want you—and I'll make the coffee."

"Do you know, Mignonette, how pale you would be if I were away?"

She shook her head.

"I do," said Mr. Linden,—"and as I am in a mood for roses this morning, I want you to let me bring 'those boys' in here—then they can see me and I can see you."

The roses came, started and brightened, and her eyes looked a soft protest; but it was a minority protest and gave way, and her face after all told him he might do what he liked. He gave her a reassuring smile, and went back to the orchard, presently returning with Reuben and Sam,—the one wearing a face of unqualified pleasure, the other of almost as unqualified shyness. Sam was not quite sure that his ears had reported correctly, but the doubt and the new idea were enough to discompose him thoroughly. He listened eagerly to the answers Reuben's words called forth, but seemed afraid to venture many himself. As for Mr. Linden, he was combining another handful of flowers—covering his amusement with very grave composure.

It was not bad amusement; for the exquisite simplicity in Faith's manner, with the contrast of the coming and going colour and the shy eyelashes, made a picture that any one claiming interest in it would have been a little proud of. And the roses in her belt and the cowslips in her hand and the delicate lines of her face which health had not yet rounded out again, all joined to make the vision a very fair one. She was most shy of Sam, and did not look at Mr. Linden.

"I haven't thanked you for your pigeons, Sam," she said, after a few lively words with Reuben.

"No, Miss Faith, please don't!" was the gallant rejoinder.

"Weren't they worth thanks?" inquired Mr. Linden.

"I thought they were, when I was eating them; and mother said they were the best I had. Don't you like to be thanked, Sam?"

"When it's worth while," said Sam. "But you know, ma'am—You know, Mr.
Linden, it's thanks enough to do anything for Miss Faith."

"I know that very well." Quiet as the words were they brought all Sam's ideas to the ground like his own pigeons.

"Where are you now in college, Sam?" Faith went on perhaps because she felt herself a coward.

Sam made answer, in a more subdued state of mind than was usual when he announced his Sophomorical distinctions.

"What are you going to do when you come out?"

"O I don't know, Miss Faith,—father says I can do just what I like."

"And you don't know what that will be, Sam?"

"No—" said Sam. "I can't even guess."

"A man who can do what he likes ought to do a great deal," said Mr. Linden. "Reuben, will you take the upper road home, and give these flowers to Ency Stephens for Miss Faith?"

"O yes, sir!" Reuben said.

"No, Reuben! I didn't send them," said Faith eagerly.

"Tell her," said Mr. Linden smiling, "that they came from Miss Faith's garden, and that I shall bring Miss Faith herself to see her, just so soon as she can bear such a long drive." The bunch of flowers was laid lightly on her hands for her disposal. "Now I must send you two collegians—present and future—away, for you have had your breakfast and we have not had ours."

At which remark Sam took Faith's hand with a bow of great perplexity and reverence, and Reuben drew near and waited for the flowers.

"Give them to her from Mr. Linden," said Faith, rosy red, as she put them in his keeping;—"she will like that best, Reuben."

Reuben thought he knew how to combine the two messages, and the boys went off just as the coffee-pot came in.

"Faith," said Mr. Linden coming back to sit down by her, "here is a rosebud so much like you that I think I ought to wear it. What do you consider the most appropriate way?"

"How do gentlemen wear flowers?—You'll have to stick it in a buttonhole," said Faith half grave and half laughing,—"if it must be worn."

"But that is to treat it as a common flower!"

"You'll have to treat it so," said Faith glancing from the rosebud to him.

"Look at it," said Mr. Linden,—"do you see how very lovely it is?"

She did look at it, more closely, and then at him with an appeal of grave remonstrance, deep though unspoken. But it was met defiantly.

"If I am to wear this, Mignonette, you must put it in place."

Faith was a little shy of even doing so much, and besides was aware that her mother as well as the coffee-pot had come upon the scene. However she took the flower and succeeded in attaching it securely where she thought it ought to go, on the breast of Mr. Linden's waistcoat; by which time the resemblance between the two rosebuds was perfect, and striking; and Faith drew back to her breakfast, glad to have everybody's attention diverted to coffee, which she declared was good with cowslips. It may be said that the diversion was not immediate; for though her chair was at once wheeled round to the table, yet Faith had to take her thanks then and there—in full defiance of Mrs Derrick's presence. After that, however, Mr. Linden—to do him justice—did change the subject.

Cowslips and coffee went on well till near the end of breakfast, which to say truth had been rather prolonged as well as delayed; and then there came a front door knock. It was of no use for Faith to start, for breakfast was not absolutely finished; and the next minute who should come in from the hall but Miss Essie de Staff. As fresh as possible, in white dress and black silk apron; her black hair from which she had drawn off the sunbonnet, in shining order; the black eyes as well! Perhaps they dilated on first seeing the party; more sparkling they could not be. She advanced at a moderate pace towards the table, looking and speaking.

"Mrs. Derrick!—I didn't know you were such late people. I have come to run away with your daughter, and thought I should find the coast clear. Mr. Linden! I didn't know Pattaquasset was so happy as to have you back, sir."

"We have breakfast late for Faith's sake," said Mrs. Derrick, while Mr. Linden rose and gave the lady first his hand and then a chair, remarking that the happiness of Pattaquasset was pleasant news to him too.

"But Faith's well again, isn't she?" said Miss Essie, waiting to get breath, mentally.

"She's better," said Mrs. Derrick.

"She goes out?"

"She has been once."

"Is that all? Well it will do her good to go again. Sophy Harrison and I made up our minds that she and I and Faith would spend the day together—and so I've come to fetch her. Do you believe in the possibility of ladies falling in love with ladies, Mr. Linden?"

"I have more knowledge of gentlemen's possibilities. Who is supposed to be in danger, Miss Essie?"

"Faith cannot go out to spend the day," said Mrs. Derrick decidedly.

"Is it *danger?*" said Miss Essie. "Mrs. Derrick, why can't Faith go with me? Faith, won't you go?"—She had come up close to the table and stood by Faith's side, whom her eyes were now reading, or at least endeavouring to spell out.

"Not to-day, Miss Essie, thank you."

"Thank me? you ought to apologize to me." Miss Essie took a chair in that place, where she could "rake" the whole table. "Here will be Sophy and me horribly disappointed. We had counted on you. Sophy is all alone. You know, Faith, the doctor is laid up?"

"We heard of it,"—Faith answered, not very easily.

"Well, do you know he says he is going South?"

"I heard so," said Faith. Miss Essie could not make much of the rising colour in her cheeks, it came and went so easily!

"What takes him off just now in such haste?—business?"

Faith looked up and gave her inquisitor a full clear look, such as curiosity never cares for, while she answered with quiet dignity, "He did not tell me, Miss Essie."

"It's a pity Dr. Harrison's just going now that you're just come," said the lady of the black eyes, shifting her ground. "You used to be such friends."

"What is a friend?" said Mr. Linden—"By the way, Miss Essie, you should make these cresses an excuse for at least eating salt with us, and so prove your title to the name."

"Dear me!" said the lady taking a handful,—"I thought a friend was something more—more etherial than that!"

"Than what, if you please?"

"A person who eats your salt!—I don't love cresses. I am not one of Nebuchadnezzar's family. Where did you get the fashion? It's French. Dr. Harrison eats them. Did he teach it to you, Faith?"

"I think I had that honour," said Mr. Linden.

"I dare say you gave more lessons than were given in school," said Miss Essie significantly. "What else did you learn of him, Faith?"

Faith gave the lady only a glance of her soft eye, but her face and her very throat were charged with varying colour. Her attention went from cresses to cowslips.

"I am saucy!" said the lady.—"Mr. Linden, are you coming back to the bona fide school here? there'll be a great many glad."

A very involuntary lesson to Miss Essie herself came longingly to Mr. Linden's lips, but except from the slight play and compression of the same she had not the benefit of it. He spoke as usual.

"She has never learned the art of self-defence, Miss Essie, therefore I pray you attack me. No, I am not coming back to the school—and to say truth, I think there would be some people sorry—as well as glad—if I did."

"Your bad scholars?"—said the lady, not intent upon her question.

"No—my good friends."

"*I* should be glad," said Miss Essie. "Who are your friends that would be sorry? Dr. Harrison, for instance?"

"The friends who like my present work better."

"And you are going to be a clergyman?" said Miss Essie, leaning her elbow on the table and 'studying' Mr. Linden, perhaps some other things too, with her eyes. He smiled under the scrutiny, but merely bowed to her question.

"It's dreadful hard work!—" said Miss Essie.

"Dreadful?—Miss Essie, you have not studied the subject."

"No," said she laughing,—"I said 'dreadful *hard*.' And so it is, I think."

"'There be some sports are painful, but their labour delight in them sets off'—is not that equally true of some work?" said Mr. Linden, making one or two quiet additions to the breakfast on Faith's plate. Which means of assistance Faith inadvertently disregarded and pushed her plate away.

"Do you suppose anybody delights in them?" said Miss Essie. "I can't understand it—but perhaps they do. A minister is very much looked up to. But one thing is certain—of all things the hardest, it is to be a minister's wife!"

"Of *all* things! He must be a poor sort of a minister who lets his wife have a harder life than his own."

"He can't help it—" said Miss Essie, walking her black eyes about. "Of course he don't wish it—but women always do have a harder time than men, and a minister's wife particularly."

"It's a comfort to think he don't wish it," said Mr. Linden with a sort of resigned gravity.

"Well it would not be much comfort to me," said Miss Essie. "When a woman marries, she naturally expects her husband to belong to her;—but a minister belongs to everybody else!"

"I see I have not studied the subject," said Mr. Linden. "Miss Essie, you are giving me most important information. Is this so inevitable that I ought in conscience to warn the lady beforehand?"

Miss Essie smiled graciously. "It would be no use,—she wouldn't believe you. *I* might warn her. I have seen it."

"What have you seen?"

"Why that!—that a woman who marries a minister needn't expect to have any more of her husband than his clothes to mend."

"Melancholy statement!" said Mr. Linden.

"It's of no use to tell it to a man!" said Miss Essie. "But I have seen it."

"Not in my house."

"I shall see it in your house, if you ever let me in there—but it will be too late to warn then. Very likely *you* will not see it."

Faith sat with one hand shielding her face from this speaker, though by that means it was more fully revealed to the other. Her other hand, and her eyes as far as possible, were lost in the bunch of cowslips; her colour had long ceased to be varying. She sat still as a mouse.

"No, I shall not see it. To what end would your warnings be directed, if they could reach her in time?"

"To keep her from taking such a trying position."

"Oh—" said Mr. Linden. "Have you no feeling for me, Miss Essie? It is very plain why you scrupled to eat salt with me this morning!"

"I'll eat salt with you as a single man," said Miss Essie,—"but if you are going to be a minister, be generous, and let your wife go! Any other woman will tell you so."

"Let her go where? With me?—that is just what I intend."

"Yes," said Miss Essie,—"and then—you'll never know it—but she will sit alone up stairs and sew while you are writing your sermons, and she'll sit down stairs and sew while you're riding about the country or walking about the town; and she'll go out alone of your errands when you have a cold that keeps you at home; and the only time she hears you speak will be when you speak in the pulpit! And if you ask her whether she is happy, she will say yes!—"

Despite all her desperate contusion, the one visible corner of Faith's mouth shewed rebellion against order. Mr. Linden laughed with most unterrified amusement.

"If she says that, it will be so, Miss Essie—my wife will be a most uncompromising truth-teller. But in your picture *I* am the one to be pitied. Will she never sit on the same floor with me under *any* circumstances?"

"More than you deserve!" said Miss Essie. "You to be pitied, indeed! You know the man has the stir, and the talk, and the going from place to place, and the being looked up to, and the having everybody at his feet; and what has she?"

Mr. Linden did not answer, even with his eyes, which were looking down; and the smile which came at Miss Essie's last words, was clearly not meant for her. His wife would have something—so it said and asserted,—and his wife was not an indefinite, imaginary person,—it said that too. And she was worth all that could be laid at her feet. How much he had to lay there—what homage *his* homage was—even of

this the face gave unconscious token. Miss Essie looked, and read it or at least felt it, much more than she could well have put into words. Then taking in review Faith's bowed head, she turned and spoke in quite a different tone.

"There is no use in talking to people, Mrs. Derrick. After all, mayn't I have Faith?"

"To spend the day? Oh no, Miss Essie!—she's not strong enough," said Mrs. Derrick, rising from the table and beginning to put the cups together. Faith left the party and went to the fire, which in the advanced state of the May morning needed no tending.

"Yet she must spend the day somewhere," said Miss Essie wheeling round. "Faith!—what are you going to do with yourself?"

"Nothing, Miss Essie,"—came softly from the fire-mender. But as her hand moved to and fro with the tongs, the sparkle of the diamonds caught Miss Essie's eye.

"Child!—how did you get that?"—she exclaimed, springing to her side and arresting the tongs. Faith's low "I don't know, ma'am"—was inimitable. It was well neither lady had sight of Mr. Linden's face.

"It's very beautiful!" said Miss Essie, controlling herself into some order, and poring over the little hand she had made captive. "I never saw a greater beauty of a ring—never. Do you know what it means, Faith?" She dropped her voice and tapped significantly the finger.

Faith answered like a person put to the question,—"Yes."

"Do you?" said Miss Essie in the same low aside and half laughing. "I am so glad. I always thought it. But this is splendid, Faith. *You* don't know how handsome it is. It is easy to know where this came from. I needn't ask."

"I must ask you both to sit down," said Mr. Linden,—"Faith is not strong enough for much standing, Miss Essie."

"I can't sit down—I'm going away," said the lady. "I'll tell Sophy she may expect you the first day you can go out for so long,"—she went on renewing her half whisper to Faith. "Does she know of this?"—touching the diamonds which Miss Essie had not yet let go.

"No, Miss Essie—" Faith stood in great confusion. Mr. Linden left the table, and gently disengaging her from Miss Essie placed her in the great chair, and stood resting one hand on the back of it.

"Miss Essie," he said, "Faith belongs to me—and therefore if I take care of her strength in a somewhat summary way, you will forgive me."

Miss Essie paused and looked at him in most bewildering confusion. He had spoken and she had heard, very clearly.

"I don't believe it!"—she said with an attempt at jocularity in which there mingled somehow, inexplicably, a quality that was not pleasure. "Faith!—no double-dealing. Two is too much."

"Or even the suggestion of two," Mr. Linden said.

"Do you mean," said Miss Essie looking at him with a semi-comical endeavour to cover up discomfiture and other things—"do you mean to say that I have made nothing here but an abominable mistake?"

"I should give it a different adjective."

Miss Essie made a despairing gesture. "Oh!—I might well say it's no use talking to people! Will you ever for give me, Mr. Linden, for all the mischief I have tried to do you? I didn't know *both* parties were within hearing of me, you know, sir?—"

"Miss Essie, I hope you may always be as successful."

Perhaps Miss Essie wondered, as she glanced at Faith, whether she had done any "mischief" or no; but she ventured no sort of repartee, being altogether in an uncomfortable and somewhat awed state of mind. She made hurried adieus to Mrs. Derrick, more formal and extremely civil leave-taking of Mr. Linden, parted in a sort of astonished wise with Faith and the diamonds which evidently bewildered her yet, and made what was also evidently an escape out of the house. While Mr. Linden attended the lady to the door, Faith softly and swiftly passed behind them and made her escape too, up stairs. She was gone before he turned.

It was perhaps an hour after this, when Cindy entered Faith's room and gave her a note. "I'm free to confess," said Cindy, "that Mr. Linden gave it to me, but who writ it I don't know." But Faith did. It ran thus:—

"Mademoiselle—With great impatience I have waited for my Sunbeam to break through the gloomy clouds of doubt which surround me—but I perceive the 'warning' has taken effect!

In keeping with this is the state of the outer world, which is even rainy!—so that my purpose to take said Sunbeam out to drive is for the present thwarted.

Conceive of my state of mind!

In vain I repeat to myself the comforting truth, that my Sunbeam is shining somewhere, if not on me, —there are circumstances where philosophical truths lose all their power.

I remember that the 'warning' contained some notable mistakes,—as for instance, that I should ever— my pen refuses to write the words!—or I do. As well might it be said that I should——. Mademoiselle, you must perceive the obvious bearing of these two upon each other.

If your interest in the writer has carried you so far, perhaps he may indulge the hope that at some future time it may carry you further—even to the head of the stairs—where it is needless to say you will be received with open arms.

It is also needless to sign this—it could come from but one person!"

Some two minutes after, Faith's room door opened, and a very flashing bright sunbeam came out upon the place indicated, only a little peachblossom tinge in her cheeks witnessing to any consciousness. She was met according to promise—then held off and looked at with serio-comic eyes.

"What a cruel child you are!" Mr. Linden said.

"What do you want, Endecott?" said Faith trying to be serious.

"How can you have the heart to sit up stairs and sew while I am down stairs in my study?"

Faith instantly came so close, taking the nearest refuge, that he could not very well see her face; but that she was laughing still he knew.

"Endecott!—don't talk so. I didn't know where you were."

"Will it be in this sort of weather that you will 'go out to do errands' and leave me at home?"

"Endecott!—If you don't want anything more of me," said Faith lifting up a face which was an array of peach-blossoms,—"I'll go back again."

"Will you?—" with a little tightening of his hold, and signification of his approval of peachblossoms. "Faith, you are a lovely child! Will it distress you very much if I go off and ride about the country alone?"

But now,—seeing she could not get away,—she stood graver; and the answer was very gentle, almost tender—"No."

"Then you will not confess that you were frightened out of your wits at the picture?" said Mr. Linden smiling, though with an answering change of tone.

"Did you think I was?"

"No—you are too much of a woman for that, even if you had believed it true."

"Then *you* were not frightened?—" she said with some comicality.

"I? desperately!—my note did not give you any idea of the state of my mind! Imagine me sitting down stairs and saying to myself—(words naturally suggested by the state of the weather)—

'O how this spring of love resembleth
Th' uncertain glories of an April day,
Which now shews all the beauties of the sun,
And by and by a cloud takes all away!'"

One of the soft flashes of Faith's eye came first to answer him; and then she remarked very coolly, (N.B. her face was not so,) "I think it will clear at noon, Endecott."

"Do you?" he said looking towards the window with a counterfeit surprise that was in comical antithesis to his last words,—"does it rain still!"

Faith's eye came back quick from the window to him, and then, for the first time in many a long day, her old mellow sweet laugh rolled over the subject, dismissing make-believes and figures of speech in its clear matter-of-fact rejoicing.

"My dear little Mignonette!" Mr. Linden said, "that does my very heart good. You are really getting better, in spite of lessons and warnings, and all other hindrances. Do you want to know what I have truly been thinking of since you came up stairs? Shall we exchange thoughts?"

"Please give me yours," she answered.

"They sprang from Miss Essie's question. Faith, when she asked me what my wife would have, I could not tell her—I could not answer it to myself afterwards very definitely. Only so far—she will have all I have to give." His hand was smoothing and arranging her hair as he spoke—his look one that nobody but Faith ever had from Mr. Linden. She had looked up once and seen it; and then she stood before him, so still and silent as if she might have had nothing to say; but every line of her brow, her moved lip, her attitude, the very power of her silence, contradicted that, and testified as well to the grace of a grave and most exquisite humility which clothed her from head to foot. Mr. Linden was as silent as she, watching her; but then he drew her off to the low couch in the wide old-fashioned entry window, and seated her there in a very bath of spring air and struggling sunbeams.

"I suppose it is useless to say 'Please give me yours'," he said smiling. "Mignonette, we have had no reading to-day—do you like this time and place?—and shall it be with you or to you?"

"It will be both, won't it?" said Faith; and she went for her Bible.

CHAPTER XXX.

The day was struggling into clearness by the time dinner was over. Patches of blue sky looked down through grey, vapoury, scattering clouds; while now and then a few rain drops fell to keep up the character of the morning, and broad warm genial sunbeams fell between them. It was not fair yet for a drive; and Mr. Linden went out on some errands of business, leaving Faith with a charge to sleep and rest and be ready against his return.

He was but a little while gone when Jem Waters made his appearance and asked for Faith. Mr. Simlins had been ill—that Faith knew—but Jem brought a sad report of how ill he had been, and a message that he was "tired of not seeing Faith and wished she would let Jem fetch her down. She might go back again as soon as she'd a mind to." He wanted to see her "real bad," according to Jem; for he had ordered the best wagon on the premises to be cleaned and harnessed up, and the best buffalo robe put in, and charged Jem to bring Miss Faith "if she could anyways come." And there was Jem and the wagon.

Faith demurred; she had not had her sleep and didn't know, or rather did know, how the proceeding would be looked upon; but she also fancied more meaning in the summons than Jem had been commissioned to make known. And perhaps another little wee feminine thought came in to help her decision.

"Mother," she said, "I shall go. You need not say anything about it unless you are asked. It isn't far to Mr. Simlins—I shall be home in time for my ride." So, quickly ready, Jem drove her down.

Mr. Simlins she found sitting up, in a nondescript invalid's attire of an old cloak and a summer waistcoat; and warm as the day was, with a little fire burning, which was not unnecessary to correct the damp of the unused sitting-room. He was, as he said, "fallen away considerable, and with no more strength than a spring chicken," but for the rest looked as usual. And so spoke.

"Well,—why haint you been to see me before?"

"I have been sick, sir."

"Sick?" said he, his voice softening unconsciously towards her sweet tones. "Sit there and let me see.

—I believe you have. But you aint fur from well now!" He had some reason, for the face he had turned to the sunlight bore all the quiet lines of happiness, and its somewhat faint colour was replaced under his scrutiny by a conscious deep rose.

"Don't you know," said he settling himself back in his chair,—"I don't think I see the sun and moon when I don't see you? Or the moon, anyways—you aint but the half of my Zodiack."

"What did you want to see the moon for, Mr. Simlins?" said Faith willing to interrupt him.

"Well—you see, I've been a kind of a latudinarian too," said Mr. Simlins doubtfully.—"It pulls a man's mind down; as well as his flesh—and I got tired of thinkin' to-day and concluded I'd send for you to stop it." His look confessed more than his words. Faith had little need to ask what he had been thinking about.

"What shall I do to stop it, sir?"

"Well, you can read—can't you?—or talk to me."

There was a strange uneasy wandering of his eye, and a corresponding unwonted simplicity and directness in his talk. Faith noted both and silently went for a Bible she saw lying on a table. She brought it to Mr. Simlins' side and opened its pages slowly, questioning with herself where she should read. Some association of a long past conversation perhaps was present with her, for though she paused over one and another of several passages, she could fix upon none but the parable of the unfruitful tree.

"Do you mean that for me?" said the farmer a minute after she had done.

"Yes sir—and no, dear Mr. Simlins!" said Faith looking up.

"Why is it 'yes' and 'no'? how be I like that?"—he growled, but with a certain softening and lowering of his growl.

"The good trees all do the work they were made for. God calls for the same from us," Faith said gently.

"I know what you're thinkin' of," said he;—"but haint I done it? Who ever heerd a man say I had wronged him? or that I have been hard-hearted either? I never was."

It was curious how he let his thoughts out to her; but the very gentle, pure and true face beside him provoked neither controversy nor mistrust, nor pride. He spoke to her as if she had only been a child. Like a child, with such sympathy and simplicity, she answered him.

"Mr. Simlins, the Bible says that 'the fruits of righteousness are by Jesus Christ.'—Do you know him?—are you in his service?"

"I don't know as I understand you," said he.

"I can't make you understand it, sir."

"Why can't you? who can?" said he quickly.

"It is written, Mr. Simlins,—'They shall be all taught of God.'"—She shewed him the place. "And it is written, 'Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and *he will teach us* of his ways, and we will walk in his paths.'—That is it. If you are willing to walk in his paths, he will shew them to you." Faith looked eagerly at the farmer, and he looked at her. Neither heart was hid from the other.

"But supposin' I was willin'—which I be, so fur's I know—I don't know what they be no more'n a child. How am I goin' to find 'em out?"

Faith's eyes filled quick as she turned over the leaves again;—was it by sympathy alone that occasion came for the rough hand to pass once or twice hastily across those that were looking at her? Without speaking, Faith shewed him the words,—"If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine."

"That is the question, dear Mr. Simlins. On that 'if' it all hangs." The farmer took the book into his own hands and sat looking steadily at the words.

"Well," said he putting it back on her lap—"supposin' the 'if' 's all right—Go ahead, Faith."

"Then the way is clear for you to do that; and it's all easy. But the first thing is here—the invitation of

Jesus himself."

"'Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.'"

"You see," she went on very gently,—"he bids you *learn of him*—so he is ready to teach you. If you are only willing to take his yoke upon you,—to be his servant and own it,—he will shew you what to do, step by step, and help you in every one."

"I don't see where's the beginning of the way yet," said the farmer.

"*That*," said Faith. "Be the servant of Jesus Christ and own it; and then go to him for all you want. He is good for all."

There was a pause.

"I s'pose you've been goin' on in that way a good while."

"A good while—yes,"—Faith almost whispered.

"Well, when you are goin' to him sometimes, ask somethin' for me,—will you?"

He had bent over, leaning on his knees, to speak it in a lower growl than ordinary. Faith bowed her head at first, unwilling to speak; but tears somehow started, and the drops followed each other, as she sat gazing into the black fireplace,—she could not help it—till a perfect shower of weeping brought her face into her hands and stirred her not very strong frame. It stirred the farmer, robust as he was in spite of illness; he shifted his chair most uneasily, and finally laid down his head on his folded arms on the table. Faith was the first to speak.

"Mr. Simlins, who takes care of you?"

"Ugh!" (a most unintelligible grunt,) "they all do it by turns—Jenny and all of 'em."

"What have you had for dinner to-day?"

"Didn't want anything!" He sat up and brushed his cloak sleeve across his forehead.

"Mr. Simlins, I shall send you down something from home and you must eat it."

"The doctor said I was to take wine—but I haint thought of it to-day."

"Where is it?"

He nodded his head in the direction of the cupboard. Faith went rummaging, poured him out a glass and brought it.

"You see," said he after he had taken it—"I've been pretty well pulled down—I didn't know—one time—which side of the fence I was goin' over—and I didn't see the ground on the other side. I don't know why I should be ashamed to say I was afeard!"—There was a strong, stern, truth-telling about this speech that thrilled his hearer. She sat down again.

"You had best take some yourself," he said. "Do Faith!"

"No sir—I'm going. I must go," she answered rising to make ready.

It was strange how the door could have opened and she not heard it—neither she nor Mr. Simlins in fact,—perhaps because their minds were so far away. That the incoming steps were unheard was not so strange, nor new, but the first thing of which Faith was conscious was the soft touch of a hand on either side of her face—she was a prisoner. Faith's instant spring to one side brought her face to face with everybody. Mr. Simlins looked from one to the other, and his first remark was characteristically addressed to Faith.

"Why you didn't tell me that!"

"Has she told you everything *but* that?" said Mr. Linden smiling, and giving the farmer's hand good token of his presence.

"Where under the sun did you come from?" said the farmer returning his grasp with interest, and looking at Mr. Linden as if indeed one of the lights of the solar system had been out before his arrival. Faith sat down mutely and as quietly as possible behind Mr. Linden.

"From under the sun very literally just now—before that from under a shower. I have been down to Quapaw, then home to Mrs. Derrick's, then here. Mr. Simlins, I am sorry to see that you are nursing yourself instead of me. What is the matter?"

"I'd as lieves be doin' this, of the two," said the farmer with a stray smile. "There aint much the matter. How long have you been in this meridian?"

"Two days." And stepping from before Faith, Mr. Linden asked her "if she had come there in a dream?"

"Do you ever see such good-lookin' things in your dreams?" said the farmer. "My visual pictures are all broken down fences, or Jem or Jenny doin' somethin' they haint ought to do. How long're you goin' to stay in Pattaquasset, Dominie?"

"Some time, I hope. Not quite so long as the first time, but longer than I have been since that. Do you know, Mr. Simlins, your coat collar is a little bit turned in?—and why don't you give the sunshine a better welcome?—you two sick people together want some one to make a stir for you." Which office Mr. Linden took upon himself—lightly disengaging the collar, and then going to the window to draw up the shade and throw back the shutters, stopping on his way back to straighten the table cover, and followed by a full gush of sunlight from the window.

"It is so glorious this afternoon!" he said. And standing silent a moment in that brilliant band of light-looking out at the world all glittering and sparkling in the sun, Mr. Linden repeated,—"'Unto you that fear my name, shall the Sun of Righteousness arise, with healing in his wings.'—What a promise that is!"

"Where did you get those words?"—said Mr. Simlins, after the sunlight and the silence had given them their full effect.

"From the Bible—God's book of promises. Do you want to see the place?"

Mr. Simlins turned down a corner of the leaf and laid the book, still open, on the table. Then looked at Mr. Linden with a mixture of pleasure and humour in his eyes. "Are you any nearer bein' a minister than you was a year ago?"

"Nearer in one way. But I cannot lay claim to the title you gave me for another year yet, Mr. Simlins."

"You're Say and Seal as much as ever. What more fixin' have you got to do?"

"A little finishing," said Mr. Linden with a smile.

And he got up and went for Faith's shawl and gloves which were on the table. Mr. Simlins watched the shawling and gloving with attention.

"You can tell Jem he won't be wanted again, Faith," he said. "I guess you'll see him at the gate." Mr. Linden smiled, but some other thought was on his mind,—the face that he turned to Mr. Simlins shewed concern that was both grave and kind.

"What can I do for you?" he said.

"This aint the prettiest place in Pattaquasset; but maybe you'll come and see me sometimes—till I can get out my self," Mr. Simlins said considerately.

"You may be sure I will. And will you let me pray with you now, before
I go?"

The farmer hesitated—or was silent—one instant, then with a sort of subdued abruptness said,

"I'm ready!"—

They knelt there in the sunlight; but when the prayer was over Mr. Simlins felt half puzzled to know for whose sake it had been proposed. For with the telling of his doubts and hindrances and wants—things which he had told to no one, there mingled so much of the speaker's own interest,—which could not be content to leave him but in Christ's hands.

There was not a word spoken after that for a minute,—Mr. Linden stood by the low mantelpiece resting his face on his hand. The farmer, busy with the feelings which the prayer had raised, sat with downcast eyes. And Faith was motionless with a deep and manifold sense of happiness, the labyrinth of which herself could not soon have threaded out. The silence and stillness of his two companions drew the farmer's eyes up; he read first, with an eager eye that nobody saw, the sweet gravity on one half

hidden face, and the deep pure joy written in all the lines of the other; and secret and strong, though half unknown to himself, the whole tide of his heart turned that way. If not before, then at least, something like Ruth's resolution came up within him;—"thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God!" Mr. Linden was the first one that moved.

"Are you ready, dear child?"

The farmer's eyes were on her too, even while he wrung Mr. Linden's hand. But he only said before he let it go,—"Give a glass of wine to her when she gets home."

Out in the sweet afternoon air, and driving through the gate which opened on the highway, with Jem Waters on hand to shut it, Mr. Linden brought Faith's face round towards him and scanned it earnestly.

"My child, how tired you are! I wish I knew whether it would do you most good to go straight home, or to breathe this air a little longer."

"I hope you won't conclude to take me home," said Faith. "I have been looking for this all day."

"Do you think you deserve to have it?" said Mr. Linden, turning Jerry's head however the way that was *not* straight home. "Why didn't you sleep, and wait for me to bring you down here?"

"One reason was, Endy, that I half guessed Mr. Simlins wanted to talk to me and that it might be better for him to see one than two.

"I could have left you there for a while."

"No you couldn't!" she said. "And I couldn't have driven off Jerry and left you—though that would have been better."

"You could have driven me off. What was the other reason?"

"The other reason isn't really worth your hearing. Don't you think this afternoon is too pretty to spoil with bad reasons?"—she said with gentle eyes, half fun, half confession.

"Entirely. Faith—I think you would bear the ride better if you had a sort of afternoon lunch,—shall we stop at Miss Bezac's for a glass of milk?"

"Oh no!"—she said hastily. "Oh no, Endecott! I don't want anything but to ride."

"And to hide—" said Mr. Linden laughingly. "Another bad reason, Faith?"

She gave him a little blushing look, very frank and happy, that also bore homage to his penetration.

"Stop anywhere you please, Endy," she said honestly. "I was very glad you came to Mr. Simlins'."

"Would you rather get it from Mrs. Davids?" he inquired demurely.

"No, not rather. Whichever you like, Endecott," Faith said, hiding the start which the question in this real form gave her. The afternoon sun through which they were riding was very bright; the washed leaves were brilliantly green; sweet scents of trees and buds filled the air, and opening apple blossoms were scattering beauty all over the land. Nothing could spoil that afternoon. Faith had a secret consciousness besides that the very thing from which she shrank was by no means disagreeable to Mr. Linden. She did not care what he did! And he,—in the joy of being with her, of seeing her grow stronger every hour, Mr. Linden was in a 'holiday humour'—in the mood for work or play or mischief; and took the road to Miss Bezac's for more than a glass of milk.

"Mignonette," he said, "what varieties of pride do you consider lawful and becoming?"

"I know only a few innocent sorts," said Faith,—"that I keep for myself."

"Luxurious child! 'A few innocent sorts of pride that you keep for yourself'! You must divide with me."

How Faith laughed.

"You wouldn't thank me for one of them all, Endecott. And yet—" She stopped, and coloured brilliantly on the sudden.

"Explain and finish," said Mr. Linden laconically.

"If I told you what they are you would laugh at me."

"That would not hurt me. What are they, Mignonette?"

She spoke gravely, though smiling sometimes; answering to the matter of fact, as she had been asked. "I am proud, a little, of very fine rolls of butter, or a particularly good cheese. I think I am proud of my carnations, and perhaps—" she went on colouring—"of being so good a baker as I am. And perhaps—I think I am—of such things as sewing and dressmaking;—but I don't think there is much harm in all that. I know myself sometimes proud of other things, where I know it is wrong."

"How do you know but I am proud of your rolls of butter too?" said Mr. Linden looking amused. "But Mignonette, what called forth such a display of the carnations you are *not* proud of? What was the force of that 'And yet'?"

It brought the colour again, and Faith hesitated and looked puzzled,
Then she tried a new way of escape.

"Don't you mean to let me have any of my thoughts to myself?" she said playfully.

"Don't you mean to let me have any of them for myself?"

"You?—Haven't you them almost all?"

"My dear I beg pardon!—one for every carnation,—but I did not know that I had so nearly made the tour of your mind. I was under the impression that my passports were not yet made out—and that my knowledge of your thoughts was all gained from certain predatory excursions, telescopic observations, and such like illegal practices. I am sure all my attempts to cross the frontier in the ordinary way are met by something more impassable than a file of bayonets."

Faith looked up at him as if to see how much of this was meant for true.

"But," said she naively, "I feel as if I had been under a microscope."

"My dear!" said Mr. Linden again, with an air at once resigned and deprecating. But then his gravity gave way. "Faith!—is *that* your feeling in my company? I wonder you can endure the sight of me."

"Why?"—said she timidly.

"If I seem to you like a microscope."

"Only your eyes, like those power-glasses.—Not for size!" said Faith, laughing now herself.

"Ah little Mignonette," he said smiling, "some things can be seen without microscopic vision. And do not you know, my child, that carnations must draw attention to the particular point round which they bloom?"

"Endy, you shall know what I was thinking of," she said. "You touched it already. It was only—that perhaps sometime you *would* be a little proud even of those little things in me—because—Now you can punish me for being proud in earnest!"—It was said in great confusion; it had cost Faith a struggle; the white and red both strove in her downcast face. Mr. Linden might not fathom what was not in a man's nature; but Faith had hardly ever perhaps given him such a token of the value she set upon his pleasure.

"Punish you?" he said, leaving Jerry to find the road for himself for a minute,—"how shall I do it?—so? And how much punishment do you require? I think a little is not enough. 'Because' what, love?"

"Endy!—" she said under her breath,—"you know!—don't ask me."

"Then—if I exceed your limits—you will not blame me?"

"Limits of what?"

"Limits of this species of executive justice."

"I don't think you would keep limits of anybody else's setting," said
Faith with a little subdued fun. "Look, Endy!—we are coming to Miss
Bezac's."

"Most true," said Mr. Linden,—"now shall you see (perhaps!) one of the innocent sorts of pride that I keep for myself. What have we come for?" he added laughing, as Jerry trotted up the side hill to the cottage,—"is it butter, or carnations, or dressmaking?—they all make a rare combination in my mind at present."

"She is at home!" said Faith,—"if she wasn't, the window-curtains would be down. Now she is going to be pleased,—and so am I, for she will give me something to eat." Faith looked as if she wanted it, as she softly opened the door of the dressmaker's little parlour, or workroom, and softly went in. The various business and talk of the afternoon had exhausted her.

Miss Bezac, having in her young days been not only rich, but also a firstrate needlewoman, now that she was older and poor plied her needle for a different purpose. Yet something of old habits clung to her still; she would not take the common work of the village; but when Mrs. Stoutenburgh wanted a gay silk dress, or Miss De Staff a delicate muslin, or Mrs. Somers an embroidered merino—then Miss Bezac was sure to have them go through her hands; and for these ladies she took the fashions and dispensed them exceeding well. Strangers too, in Pattaquasset for the summer, often came to her,—and had not Miss Bezac made the very first embroidered waistcoat that ever Squire Deacon wore, or Sam Stoutenburgh admired himself in? So her table was generally covered with pretty work, and on this particular afternoon she was choosing the patterns for a second waistcoat for the young member from Quilipeak, a mantilla for his mother, and a silk apron for Miss Essie, all at once. In deep cogitation Faith found her, and Faith's soft salutation,—

"Dear Miss Bezac, will you let strangers come in?" How gloriously Faith blushed.

"Strangers!" cried Miss Bezac, turning round. "Why Faith!—you don't mean to say it's you?—though I don't suppose you mean to say it's anybody else. Unless—I declare I don't know whether it is you or not!" said Miss Bezac, looking from her to Mr. Linden and shaking hands with both at once. "Though if it isn't I ought to have heard—only folks don't always do what they ought—at least I don't,—nor much of anything."

"It is nobody else yet," said Mr. Linden smiling. Whereat Miss Bezac laid one hand on the other, and stepping back a little surveyed the two "as a whole."

"Do you know," she said, "(you wouldn't think it) but sometimes I can't say a word!"

"You must not expect Faith to say much—she is tired," said Mr. Linden putting her in a chair. "Miss Bezac, I brought her here to get something to eat."

"Well I don't believe—I don't really believe that anybody but you would ever do such a kind thing," said Miss Bezac. "What shall I get? Faith—what will you have? And you're well enough to be out again! —and it's so well I'm not out myself!—I'll run and see if the fire ain't,—the kettle ought to be boiled, for I wanted an early cup of tea."

"No, dear Miss Bezac, don't!" said Faith. "Only give me some bread and milk."

Miss Bezac stopped short.

"Bread and milk?" she said—"is that good for you? The bread's good, I know, baked last night; and the milk always is sweet, up here with the cowslips—and most things are sweet when you're hungry. But ain't you more hungry than that?—and somebody else might be, if you ain't—and one always must think of somebody else too. But you do, I'll say that for you. And oh didn't I say long ago!—" A funny little recollective pause Miss Bezac made, her thoughts going back even to the night of the celebration. Then she ran away for the bread and milk,—then she came back and put her head in at the door.

"Faith, do you like a cup or a bowl?—I like a cup, because I always think of a cup of comfort—and I never heard of a bowl of anything. But you can have which you like."

"I like the cup too," said Faith laughing. "But even the bowl would be comfort to-day, Miss Bezac."

The cup came, and a little pitcher for replenishing, and a blue plate of very white bread and very brown bread, and one of Miss Bezac's old-fashioned silver spoons, and a little loaf of "one, two, three, four, cake", that looked as good as the bread. All of which were arranged on a round stand before Faith by Miss Bezac and Mr. Linden jointly. He brought her a footstool too, and with persuasive fingers untied and took off her bonnet—which supplementary arrangements Miss Bezac surveyed with folded hands and great admiration. Which also made the pale cheeks flush again, but that was pretty to look upon. Faith betook herself to the old-fashioned spoon and the milk, then gave Mr. Linden something to do in the shape of a piece of cake; and then resigning herself to circumstances broke brown bread into the milk and eat it with great and profitable satisfaction, leaving the conversation in the hands of the other two. The sun sank lower and lower, sending farewell beams into the valleys, and shaking out gold pieces in Miss Bezac's little brown sitting-room like the Will-o'-wisps in the "Tale of tales". Through the open door her red cow might be seen returning home by a winding and circuitous path, such as cows love, and a little sparrow hopped in and out, from the doorstep, looking for "One, two, three, four", crumbs. Faith from her seat near the fire could see it all—if her eyes chose to pass Mr. Linden,—what

he saw, she found out whenever they went that way. It was not wonderful that Faith turned from the table at last with a very refreshed face.

"Miss Bezac, you have made me up," she said smiling.

"Have I?" said her little hostess,—"well that comes pretty near it. Do you know when I saw you—I mean when I saw *both* of you, I really thought you had come for me to make up something else? And I must say, I wish you had,—not that I haven't dresses enough, and too many—unless I had a new pair of eyes—but I always did set my heart on making that one. And I haven't set my heart upon many things for a good while, so of course I ain't used to being disappointed. You won't begin, will you, Faith?"

Faith kissed her, hastily expressing the unsentimental hope that her tea would be as good as her bread and milk; and ran out, leaving Mr. Linden to follow at his leisure. Faith was found untying Jerry.

"What do you mean?" said Mr. Linden staying her hands and lifting her in the most summary manner into the wagon. "Bread and milk is too stimulating for you, child,—we must find something less exciting. What will you see fit to do next?"

"I can untie a bridle," said Faith.

"Or slip your head through one. But you should have seen the delight with which Miss Bezac entered upon the year of patience that I prescribed to her!—and the very (innocuous) pride that lay hid in the prescription. Do you feel disposed to punish me for that, Mignonette?"

One of Faith's grave childish looks answered him; but then, dismissing Mr. Linden as impracticable, she gave herself to the enjoyment of the time. It was a fit afternoon! The sunbeams were bright on leaves and flowers, with that fairy brightness which belongs peculiarly to spring. The air was a real spring air, sweet and bracing, full of delicate spices of May. The apple blossoms, out and bursting out, dressed the land with the very bloom of joy. And through it all Mr. Linden drove her, himself in a "holiday humour." Bread and milk may be stimulating, but health and happiness are more stimulating yet; and Faith came home after a ride of some length looking not a bit the worse, and ready for supper.

CHAPTER XXXI.

A month passed away,—with apple blossoms, strawberry flowers, now with strawberries themselves. Roses coming into splendour, carnations in full force, and both re-established in the cheeks of Faith Derrick. What a month it had been!—of weather, of work, of society. Lessons after the old fashion, reading aloud, talking; going round the country at Jerry's heels, or on the back of Mrs. Stoutenburgh's pony—for there she was put, just so soon as she could bear it, passing by degrees from a gentle trot on level ground to a ladylike scamper over the hills. Faith had not been so strong for many a day as the longest day of that summer found her.

Coming home from their afternoon ride by the way of the postoffice, Mr. Linden found there a letter from Europe; the seal of which he broke as they entered, the house, just in time to give Faith a little enclosed note to herself as she went up stairs to change her dress. Its words were few. Referring Faith to Mr. Linden for particulars, it asked her to let him come to Germany without delay. The aunt with whom Miss Linden lived was at the point of death, apparently—she herself in danger of being left quite alone in a strange land. Yet with all the urgency of the case, the whole breathing of Miss Linden's note was, "Faith—can you spare him?—will you let him come?"

The question was settled before it was asked, in Faith's mind; but what a laying down of pleasure and what a taking up of pain was there! The rest of the vacation was gone at once; for Mr. Linden could not go to Europe and come back, even on the wings of steam, and have a day left before study would begin again. No more of him—except, at the best, snatches—till next year; and next year was very far off, and who could tell what might be next year? But at the best, she must see little more of him until then; and in the mean time he must put half the world between them. Nobody saw how fast the roses faded on Faith's cheek; she sat and looked at the matter all alone, and looked it through. For one few minutes; and then she rose up and began dressing slowly, looking at it still, but gathering all her forces together to deal with it. And when her dressing was done, she still stood leaning one hand and her head on the dressing table, thinking over all that was to do. She had remembered, as with a flash of remembrance, what day the next steamer would sail—from what port—she knew the hour when Mr. Linden must leave Pattaquasset. And when her mind had seen all the preparations to be made, and she thought she was strong enough, she turned to go down stairs; but then feeling very weak Faith turned again and kneeled down to pray. And in a mixed feeling of strength and weakness, she went down stairs.

First to the kitchen, where she quietly looked after the state of the clothes in the wash, and desired Cindy to have all Mr. Linden's things ready for ironing that evening. Then attended to the supply of bread and the provision for breakfast; saw that one or two things about the supper were in proper order and progress; asked Mrs. Derrick to make the tea when it was time, and finally, as quietly as if the afternoon's ride had been the only event of the afternoon, opened the door of the sitting-room and softly went in.

For a while after reading his own letter Mr. Linden had sat absolutely still,—then with a sort of impatience to see Faith, to give her what comfort he could, at least to have her with him every minute, he had paced up and down the sitting-room till she appeared. Now he took her in his arms with all sorts of tender caresses—with no words at first but, "My little Mignonette!" Faith herself was quite still and wordless; only once, and that suddenly and earnestly, she gave his cheek the salutation she had never given him before unbidden. From her it was a whole volume, and thoroughly peace-speaking, although it might intimate a little difficulty of words.

Keeping one arm round her, Mr. Linden began again his walk up and down the room; beginning to talk as well—telling her what was in his letter, how long the journey would take, and more than all, what she must do while he was away. How long the absence would be—when he should be at home again, that was little touched upon by either; the return might be very speedy—that seemed most probable, but neither he nor Faith cared to put in words all the uncertainties that hung about it. From every point he came back to her,—with injunctions about her strength, and directions about her studies, and charges to take care of herself *for him*—with other words of comfort and cheering, spoken cheerfully from a very sorrowful heart. One other charge he gave—

"My little Sunbeam, my dearest Faith, keep both your names unclouded!"

"I have had one lesson, Endy"—

She was a little pale, but had listened to him quietly as intently; voice and smile both ready to do their part, albeit gravely, whenever there was a part for them.

"I shall not forget—" she added now with a smile, a rare one, after a little pause.

He brought her back to the sofa then, kissing the pale cheeks as if he missed their carnations. Yet—with the stringency of the old law which saith that "Doublet and hose must shew itself courageous to petticoat"—Mr. Linden gave her bright words, although they were words of a very grave brightness—not contradicted, but qualified by his eyes.

"Mignonette," he said, "I did not think next year could gain brightness from anything—but I cannot tell you how it has looked to me within these last two hours. If I could but call in Mr. Somers, and then take you with me!"

It brought a rush of the carnations; but Faith did not think so extravagant a wish required any combating. Neither did she say what *she* thought of "next year."

That evening at least they had quietly together. What Faith did after they had separated for the night, Mr. Linden never knew; but the morning saw everything ready for his departure,—ready down to the little details which a man recognizes only (for the most part) by the sense of want. And if cheeks were paler than last night, they were only now and then less steady—till he was gone.

CHAPTER XXXII.

Dr. Harrison took passage in the steamship Vulcan, C. W. Cyclops, commander, for the Old World; having come to the conclusion that the southern country was not sufficiently remote, and that only a change of hemispheres would suit the precise state of his mind. Letters of combined farewell and notice-giving, reached Pattaquasset too late to cumber the doctor with a bevy of friends to see him off; but his sudden motions were too well known, and his peculiarities too long established, to excite much surprise or dismay by any new manifestations.

The Vulcan lay getting her steam up in that fair June morning, with very little regard to the amount of high pressure that her passengers might bring on board. Nothing could be more regardless of their hurry and bustle, the causes that brought them, the tears they shed, the friends they left behind, than the ship with her black sides and red smoke pipe. Tears did indeed trickle down some parts of her machinery, but they were only condensed steam—which might indeed be true of some of the tears of her passengers.

Punctual to her time she left her moorings, steaming down the beautiful bay with all the June light upon her, throwing back little foamy waves that glittered in the sun, making her farewell with a long train of blue rollers that came one after another to kiss the shore. What if tears sprinkled the dusty sidewalks of Canal St.?—what if that same light shone on white handkerchiefs and bowed heads?—The answering drops might fall in the state-rooms of the Vulcan, but on deck bustle and excitement had their way.

So went on the miles and the hours,—then the pilot left the vessel, taking with him a little handful of letters; and the passengers who had been down stairs to write were on deck, watching him off. In the city business rolled on with its closing tide,—far down on the Long Branch shore people looked northward towards a dim outline, a little waft of smoke, and said—"There goes the Vulcan." The freshening breeze, the long rolls of the Atlantic, sent some passengers below, even now,—others stood gazing back at the faint city indications,—others still walked up and down—those who had left little, or cared little for what they had left. Of these was Dr. Harrison, who paced the deck with very easy external manifestations.

Some change of mind—some freak of fancy, sent him at last to the other side of the ship—then to the prow. Here sailors were busy,—here one passenger stood alone: but if there had been twenty more, Dr. Harrison could have seen but this one. He was standing with arms folded, in a sort of immoveable position, that yet accommodated itself easily to the ship's slow courtseying; as regardless of that as of the soft play of the sea breeze; looking back—but not to the place where the Vulcan had lain a few hours before. He was rather looking forward,—looking off to some spot that lay north or northeast of them: some spot invisible, yet how clearly seen! Looking thither,—as if in all the horizon that alone had any interest. So absorbed—so far from the ship,—his lips set in such grave, sad lines; his eyes so intent, as if they could by no means look at anything else. Nay, for the time, there was nothing else to see! Dr. Harrison might come or go—the sailors might do their utmost,—far over the rolling water, conscious of that only because it was a barrier of separation, the watcher's eyes rested on Mignonette. If once or twice the eyelids fell, it was not that the vision failed.

Dr. Harrison stopped short, unseen, and not wishing at that moment to meet the consequences of being seen. Yet he stood still and looked. The first feeling being one of intense displeasure and disgust that the Vulcan carried so unwelcome a fellow-passenger; the second, of unbounded astonishment and wonder what he did there. *He* putting the ocean between him and Pattaquasset? *he* setting out for the Old World, with all his hopes just blossoming in the New? What could be the explanation? Was it possible, Dr. Harrison asked himself for one moment, that he could have been mistaken? that he could have misunderstood the issue of the conversation that morning in Faith's sick room? A moment resolved him. He recalled the steady, dauntless look of Faith's eyes after his words,—a look which he had two or three times been privileged to receive from her and never cared to meet;—he remembered how daintily her colour rose as her eyes fell, and the slow deliberate uncovering of her diamond finger from which the eyes were not raised again to look at him; he remembered it with the embittered pang of the moment. No! he had not been mistaken; he had read her right. Could it be—it crossed the doctor's mind like a flash of the intensest lightning—that *his letter* had done its work? its work of separation? But the cool reminder of reason came like the darkness after the lightning. Mr. Linden would not have been at Mrs. Derrick's, as the doctor had heard of his being there, if any entering wedge of division had made itself felt between his place there and him. No, though now he was here in the Vulcan. And Dr. Harrison noticed anew, keenly, that the expression of the gazer's face, though sorrowful and grave, was in nowise dark or desponding. Nothing of that! The grave brow was unbent in every line of it; the grave lips had no hard set of pain; the doctor read them well, both lips and brow! Mr. Linden was no man to stand and look towards Pattaquasset if he had nothing there. And with a twinge he now recollected the unwonted sound of that name from the pilot's mouth as he took charge of the letters and went off. Ay! and turning with the thought the doctor paced back again, as unregardful now of the contents of the Vulcan, animate or inanimate, as the man himself whom he had been watching.

What should he do? he must meet him and speak to him, though the doctor desired nothing less in the whole broad earth. But he must do it, for the maintenance of his own character and the safety of his own secret and pride that hung thereby. That little piece of simplicity up there in the country had managed to say him no without being directly asked to say anything—thanks to her truthful honesty; and perhaps, a twinge or two of another sort came to Dr. Harrison's mind as he thought of his relations with her,—yes, and of his relations with *him*. Not pleasant, but all the more, if possible, Dr. Harrison set his teeth and resolved to speak to Mr. Linden the first opportunity. All the more, that he was not certain Mr. Linden had received his letter,—it was likely, yet Dr. Harrison had had no note of the fact. It might have failed. And not withstanding all the conclusions to which his meditations had come, curiosity lingered yet;—a morbid curiosity, unreasonable, as he said to himself, yet uncontrollable, to see by eye and ear witness, even in actual speech and conversation, whether all was well with Mr. Linden or not.

His own power of self-possession Dr. Harrison could trust; he would try that of the other. Yet he took tolerably good care that the opportunity of speaking should not be this evening. The doctor did not come in to supper till all the passengers were seated, or nearly so, and then carried himself to the end of the apartment furthest from his friend; where he so bore his part that no mortal could have supposed Dr. Harrison had suffered lately in mind, body, or estate.

Mr. Linden's part that night was a quiet one, the voluntary part of it, and strictly confined to the various little tea-table courtesies which with him might indeed be called involuntary. But it so happened that the Vulcan carried out quite a knot of his former friends—gentlemen who knew him well, and these from their various places at the table spoke either to him or of him frequently. Dr. Harrison in the pauses of his own talk could hear, "Linden"—"Endecott Linden"—"John, what have you been doing with yourself?"—in different tones of question or comment,—sometimes caught the tones of Mr. Linden's voice in reply; but as they were both on the same side of the table eyesight was not called for. The doctor sat in his place until the table was nearly cleared; then sauntered forth into the evening light. Fair, bright, glowing light, upon gay water and a gay deck-full; but Dr. Harrison gaining nothing from its brightness, stood looking out on its reflection in the waves more gloomily than he had seen another look a little time ago. Then a hand was laid lightly on his shoulder, making its claim of acquaintanceship with a very kind, friendly touch. The doctor turned and met hand and eye with as far as could be seen his old manner, only perhaps his fingers released themselves a little sooner than once they would, and the smile was a trifle more broad than it might if there had been no constraint about it.

"I am not altogether taken now by surprise," said he, "though surprise hasn't yet quit its hold of me. I heard your name a little while ago. What are you doing here, Linden?"

"Rocking in the cradle of business as well as of the deep," said Mr. Linden. "The last steamer brought word that I must sail by this, and so here I am."

"Who rocks the cradle of business?" said the doctor, with the old comical lift of the eyebrows with which he used to begin a tilt with Mr. Linden.

"Duty and Interest rock it between them,—singing of rest, and keeping one awake thereby."

"A proper pair of nurses!" said the doctor. "Why man, they would tear the infant Business to pieces between them! Unless one of them did as much for the other in time to prevent it."

"Never—unless Inclination took the place of Interest."

"Don't make any difference," said the doctor;—"Inclination always follows the lead of Interest.—Except in a few extraordinary specimens of human nature."

Mr. Linden turned towards the scattered groups of passengers, and so doing his eye caught the shining of that very star which was rising over Pattaquasset as he and Mignonette rode home two nights before. Only two nights!—For a minute everything else might have been at the antipodes—then Mr. Linden brought at least his eyes back to the deck of the Vulcan. "What sort of a motley have we here, doctor? Do you know many of them?"

"Yes," said the doctor slightly;—"the usual combinations of Interest and Inclination. I wonder if we are exceptions, Linden?"

"The *usual* combination is not, perhaps, just the best,—it is a nice matter for a man to judge in his own case how far the proportions are rectified."

"He can't do it. Human machinery can't do it. Can you measure the height of those waves while they dazzle your eyes with gold and purple as they do now?"

"Nay—but I can tell how much they do or do not throw me out of my right course."

"What course are you on now, Linden?" said the doctor with his old-fashioned assumption of carelessness, dismissing the subject.

"Now?" Mr. Linden repeated. "Do you mean in studies, travels, or conversation?"

"In conversation, you have as usual brought me to a point! I mean—if I mean anything,—the other two; but I mean nothing, unless you like."

"I do like. Just now, then, I am in the vacation before the last year of my Seminary life,—for the rest, I am on my way to Germany."

"Finish your course there, eh?" said the doctor. "Why man, I thought you had found the 'four azure

chains' long ago."

"No, not to finish my course,—if I am kept in Germany more than a few weeks, it will not be by 'azure' chains," said Mr. Linden.

"That it will not!" said one of the young men coming up, fresh from the tea-table and his cigar. "Azure chains?—pooh!—Linden breaks *them* as easy as Samson did the green withs. How biblical it makes one to be in company with such a theologian! But I shouldn't wonder if he was going to Europe to join some order of friars—he'll find nothing monastic enough for him in America."

"Mistaken your man, Motley!" said the doctor; who for reasons of his own did not choose to quit the conversation. "The worst *I* have to say of him is, that if he spends an other year in Germany his hearers will never be able to understand him!"

"Mistaken him!" said Mr. Motley—"at this time of day,—that'll do!
Where did you get acquainted with him, pray?"

"Once when I had the management of him," said the doctor coolly. "There is no way of becoming acquainted with a man, like that."

"Once when you *thought* you had," said Mr. Motley. "Well, where was it?—in a dark passage when you got to the door first?"

"Whenever I have had the misfortune to be in a dark passage with him, he has *shewed* me the door," said the doctor gravely but gracefully, in his old fashion admirably maintained.

"If one of you wasn't Endecott Linden," said Mr. Motley throwing the end of his cigar overboard, "I should think you had made acquaintance on a highway robbery."

"Instead of which, it was in the peaceful town of Pattaquasset," said
Mr. Linden.

"Permit me to request the reason of Mr. Motley's extraordinary guess," said the doctor.

"So natural to say where you've met a man—if there's no reason against it," said the other coolly. "But you don't say it was in Pattaquasset, doctor? Were *you* ever there?"

"Depends entirely on the decision of certain questions in metaphysics,"—said the doctor. "As for instance, whether anything that is, *is*—and the matter of personal identity, which you know is doubtful. I know the *appearance* of the place, Motley."

"Are there any pretty girls there?" said Mr. Motley, carelessly, but keeping his eye rather on Mr. Linden than the doctor.

"Mr. Linden can answer better than I," said Dr. Harrison, whose eye also turned that way, and whose tone changed somewhat in spite of himself. "There are none there that could not answer any question about Mr. Linden."—

"By the help of a powerful imagination," said the person spoken of. Mr.
Motley looked from one to the other.

"I don't know what to make of either of you," he said. "Why doctor, Endecott Linden is a—a mere—I don't like to call him hard names, and I can't call him soft ones! However—to be sure—the cat may look at the king, even if his majesty won't return the compliment. Well—you and I were never thought hard-hearted, so I'll tell you my story. Did it ever happen—or *seem* to happen, doctor—that you, *seeming* to be in Pattaquasset, went—not to church—but along the road therefrom? Preferring the exit to the entrance—as you and I too often do?"

"It has seemed to happen to me,"—said Dr. Harrison, as if mechanically.

"Well—George Alcott and I—do you know George?—no great loss—we were kept one Sunday in that respectable little town by a freshet. Whether it was one of those rains that bring down more things from the sky than water, I don't know,—George declared it was. If it wasn't, we made discoveries."

"If you and George both used your eyes, there must have been discoveries," said Mr. Linden. "Did you take notice how green the grass looked after the rain? and that when the clouds were blown away the sun shone?"

"You're not all theology yet!" said Mr. Motley. "Be quiet—can't you? I'm not talking to you. We were

sauntering down this same road, doctor—after church,—falling in with the people, so that we could see them and be taken for churchgoers. But there wasn't much to see.—Then George declared that here was the place where Linden had secluded himself for nobody knows what,—then we fell naturally into lamenting the waste of such fine material, and conned over various particulars of his former life and prospects—the great promise of past years, the present melancholy mania to make money and be useful. Upon which points George and I fought as usual. Then we grew tired of the subject and of the mud—turned short about—and beheld—what do you suppose, doctor?"

"How far you had come for nothing?"

"Imagine," said Mr. Motley, taking out a fresh cigar and a match and proceeding to put them to their respective uses,—"Imagine the vision that appeared to Balaam's ass—and how the ass felt."

"Nay, that we cannot do," said Mr. Linden. "You tax us too far."

"In both requisitions—" added the doctor.

"There stood," said Mr. Motley, removing his cigar and waving it gracefully in one hand. "There stood close behind us on the mud—she could not have been in it—an immortal creature, in mortal merino! We—transfixed, mute—stepped aside right and left to let her pass,—I believe George had presence of mind enough to take off his hat; and she—'severe in youthful beauty', glorious in youthful blushes—walked on, looking full at us as she went. But such a look! and from such eyes!—fabulous eyes, doctor, upon my honour. Then we saw that the merino was only a disguise. Imagine a search warrant wrapped up in moonbeams—imagine the blending of the softest sunset reflection with a keen lightning flash,—and after all you have only words—not those eyes. Linden!—seems to me your imagination serves you better here,—your own eyes are worth looking at!"

"It has had more help from you," Mr. Linden said, controlling the involuntary unbent play of eye and lip with which he had heard the description.

"Well, George raved about them for a month," Mr. Motley went on, "and staid in Pattaquasset a whole week to see them again—which he didn't; so he made up his mind that they had escaped in the train of events—or of ears, and now seeks them through the world. Some day he will meet them in the possession of Mrs. Somebody—and then hang himself." And Mr. Motley puffed out clouds of smoke thereupon.

"According to your account, he could not do better," said the doctor cynically.

"I suppose the world would get on, if he did," said Mr. Motley with philosophical coolness. "But the queerity was," he added, removing the cigar once more, "what made her look at us so? Did she know by her supernatural vision that we had not been to church?—for I must say, Linden, she looked like one of your kind. Or were her unearthly ears charmed by the account of your unearthly perfections?—for George and I were doing the thing handsomely."

"It was probably that," said Mr. Linden. "Few people, I think, can listen to your stories unmoved."

"Hang it," said Mr. Motley, "I wish I could!—This vixenish old craft is behaving with a great deal too much suavity to suit my notions. I don't care about making a reverence to every wave I meet if they're going to tower up at this rate. But I guess you're right, Linden—the description of you can be made quite captivating—and her cheeks glowed like damask roses with some sort of inspiration. However, as George pathetically and poetically remarks,

'I only know she came and went!'—

the last part of which illustrious example I shall follow. Linden, if any story don't move *you*, you're no better than the North Cape."

"Can you stand it?"—asked the doctor suddenly of his remaining companion.

"Yes—I have known Motley a long time."

"Pshaw! no, I mean this wind."

"I beg your pardon! Yes—for anything I have felt of it yet."

"If you will excuse me, I will get something more on. I have come from a warmer part of the world lately."

The doctor disappeared, and found something in another part of the boat to detain him.

Dr. Harrison had stood one conversation, but he had no mind to stand a second. He did not think it necessary. If by any possibility he could have put himself on board of another steamer, or packet; or have leaped forward into France, or back into America!—he would have done it. But since he must see Mr. Linden from time to time in their present situation, he contrived that that should be all. Even that was as seldom and as little as possible; the art *not to see*, Dr. Harrison could practise to perfection, and did now; so far as he could without rendering it too obviously a matter of his own will. That would not have suited his plans. So he saw his one-time friend as often as he must, and then was civil invariably, civil with the respect which was Dr. Harrison's highest degree of civility and which probably in this instance was true and heartfelt; but he was cool, after his slight gay surface manner, and even when speaking kept at a distance. For the rest, it is notable, even in so small a space as the walls of a steamer shut in, how far apart people can be that have no wish to be near. Days passed that saw at the utmost only a bow exchanged between these two; many days that heard but one or two words. Mr. Linden's own plans and occupations, the arrangement of his time, helped to further the doctor's wish. There was many an hour when Dr. Harrison would not have found him if he had tried, but when they were really together the non-intercourse was the doctor's fault. For all that had been, Mr. Linden was still his friend,—he realized more and more every day the value of the prize for which Dr. Harrison had played and lost; and pity had made forgiveness easy. He was ready for all their old kindly intercourse, but seeing the doctor shunned him there was nothing to do but follow the lead. Sometimes indeed they came together for a few minutes—were thrown so—in a way that was worse than hours of talk.

The Vulcan had made about half her passage, and a fair, fresh morning had brought most of the passengers on deck. Mr. Linden was not there, but the rest were grouped and watching the approach of a homeward bound steamer; when as she neared them Mr. Linden too came on deck. It was to talk with the Captain however, not the passengers—or to consult with him, for the two stood together speaking and smiling. "You can try," Dr. Harrison heard the Captain say; and then he lifted his trumpet and hailed—the other Captain responding. Still the steamer came on, nearer and nearer,—still the two on the deck of the Vulcan stood side by side; till at a certain point, just where the vessels were at the nearest, Captain Cyclops gave his companion a little signal nod. And Mr. Linden stepping forward a pace or two, lent the whole power of his skill and strength to send a despatch on board the Polar Bear. The little packet sped from his hand, spinning through the air like a dark speck. Not a person spoke or moved—Would it reach?—would it fail?—until the packet, just clearing the guards, fell safe on the deck of the other vessel, was picked up by her Captain and proclaimed through the speaking trumpet. Slightly raising his hat then, Mr. Linden drew back from his forward position; just as a shout of delighted acclaim burst from both the boats.

"That went with a will, I tell *you!*" said Captain Cyclops with a little nod of his head.

"I say, Linden!" spoke out one of the young men—"is that your heart you sent home?"

"I feel it beating here yet," Mr. Linden answered. But just how much of it he carried back to his state-room for the next hour has never been ascertained. Society had no help from Dr. Harrison for more than that length of time. Neither could proximity nor anything else make him, visibly, aware of Mr. Linden's existence during the rest of the day.

Mr. Linden knew the doctor too well—and it maybe said, knew Faith too well—to be much surprised at that. If he could have spared Dr. Harrison the pain of seeing his little air-sent missive, he would have done it; but the letter could go but at one time, and from one side of the ship—and just there and then Dr. Harrison chose to be. But though the sort of growing estrangement which the doctor practised sprang from no wish nor feeling but his own, yet Mr. Linden found it hard to touch it in any way. Sometimes he tried—sometimes he left it for Time's touching, which mends so many things. And slowly, and gently, *that* touch did work—not by fading one feeling but by deepening another. Little as Dr. Harrison had to do with his friend, almost every one else in the ship had a good deal, and the place which Mr. Linden soon took in the admiration as well as the respect of the passengers, could not fail to come to the doctor's notice. Men of very careless life and opinions pruned their language in his presence,—those who lived but for themselves, and took poor care of what they lived for, passed him reverently on some of his errands through the ship. Dr. Harrison had never lived with him before, and little as they saw each other, you could as well conceal the perfume of a hidden bunch of violets—as well shut your senses to the spring air—as could the doctor shut his to the beauty of that well-grown Christian character. The light of it shone, and the influence of it went forth through all the ship.

"What a strange, incomprehensible, admirable fellow, Linden is!" said Mr. Motley one day when he and the doctor were sunning themselves in profound laziness on deck. It was rather late Sunday afternoon, and the morning service had left a sort of respectful quietness behind it.

"He must be!" said the doctor with a slight indescribable expression,—"if at this moment you can be roused to wonder at anything."

Mr. Motley inclined his head with perfect suavity in honour of the doctor's words.

"It's a glorious thing to lie here on deck and do nothing!" he said, extending his elegantly clad limbs rather more into the distance. "How fine the breeze is, doctor—what do you think of the day, as a whole?"

"Unfinished, at present,—"

"Well—" said Mr. Motley,—"take that part of it which you with such precision term 'this moment',—what do you think of it as it appears here on deck?"

"Sunny—" said the doctor,—"and we are flies. On the whole I think it's a bore, Motley."

"What do you think of the Black Hole of Calcutta, in comparison?" said Mr. Motley closing his eyes.

"The difference is, that *that* would have been an insufferable bore."

Mr. Motley smiled—stroking his chin with affectionate fingers. "On the whole," he said, "I think you're right in that position. What do you suppose Linden's about at this moment?"

"Is he your ward?" said the doctor.

"He's down below—" said Mr. Motley with a significant pointing of his train of remarks. "By which I don't mean! that he's left this planet—for truly, when he does I think it will be in a different direction; but he's down in the steerage—trying to get some of those creatures to follow him."

"Which way?"

"You and George Alcott have such a snappish thread in you!" said Mr. Motley yawning—"only it sits better on George than it does on you. But I like it—it rather excites me to be snubbed. However, here comes Linden—so I hope they'll not follow him *this* way."

"This way" Mr. Linden himself did not come, but chose another part of the deck for a somewhat prolonged walk in the seabreeze. The doctor glanced towards him, then moved his chair slightly, so as to put the walker out of his range of vision.

"He's a good fellow enough," he remarked carelessly. "You were pleased to speak of him just now as 'incomprehensible'—may I ask how he has earned a title to that?" The tone was a little slighting.

"Take the last instance—" said Mr. Motley,—"you yourself were pleased to pronounce the steerage a more insufferable bore than the deck—yet he chooses it,—and not only on Sundays. I don't believe there's a day that he don't go down there. He's popular enough without it—'tisn't that. And nobody knows it—one of the sailors told me. If he was a medico, like you, doctor, there'd be less wonder—but as it is!—" and Mr. Motley resigned himself again to the influence of the sunshine. A moment's meditation on the doctor's part, to judge by his face, was delectable.

"There isn't any sickness down there?" he said then.

"Always is in the steerage—isn't there?" said Mr. Motley,—"I don't know!—the surgeon can tell you."

"There's no occasion,—" said the doctor with a little haughtiness. "He knows who I am."

And Dr. Harrison too resigned himself, apparently, to the sunny influences of the time and was silent.

But as the sun went down lower and lower, Mr. Motley roused himself up and went off to try the effect upon his spirits of a little cheerful society,—then Mr. Linden came and took the vacant chair.

"How beautiful it is!" he said, in a tone that was half greeting, half meditation. The start with which Dr. Harrison heard him was skilfully transformed into a natural change of position.

"Beautiful?—yes," said he. "Has the beauty driven Motley away?"

"He is gone.—Your waves are very dazzling to-night, doctor."

"They are helping us on," said the doctor looking at them. "We shall be in after two days more—if this holds."

Helping us on—perhaps the thought was not unqualified in Mr. Linden's mind, for he considered that—or something else—in grave silence for a minute or two.

"Dr. Harrison," he said suddenly, "you asked me about my course—I wish you would tell me yours. Towards what—for what. You bade me call myself a friend—may I use a friend's privilege?" He spoke with a grave, frank earnestness.

The doctor's face shewed but a small part of the astonishment which this speech raised. It shewed a little.

"I can be but flattered!—" he said with something of the old graceful medium between play and earnest. "You ask me what I am hardly wise enough to answer you. I am going to Paris, and you to Germany. After that, I really know about as much of one 'course' as of the other."

"My question referred, not to the little daily revolutions, but to the great life orbit. Harrison, what is yours to be?"

Evidently it was an uneasy question. Yet the power of influence—or of associations—was such that Dr. Harrison did not fling it away. "I remember," he said, not without some bitterness of accent—"you once did me the honour to profess to care."

"I do care, very much." And one of the old looks, that Dr. Harrison well remembered—said the words were true.

"You do me more honour than I do myself," he said, not so lightly as he meant to say it. "I do not care. I see nothing to care for."

"You refuse to see it—" Mr. Linden said gently and sorrowfully.

Dr. Harrison's brow darkened—it might be with pain, for Mr. Linden's words were the echo of others he had listened to—not long ago. In a moment he turned and spoke with an impulse—of bravado? Perhaps he could not have defined, and his companion could not trace.

"I refuse to see nothing!—but I confess to you I see nothing distinctly. What sort of an 'orbit' would you propose to me?"

The tone sounded frank, and certainly was not unkind. Mr. Linden's answer was in few words—"'To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life'."

Dr. Harrison remained a little while with knitted brow looking down at his hands, which certainly were in an order to need no examination. Neither was he examining them. When he looked up again it was with the frankness and kindliness both more defined. Perhaps, very strange to his spirit, a little shame was at work there.

"Linden," he said, "I believe in you! and if ever I enter upon an orbit of any sort, I'll take up yours. But —" said he relapsing into his light tone, perhaps of intent,—"you know two forces are necessary to keep a body going in one—and I assure you there is none, of any sort, at present at work upon me!"

"You are mistaken," said Mr. Linden,—"there are two."

"Let's hear—" said the doctor without looking at him.

"In the first place your conscience, in the second your will."

"You have heard of such things as both getting stagnant for want of use—haven't you?"

"I have heard of the one being half choked by the other," said Mr.
Linden:

"It's so warm this afternoon that I can't contradict you. What do you want me to do, Linden?"

"Let conscience do its work—and then you do yours."

A minute's silence.

"You do me honour, to believe I have such a thing as a conscience,"—said the doctor again a little bitterly. "I didn't use to think it, myself."

He was unaware that it was that very ignored principle which had forced him to make this speech.

"My dear friend—" Mr. Linden began, and he too paused, looking off gravely towards the brightening horizon. "Then do yourself the honour to let conscience have fair play," he went on presently,—"it is too delicate a stream to bear the mountain torrents of unchecked will and keep its clearness."

"Hum!—there's no system of drainage that ever I heard of that will apply up in those regions!" said the doctor, after again a second's delay to speak. "And you are doing my will too much honour now—I tell you it is in a state of stagnation, and I don't at present see any precipice to tumble down. When I do, I'll promise to think of you—if that thought isn't carried away too.—Come, Linden!" he said with more expression of kindliness than Mr. Linden had seen certainly during all the voyage before,—"I believe in you, and I will!—though I suppose my words do seem to you no better than the very spray of those torrents you are talking about. Will you walk?—Motley put me to sleep, but you have done one good thing—you have stirred me to desire action at least."

It was curious, how the power of character, the power of influence, had borne down passion and jealousy—even smothered mortification and pride—and made the man of the world speak truth. Mr. Linden rose—yet did not immediately begin the walk; for laying one hand on the doctor's shoulder with a gesture that spoke both regard and sorrow and entreaty, he stood silently looking off at the colours in the west.

"Dr. Harrison," he said, "I well believe that your mother and mine are dear friends in heaven—God grant that we may be, too!"

Then they both turned, and together began their walk. It lasted till they were summoned to tea; and from that time till they got in there was no more avoidance of his old friend by the doctor. His manner was changed; if he did not find enjoyment in Mr. Linden's society he found somewhat else which had value for him. There was not again a shade of dislike or of repulsion; and when they parted on landing, though it might be that there lay in Dr. Harrison's secret heart a hope that he might never see Mr. Linden again, there lay with it also, as surely, a secret regret.

Now all that Faith knew of this for a long time, was from a newspaper; where—among a crowd of unimportant passengers in the Vulcan's list—she read the names of Dr. Harrison and J. E. Linden.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

Faith and her mother sat alone at breakfast. About a fortnight of grave quiet had followed after the joyous month that went before, with little enlivening, few interruptions. Without, the season had bloomed into greater luxuriance,—within, the flowers now rarely came; and Faith's flowerless dress and belt and hair, said of themselves that Mr. Linden was away. Roses indeed peeped through the windows, and thrust their heads between the blinds, but no one invited them in.

Not so peremptorily as the roses—and yet with more assurance of welcome—Reuben Taylor knocked at the door during breakfast time; scattering the abstract musings that floated about the coffee-pot and mingled with its vapoury cloud.

"Sit down, Reuben," said Faith jumping up;—"there's a place for you,—and I'll give you a plate." To which Reuben only replied, "A letter, Miss Faith!"—and putting it in her hands went off with quick steps. On the back of it was written, up in one corner—"Flung on board the Polar Bear, by a strong hand, from steamship Vulcan, half way across."

There was no need of flowers now truly in the house, for Faith stood by the table transformed into a rose of summer joy.

"Mother!" she exclaimed,—"It's from sea—half way across."—

"From sea!—half way across—" her mother repeated. "Why child, what are you talking about? You don't mean that Mr. Linden's contrived to make a letter swim back here already, do you?"

Faith hardly heard. A minute she stood, with her eyes very like what Mr. Motley had graphically described them to be, breaking the seal with hurried fingers,—and then ran away. The breakfast table and Mrs. Derrick waited—they waited a long time before Faith came back to eat a cold breakfast, which tasted of nothing but sea-breezes and was therefore very strengthening. The strengthening effect went through the day; there was a fresh colour in Faith's face. Fifty times at least the "moonbeams" of her eyes saw a "strong hand" throw her packet across the sea waves that separated the two steamers; the master of the "Polar Bear" might guess, but Faith knew, that a strong heart had done it as well. And when her work was over Faith put a rose in her belt in honour of the day, and sat down to her books, very happy.

The books were engrossing, and it was later than usual when she came down stairs to get tea, but Mrs. Derrick was out. That wasn't very strange. Faith went through the little routine of preparation,—

then she took another book and sat down by the sweet summer air of the open window to wait. By and by Mrs. Derrick came slowly down the road, opened and shut the gate with the same air of abstracted deliberateness, and came up the steps looking tired and flushed. In the porch Faith met and kissed her.

"Where have you been now, mother? tea's ready."

"Pretty child!" was Mrs. Derrick's answer, "how glad I am you got that letter this morning!"

Faith smiled; *she* didn't forget it, but it was not to be expected that it should be quite so present to Mrs. Derrick's mind. Yet almost at the same instant she felt that her mother had some particular reason for saying that just then.

"Where have you been, mother?"

"Up to Squire Stoutenburgh's," said Mrs. Derrick, putting herself wearily in the rocking-chair,—"and they were all out gone—to Pequot to spend the day. So I lost my labour."

Gently Faith stood before her and took off her bonnet. "What did you go there for, mother?"

"I wanted to see him—" said Mrs. Derrick. "Squire Deacon's been here,
Faith."

"Mother! Is he back again?—What for?"

"Settle here and live, I suppose. He's married—that's one thing. What was he here for?—why the old story, Faith,—he wants the place." And Mrs. Derrick's eyes looked as if she wanted it too.

"Does he want it very much, mother?"

"Means to have it, child—and I don't feel as if I could live in any other house in Pattaquasset. So I thought maybe Mr. Stoutenburgh would make him hold off till next year, Faith," said Mrs. Derrick, a little smile coming back to her lips. "I guess I'll go up again after tea."

Faith coaxed her mother into the other room and gave her her tea daintily; revolving in her mind the while many things. When tea was over and Mrs. Derrick was again bent upon business, Faith ventured a question. "Mother, what do you suppose Squire Stoutenburgh can do to help us?"

"I can't tell, child,—he might talk Sam Deacon into letting us keep the house, at least. We've got to live somewhere, you know, Faith. It's no sort of use for me to talk to him,—he's as stiff as a crab tree—and I aint. I think I'll try."

"To-night, mother?"

"I thought I would."

Faith hesitated, putting the cups together. "Mother, I'll go. I dare say I shall do as well."

"I'm afraid you're tired too, pretty child," said Mrs. Derrick, but with evident relief at the very idea.

"I tired?—Never," said Faith. "You rest, mother—and don't fear," she added, kissing her. "I'll put on my bonnet—and be there and back again in a little while."

The summer twilight was falling grey, but Faith knew she could have a guardian to come home; and besides the road between the two houses was thickly built up and perfectly safe. The evening glow was almost gone, the stars faintly gleaming out in the blue above; a gentle sea breeze stirred the branches and went along with Faith on her errand. Now was this errand grievously unpleasing to Faith, simply because of the implication of that *one year* of reprieve which she must ask for. How should she manage it? But her way was clear; she must manage it as she could.

Spite of this bugbear, she had gone with a light free step all along her road, walking rather quick; for other thoughts had kept her company, and the image of her little flying packet shot once and again through her mind. At length she came to Mr. Stoutenburgh's gate, and Faith's foot paused. Light shone through the muslin curtains; and as her step neared the front door the broken sounds of voices and laughter came unwelcomely through. A most unnecessary formality her knock was, but one of the children came to the door and ushered her at once into the tea-room, where the family were waiting for their late tea. Mrs. Stoutenburgh—looking very pretty in her light summer dress—was half reclining on the sofa, professing that she was tired to death, but quite failing to excite any sympathy thereby in the group of children who had not seen her since morning. The Squire himself walked leisurely up and down, with his hands behind him, sometimes laughing at the children sometimes helping on their play. Through the room was the full perfume of roses, and the lamplight could not yet hide the departing

glow of the western horizon. Into this group and atmosphere little Linda brought the guest, with the simple announcement, "Mother, it's Miss Faith."

"Miss Faith!" Mrs. Stoutenburgh exclaimed, starting up and dispersing the young ones,—"Linda, you shall have a lump of sugar!—My dear other child, how do you do?—and what sweet corner of your little heart sent you up here to-night? You have not—no, that can't be,—and you wouldn't come here if you had. But dear Faith, how are you?"—and she was rescued from the Squire and carried off to the sofa to answer at her leisure. With a sort of blushing, steadfast grace, which was common with her in the company of friends who were in her secret, Faith answered.

"And you haven't had tea yet,"—she said remorsefully. "I came to give Mr. Stoutenburgh some trouble—but I can do it in three minutes." Faith looked towards the Squire.

"My dear," he said, "it would take you three years!"

"But Faith," said Mrs. Stoutenburgh—"here comes the tea, and you can't go home without Mr. Stoutenburgh,—and nothing qualifies him for business like a contented state of his appetite!"

Faith laughed and sat down again, and then was fain upon persuasion to take a place at the table, which was a joyous scene enough. Faith did little but fill a place; her mind was busy with thoughts that began to come pressingly; she tried not to have it seem so.

"My dear," said the Squire as he helped Faith to raspberries, "what fine weather we have had, eh?"

"Beautiful weather!"—Faith responded with a little energy.

"Papa," said one of the children, "do you think Mr. Linden's had it fine too?"

"What tangents children's minds go off in!" observed Mrs. Stoutenburgh. "Faith! don't eat your raspberries without sugar,—how impatient you are. You used to preach patience to me when I was sick."

"I can be very patient, with these raspberries and no sugar," said Faith, wishing she could hide the bloom of her cheeks as easily as she hid that of the berries under the fine white shower.

"Poor child!" said her friend gently,—"I think you have need of all your patience." And her hands came softly about Faith's plate, removing encumbrances and adding dainties, with a sort of mute sympathy that at the moment could find no more etherial channel. "Mr. Stoutenburgh drove down to Quapaw the other day," she went on in a low voice, "to ask those fishing people what indications our land weather gave of the weather at sea; and—he couldn't half tell me about his visit when he came home," said Mrs. Stoutenburgh, breaking short off in her account. "Linda, go get that glass of white roses and set it by Miss Faith,—maybe she'll take them home with her."

Faith looked at the white roses and smelled their sweetness; and then she said, "Who did you see, Mr. Stoutenburgh?—down at Quapaw?"

"None of the men, my dear—they were all away, but I saw half the rest of the village; and even the children knew what report the men had brought in, and what *they* thought of the weather. Everybody had a good word to say about it, Miss Faith; and everybody—I do believe!" said the Squire reverently, "had been on their knees to pray for it. Jonathan Ling's wife said that was all they could ever do for him." Which pronoun, be it understood, did not refer to Jonathan Ling.

"They're Mr. Linden's roses, Miss Faith," said little Linda, who stood waiting for more marked admiration,—"do you like them? He always did."

Faith kissed the child, partly to thank her and to stop her lips, partly to hide her own which she felt were tale-telling.

"Where did you get the roses, Linda?"

"O off the bush in the garden. But Mr. Linden always picked one whenever he came, and sometimes he'd stop on his way to school, and just open the gate and get one of these white roses and then go away again. So we called it Mr. Linden's bush." Faith endeavoured to attend to her raspberries after this. When tea was over she was carried off into the drawing-room and the children were kept out.

"If you want me away too, Faith," Mrs. Stoutenburgh said as she arranged the lamp and the curtains, "I'll go."

"I don't want you to go, ma'am."—And then covering her trepidation under the simplest of grave exteriors, Faith spoke to the point. "It is mother's business. Squire Deacon has come home, Mr.

Stoutenburgh."

"My dear," said the Squire, "I know he has. I heard it just before you came in. But he's married, Miss Faith."

"That don't content him," said Faith, "for he wants our farm."

"Rascal!" said Mr. Stoutenburgh in an emphatic under tone,—"the old claim, I suppose. What's the state of it now, my dear?"

"Nothing new, sir; he has a right to it, I suppose. The mortgage is owing, and we haven't been able to pay anything but the interest, and that must be a small rent for the farm." Faith paused. Mrs. Stoutenburgh was silent; looking from one to the other anxiously,—the Squire himself was not very intelligible.

"Yes"—he said,—"of course. Your poor father only lived to make the second payment. I don't know why I call him poor—he's rich enough now. But Sam Deacon!—a small rent? too much for him to get,—and too little.—Why my dear!" he said suddenly sitting up straight and facing round upon Faith, "I thought—What does your mother expect to do, Miss Faith?—has she seen Sam? What does he say?"

"He came to see her this afternoon, sir—he is bent upon having the place, mother says. And she don't like to leave the old house," Faith said slowly. "He will take the farm, I suppose,—but mother thought, perhaps, sir—if you would speak to Mr. Deacon, he would let us stay in the house—only the house without anything else—for another year. Mother wished it—I don't know that your speaking to him could do any good." Faith went straight through, but the rosy colour sprung and grew till its crimson reached her forehead. Not the less she went clearly through with what she had to say, her eyes only at the last words drooping. Mr. Stoutenburgh rose up with great energy and stood before her.

"My dear," he said, "he shall do it! If it was any other man I'd promise to make him do more, but Sam always must have some way of amusing himself, and I'm afraid I can't make this as expensive as the last one he tried. You tell your mother, Miss Faith, that she shall stay in her house till she'd rather go to yours. I hope that won't be more than a year, but if it is she shall stay."

"That's good, Mr. Stoutenburgh!" said his wife with a little clap of her hands.

Whether Faith thought it was 'good' might be a question; her eyes fell further, she did not offer to thank Mr. Stoutenburgh for his energetic kindness, nor to say anything. Yet Faith had seemingly more to say, for she made no motion to go. She sat quite still a few minutes, till raising her eyes fully to Mr. Stoutenburgh's face she said gravely, "Mother will feel very glad when I tell her that, sir."

"She may make herself easy But tell her, my dear," said the Squire, again forgetting in his earnestness what ground he was on,—"tell her she's on no account to tell Sam *why* she wants to stay. Will you recollect that, Miss Faith?"

Faith's eyes opened slightly. "I think he must know—or guess it, Mr. Stoutenburgh? Mother says she could hardly bear to live in any other house in Pattaquasset."

"My dear Miss Faith!" said Mr. Stoutenburgh,—"I mean!—why she don't want to stay any longer. *That's* what Sam mustn't know. I'm very stupid about my words, always."

Faith was again obliged to wait a few minutes before she could go on. Mrs. Stoutenburgh was the first to speak, for the Squire walked up and down, no doubt (mentally) attacking Mr. Deacon.

"I'm so glad!" she said, with the old dance of her eyes—and yet a little sigh too. "So glad and so happy, that I could cry,—I know I shall when the time comes. Dear Faith, do you feel quite easy about this other business now?"

"What, ma'am?—about Mr. Deacon?"

"Why yes!" said Mrs. Stoutenburgh laughing,—"isn't that the only one you've been uneasy about?"

"I am not uneasy now," said Faith. "But Mr. Stoutenburgh—if Mr. Deacon takes the farm back again, whom does the hay belong to, and the cattle, and the tools and farm things?"

"All that's *on the land*—all that's growing on it, goes with it. All that's under cover and moveable belongs to you."

"Then the hay in the barn is ours?"

"Everything in the barn."

"There's a good deal in the barn," said Faith with a brightening face. "You know the season has been early, sir, and our hay-fields lie well to the sun; and a great deal of the hay is in. Mr. Deacon will want some rent for the house I suppose,—and I guess there will be hay enough to pay it, whatever it is. For I can't sell my cows!—" she added laughing a little.

Her two friends—the Squire on the floor and his wife on the sofa—looked at her and then at each other.

"My dear," the Squire began, "I want to ask you a question. And before I do, let me tell you—which perhaps you don't know—just what right I"—

"Oh Mr. Stoutenburgh!" cried his wife, "do please hush!—you'll say something dreadful."

"Not a bit of it—" said the Squire,—"I know what to say this time, my dear, and when to stop. I wanted to tell you, Miss Faith, that I am your regularly appointed guardian—therefore if I ask questions you will understand why." But what more on that subject the Squire might have said, and said not, was left to conjecture. Faith looked at him, wondering, colouring, doubting.

"I never heard of it before, sir," she said.

"You shouldn't say *regularly*, Mr. Stoutenburgh," said his wife,—"Faith will think she is to be under your control."

"I shouldn't say *legally*," said the Squire, "and I didn't. No she aint under my control. I only mean, Miss Faith," he said turning to her, "that I am appointed to look after your interests, till somebody who is better qualified comes to do it."

"There—Mr. Stoutenburgh,—don't go any further," said his wife.

"Not in that direction," said the Squire. "Now my dear, if Sam Deacon will amuse himself in this way, as I said, what will you do? Do the farm and the house about counterbalance each other most years?"

Faith never knew how she separated the two parts of her nature enough at this moment to be practical, but she answered. "We have been able to pay the interest on the mortgage, sir, every year. That's all. Mother has not laid up anything."

The Squire took a turn or two up and down the room, then came and stood before her again. "My dear," he said, "you can't tell just yet what your plans will be, so I won't ask you to-night, but you had better let me deal with Sam Deacon, and the new tenant, and the hay, and everything else. And you may draw upon me for something more solid, to any amount you please."

"Something more solid than yourself!—O Mr. Stoutenburgh!" his wife said, though her eyes were bright with more than one feeling.

Faith was silent a minute, and then gave Mr. Stoutenburgh a full view of those steady eyes that some people liked and some did not care *just so* to meet.

"No, sir!—" she said with a smile and also a little wistful look of the gratitude she did not speak,—"if the hay will pay the rent, I don't want anything else. Mother and I can do very well. We will be very much obliged to you to manage Mr. Deacon for us—and the hay. I think I can manage the rest. I shall keep the cows and make butter,"—she said with a laughing flash of the eye.

"O delicious!" cried Mrs. Stoutenburgh, "(I mean the butter, Faith)—but will you let me have it?"

"You don't want it," said Faith.

"I do!—nobody makes such butter—I should eat my breakfast with a new appetite, and so would Sam. We never can get butter enough when he's in the house. I'll send down for it three times a week—how often do you churn, Faith?"

Faith came close up to her and kissed her as she whispered laughingly, "Every day!"

"Then I'll send every day!" said Mrs. Stoutenburgh clapping her hands. "And then I shall hear of you once in a while.—Ungrateful child, you haven't been here before since—I suppose it won't do to say when," she added, kissing Faith on both cheeks. "I shall tell Mr. Linden it is not benevolent to pet you so much."

"But my dear—my dear—" said the Squire from one to the other. "Well, well,—I'll talk to you another time, Miss Faith,—I can't keep up with more than one lady at once. You and Mrs. Stoutenburgh have gone on clean ahead of me."

"What's the matter, Mr. Stoutenburgh?" said Faith. "I would like to hear it now, for there is something I want settled."

"What's that?" said the Squire.

"Will you please go on, sir?"

"I guess I'll hear you first," said the Squire. "You seem to know just what you want to say, Miss Faith, and I'm not sure that I do."

"You said we had gone on ahead of you, sir. Shall we go back now?"

"Why my dear," said the Squire smiling, "I thought you two were settling up accounts and arrangements rather fast, that's all. If they are the beginning and end, *that's* very well; but if they're only premonitory symptoms, that again's different."

"And not 'very well'?" said Faith, waiting.

"Not very," said Mr. Stoutenburgh shaking his head.

"How should it be better, sir?"

"My dear, in general, what is needless can be spared."

"I don't know what I am going to do, Mr. Stoutenburgh. I am going to do nothing needless, not wilfully needless. But I am going to do it *without help*." She stood before him, with perfect gentleness but with as clear determination in both look and manner, making her meaning known. Mrs. Stoutenburgh laughed, the Squire stood looking at her in a smiling perplexity. Finally went straight to the point.

"Miss Faith, it is doubly needless that you should do anything more than you've been doing—everybody knows that's enough. In the first place, my dear, you are your father's child—and that's all that need be said, till my purse has a hole at both ends. In the next place—shall I tell her what she is in the next place, Mrs. Stoutenburgh?"

"I fancy she knows," said his wife demurely.

"Well," said the Squire, "the next place is the first place, after all, and I haven't the right to do much but take care of her. But my dear, I have it under hand and seal to take better care than that."

"Than what, sir?"—said Faith with very deep colour, but unchanged bearing.

"I don't know yet," said Mr. Stoutenburgh, "any more than you know what you are going to do. Than to let you do anything that would grieve your dear friend and mine. If I could shew you the letter you'd understand, Miss Faith, but I'm not good at repeating. 'To take care of you as lie would'—that was part of it. And because I can't half carry out such instructions, is no sign I shouldn't do it a quarter." And the Squire stood as firm on his ground as Faith on hers.

No, not quite; for in her absolute gentleness there was a power of intent expressed, which rougher outlines could but give with less emphasis. The blood spoke for her eloquently before Faith could find any sort of words to speak for herself, brought now by more feelings than one; yet still she stood before the Squire, drooping her head a little, a soft statue of immoveability. Only once, just before she spoke, both Faith's hands went up to her brow to push the hair back; a most unusual gesture of agitation. But her look and her words were after the same steady fashion as before, aggravated by a little wicked smile, and Faith's voice sounded for sweetness like silver bells.

"You can't do it, Mr. Stoutenburgh!—not that way. Take care of me every other way;—but I'll not have—of that sort—a bit of help."—

The Squire looked at her with a mixture of amusement and perplexity.

"Pin to follow suit—" he said,—"but then I don't just know what Mr.
Linden would do in such a case! Can you tell me, Miss Faith?"

"It is no matter—it would not make any difference."

"What would not?" said the Squire innocently.

"Anything that he could do, sir;—so you have no chance." She coloured gloriously, but she smiled at him too with her last words.

"Well, Miss Faith," said Mr. Stoutenburgh, "I have my doubts as to the correctness of that first statement; but I'll tell you what *I* shall do, my refractory young lady. If you set about anything outside the limits, I'll do my best to thwart you,—there!"

If Faith was not a match for him, there was no meaning in the laugh of her dark eye. But she only bade Mrs. Stoutenburgh an affectionate good night, took her bunch of white roses and Mr. Stoutenburgh's arm and set out to go home.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

Faith put her roses in water and listened half a minute to their strange silent messages. But after that she did a great deal of thinking. If all went well, and Mr. Linden got home safe from abroad,—and *this* year were all she had to take care for, it was a very little matter to keep the year afloat, and very little matter, in her estimation, whatever she might have to do for the purpose. But those "ifs" no mortal could answer for. Faith did not look much at that truth, but she acted upon it; prayed over her thoughts and brought her plans into shape in very humble consciousness of it. And at the early breakfast the next morning she began to unfold them; which as Mrs. Derrick did not like them, led on to a long talk; but Faith as usual had her way.

After some preliminary arrangements, and late in the day, she set off upon a long walk to Miss Bezac's. The slant beams of the summer sun were again upon the trim little house as Faith came up towards it. Things were changed since she was there before! changed a good deal from the gay, joyous playtime of that visit. Mr. Linden in Europe, and she—"It is very well," thought Faith; "it might not have been good for me to have too much of such a time. Next year"—

Would if it brought joy, bring also an entering upon real life-work. Faith knew it; she had realized long before with a thought of pain, that this summons to Europe had perhaps cut short her last time of absolute holiday pleasure. Mr. Linden could hardly now be more than a few days in Pattaquasset before "next year" should come—and Faith did not stop to look at that; she never thought of it three minutes together. But life-work looked to her lovely;—what did not? Even the little pathway to Miss Bezac's door was pleasant. She was secretly glad of that other visit now, which had made this one so easy; though yet a sympathetic blush started as she went in.

"Why Faith!" said Miss Bezac,—"you're the *very* person I was thinking of, and the very one I wanted to see! though I always do want to see you, for that matter, and don't often get what I want. Then I don't generally want much. But what a beautiful visit we had last time! Do you know I've been conjuring ever since how your dress should be made? What'll it be, to begin with?—I always do like to begin with that—and it's bothered me a good deal—not knowing it, I mean. I couldn't arrange so well about the making. Because making white satin's one thing, and muslin's another,—and lace is different from 'em both—and indeed from most other things except spider's webs." All which pleasant and composing sentiments were uttered while Miss Bezac was clearing a chair for Faith, and putting her in it, and laying her various pieces of work together.

"I shouldn't be the least bit of help to you," said Faith who couldn't help laughing. "Can't it wait?"

"Why it'll have to," said Miss Bezac; "he said it must,—but that's no reason I should. I always like a reason for everything. It took me an age and a quarter to find out why Miss Essie De Staff always will wear aprons. She wears 'em out, too, in more ways than one, but that's good for me. Only there's so many ways of making them that I get in a puzzle. Now this one, Faith—would you work it with red flowers or green?—I said black, but she will have colours. You've got a good colour to-day—O don't you want some bread and milk?" said Miss Bezac, dropping the apron.

"No, thank you!" said Faith laughing again,—"not to-day. I should work that with green, Miss Bezac."

"But I'm afraid green won't do, with black above and black below," said Miss Bezac. "Two sides to things you know, Faith,—aprons and all the rest. I'd a great mind to work it with both, and then she couldn't say she'd rather have had 'tother. What things I *have* worked in my day!—but my day's twilight now, and my eyes find it out."

"Do you have more to do than you can manage, generally?" said Faith.

"Why no, child, because I never take any more,—that's the way not to have things—troubles or aprons. I could have my hands full of both, but what's the use?—when one hasn't eyes—for sewing or crying. Mrs. Stoutenburgh comes, and Mrs. Somers, and Miss Essie—and the landlord, and sometimes I let 'em leave me a job, and sometimes I don't,—send 'em, dresses, and all, off to Quilipeak."

"Then I'll tell you what you shall give me to-day—instead of bread and milk;—some of the work that you would send off. Don't you remember," said Faith, smiling quietly at Miss Bezac's eyes,—"you once promised to teach me to embroider waistcoats?"

"Why yes!" said Miss Bezac—"and so I will. But, my dear, are you sure he would wear it?—and after all, isn't it likely he'll get everything of that sort he wants, in Paris? And then the size!—who's to tell what that should be? To be sure you could do the fronts, and have them made up afterwards—and of course he *would* wear anything you made.—I'll go right off and get my patterns."

Faith's confusion was startled. It was Miss Bezac's turn to look at her. She caught hold of the seamstress and brought her back to listening at least.

"Stop!—Miss Bezac!—you don't understand me. I want work!—I want work. I am not talking of making anything for anybody!—" Faith's eyes were truthful now, if ever they were.

"Well then—how can you work, if you won't make anything for anybody? Want work, Faith?—you don't mean to say all that story about Sarn Deacon's *true?* Do you know," said Miss Bezac, dropping into a chair and folding her hands, "when I heard that man had gone out of town, I said to myself, it would be a mercy if he never came back!"—which was the severest censure Miss Bezac ever passed upon anybody. "I really did," she went on,—"and now he's come, and I s'pose I've got to say *that*'s a mercy too—and this,—though I wouldn't believe it last night."

"Then you have heard it?"

"My ears did, and they're pretty good ears too,—though I do get out of patience with them now and then."

"It's true," said Faith, "and it's nothing very dreadful. Mother and I have nothing to live upon but what I can make by butter; so I thought I would learn and take work of you, if you had it for me. I could soon understand it; and then you can let people bring you as much as they will—what you cannot do, I will do. I could think of nothing so pleasant;—no way to make money, I mean."

For a minute Miss Bezac sat quite still,—then she roused up.

"Nothing to live upon but butter!"—she said,—"well that's not much,—at least if there's ever so much of it you want something else. And what you want you must have—if you can get it. And I can get you plenty of work—and it's a good thing to understand this sort of work too, for he might carry you off to some random place where they wear calico just as they can put it on—and that wouldn't suit you, nor him neither. I don't believe *this*'ll suit him though—and it don't me, not a bit. I'm as proud as a Lucifer match for anybody I love. But I'll make you proud of your work in no time. What'll you do first? embroider or stitch or cut out or baste or fit?"

"What you please—what you think best. But Miss Bezac, what are you 'proud' about?"

"O I've my ways and means, like other folks," said Miss Bezac. "And you can do something more striking than aprons for people that don't need 'em. But I'm not going to give you *this* apron, Faith—I sha'n't have her wearing your work all round town, and none the wiser. See—this is nice and light and pretty—like the baby it's for,—you like green, don't you? and so will your eyes."

"I'd as lieve have Miss Essie wear my work as eat my butter," said Faith. "But," she added more gravely,—"I think that what God gives me to do, I ought to be proud to do,—and I am sure I am willing. He knows best."

"Yes, yes, my dear—I believe that,—and so I do most things you say," answered Miss Bezac, bringing forth from the closet a little roll of green calico. "Now do you like this?—because if you don't, say so."

"I'll take this," said Faith, "and the next time I'll take the apron. I must do just as much as I can, Miss Bezac; and you must let me. Would you rather have the apron done first? I want Miss Essie's apron, Miss Bezac!"

"Well you can't have it," said Miss Bezac,—"and what you can't, you can't—all the world over. Begin slow and go on fast—that's the best way. And I'll take the best care of you!—lay you up in lavender,—like my work when it's done and isn't gone home."

So laughingly they parted, and Faith went home with her little bundle of work, well contented.

A very few days had seen the household retrenchments made. Cindy was gone, and Mr. Skip was only waiting for a "boy" to come. Mother and daughter drew their various tools and conveniences into one room and the kitchen, down stairs, to have the less to take care of; abandoning the old eating-room except as a passage-way to the kitchen; and taking their meals, for greater convenience, in the latter apartment.

Faith did not shut up her books without some great twinges of pain; but she said not one word on the matter. She bestowed on her stitching and on her housework and on her butter the diligent zeal which used to go into French rules and philosophy. But Mrs. Stoutenburgh had reckoned without her host, for there was a great deal more of the butter than she could possibly dispose of; and Judge Harrison's family and Miss De Staff's became joint consumers and paid the highest price for it, that Faith would take. But this is running ahead of the story.

Some days after Faith's appeal to Mr. Stoutenburgh had passed, before the Squire presented himself to report progress. He found both the ladies at work in the sitting-room, looking very much as usual, except that there was a certain not inelegant disposition of various pieces of muslin and silk and ribbon about the room which carried the appearance of business.

"What rent will Mr. Deacon have, Mr. Stoutenburgh?" said Faith looking up from her needle.

"My dear, he'll have what he can get," said the Squire, "but what *that*'ll be, Miss Faith, he and I haven't just made up our minds."

"How much ought it to be, sir, do you think?"

"Nothing at all," said the Squire,—"not a cent."

"Do you think not, sir?" said Faith doubtfully.

"Not a cent!" the Squire repeated,—"and I told him so, and said he might throw the barn into the bargain and not hurt himself."

"Will he agree to that, Mr. Stoutenburgh?—I mean about the house. We can pay for it."

"My dear, I hope to make him agree to that, and more too. So just let the hay stand, and the house, and the barn, and everything else for the present. I'll tell you time enough—if quarter day must come. And by the way, talking of quarters, there's one of a lamb we killed yesterday,—I told Tim to leave it in the kitchen. How does your ice hold out?"

"Do you want some, sir?" said Faith, in whose eyes there shone a soft light the Squire could be at no loss to read.

"No my dear, I don't—though Mrs. Stoutenburgh does tell me sometimes to keep cool. But I thought maybe *you* did. Do you know, Miss Essie De Staff never sees me now if she can help it—what do you suppose is the reason?"

"I don't think there can be any, sir."

"Must be!" said the Squire,—"always is a reason for every fact. You know what friends we used to be,—it was always, 'Hush, Mr. Stoutenburgh!' or, 'How do you know anything about it?' Ah, he's a splendid fellow!—My dear, I don't wish to ask any impertinent questions, but when you do hear that he's safe across, just let me know—will you?" And the Squire bowed himself off without waiting for an answer.

CHAPTER XXXV.

Faith found that sewing and housework and butter-making took not only her hands but her minutes, and on these little minute wheels the days glided off very fast. She had plenty of fresh air, withal, for Mrs. Stoutenburgh would coax her into a horseback ride, or the Squire take her off in his little wagon; or Mrs. Derrick and Jerry go with her down to the shore for clams and salt water. The sea breeze was more company than usual, this summer.

By the time August days came, there came also a letter from Europe; and thereafter the despatches were as regular and as frequent as the steamers. But they brought no special news as to the point of coming home. Mrs. Iredell lingered on in the same uncertain state, neither worse nor better,—there

was no news to send. Everything else the letters had; and though Faith might miss that, she could not complain.

So the summer days slipped away peacefully; and when the mother and daughter sat sewing together in the afternoon, (for Mrs. Derrick often took some little skirt or sleeve) nobody would have guessed why the needles were at work.

There was one remarkable thing about the boy Reuben had found to supply Mr. Skip's place—he was never visible. Nor audible either, for that matter, except that Faith at her own early rising often heard the wood-saw industriously in motion. He was not to sleep in the house for the first month,—that had been agreed; but whether he slept anywhere seemed a matter of doubt. A doubt Faith resolved to set at rest; and one August morning, while the birds were a-twitter yet with their first getting up and the sun had not neared the horizon, Faith crossed the yard to the woodshed and stood in the open doorway,—the morning light shewing the soft outlines of her figure in a dark print dress, and her white ruffles, and gleaming on her faultlessly soft and bright hair.

The woodshed was in twilight yet; its various contents shewing dimly, the phoebe who had built her nest under the low roof just astir, but the wood work was going on briskly. Not indeed under the saw—that lay idle; but with the sort of noiseless celerity which was natural to him, Reuben Taylor was piling the sticks of this or yesterday's cutting: the slight chafing of the wood as it fell into place chiming with the low notes of a hymn tune which Faith well remembered to have heard Mr. Linden sing. She did not stir, but softly, as she stood there, her voice joined in.

For a minute Reuben did not hear her,—then in some pause of arrangement he heard, and turned round with a start and flush that for degree might have suited one who was stealing wood instead of piling it. But he did not speak—nor even thought to say good morning; only pushed the hair back from his forehead and waited to receive sentence.

"Reuben!"—said Faith, stepping in the doorway. And she said not another word; but in her eyes and her lips, even in her very attitude as she stood before him, Reuben Taylor might read it all!—her knowledge for whose love he was doing that work, her powerlessness of any present means of thanks, and the existence of a joint treasury of returned affection that would make itself known to him some day, if ever the chance were. The morning sun gleamed in through the doorway on her face, and Reuben could see it all there. He had raised his eyes at the first sound of her voice, but they fell again, and his only answer was a very low spoken "Good morning, Miss Faith."

Faith sat down on a pile of cut sticks and looked up at him.

"Reuben—what are you about?"

"Putting these sticks out of the way, Miss Faith"—with a half laugh then.

"I shall tell Mr. Linden of you," (gravely.)

"I didn't mean you should have a chance, Miss Faith."

"Now you are caught and found—do you know what your punishment will be?"

Reuben looked up again, but did not venture to guess.

"You will be obliged to come in and take a cup of coffee with me every morning."

"O that's not necessary!" Reuben said with a relieved face,—"thank you very much, Miss Faith."

"It is necessary," said Faith gravely;—"and you are not to thank me for what you don't like."

"It was partly for what I do like, ma'am," said Reuben softly pitching up a stick of hickory.

"It's so pleasant to have you do this, Reuben," said Faith, watching him, "that I can't tell you how pleasant it is; but you must drink my coffee, Reuben, or—I will not burn your wood! You know what Mr. Linden would make you do, Reuben." Faith's voice lowered a little. Reuben did not dispute the commands so urged, though a quick glance said that her wish was enough.

"But dear Reuben, who's coming when you're gone?"

"Would you like Dromy Tuck, Miss Faith?—but I don't know that you ever saw him. He's strong, and honest—he's not very bright. I'll find somebody." And so the matter ended.

August went on,—Reuben sawed his last stick of wood and eat his last breakfast at Mrs. Derrick's, and then set forth for Quilipeak, to begin his new life there. The little settlement at Quapaw was not

alone in feeling his loss,—Mrs. Derrick and Faith missed him every day. One of Reuben's last doings in Pattaquasset, was the giving Dromy Tuck in charge to Phil Davids.

"Look after him a little, Phil," he said, "and see that he don't go to sleep too much daytimes. He means to go straight, but he wants help about it; and I don't want Mrs. Derrick to be bothered with him." Which request, enforced as it was by private considerations, favoured Dromy with as strict a censorship as he desired.

From Germany news came at last,—but it was of the sort that one can bear to wait for. Mrs. Iredell was not able to be moved nor certain to get well. Mr. Linden could neither come with his sister nor from her. And thus, hindered from getting home to his Seminary duties in America, there was but one thing he could do—finish his course in a German University. But that ensured his being in Europe the whole year! No question now of fall or winter or spring,—summer was the first time that could be even thought of; and in this fair September, when Faith had been thinking of the possibility of his sudden appearance, he was beginning his work anew in a foreign land.

It came heavily at first upon her. Faith had not known how much she counted on that hope or possibility. But now when it was gone she found she had lost a large piece of her sunlight. She had read her letter alone as usual, and alone she struggled with her sorrow. It cost Faith for once a great many tears. Prayer was always her refuge. But at last after the tears and the signs of them were gone, Faith went into her mother's company again, looking wistful and as gentle and quiet.

Perhaps it was well for Faith that her mother knew what this quiet meant—it saved her countless little remarks of wonder and comment and sorrow. More devoted to her Mrs. Derrick could not be, but she had her own strong box of feeling, and there locked up all her sorrow and anxiety out of sight. Yet it was some time before the little sitting-room, with its scattered bits of work, could look bright again.

"And I sha'n't see him again till——." It gave Faith a great pang. That "next year" she never looked at much. She would have liked a little more of those innocent play days which had been so unexpectedly broken off. "Next year" looked serious, as well as glad. "But it is good for me," she said to herself. "It must be good for me, to be reminded to live on what cannot fail. I suppose I was getting to be too very happy."—And after a few such talks with herself Faith went straight on, for all that appeared, as peacefully as ever, and as cheerfully.

It was not long after this, that passing Mr. Simlins' gate one afternoon, as she was coming home from a walk, Faith was hailed by the farmer. She could not but stop to speak to him, and then she could not prevent his carrying her off into the house.

"'Twont hurt you to rest a minute—and 'twont hurt *me*," said he. "Why I haint seen you since——How long do you s'pose folks can live and not see moonshine? Now you pull off your bonnet, and I'll tell Mrs. Hummins to give us something good for tea."

"What would mother do for hers, Mr. Simlins?" said Faith resisting this invitation.

"Well you can sit down anyhow, and read to me," said Mr. Simlins, who had already taken a seat himself in preparation for it. "People can't get along without light from one phenomenon or the other, you know, Faith."

She took off her bonnet, and brought the Bible. "What do you want, Mr. Simlins?" her sweet voice said meaningly.

"Fact is," said the farmer rather sorrowfully, "I s'pose I want about everything! I don't feel to know much more'n a baby—and there aint more'n three grains of corn to the bushel in our minister's preachin'. I go to meetin' and come home with my head a little more like a bell than 'twas; for there's nothing more in it but a ringin' of the words I've heerd. Do you mind, Faith, when somebody—I don't know whether you or I like him best—wanted me to try a new kind of farming?—you mind it? I guess you do. It never went out o' *my* head again, till I set out to try;—and now I find I don't know nothin' at all how to work it!"

"What is the trouble, dear Mr. Simlins?" said Faith looking up.

The farmer hesitated, then said low and huskily, "I don't know what to do about joinin' the church."

"The Bible says, 'If a man love God, the same is known of him,'"—Faith answered softly.

"Well, but can't it be known of him without that? Fact is, Faith, I'm afeard!"—and a rough hand was drawn across the farmer's eyes—"I'm afeard, if I do, I'll do something I hadn't ought to do, and so only just dishonour the profession—and I'd better not have anything to do with it!"

Faith turned back the leaves of the Bible.

"Listen to what God said to Joshua, Mr. Simlins, when he was going to lead the people of Israel over into a land full of enemies.—

'Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed.'"

"It's easy to say 'be strong'," said the farmer after pausing a minute,—"but how are you going to contrive it?"

Faith read from the Psalms; and her words fell sweeter every one. "'In the day when I cried thou answeredst me, and strengthenedst me with strength in my soul.' That is what David says, Mr. Simlins; and this is Isaiah's testimony.—'They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.'"

"Go ahead, Faith!"—said the farmer, who was sitting with his head down in his hands. "You aint leavin' me much of a corner to hide in. Turn down a leaf at them places."

Faith was still again, turning over leaves.

"Paul was in trouble once, Mr. Simlins, and prayed earnestly about something; and this is what he says of the Lord's answer to him.—'And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.'—'When I am weak, then am I strong.'—And in another place—'I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.'"

"But he wa'n't much like me," said Mr. Simlins "he was an apostle and had inspiration. I hain't none."

"He was a man, though," said Faith, "and a weak one, as you see he calls himself. And he prays for the Christians at Ephesus, that God would grant them 'to be strengthened with might by his Spirit;' and they were common people. And the Bible says 'Be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might;'—we aren't bid to be strong in ourselves; but here again, 'Strengthened with might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness.' Won't that do?" said Faith softly.

"Have you put marks in all them places?" said the farmer.

"I will."

"If that don't do, I s'pose nothing will," said Mr. Simlins. "They're mighty words! And they've stopped *my* mouth."

Faith was silently marking the places. The farmer sat looking at her.

"You do know the Scripturs—I can say that for you!" he remarked.

"No, Mr. Simlins!—" said Faith looking up suddenly, "I don't know this string of passages of myself. Mr. Linden shewed them to me," she said more softly and blushing. She went on with what she was about.

"Well don't he say you like to speak truth rayther than anything else?" said the farmer. "If he don't, I wouldn't give much for his discretion. When's he going to have leave to take you away, Faith?" It was half sorrowfully spoken, and though Faith rose up and blushed, she did not answer him quickly.

"My business must take me away now, sir;—good night."

But Mr. Simlins shouted to Jem Waters, had the wagon up, put Faith in with infinite care and tenderness, and sent her home so.

One rainy, stormy, wild equinoctial day in the end of September—not long after that letter had come, Squire Stoutenburgh came to the door. Faith heard him parleying with her mother for a minute—heard him go off, and then Mrs. Derrick entered the sitting-room, with her eyes full of tears and her heart, at least, full of a little package,—it did not quite fill her hands.

"Pretty child!" she said, "I'm so thankful!"—and she went straight off to the kitchen, and the little package lay in Faith's lap. The thick brown paper and wax and twine said it had come a long way. The rest the address told. It was a little square box, the opening of which revealed at first only soft cotton; except, in one corner, there was an indication of Faith's infallible blue ribband. Fastened to that, was a gold locket. Quite plain, alike on both sides, the tiny hinge at one edge spoke of a corresponding spring.

That touched, Faith found Mr. Linden. Admirably well done and like, even to the expression, which had probably struck the artist's fancy; for he had contrived to represent well both the pleasure and the pain Mr. Linden had felt in sitting for this picture, for such a reason. The dress was that of the German students—such as he was then wearing.

Faith had never guessed—till her wondering fingers had persuaded the locket to open—she had never guessed what she should find there; at the utmost she looked to find a lock of hair; and the joy was almost as overwhelming as a little while ago pain had been. Faith could hardly see the picture for a long time; she called herself foolish, but she cried and laughed the harder for joy; she reproached herself for past ungratefulness and motions of discontent, which made her not deserve this treasure; and the joy and the tears were but enhanced that way. Faith could hardly believe her eyes, when they were clear enough to see; it seemed,—what they looked at,—too good to be true; too precious to be hers. But at last she was fain to believe it; and with blushes that nobody saw, and a tiny smile that it was a pity somebody *didn't* see, she put the blue ribband round her neck and hid the locket where she knew it was expected to find its place. But Faith forgot her work, and her mother found her sitting there doing nothing, looking with dreamy happy thoughtfulness into distance, or into herself; all Miss Bezac's silks and stuffs neglected around her.

And work, diligent, happy, contented, continued, was the order of the day, and of many days and weeks after. Miss Bezac giving out that she would take as much work as was offered her, she and Faith soon had both their hands completely full. The taste and skill of the little dressmaker were so well acknowledged that even from Pequot there was now many an application for her services; and many a lady from there and from Pattaquasset, came driven in a wagon or a sleigh to Miss Bezac's cottage door.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

It was the month

> "When beechen buds begin to swell,
> And woods the blue bird's warble know,"—

the month of the unbending of Nature—of softening skies and swelling streams and much underground spring work. As for instance, by the daffodils; which by some unknown machinery pushed their soft, pliant leaves up through frozen clods into the sunshine. Blue birds fluttered their wings and trilled their voices through the air, song sparrows sang from morning to night, and waxwings whistled for cherries in the bare tree tops. There the wind whistled too, "whiles," with the fall approbation of snow birds and chickadees,—the three going out of fashion together.

It was a busy month at Miss Bezac's—two weddings at Pequot and one in Pattaquasset kept her hands full,—and Faith's too. Just now the great point of interest was the outfit of Miss Maria Davids—the wedding dress, especially, being of the most complicate and ornamented description. Miss Bezac and Faith needed their heads as well as their hands, Miss Maria's directions with regard to flowers and furbelows being somewhat like the Vicar of Wakefield's in respect of sheep—only Miss Maria was willing to pay for all that went on, whereas the Vicar wanted the sheep for nothing.

Thus they stood, the two friends and co-workers, with the dress spread out on a table, contriving where the flowers should go and how many it would be possible to put on. Miss Maria's box of Pequot flowers on a chair near by, was as full as her directions.

"It would be better to take the box and turn it right over her after she's dressed, and let 'em stick where they would!" said Miss Bezac in some disgust. Whereupon, dropping her grave look of thought, Faith's laugh broke up the monotony of the occasion.

"Well *that's* good any way," said Miss Bezac. "And I'm sure everything's 'any way' about this dress. But I won't have you about it a bit longer,—you're tired to death standing up."

"I'm not much tired. Miss Bezac, let the lilacs have the bottom of the dress, and the roses and lilies of the valley trim the body.—And it will be like a spotted flower-garden then!" said Faith laughing anew.

How little like her occupation she looked,—with her brown stuff dress, to be sure, as plain as possible; her soft brown hair also plain; her quaint little white ruffles; and that brilliant diamond ring flashing wherever her hand went! N.B. A plain dress on a pretty person has not the effect of plainness, since it lets that better be seen which is the highest beauty.

Up Miss Bezac's mountain road came a green coach drawn by two fat grey horses; the coachman in front and the footman behind being in the same state of plethoric comfort. They addressed themselves to the hill with no hasty approbation yet with much mind to have their own way, and the hill yielded the ground step by step. At Miss Bezac's door hill and horses made a pause.

"Coaches already!" said Miss Bezac,—"that's a sign of summer, as good as wild geese. And you'd think, Faith, not having had much experience, that it was the sign of another wedding dress—but nothing worse than a calico wrapper ever comes out of a coach like that."

"Why?"—said Faith looking amused.

"The people that drive such coaches drive 'em to town for a wedding dress," said Miss Bezac sagely. "There's a blue bird getting out of this one, to begin with."

While she spoke, a tiny foot emerged from the coach, and after it a dress of blue silk, which so far from "standing alone" followed softly every motion of the wearer. A simply plain shirred spring bonnet of blue and white silk, made the blue bird comparison not altogether unapt,—the bird was hardly more fair and dainty in his way than the lady in hers. She stood still for a minute, shading her eyes with her hand, and looking off down the road; a slight, delicate figure, with that sort of airy grace which has a natural poise for every position,—then she turned abruptly and knocked at the door.

Now it was Miss Bezac's custom to let applicants open and shut for themselves, her hands being often at a critical point of work; so in this case, with a refractory flower half adjusted—while Faith was in the intricacies of a knot of ribband, she merely cried, "Come in!" And the young lady came—so far as across the threshold,—there she stopped. A quick, sudden stop,—one little ungloved hand that looked as if it had never touched anything harsher than satin, clasped close upon its gloved companion; the shawl falling from her shoulders and shewing the bunch of crocuses in her belt; the fair, sweet, high bred face—sparkling, withal flushing like a June rose. For a minute she stood, her bright eyes seeing the room, the work, and Miss Bezac, but resting on Faith with a sort of intenseness of look that went from face to hand. Then her own eyes fell, and with a courteous inclination of her head, she came for ward and spoke.

"I was told," she said, advancing slowly to the table, and still with downcast eyes,—"I was told that—I mean—Can you make a sunbonnet for me, Miss Bezac?" She looked up then, but only at the little dressmaker, laying one hand on the table as if to support herself, and with a face grave enough to suit a nun's veil instead of a sunbonnet.

Faith's eyes were held on this delicate little figure with a sort of charm; she was very unlike the Pattaquasset models. At the antipodes from Miss Essie De Staff—etherial compared to the more solid proprieties of Sophy Harrison,—Faith recognized in her the type of another class of creatures. She drew back a little from the table, partly to leave the field clear to Miss Bezac, partly to please herself with a better view.

"A sunbonnet?" Miss Bezac repeated,—"I should be sorry if I couldn't, and badly off too. But I'm afraid you'll be, for a pattern,—all I've got are as common as grass. Not that I wish grass was uncommon, either—but what's the stuff?"

"When I came out this morning," said the lady, glancing at Faith and then down again, "I did not expect to come here. And—I have brought no stuff. Can you send some one down to the village?—this young lady, perhaps.—May I take her with me now?"

"Why of course you may!" said Miss Bezac delightedly.—"Just as much as if I was glad to get rid of her—which I aint,—and am too,—for she's tired to death, and I was just wishing somebody that wasn't would take her home. Or some horses."

There was a sweet amused play of the lips in answer to this lucid statement of facts, and then turning towards Faith, the stranger said, "Will you go?"—the words were in the lowest of sweet tones.

"Where do you wish me to go?" said Faith, coming a step forward.

"With me—down into the village."

"I will go," said Faith. "Then I will take these two mantillas, Miss Bezac,—and you shall have them the day after to-morrow."

The straw bonnet and shawl were put on in another minute, and not waiting for her gloves she followed the "blue bird" to the carriage, rather pleased with the adventure.

The little ungloved hand took firm hold of hers as they stepped out of Miss Bezac's door, and but that

the idea was absurd Faith would have thought it was trembling. Once in the carriage, the two side by side on the soft cushions, the orders given to the footman, the coach rolling smoothly down the hill, the stranger turned her eyes full upon Faith; until the tears came too fast, quenching the quivering smile on her lips. Her head dropped on Faith's shoulder, with a little cry of, "Faith, do you know who I am?"

A sort of whirlwind of thoughts swept over Faith—nothing definite; and her answer was a doubtful, rather troubled, "No."—

"I know who you are!" said the stranger. "You are Mignonette."

"Who told you so?" said Faith, drawing back from her to look.

"Some one who knew!"—the face was lovely in its April of mischief and tears.

Faith's face grew very grave, with doubt, and bewilderment, and growing certainty, and drew yet further off. Rosy blushes, more and more witchingly shy, chased in and out of her cheeks; till obeying the certainty which yet was vague, Faith's head stooped and her two hands covered her face. She was drawn back into the stranger's arms, and her hands and face (what there could) were covered with kisses.

"Faith, is it strange your sister should know?—and why don't you let me have the rest of your face to kiss?—I haven't half seen it yet. And I'm sure Endy would not like to have his message delivered in these out of the way places."

Even as she spoke, the hands quitted the face, veiled only by the rosiest consciousness; and laying both hands on the stranger Faith gave her warm kisses—on cheeks and lips; and then looked at her, with eyes alternately eager and shy, that rose and fell at every new stir of feeling.

"How did you come here?"—she said with a sort of soft breathlessness. The eyes that looked at her were as intent, a little laughing, a little moved.

"How did I come here?—Faith, I knew you at the first glance,—how came you not to know me?"

"I—could not!" said Faith. "How came you here?"

"Here? in Pattaquasset—how I love the name! Faith, I shall expect you to take me to every place where Endecott set his foot when he was here."

Faith's eye gave a little answering flash. "I don't believe I know them all. Then—" she checked herself —"But how did you come here? You—were in Germany."

"Then what?—please answer me first."

How Faith blushed!—and laughed; but she grew very grave almost immediately.

"Please answer me!" she said.

"Yes, I was there—and I could not help coming here," Miss Linden answered. "To leave him there, after all! But I could not help it, Faith. When he determined to spend the year there—and I never saw him look so grave over a determination—it was for one reason alone. You know what?"

Faith did not assent nor dissent, but her eyes were swallowing every word.

"It seemed then as if it might not much lengthen his absence, and would ensure its being the last. And by-the-by, fair ladye, Endecott said I might make the most of you before he got home; for *then* he meant to have you all to himself for six months, and nobody else should have a sight of you."

As far as they could go, Faith's eyes fell; and her new sister might study the fair face and figure she had not had so good an opportunity of studying before. Perfectly grave, and still to her folded hands.

"After he was fairly launched in his work," Miss Linden went on, "Aunt Iredell began slowly to grow better; and as the winter passed she took the most earnest desire to come home—to America. Nothing could shake it; and the doctors approved and urged that there should be no delay. Then, Faith, *I* would have stayed,—but she was exceedingly dependent upon me, and most of all, Endecott said I ought to come. I believe he was glad to think of my being here for another reason. He came with us to Paris—it happened just then that he *could come*—and put us on board the steamer. But we were three days in Paris first,—O such pretty days!" she added smiling. "I'll tell you about them another time."

The downcast eyes were lifted and rested for a minute on the sparkling face before them. If a little warm light in their glance meant that all was "pretty" about which those two had to do, it said part at

least of what was in Faith's mind.

"Now I am to be your neighbour for a while," said Miss Linden. "Aunt Iredell was ordered out of town at once, and last night we came up to Pequot,—so you must not wonder if you see me every other day after this. O how good it is to see you! Do you know," she said, wrapping her arms round Faith again, and resting the soft cheeks and lips upon hers, "do you know how much I have to say of this sort, for somebody else?"

"You are not going back to Pequot to-day?" said Faith softly.

"May I stay in Pattaquasset till to-morrow?"

"If I can take good enough care of you!" said Faith, kissing her half gladly, half timidly.

"And may I go home with you now?"

"Where are we going?" said Faith looking out.

"My dear, you ought to know! but I do not. I told them to drive about till I gave contrary orders. Now you must give them." And the check string brought the horses to a stand and the footman ditto. A half minute's observation enabled Faith to give directions for reaching the main Pattaquasset road and taking the right turn, and the carriage rolled on again. There was a little pause then, till Faith broke it. A rich preparatory colour rose in her cheeks, and the subject of her words would certainly have laughed to see how gravely, with what commonplace demureness, the question was put.

"Was Mr. Linden well, when you came from Germany?"

"Faith!" was his sister's prompt reply. Faith's glance, soft and blushing, yet demanded reason. Whereupon Miss Linden's face went into a depth of demureness that was wonderful. "Yes my dear, Mr. Linden was well—looking well too, which is an uncommon thing with him."

"Is it?"—said Faith somewhat wistfully.

"Not in the way I mean," said her new sister smiling,—"I thought nothing could have improved his appearance but—Mignonette. And I suppose he thought so himself, for he was never seen without a sprig of the little flowers."

Faith's look in answer to that was given to nothing but the ground, and indeed it was worthy to have been seen by only one person.

"Faith," said Miss Linden suddenly, "are there many French people in Pattaquasset?"

"No,—not any. Why?"

"Because Endecott gave me a message to you, part of which I did not understand. But I suppose you will, and that is enough."

"What is it?" said Faith eagerly.

"You would not understand the other part, to-day."

Faith went back to her thoughtfulness But as the carriage turned into the Pattaquasset high street she suddenly faced round on Miss Linden, flushing again before she spoke.

"Pet," she said a little timidly—it was winning, this air of timidity that was about her,—"don't say—don't tell Mr. Linden where you found me."

"Faith! does he not know? is it something new? O dear child, I am very sorry!"—and Miss Linden's other hand came caressingly upon the one she held.

"Don't be sorry!—" said Faith, looking as fearless and sonsy as any real piece of mignonette that ever shook its brown head in the wind;—"I wouldn't tell you, only you must see it. You know, perhaps, that mother lived by a farm.—Last summer the farm was taken away and we had nothing left but the house. We had to do something, and I took to dressmaking with Miss Bezac—where you found me. And it has been very pleasant and has done very well," said Faith, smiling at Miss Linden as honestly as if the matter had been of music lessons or any other accomplishment. Miss Linden looked at her—grave and bright too. Then with a sparkle of her eyes—"I won't tell Endecott now, but some time I *will* tell him over what sort of a wedding-dress I found you poring. But my dear child!—" and she stopped with a look of sudden thought that was both grave and gay. Faith's eyes asked what the matter was.

"No, I will not tell him now," Miss Linden repeated,—"it is so little while—he could not know it in time for anything but his own sorrow. But Faith! I am going to make one of those mantillas!"—and she looked a pretty piece of defiant resolution.

"You shall do what you please," Faith said gayly. "But—will you stop them?—there is the house."

The coach came to a stand before Mrs. Derrick's little gate and the two ladies alighted. Miss Linden had been looking eagerly out as they drove up—at the house, the fence, the little garden courtyard, the steps,—but she turned now to give her orders, and taking Faith's hand again, followed her in, looking at every inch of the way. Faith drew the easy-chair out before the fire, put Miss Linden in it, and took off her bonnet and shawl. She staid but to find her mother and introduce her to the parlour and her guest; and she herself ran away to Mr. Linden's room. She knew that the brown woodbox was near full of wood which had been there since his sudden departure nine months ago. It was well dried by this time. Faith built a fire and kindled it; made the bed, and supplied water and towels; opened the blinds of one or two windows, laid books on the table, and wheeled up the couch. The fire was blazing by that time and shone warm and glowingly on the dark wood and furniture, and everything wore the old pleasant look of comfort and prettiness. Then Faith went for her guest.

"You will know where you are," she said a little vaguely,—"when you open the cupboard doors."

Miss Linden stood still for a moment, her hands folded, her lips again taking their mixed expression.

"And *that* is where he lay for so long," she said. It was a mixed remembrance to Faith; she did not like to answer. A moment's silence, and she turned her bright face to Miss Linden.

"Let me do what I can for you," she said with that mixture of grace and timidity.—"It isn't much. What may I now, Pet?"

"You did a lifetime's work then, you dear child!—and how I used to hear of it." And putting her arm round Faith's waist Miss Linden began to go slowly about the room, looking at everything—out of the windows and into the cupboards. "If you could have known, Faith—if you could have seen Endecott in some of the years before that, you would have known a little how very, very glad I was. I hardly believed that he would ever find any one who could charm him out of the solitary life into which sorrow had led him."

"I didn't do it!" said Faith simply.

"What do you suppose did?"

"I think he charmed himself out of it,"—Faith said blushing.

Miss Linden laughed, holding her very fast. "You are clear from all charge of malice prepense," she said. "And I will not deny his powers of charming,—but they are powerless upon himself."

"Do you think so?" said Faith. "A charm comes at the rebound, doesn't it sometimes?"

"*Does* it? How do I know?"

Faith laughed a little, but very softly. "Now shall I leave you for a little while?" she said.

"Will you be busy, or may I come down when I like?"

"I am going into the kitchen,—You wouldn't like to follow me there?"

"If I have leave—I am in the mind to follow you everywhere."

"Come then!" said Faith joyously.

Miss Linden might not be accustomed to seeing kitchens, or she might! there was no telling from her manner. Certainly that kitchen was a pleasant one to see. And she "followed," as she had said, wherever Faith went and watched her whatever she did, conversation going on meanwhile amusingly enough. Faith was making some cakes again; and then concocting coffee, the Pattaquasset fête dish in ordinary; while Mrs. Derrick broiled the chicken. With a great white apron enveloping her brown stuff dress, and her arms bared, running about the kitchen and dairy in her quick still way, Faith was a pretty contrast to the "blue bird" who smiled on her and followed her and talked to her throughout. Then the cakes were baking, and Faith came back to the sitting-room; to set the table and cover it with all dainty things that farm materials can produce. And if ever "Pet" had been affectionately served, she was that night, and if ever a room was fresh and sweet and warm and glowing, the fire-lit room where she went to sleep afterwards was such a one.

But before that, when they had done tea, and talk and motion had subsided a little, Miss Linden brought a low seat to Faith's side, and taking that left hand in hers looked silently at the ring for a few minutes,—then laid her cheek down upon it in Faith's lap. Faith's lip trembled; but she only sat still as a statue till the cheek was lifted up.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

In the early morning which Faith and her mother enjoyed next day together, Mrs. Derrick was in a contemplative and abstracted state of mind; assenting indeed to all Faith's words of pleasure and praise, but evidently thinking of something else. At last the matter came out.

"Faith, how much money have we?—I mean, to last how long, suppose you didn't do anything else but the butter?"

"Why, mother?"

"Why child, I've been thinking—do you know how much you've got to do for yourself?—it won't do to put that off for Miss Bezac."

Faith's lips softly touched Mrs. Derrick's.

"Hush, mother, please!—Don't you think Dromy could find some water-cress at the foot of the Savin hill?"

"Yes—like enough," said Mrs. Derrick,—"Reuben could if he was here. And child, you may say 'hush,' but things won't hush, after all." With which sentiment Mrs. Derrick gave attention to the tea-kettle, just then a practical illustration of her remark.

About as bright and fresh and sweet as the morning Miss Linden looked when she came down, but warmer and gentler than March in his best mood. Her interest in everything about the house and its two tenants was unbounded, and without being really like her brother, there was enough family likeness in manner and voice to give a pleasant reminder now and then. While they were at breakfast the man came from Pequot according to order, but she went out alone to attend to him, coming back to the table with a sort of gleeful face that spoke of pleasure or mischief in prospect.

"Faith," she said, "we cannot touch those mantillas this morning."

"Can't we?" said Faith. "Which part of Pattaquasset shall we go to see?"

"Suppose we go up to my room and discuss matters."—

Faith was ready. Ready as a child, or as the "bird" she used to be called, for any innocent play or work.

"My dear little sister," said Miss Linden as they ran up stairs, the glee working out at the dainty finger ends that were on Faith's belt, "don't you know that I promised you a 'message'? and don't you want to have it?—O how lovely this room is! That trunk is not lovely, standing just there. Dear Faith, you need not think all my baggage is coming after it!"

"I wish it could,"—said Faith, looking after her "message."

"I want to shew you the key of this—it has something peculiar about it," said Miss Linden searching in her bag. "Endecott said, Faith, that as you and he had been together so much in a French atmosphere, you must let him do one thing in the French style. To which message, as well as to the trunk, you will find this the key."

Now attached to the key was a little card, on which was written simply the word, "Trousseau."

Faith understood the word well enough, and it seemed to turn her into a pretty petrifaction—with internal life at work indeed, as the rising and falling colours witnessed. She stood with bended head looking at the mysterious key; then making a swift transit to the window she opened it and threw back the blinds and stood looking out, the key in one hand giving little impatient or abstracted taps against the fingers of the other. It was a pretty landscape certainly, but Faith had looked at it often before.

Miss Linden on her part followed Faith to the window with her eyes and a smile, then sat looking at the great leathern trunk in its travelling cover, which it wore still. Once she made a motion to take this

off—then laid her hands back in their former position and waited for Faith to come.

"Pet," said Faith presently,—"have you looked out of the window this morning?" Which question brought two hands round her shoulders in no time.

"Yes my dear, I have. What new beauties have you discovered?"

"It looks pretty in the spring light.—But I wasn't thinking of it, either," said Faith blushing. And without raising her eyes, looking distressed, she softly insinuated the key with its talismanic card back into Miss Linden's hand.

"Well? what, dear Faith?"

"I don't know,"—said Faith softly. "You know."

"I know,"—said Miss Linden, "that Endecott locked the trunk and tied the label to the key, and it is a great mistake to suppose that I will unlock the one or take charge of the other. In the second place, I need not even look on unless you wish. It can go to another room, or I will leave you in undisturbed possession of this. So speak," she said, kissing her.

Faith did not immediately. She wound her arms round her new sister and hid her face in Miss Linden's neck, and stood so clasping her silently for a few minutes. But when she raised her head she went straight to the "trousseau" trunk; pulled off, business fashion, the travelling cover; set the key in the lock, and lifted the lid.

"I should tell you, dear," said Miss Linden while this was doing—she had seated herself a little way off from Faith and the trunk, "I should tell you, that if it had been possible to get a pattern dress and so forth, you would have found nothing here to do *but* look. As it is, there is some work for your fingers, and I hope for mine." The lid was now open, and between the two next protecting covers lay a letter. A recognizing flash of eye greeted that; Faith put it out of sight and lifted the second cover. From where she sat Miss Linden could see her hand tremble.

There were two or three characteristics that applied to the whole arrangement, choice, and filling of the "trousseau." The absence of things useless was not more notable than the abundance of things useful; and let not useful be understood to mean needful,—for of the little extras which are so specially pleasant to those who never buy them for themselves, there was also a full supply. The daintiness of everything was great, but nothing was out of Faith's line: the stuffs might be finer than she had always worn, but the colours were what she had always liked, and in any one of those many dresses she might feel at home in five minutes—they suited her so well. She could see, well enough, that Mr. Linden not only remembered "her style" but loved it,—in the very top rack, that was first laid open, she had proof of this—for besides the finest of lawn and cambric, there were dainty bands of embroidery and pieces of lace with which Faith could ruffle herself to her heart's content.

At this point Faith drew a rather quick breath. She was on her knees before the trunk, and shielding her face a little from Miss Linden, she sat looking in—steadfastly at bits of French needlework and lappings of the daintier texture, lifting now and then, also daintily—the end or fold of something to see what lay underneath. There was so much food for meditation, as well as for industry, in this department, that Faith seemed not likely to get through it. How clearly she saw any one thing might be doubted. She made no progress.

"You may see Endecott in everything, Faith," said Miss Linden. "In the matter of quantity I could sometimes give him help, but every colour and style had to be matched with the particular pattern in his mind. I wish you could have seen it!—it was one of the prettiest things I ever saw. Those three days in Paris!—I told you they were pretty days."

Faith gave her a swift look, very flushed and very grave. A pretty picture of wonder and humility she was; and something more was borne witness to by those soft eyes, but Miss Linden had only a second's look of them.

The racks seemed to hold the light varieties, each done up by itself. There was the little French parasol in its box; the fan box, with most pretty contents. There was the glove box, beautifully filled, and holding among the rest the prettiest of riding gauntlets—all of just the right size, by some means. At the other end to keep this in countenance, was a little French riding hat in its own pasteboard container. The riding whip Mr. Linden had given her long before. There were stockings in pretty variety; and handkerchiefs—not laced and embroidered, but of fine material and dainty borders. The various minor things were too many to mention.

Faith was in an overwhelmed state, though she hardly shewed that. Her fingers made acquaintance

almost fearfully with the various items that lay in sight; finally she laid both hands upon the edge of the rack.

"It is exactly like him!—" she said in profound gravity. His sister laughed—a gay, pleased little laugh.

"*He* said they were all like you, Faith. His fear of touching your individuality was comical. Do you know he says he shall expect you always to have a brown merino?—so you will find one there."

But first, at the bottom of the rack, under all the others, was the flat mantilla box; and its contents of muslin and silk, in their elegant simpleness, left Miss Bezac's "nowhere". How Faith would have liked to shut up the trunk then and run away—nobody knew! For she only quietly lifted out the rack and took the view of what came next. It was not the brown merino!—it was something made up,—the gayest, prettiest, jauntiest dressing gown; with bunches of tiny carnations all over it, as bright as Faith's own. Though that be saying much, for at this hers reached their acme.

"How beautiful—" she said gravely, while her poor fluttering thoughts were saying everything else. "How perfectly beautiful!—"

And as delicately as if it had been made of silver tissue, Faith laid it off on the rack. Laid it off to find the next stagc in the shape of morning wrappers, also made up. "They fit so loosely at best—" Miss Linden explained,—"and Endecott knew your height."

Now neither in these nor in what lay beneath was there such profusion as would furnish a new dress every day (for an indefinite number) at a watering place; but there was just such as befitted a young lady, who being married in summer-days yet looked forward to winter, and was to be the delight of somebody's eyes summer and winter.

They were downcast and wonderfully soft eyes that looked at those morning dresses now,—as Miss Linden could see when by chance they were lifted. But that was not generally; with lowered eyelids and unsteady lips Faith went on taking out one after the other. Below, the packages were more solid and compact, some close at both ends, others shewing shawl fringes. Dress after dress lay in close order—muslin and silk and stuff; under them pieces of linen and flannel such as Pattaquasset could hardly have furnished. One particular parcel, long and soft, was tied with white ribband. Faith looked at it doubtfully.

"Must I open this, Pet?"

"It is tied up for that express purpose."

A little suspicious of each new thing, Faith pulled the easy knot of white ribband and uncovered what lay within. It was a white embroidered muslin, fine and beautiful in its clear texture, as was the wrought tracery upon it. No colour relieved this white field,—a pair of snowy gloves lay upon it, with the lace and sash for its finish of adornment; with them a folded handkerchief, plain like the rest but particularly fine. Separately wrapped up in soft paper that but half hid them, were the little rosetted slippers.

"He said you must have none but real flowers," Miss Linden said—too softly to call for a look in answer.

That dress was what not even Miss Bezac had been able to make Faith look at in imagination—and there it lay before her! Perhaps, to tell the truth, she had been hardly willing to realize to herself the future necessity of such a thing. The blood came deeper to her cheeks, then left them in another moment pale. Faith laid her face in her hands on the edge of the trunk,—for once overcome. Again Miss Linden's quick impulse was to come to Faith's side, and again she checked herself; thinking perhaps that she was too new a friend to have her words pleasant just then—feeling that there was but one person who *could* say what ought to be said. So she sat quite still, nor even turned her eyes towards Faith except now and then in a quick glance of sympathy and interest; both which were shewn in her folded hands and averted head. But very soon Faith was softly doing the parcel up again in its white ribbands; and then she began to lay the things back in the trunk, with quick hands but dainty. Half way through, Faith suddenly stopped.

"Shall I put these back here for the present?"—she said, looking towards Miss Linden.

"For the present, dear?—I am not sure that I understand."

"Just now—till I can arrange some other place to put them."

"I have nothing to do with 'this place'," said Miss Linden smiling,—"it came with my trunks, that is all."

Faith coloured again and went on with what she was doing. Miss Linden watched her.

"Faith," she said, "don't finish that work just now,—sit still there and read Endy's letter—won't you, darling? I am going down to pay your mother a visit." And with a kiss and embrace she was gone.

Faith's hands stopped their work as the door closed, and she sat still, looking at the voiceless messages of love, care, thought, and anticipation, which surrounded her. Looking dreamily, and a little oppressed; and when she moved her hand it was not first to get her letter, but to draw out the locket from her bosom and see Mr. Linden's face; as if she wanted his look to authenticate all these messages, or to meet her own heart's answer. At any rate it was not till after a good study of the little picture that Faith put it away and took out her letter.

It was not *just* like having him there to talk or caress away her discomfort—and yet it was like it, though the pages were well on their way before the trousseau was even alluded to. But the words, the atmosphere of the letter made Faith breathe easier,—it was like the wand of the Fairy Order, smoothing out the little tangled skeins of silk. And when that subject came up, it was touched so lightly, so delicately, yet with such evident pleasure,—there was such mingling of play and earnest in the charge given her to be ready before he came, and such a strong wish that he could have saved her all the work,—the terror of the trousseau could not stand before it. And at the hope that her taste would be suited, Faith's heart made a spring the other way. She drank in every word of the letter; and then feeling healed, though tender-spirited yet, she finished putting away her riches and went down stairs.

Mrs. Derrick having gone off to attend to dinner preparations, Miss Linden sat alone, singing to herself softly in company with the March wind and the fire, and (of all things!) at work upon one of Miss Bezac's mantillas. Faith's two hands were laid upon the one which held the needle. "Not to-day—" said the silver voice which Miss Linden must learn to know.

"Yes—unless you'll give me somewhat else to do!" she said leaning her sunshiny head back against Faith. "I was out of patience with myself because I could not do what no one but Endecott could—so in my woman's pride I took up something which he couldn't. What are *you* going to do, darling?"

Faith thought she knew why she was called "Pet"—but she only kissed her. "I shall have to ask you a great deal about those things up stairs," she said;—"but to-day I want to see you What would you like?"

The thing Miss Linden liked best, was to see some of her brother's old haunts; and a notable drive the two had that afternoon. Wherein, under the light of a Spring day, Miss Linden saw Pattaquasset, the Quapaw people, (part of them) and not least of all, Faith herself, who shewed herself very much as the Spring day. And of Mr. Linden his sister talked the while, to her heart's content, and Faith's—in the full joy of that affection which can never say enough, speaking to that which can never hear too much.

It would be long to tell how the trousseau was made up. Mrs. Iredell came from Pequot and established herself in a farmhouse at Pattaquasset; and the two future sisters put their heads and their hands—a good deal of their hearts too—into the work that was done in Faith's blue-wainscotted white room. There they sat and sewed, day after day; while the days grew warm, and the apple blossoms burst, and the robins whistled. They whistled of Mr. Linden's coming home, to Faith, and sent her needle with a quicker impulse. She never spoke of it.

But Miss Linden knew whither the look went, that seemed to go no further than the apple trees; and what was the pressure that made a quick breath now and then and a hurried finger. Perhaps her own pulses began to move with accelerated beat. And when towards the end of May Mrs. Iredell found business occasion for being in Quilipeak a fortnight, Pet so urged upon Mrs. Derrick the advantages of the scheme, that she carried off Faith with her. It would break the waiting and watching, and act as a diversion, she said,—and Faith did not contradict her.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

Established fairly in that great Quilipeak hotel, Faith found her way of life very pleasant. Mrs. Iredell was much in her own room, coming out now and then for a while to watch the two young things at their work. A pretty sight!—for some of *the* work had been brought along,—fast getting finished now, under the witching of "sweet counsel." Miss Linden declared that for her part she was sorry it was so near done,—what Faith thought about it she did not say.

Meantime, June was using her rosy wings day by day, and in another week Mr. Linden might be looked for. Just what steamer he would take was a. little uncertain, but from that time two people at

least would begin to hope, and a day or two before that time they were to go back to Pattaquasset.

The week was near the ending—so was the work,—and in their pretty parlour the two ladies wrought on as usual. The morning had been spent in explorations with Reuben Taylor and Sam Stoutenburgh, and now it was afternoon of a cool June day, with a fresh breeze scouting round to see what sweets it could pick up, and coming in at the open window to report. On the table was a delicate tinted summer muslin spread out to receive its trimming, over which Faith and Miss Linden stood and debated and laughed,—then Faith went back to her low seat in the window and the hem of a pocket handkerchief. So—half looking out and half in,—the quiet street sounds murmuring with the rustle of the many elm leaves,—Faith sat, the wind playing Cupid to her Psyche; and Miss Linden stood by the table and the muslin dress.

"Faith," she said contemplatively, "What flowers do you suppose
Endecott would get you to wear with this—out of a garden full?"

"It is difficult to tell"—said Faith; "he finds just what he wants, just where I shouldn't look for it." And a vision of red oak-leaves, and other illustrations, flitted across Faith's fancy.

"Very true," said Miss Linden,—"precisely what Aunt Iredell said when she first saw you,—but I am inclined to think, that the first day you appear in this you will see him appear with a bunch of white roses—probably Lamarques; if—"

"Why Lamarques?" said Faith sewing away. "Pet, how pleasant this wind is."

Miss Linden did not immediately answer. She stood resting her finger tips on the muslin dress, looking down at it with an intentness that might have seen through thicker stuff, the colour in her cheeks deepening and deepening. "Why?" she said abstractedly,—"they're beautiful—don't you think so?—Oh Faith!"—With a joyous clasp of the hands she sprang to the window, and dropped the curtain like a screen before her. There was no time to ask questions—nor need. Faith heard the opening door, the word spoken to the waiter,—saw Mr. Linden himself come in.

Pet sprang towards him with a joyful exclamation—an unselfish one, as it seemed; for after a moment's concentrated embrace which embodied the warmth of half a dozen, she disappeared out of the room. Mr. Linden came forward, looking after her at first with surprise,—then as if a possible explanation occurred to him, he stood still by the mantelpiece, watching the door by which she had gone. Faith had waited behind her screen—she could not have told why—utterly motionless for that minute; then a little quick push sent the curtain aside, and she came to him,

"Faith!" he exclaimed—"are you hiding from me?—My dear Mignonette—"

She hid from him then,—all her face could; for her gladness was of that kind which banishes colour instead of bringing it. He let her stand so a few minutes, himself very silent and still; then one hand brought her face within reach.

"Little bird!" he said, "I have you safe now,—you need not flutter any more!"

Perhaps that thought was hardly composing, for Faith's head drooped yet, in a statue-like stillness. Not very unlike a bird on its rest however, albeit her gravity was profound. And rest—to speak it fairly—is a serious thing to anybody, when it has been in doubt or jeopardy, or long withheld. What could be done to bring the colour back, that Mr. Linden tried.

"Faith," he said, "is this all I am to have from your lips—of any sort? Where did you get such pale cheeks, precious one?—did I frighten you by coming so suddenly? You have not been ill again?"

"No,"—she said, raising her eyes for the first time to look fairly in his face. But that look brought Faith back to herself; and though she drooped her head again, it was for another reason, and her words were in a different key. "We didn't expect you for a week more."

"No—because I didn't want you to be watching the winds. Mignonette, look up!"

Which she did, frankly,—her eyes as delicious a compound of gravity and gladness as any man need wish to have bestowed upon him. "Pet brought me here,—" she said.

"Well do you suppose *I* have brought an invoice of Dutch patience?"

"I don't think you are particularly patient,"—said Faith demurely,—"except when you choose. Oh Endy!—"

That last note had the true ring of joy. Her forehead touched his shoulder again; the rest of her

sentence was unspoken.

"I do not choose, to-day. Mignonette, therefore tell me—do you think I have had all I am fairly entitled to?"

She flushed all over, but lifted up her head and kissed him. Mr. Linden watched her, smiling then though she might not see it.

"My little beauty," he said, "you have grown afraid of me—do you know that?"

"Not very—" she said. Certainly Faith was not good at defending herself.

"No, not very. Just enough to give us both something to do. Mignonette, are you ready for me?"

Faith's face was bowed again almost out of sight. "Don't you think," she half whispered, "that Pet must be ready to see you, by this time?"

For all answer—except a smile—she was led across the room to a seat near the window. But *just* there, was the table and its muslin dress! Mr. Linden stopped short, and Faith felt and understood the clasp of his arm about her waist, of his hand upon hers. But he only said laughingly, "Faith, was *that* what made you hide away?"

"Pet hid me," Faith said very much abashed;—"not I. She let fall the curtain."

Mr. Linden let it fall again, in effect, for he quitted all troublesome subjects, and sat down by her side; not loosing his hold of her, indeed, nor taking his eyes from her, but in the gravity of his own deep happiness there was not much to disturb her quiet.

"I sent you a telegraphic despatch this morning to Pattaquasset, dear Faith,—I did not mean to take you quite by surprise. And my stopping anywhere short of that was merely because the arrangement of trains forced me to lose an hour here on the way. I thought it lost."

"It hasn't proved so."

"There was such a doubt of my being in time for this steamer, that I would not even speak of it. Faith, I have not often heard such music as the swash of the water about her paddle-wheels as we set off."

"Didn't you hear the swash of her paddle-wheels as you came in?" said
Faith merrily.

"No!" The wistful gladness of her eye was a pretty commentary.

"Is Miss Reason in full activity yet?" said Mr. Linden smiling,—*his* comment.

"She has had no interruption, you know, for a great while."

"Take care of her, Faith,—she has a great deal of work before her."
The look that answered this was a little conscious, but shewed no fear.

There was nothing very unreasonable in the face that bent over hers; the eyes with their deep look, lit up now and then with flashes of different feelings; the mouth wearing its sweet changeable expression. A little browner than usual, from the voyage,—a little thinner, perhaps, with hard work; Mr. Linden still looked remarkably well and like himself; though Faith felt that nameless change—that mingling of real and unreal, of friend and stranger, which a long absence always brings. One minute he was himself, as he had been in Pattaquasset,—giving her lessons, riding with her, reading to her, going off to school with one of Mrs. Stoutenburgh's white roses. The next—he was a gentleman just arrived from Europe! —from whom she could not get away. Perhaps the last impression was the most remarkable. But in spite of this, Faith was herself, every inch of her; with the exception of that one little difference which Mr. Linden had pointed out and which was not to be denied.

Some time had passed, when Faith felt Pet's little hand come round her neck—the other was round Mr. Linden. Faith's start was instant; springing up she went to the window where behind the curtain lay the work her hand had dropped. Faith gathered it up. She would have put that muslin dress out of the way then!—but there it lay in plain sight and close neighbourhood. Yet somebody must do it, and it was her business; and with cheeks of a very pretty deep rose that set off her white drapery, Faith applied herself to the due folding of the troublesome muslin. In two minutes Pet came to help her, but in a different mood, though her eyelashes were glittering.

"Endy, come here and look at this—I think it is so pretty. What flowers must Faith wear with it?"

"Carnations look very well."

"I said white roses."—

"Which will you wear, Mignonette?" said Mr. Linden.

He was favoured with a glance from two gentle eyes, which it was worth a little wickedness to get. It was only a flash. "I think Pet is right,"—she answered with great gravity.

He came close to her side, the low-spoken "you shall have them—" touched more things than one.

"What do you suppose I found her doing?" said Pet, folding down a sleeve.

"Pet!"—said Faith. "Don't touch that! Not to-night."

"Do you wish me to leave it unfolded?—the servants will perhaps sweep in the morning."

"Pet," said Faith softly,—"don't *you* raise a dust! We might not lay it so soon."

"Endy," said his sister, "how do you do?—you haven't told me."

"Perfectly well, dear Pet."

"Turn round to the light and let me see—You've grown, thin, child!"

He laughed—giving her a kiss and embrace to make up for that; which was only half successful. But she spoke in her former tone.

"He looks pretty strong, Faith,—I think I might tell him."

"Mr. Linden," said Faith, "won't you please ask Pet not to tell you something?"

"I will ask *you*," he said softly, laying his hands lightly on her shoulders. "Faith—I think we may dispense with 'Mr. Linden' *now*, even before people."

She was oddly abashed; glanced up at him and glanced down, with the grave air of a rebuked child. There was nothing about it that was not pretty; and the next thing her eyes went to Pet. How lovely and precious she looked as she stood there! with her sweet shy face and changing colours. Mr. Linden held her to his breast and kissed her more than once,—but in a way that was beyond chiding.

"Why must I ask Pet not to tell me something?"

"It is nothing great!"—said Faith stammering over her words—"Only you won't like it very well—but you will have to hear it. I thought another time—that's all."

"He'll never hear it from you—what I mean," said Miss Linden, "so he shall from me. We'll see whether he likes it. Know then, Endecott, that I found this child absorbed in wedding dresses!"

"Wedding dresses!" he repeated. "More than one?"

"Oh Endy," said his sister with a sort of laughing impatience, "what a boy you are! I mean other people's." Faith stood smiling a little, letting her manage it her own way.

"Imagine it," Miss Linden went on,—"imagine this one little real flower bending over a whole garden of muslin marigolds and silk sunflowers and velvet verbenas, growing unthriftily in a bed of white muslin!" Mr. Linden laughed, as if the picture were a pleasant one.

"Mignonette," he said,—"how could you bear the sight?"

"I was trying to make the best of it."

"In whose behalf were you so much interested?"

"Maria Davids," said Faith glancing up at him. "But I was *not* interested,—only so far as one is in making the best of anything."

"Who is trying to make the best of her?"

Faith looked down and looked grave as she answered—"Jonathan Fax." Mr. Linden's face was grave too, then, with the recollections that name brought up.

"There is one place in the house she cannot touch," he said. "Faith, I am glad she is not to take care

of *him*."

"I have thought that so often!"

"Do you like my story, Endy?" said Miss Linden presently.

"Very much—the subject. I am less interested in the application. Who next is to be married in Pattaquasset?"

"I don't know."—

"Aunt Iredell says she wishes *you* would be married here," observed Pet demurely. To which insinuation Faith opposed as demure a silence.

"Oh Endecott," said his sister changing her tone and speaking in that mixed mood which so well became her,—"I'm so happy that you are here! This week Faith has been pretty quiet, by dint of being away from home; but nothing would have kept her here next week—and I had been thinking what we should do,—if the week should run on into two—or if the wind should blow!" She spoke laughingly, yet with a voice not quite steady.

"'So he bringeth them to the haven where they would be'!" Mr. Linden said. But his voice was clear as the very depth of feeling of which it told. "Aunt Iredell cannot have her wish, Pet," he added presently, —"there would be at least three negative votes."

"I suppose that! But I shall come down Saturday to hear what wishes *are* in progress."

"Won't you go with us, Pet, to-morrow?" said Faith earnestly. She had been standing in a sort of abstracted silence.

"No, pretty sister, I will not. But I shall keep all those ruffles here to finish, and Saturday Reuben Taylor shall escort them and me to Pattaquasset."

CHAPTER XXXIX.

Things were yet in their morning light and shadow when Faith set off on this her first real journey with Mr. Linden. She felt the strangeness of it,—in the early breakfast, the drive alone with him to the station,—to stand by and see him get her ticket, to sit with him alone in the cars (there seemed to be no one else there!) were all new. The towers of Quilipeak rose up in the soft distance, shining in the morning sun: over meadow and hillside and Indian-named river the summer light fell in all its beauty. Dewdrops glittered on waving grain and mown grass; labourers in their shirt-sleeves made another gleaming line of scythe blades, or followed the teams of red and brindled oxen that bowed their heads to the heavy yoke. Through all this, past all this, the Pequot train flew on towards Pattaquasset; sending whole lines of white smoke to scour the country, despatching the shrill echoes of its whistle in swift pursuit.

Faith saw it all with that vividness of impression which leaves everything sun-pictured on the memory forever. In it all she felt a strange "something new;"—which gave the sunlight such a marked brilliancy, and made dewdrops fresher than ordinary, and bestowed on mown grass and waving grain such rich tints and gracious motion. It was not merely the happiness of the time;—Faith's foot had a little odd feeling that every step was on new ground. It was a thoughtful ride to Pattaquasset, though she was innocently busy with all pleasant things that came in her way, and the silveriest of tones called Mr. Linden's attention to them. He did not leave her thoughts too much chance to muse: the country, the various towns, gave subject enough for the varied comment and information Faith loved so much. Mr. Linden knew the places well, and their history and legends, and the foreign scenes that were like—or unlike—them, or perhaps a hayfield brought up stories of foreign agriculture, or a white sailing cloud carried them both off to castles in the air. One thing Mr. Linden might have made known more fully than he did—and that was his companion. For several times in the course of the morning, first in the station at Quilipeak, then in the cars, some friend or acquaintance of his own came to greet or welcome him. And Faith could see the curiosity that glanced at so much of her as her veil left in view,—Mr. Linden saw it too, with some amusement. And yet though all this was a little rouging, it was interesting to her in another way,—shewing her Mr. Linden as she had never seen him, among the rest of the world,—giving her little glimpses of his former life; for the bits of talk were sometimes quite prolonged.

"Mignonette," he said after one of these occasions, "some people here are very anxious to make your acquaintance."

"I am glad you don't want to gratify them."

"Why?—In the first place, I do."

"Do you!"—said Faith, somewhat fearfully.

"Certainly. I, like you, am 'a little proud of my carnations'. How do you like this way of travelling?"

"I like it such a morning as this," said Faith. "I don't think it's the pleasantest. But to-day it's delicious."

"Yes—to-day," he repeated. "What way of travelling do you like best?"

"You know I never travelled at all, except to Quilipeak and Pequot. I believe I like a wagon or a sleigh better than this,—in general."

"That is our last whistling post!" said Mr. Linden "Faith, I shall be glad to get rid of that veil. And I have so many things to say to you that cannot be said here. Is Mr. Somers in Pattaquasset still?"

"Everybody's there—" Faith answered.

The little shake of the head with which this intelligence (so far as regarded Mr. Somers) was received, Faith might understand as she pleased, for in another minute they were at the Pattaquasset station; the train was puffing off, and she standing there on the platform with Mr. Linden. A little way back was Jerry and the wagon—that Faith saw at a glance; but there too, and much nearer, was Squire Stoutenburgh—in doubt whether to handle the new corners separately or together, in his great delight.

From all this Mr. Linden rescued Faith with most prompt skill; carried her off to the wagon, shook hands with Dromy and dismissed him, and then with the reins in his own hands had her all to himself once more. And Jerry dashed on as if he knew his driver.

"Mignonette, please put back your veil," were the first words. Which Faith did, and looked at him, laughing, blushing and a little shy, all in one pleasant combination.

"What have you been doing to make yourself lovelier, little Sunbeam?"

"I have been a year without seeing you,"—said Faith with excellent seriousness.

"My presence seems to have no counteracting effect. By the same rule, I should be—marvellous! To you perceive it?"

Her eye gave one of its little flashes, but Faith immediately looked away.

"Do you know," said Mr. Linden, "I can hardly believe that this year of exile is over—and that there are none others to follow it. What do you suppose will be the first subject you and I shall consider?"

"Mr. Skip," said Faith gravely.

"Mr. Skip merits no consideration whatever. Is Miss Bezac at work on that dress?"

"Because he don't live with us any longer, Endecott."

"Does he not?—Unfortunate man!"

"And Dromy is in his place."

"My dear, my own place is the only one I can think of with any intense interest. Except yours."

"Because we have had no farm to manage this winter," said Faith; "so
Dromy could do what we wanted."

"I am glad to hear it," said Mr. Linden,—"he never used to be able to do what I wanted. Who has managed for you? Mr. Simlins? And has Mr. Skip gone off in a pumpkin with Cinderella? Faith, there is the door where I had the first sight of you—my Rose of delight!" he added softly, as if all the days since then were passing through his mind in sweet procession.

Faith was silent, for she too had something to think of; and there was no more time to finish either train of conversation that had been started. Both dropped, even before Jerry drew up at the gate; and if she had not gained one object she had the other.

By this time it was about eleven o'clock. It was rarely very hot in Pattaquasset; and now though under

a sunny sky there were summer breezes rustling in the trees. Both mingled in Faith's senses with the joy of going into that house again so accompanied. That gladness of getting home in a pleasant hour! No one was in the cool sitting-room—Faith pushed open the door between and went into the eating-room, followed by Mr. Linden. There was Mrs. Derrick; and what of all things doing but *doing up* some of Faith's new ruffles! It was a glad meeting,—what though Mrs. Derrick had no hand to give anybody. Then she went to get rid of the starch, and the two others to their respective rooms. But in a very few minutes indeed Faith was by her side again.

"Mother—has Cindy come?"

"She's coming to-morrow, child. But there's not much to do for dinner,—*that*'s all under way."

Faith bared her arms and plunged into dairy and kitchen to do all that her mother characterized as "not much," and a little more. When every possible item had been cared for—the strawberries looked over—the cream made ready—the table set—the lettuce washed—the dishes warming for the vegetables—the pickles and bread on the table—and Faith had through all this delighted Mrs. Derrick as much as possible with her company, sight and presence at least,—for Faith's words were a trifle less free than usual;—when it was all done and the eating-room in a state of pleasant shady summer readiness, Faith went "ben," as they say in Scotland. She came into the sitting-room, as quietly as usual, and coming up to Mr. Linden laid a hand on his shoulder.

"My own dear little Mignonette!—Do you feel less afraid of me, now I am here?"

She hesitated to answer at first, then spoke with a very dainty shy look—"I don't think I ever had fear enough of you to hurt anything."

"See that you do not begin now! What have you been about, all these long months? You were as chary of details as if I had no right to them."

Faith looked gravely out of the window before she said, "I have not been studying this year, Endecott." There was so clearly some reason for it, that Mr. Linden's first thought was one of anxiety.

"What has been the matter?"

"You know I told you Mr. Skip had gone away?"

"Yes."

"And that he went because we hadn't any farm to manage?"

"What has the farm to do with your studies?"

"What shall I do if I make you very angry with me?" said Faith, the least touch of seriousness mingling with her words,

"You had better ask what I shall do. Has Mr. Deacon come back and taken possession?"

"Yes—And you know, Endy, we used to live by the farm. When that was gone we had to live by something else. I wouldn't tell you if I could help your knowing it."

"Mignonette, what have you been doing?"

"You know what Pet found me at?"

"Yes."—She could not tell whether he saw the whole,—he was clearly in the mind to hear it, taking both her hands in his.

"I did that," said Faith.

"Did what?"

"I got work from Miss Bezac.—She gave me lessons."

"For how long?"

"Since—about a fortnight after you went away. It was then Squire Deacon took away the farm. From that time until Pet came—" she added with a little rise of colour in her cheeks.

"And that all the daylight and candlelight hours of each day?"

"O no, not that. I had long walks to Miss Bezac's, you know—or rides—every day or two; for we kept

Jerry; and I never sewed before breakfast. And in the evening I used to write letters—part of the evening."

"Child! child!"—He dropped her hands, and began to pace up and down the moderate limits of Mrs. Derrick's best carpet. Until after a few turns Faith put herself straight in his way and intercepted him, with a very innocent face.

"Faith, did no one protest against this—for me?"

"Yes, sir."—

"And you knew that I had guarded—that I had *tried* to guard you against any such possibility?"

Faith paused. "Yes, I knew,—but Endy, that couldn't make any difference."

"It did not—How, could not?"

"It ought not," she said softly and colouring.

"Can you tell why?"

"You know, Endy, it was better,—it was right,—it was better that I should work for myself."

"Never, Mignonette—while I could work for you. How do you expect to manage when you are my wife?—And do you think I had no right even to *know* about it?"

"I thought—now was the best time—" Faith said.

"Am I to learn from this and similar instances what my wife will expect of me if I chance to be sick or in trouble?"

It touched her. She coloured again to the roots of her hair.

"Do you think I did wrong, Endy?" she said doubtfully, yet in an appealing fashion.

"I cannot say you did right."

"But when you could do me no good,"—said Faith very gently,—"and I should only have given you pain—for nothing?"

"It would not have given me pain to have you tell it—and the thing does now. Besides, in a great many cases the thought that it is pain 'for nothing' is a mistake. I might know some remedy when you did not. Self sacrifice will never run wild in my nature—as it is inclined to do in yours, but just imagine it once in the ascendant and me with a bad headache (which I never have),—it can only give you pain to hear of it—so I tell you of it the next day. But if I had told you at the time—what conjurations of your little fingers! what quick-witted alleviations!—till the headache becomes almost a pleasure to both of us."

Faith was very near the unwonted demonstration of tears. She stood still, looking down, till she could look up safely.

"I will not do so again, Endy.—About important things, I mean,"

"You know, Faith, I am speaking less of this one case, than of the daily course of future action. Is not perfect frankness, as well as perfect truth, best? And if I call for your sympathy in all manner of small and great things, will you let mine lie idle?"

"I might like it,"—said Faith honestly. "But in great things I will not again, Endecott."

"Take care you get the right measure for things," said Mr. Linden smiling. "Frankness makes a deliciously plain way for one's feet."

Faith looked sober again, at the idea that she should have failed in frankness. Then put her hand in his and looked smiling up at him.

"There is one thing I will not keep from you any longer,"—she said.

"What is that?—the seal of this little compact of plain speaking?"

"Strawberries!"—

"Only another style of nomenclature,"—said Mr. Linden.

"You must take the trouble to go into the other room for them."

And light-heartedly Faith preceded him into the other room, where the dinner was ready. A very simple dinner, but Mrs. Derrick would not have had anything less than a roast chicken for Mr. Linden, and the lettuce and potatoes did very well for a summer day; and Faith's waiting on table made it only more pleasant. Talk flowed all the while; of a thousand and one things; for Mrs. Derrick's sympathies had a wider range since Mr. Linden had been in Germany. Indeed the talk was principally between those two. It was a remarkably long dinner, without multiplication of courses—there was so much to say! Many were the pleasant things swallowed with the strawberries. It is said hunger is the best sauce; it's not true; happiness is a better.

And then—what came then? Truly, the same over again—looking and talking, without the strawberries. Which were not wanted; especially when Faith was dressed out with roses, as she was presently after dinner. As she *would* wash the tumblers and spoons in the dining-room, spite of all Mrs. Derrick could say, so Mr. Linden would stay there too; not indeed to do anything but look on, and bestow the roses as aforesaid. Talking to her sometimes in English, sometimes in French, with preliminary instructions in German.

"Mignonette," he said, "I have three letters for you to read."

"Letters, Endecott!—Who has written to me?"

"Through me—three regions of country."

"What do you mean?"

Just as she spoke the words, Faith paused and set down the tumbler she was wiping. Her ears had caught the sound of a modest knock at the front door. She looked at Mr. Linden.

"Stay here, Endy—please!" she said as she threw down her towel and ran off. But Faith's hope of a chance was disappointed. She ushered somebody into the sitting-room and came back gravely and flushed to Mr. Linden.

"It's Mr. Somers—and he wants to see you, Endecott!"

Faith went at her tumblers, and simultaneously, greatly to the dismay of one party as to the surprise of the other, in walked Mr. Somers after her.

"Miss Derrick told me you were in this room, sir," said the clergyman shaking Mr. Linden's hand,—"so I came in. Ha! I am glad to be one of the first to welcome you back. How do you do, Mr. Linden? You've been a great while from Pattaquasset!—and you've been missed, I don't doubt."

Apparently not by Mr. Somers! But Mr. Linden met all the advances as he should, merely stating his belief in the general proposition that "there is always somebody to miss everybody."

"Will you take a seat here, sir?" he said—"or may I go with you to the next room?"

"I—have no choice," said Mr. Somers looking benignantly around;—"it is very pleasant here, very!—cool;—perhaps Miss Derrick will have no objection to our taking our seats here?"

Faith did not say, but as Mr. Somers had taken her leave for granted, and his seat consequently, she was saved that trouble. How she reddened at the thought of the roses with which she was dressed! And there she stood in full view, washing her spoons! But Mr. Somers looked the other way.

"I—I am very happy to see you again, Mr. Linden—very happy indeed, sir! I heard from Squire Stoutenburgh that you were expected, and I lost no time. How have you enjoyed your health, sir, this year? A year's a long time! isn't it?"

Mr. Linden, taking his seat as in duty bound, looked abstractedly at Faith and the spoons and the roses, and answered according to the evidence.

"Yes, Mr. Somers,—and yet it depends very much upon how far the two ends of the year are apart in other respects. The 'Voyage autour de ma chambre' could never *seem* very long, whatever time it took."

"Ha!"—said Mr. Somers blandly,—he hadn't the remotest idea what this speech might mean,—"no. Did you have a good passage coming over? We had every sign of it."

"Very good,"—said Mr. Linden smiling,—"and very stormy."

"Ah?"—said Mr. Somers,—"very good and very stormy? Well I shouldn't have thought that. But I

suppose you have got to be such a traveller that you don't mind which way the wind blows, if it blows you on, ha?—like Dr. Harrison. *He* never minds the weather. Dr. Harrison's a great loss to Pattaquasset too," said Mr. Somers looking at Faith and smiling a little more openly;—"all our—ha!—our pleasantest members of society seem to be running away from us! That's what Mrs. Somers says."

"One more spoon—and put them up,"—thought Faith,—"and then I'll be away!"—

"But I've come to see if I can't get you to do me a favour, Mr. Linden," said Mr. Somers withdrawing his eyes and mind from her. "I—should be very much obliged to you indeed! I'm almost afraid to ask, for fear I sha'n't get it."

Faith wiped her spoon slowly.

"I like to do favours," said Mr. Linden,—"at least I think I should. But I cannot imagine how you can give me a chance, Mr. Somers."

"Don't you think it would be a great gratification to all your old friends in Pattaquasset, if you would consent to fill my pulpit next Sunday? They—I believe they'd come from all over the country!—and it would be—a—it would be a very great gratification indeed to me. Can't I prevail with you?"

Faith had ceased her work and was standing quite still, with bended head, and cheeks which had gathered their colour into two vivid spots. On those carnations Mr. Linden's eyes rested for a moment, with a strange feeling of pleasure, of emotion. The sort of touched smile upon his lips when he spoke, did not, it may be said, belong to Mr. Somers. His answer was very simple and straightforward.

"I should like to see and speak to all my old friends again, sir, more than I can tell you—and I think they would be glad to see me. I could do it so well in no other way. Thank you, Mr. Somers!—it is you who confer the favour."

"Then you'll do it?" said Mr. Somers, delighted. "I am very happy—very fortunate indeed! It will be quite a relief. And a pleasure—a very great pleasure—a—I assure you, sir. It's profitable for—a—people to have a change—they listen—ha!—they hear the same things said in a different way; and it is often striking. And it is certainly profitable to the pastor. Well, Mr. Linden, I shall make a great many people happy,—and Mrs. Somers, she'll set off on her side to tell the news. How long are you going—a—to remain in Pattaquasset?—But I don't know," added he laughing,—"as I ought to ask!"

Faith had carried her spoons summarily to the cup-board, and was sitting at an open window near it, looking out.

"And I cannot answer," said Mr. Linden. "I have hardly got past my arrival yet, sir."

"No—certainly. I was—a—premature. You must excuse me. And I have no right to take up any more of your time,—as you have so kindly—a—consented to give me Sunday. What is the state of religion now, abroad, sir?"

The answer to which comprehensive enquiry drew on into a talk of some length, although Mr. Somers had declared he must go and had no right to stay. For a little while Faith sat still by her window, but then she vanished and appeared at Mrs. Derrick's side in the kitchen. The dishes were all done there too, and Mrs. Derrick was "ticing" about,—talking to Faith and wishing Mr. Somers would go, some time before he went. Faith heard the closing door, and the light returning step,—then a clear—not loud-spoken—"Mignonette—where are you?"

Faith sprang back through the passage, and stood in the eating-room again. With a very sweet sort of gravity. All her mind and her face full of the thought that he was going to preach for Mr. Somers.

"What are you about, little Sunbeam?—are you busy?"

"No."

"Then first I want a talk with you, and then a walk with you,—do you want the same with me?—or are you tired?"

"No—yes;—I'm not tired a bit."

"Are you nervous?" he said, drawing her off into the next room.

"No!" she said laughing a little,—"did you ever think I was, Endecott?"—But Faith's heart beat somewhat strangely.

"I am going to try you—" he said as he sat down by her; "so if you are, shut up your eyes."

There was no sign of shutting up in Faith's eyes. She looked at him, not indeed assuredly, but steadily, and with a wee smile. Eye and smile were met and held, until he had taken her left hand and held that too; but then looking down at it, Mr. Linden gravely took out a little gold ring and proceeded to try how well its dimensions agreed with those of the finger for which it was destined.

Nothing moved of Faith but her eyes, which followed his, and the fluttering colour—which fluttered indeed! went and came like the lights on a wreath of vapour.

Silently the hand, with both rings on, was looked at for a few moments—then held to his lips, with special greeting of those two fingers; and then, as he took off the second ring, Mr. Linden looked up at her.

"Mignonette, when may I put it on again?"

There seemed to be difficulty in Faith's answering. Probably she was making up her mind to speak, but he had to wait for her words to be ready. He waited quietly, as if he expected it; looking down at the hand he held, and saying nothing unless by the clasp of its little fingers.

"Do you know where you are going yet Endy?"—she said in a very low voice.

"No, darling—not certainly."

"Then—do you want to know this yet?"

"Very much."

Faith had expected no less; she had had fair warning; and besides in her heart could not but confess that Mr. Linden had reason. Little as she might care to disturb the existing state of things, which to her mind was pleasant enough, it was clear that his mind on the subject was different; and she could not find fault with that. There was a pause again, of quiet waiting on one side and great difficulty of utterance on the other, and the words when they came were in the lowest possible key.

"What do you wish?"

"What I have been waiting for all these years."

"But as to time?"

"As little as possible."

"I know,—but what is that, Endy?"—she said with very timid intonation.

"'As little as possible'?" he said, raising his eyes with a laughing look to her face,—"the words hardly need explanation—I might have stayed Mr. Somers this afternoon. It cannot be too soon for me, Mignonette—but I do not know what is possible for you."

What was possible for her! It almost took Faith's breath away. Because she acknowledged Mr. Linden's right to his wish. She was in great confusion, besides.

"I will do what you please!" she said at length. "You may arrange it with mother."

"No, with you," said Mr. Linden,—"what do you please? Am I to repeat the passage of Quapaw creek?"

She looked up and looked at him, and said yes. It was a look any man would have liked to have given him. Not without a little fear of what he might say, those eyes put such a pure faith in him and were so ready to answer his pleasure. She waited for his answer, though her eyes did not.

"You know, dear Faith, I sent you word to be ready for me,—is that done?"

"Yes nearly."

"'Nearly' is soon despatched," said Mr. Linden,—"and this is the month when, 'if ever, come perfect days'—Shall we say a week from to-day?"

She looked very startled, soft though the glance was that again met his face. And for a moment the roses fairly fled away. "As soon as possible" this was, sure enough. They came back however, first stealthily and then swiftly, till Faith's face was bowed and her right hand with futile intent of concealment was interposed between it and Mr. Linden. But whether Faith meant to speak or meant

not to speak, certain it is that words were none.

"I cannot have this!" said Mr. Linden, as he took the shielding hand into his own possession,—"Faith, you shall not look pale about it. This is the second time I have banished the colour in the first twenty-four hours I have been home. And these roses I see now, seem to me to come from the same tree as the white ones. If you would look more boldly at the subject it would appear much less terrific—and the same might be said of me. What sort of a face have I down there in the carpet?"

There was a little clasp of his hand which answered that; but though he could see Faith's lips give way he did not hear them speak.

"Mignonette, the treaty waits your signature."

"Yes, Endy,"—she said quaintly enough. Mr. Linden brought her face round within sight, saying—much as he had done at Quapaw creek—"Are you afraid, dear child?"

"No—" she said timidly, and yet "no" it was.

"Then it only needs my seal.—In one of the northern countries of Europe, Mignonette, the bride and bridegroom are expected to stand at the open window for an hour or two, in full dress,—so you see things are not so bad as they might be. Now my little beauty—are you ready for your walk?"

CHAPTER XL.

It was the pretty time of a summer afternoon. The sun, in the last quarter of almost his longest journey of the year, but high yet, sent warm rays to rest in the meadows and dally with the tree tops and sparkle on the Mong and its salt outlet. The slight rustle of leaves now and then was as often caused by a butterfly or a kildeer as by the breeze; sometimes by a heavy damask rose that suddenly sent down its rosy shower upon the ground. It was the very pastime of birds and insects and roses,—with that slight extra stir which told the time of day and that the afternoon siesta was at an end.

Gathering roses as he went along, fastening them in her belt or her bonnet, Mr. Linden led Faith down the farm road by which he had driven her to the shore that first day after her illness. There was small danger of meeting any one,—it was not the time for loads of hay and grain, and little else passed that way: the labourers in the fields were seen and heard only at a distance Mr. Linden himself was in as gay and gladsome a mood as the day,—more lively indeed, and active—taking the "dolce far" without the "niente;" witnessing what "the year of exile" had been, by his joy in being at home, with June and Mignonette. The afternoon's talk had added something even to both their perfections—he could not forget it though he talked of other things. Neither did Faith forget it. Yet she laughed at Mr. Linden and with him; though as far as conversation was concerned she took a secondary part. She started no subject whatever, of the least moment.

Subjects started of themselves—in numbers somewhat like the little butterflies that roused out of the clover as the intruding feet came by,—about as airy, about as flitting, not quite so purposeless. And thus in a way more summery than summary, Mr. Linden and Faith arrived at the shore. He found a shady seat for her, and with no "by your leave," except in manner, transferred her bonnet to an airy situation on a wild thorn.

"Mignonette, do you know what I mean to do with you after Thursday?"

"No, Endecott."—

"I shall put you before me on the wooden horse spoken of in the fairy tale, turn the pin under his right ear, and be off."

"What's that story!"—said Faith, looking round at him (he was standing behind her) with the prettiest of bright flushed faces.

"An authentic account of how a prince carried off a princess."

"How did he?"

"Got her consent first—(couldn't get anybody's else, but that did not matter)—ordered some one to bring the wooden horse to the front of the palace, placed her and himself as aforesaid, turned the pin, and disappeared from the curious eyes of the whole court. The story goes on to state that they both enjoyed the ride."

"Was that what you meant when you asked me if I liked travelling in cars?—" said Faith, a very little laugh speaking her sense of the application.

"Quick witted little princess!" said Mr. Linden. "The horse that refuses to carry double for your service, shall be dismissed from mine."

"But I don't see much, yet," said Faith. "I don't understand the story nor you. I think you have taken me a great many rides on that horse."

"Not en princesse," said Mr. Linden smiling. "The story is very simple, my dear. After shewing his wife various places of interest, and letting his friends see her, the prince arrives at home. It is said that he then finds his fortune—but I think that part of the story is fabulous, so don't set your heart upon it."

"That's the story—but what do you mean, Endy?"

"To give you such a ride. I mean that I am the prince, and that you (will be) the princess, who shall do all these things."

Faith jumped up. "Do you!"—

"Truly I do, dear Mignonette."

Faith's face was changing. The undoubted joy in her eye had yet a check somewhere.

"But Endecott—"

"Qu'est-ce que c'est, Mademoiselle?"

"You haven't a wooden horse!"—she said with a delicious and most delicate mixture of frankness and timidity.

"Are you sure of the fact?—and after all, Mademoiselle, what then?"

The same look almost answered him without words. "I am not sure—" she said. "I thought so."

"What is the point of the remark?"

She hesitated between the two feelings. But frankness, or duty, carried it. "Because, Endy—if that were so,—I don't want to go!"

"How did your royal pride get turned about?—that you will look at none *but* a wooden horse?"

She smiled at him, a little puzzled as of old, and not choosing to venture any further.

"I suppose I know what you mean, my dear one," Mr. Linden said, taking both her hands in his, and smiling too; "but as I do not intend to be John Gilpin, you need not be his wife,—not yet. Besides, the horse—of whatever sort—will require less than you suppose; and for the prince and princess, they,

Being in the air,
Will not care
How they fare!"—

Which words had an overcoming effect not only upon Faith's nascent scruples, but upon Faith herself; and a perfect series of little laughs of the most musical description rolled along a very limited extent of the shore, kept company by flushing colours as fair as the lights which were just then playing in the clouds overhead. Mr. Linden holding her hands still, watched his princess with the most perfect satisfaction.

"Is your mind at rest?" he said. "You know I threatened to keep you all to myself for six months—though I'm afraid four will be as near as I can come to it."

"But where are you going, Endy?"

"That waits partly on your choice. In general, to hills, cities, and rivers,—the Falls, the White Mountains, Washington, and the pictured rocks of Lake Superior. Then to some shore where you can see real surf—and to delight the eyes of some of my old friends by the way."

Faith's eye went gravely over to the sunny Long Island shore, but her mind had made a perfect leap. The only outward token of which was the unconsciously playing line of her lips. Such a journey!—with him! The breeze from the White Mountains seemed to blow in her face already, and the capital of the

country rose before her in a most luminous cloud-view. With Mr. Linden to guide her and to tell her everything!—She did not see the eyes that were watching her, but when she suddenly noticed the silence and turned towards Mr. Linden, the smile was on his lips too.

"I thought I should go right to work," she said,—"to study—to make up for lost time. Can't I do that too?"

"As much as you like! But don't you know there is a lost holiday to be made up, as well?"

"It is made up,"—she said gently, after a minute's hesitation.

"How that grieved me when I went away!" said Mr. Linden,—"to take from you what I might never be able to replace. But sit down, dear child—I want to consult you about various things."

Faith sat down and looked—like a grave child indeed. Her journey for the present forgotten, and all her mind bent on something more weighty and worthy.

"I told you I had three letters for you to read," said Mr. Linden. "One reached me in Germany, two I found waiting for me here. They are all about the same subject, Mignonette: where you and I shall establish ourselves."

A flush rose, but she looked steadily.

"You told me once," Mr. Linden went on, "that in such a case I should choose the place where I was most needed—where there was most work for me to do. Now you shall judge. The pastor of a large manufacturing town in Pennsylvania (I may say of the town—it is so in effect) has accepted a call to Baltimore. I knew him formerly, and I suppose it is through his influence that the people have applied to me." Faith thought it very likely.

"How large is the town, Endy?"

"Ten or fifteen thousand—I do not know precisely."

"And no other churches?"

"Yes, but this is so much the leading one that the others hardly hold their ground; and by the way, I think I would rather have a call from one of them. Apparently the churchgoers are in the minority."

Faith thought there must be work enough to do in that place; but she only listened more gravely.

"An old friend of my father's writes the second letter. He lives at Newport, and has pleased himself with building a new church in a part of the island not much adorned with spires. Climate and society are good, scenery picturesque, and he is quite sure if I will only bring—Mrs. Linden!—to his house, she will decide in favour of Newport at once."

Faith's eyes went down, and rouge of the richest and frankest coloured her cheeks.

"Do you think she will?" said Mr. Linden demurely.

"What is the other, Endy?—You said three."

"The other, love, is from those very White Mountains you are going to see. Another friend writes the letter,—one who has built himself a nest there for summer migrations. It is a strange place, Faith, by all accounts—I have never been to that part of the mountains. A scattered population, sprinkled about on the hills like their own dewberries, and to be found in much the same manner. Neither church nor chapel, but only an unused schoolhouse—of which Mr. Olyphant prays I will come and take possession. Snow and frost, the valleys and the everlasting hills—that would be your society."

Faith's eyes were raised now and met Mr. Linden's. Grave, as one who felt the weight of the question to be settled; but with a brow unshadowed, and eyes unfearing. A child's look still!

"Mr. Olyphant says there could not be better air for my bird to sing in," he went on with a smile, —"there was one great objection to the place in Pennsylvania. How does this seem to you, dear Faith?—it is rather on a spur of the mountains—not absolutely shut in. Then I am not sure how much society you would have but mine,—what do you think of it, in comparison with Newport?"

She answered at first with a rare little smile, so happy in its grave trust, and which withal a little significantly deferred the question.

"I know you will go where you think you ought to go. Endy—I don't know about places."

"I doubt whether I shall grant more than half of Mr. Alcott's request," said Mr. Linden. "I suppose if George has not got home I may venture to grant that. Faith, it is a very singular fact that everybody falls in love with you."

To judge by Faith's blush, it was a somewhat painful "fact." "Whom are you talking of?" she said doubtfully.

"The present occasion of my remark is George Alcott—said to be absent on a crusade of search after a pair of eyes he saw in Pattaquasset."

"I don't know him," said Faith laughing a little; but instantly recurring to business she asked very earnestly, "Then, Endy, you think you will go to that place in the mountains?—or haven't you made up your mind?"

"I am inclined to that one, of the three—I cannot say my mind is absolutely made up. It has had so much else to do since I came home! Faith, do you mean to have any bridesmaids?"

Faith jumped up off her rock. "Endy, I want to run down and look at these little fish. And it's growing late, besides!"—

"Yes, but, you must answer me first," said Mr. Linden laughing and holding her fast. "It is needful I should know beforehand, because they will want supporters, if I do not."

"I don't want any, Endy," said Faith with cheeks like two pink roses, but standing very still now.

"Then come and shew me the fish. Don't you think it would be gladsome work to seek out those untaught and uncared for people up in the mountains?"

They had come down to the rocks between and among which at low tide the shell fish played in an inch or two of water; and sitting on one of the mossy stones Faith was watching the mimic play of evil passions which was going on among that tribe of Mollusca below her; but her mind was on something else.

"I read the other day," she said, "those words of Paul, where he says to the Thessalonians 'we were allowed of God *to be put in trust with the gospel*'.—They made me very happy—they make me happy now. What I thought of in connexion with them, I mean."

"And what was that?"

"That they are your words too,"—she said after looking up as if she thought her meaning must be known.—"And that even I—have something to do," she added lower.

Mr. Linden stood by her, looking off at the rippling waves, then down at his fair little helper. "Yes, Faith—it is a glorious thing to have any part of that work in trust,—and the part which makes least show may be no less in reality. 'In trust'!" he repeated, looking off again. "Such beautiful words!—such terrible."

"No!"—she said with a smile,—"I don't think so."

"Nor I, dear, from your point of view. But in the world, Faith, where you have been so little, I have seen the words of the trust to be boundless—the faithfulness of the trustees within very narrow limits. And to be always ready to 'sow beside all waters'—who is? 'Freely ye have received, freely give,' is the command—but what Christian sees with half perception what he has received!"

Faith paused and looked thoughtful, and then smiled again. "I always think of the words you read to me one day,—'Only be thou strong and very courageous,—for the Lord, thy God is with thee, whithersoever thou goest.'"—

The answering look told that if Mr. Linden's words had not been said for the purpose of drawing her out, they had at least served that purpose.

"You are a dear little Sunbeam!" he said. "Acting out your name, as I told you long ago. There is nothing needful to get *you* ready for the White Mountains but a fur cloak. Now come—it is growing late, as you say."

It was a late tea-time when they got home. They sat down to tea and Faith had not told her mother yet! which she remembered with a somewhat uneasy mind. There was nothing uneasy about the third member of the family!—the poise and balance of the white strawberries upon each other was not more complete than the resting adjustment of all his thoughts.

"Mrs. Derrick," he said as she handed him his cup of tea, "what do you consider the prettiest time of day?"

"The prettiest time of day?" Mrs. Derrick repeated,—"do you mean when the day looks best—or the people? I'm sure I don't know, Mr. Linden,—I never watch anybody from morning to night but Faith."

"I am talking of Faith—or what concerns her."

"O well all times of day are alike to her," said her mother fondly,—"she's just as pretty one time as another,—and one day as another. Only the days when she used to get letters."

"Mignonette," said Mr. Linden, "when should I have heard such a piece of news from you?"

"I never knew it before," said Faith.

"How many hours does she need for a morning toilette?" said he, pursuing his researches.

"Hours!" said Mrs. Derrick—"you'd better say minutes. It's less than an hour, commonly."

"But I mean uncommonly."

Mrs. Derrick looked thoroughly puzzled. But Faith had got the key, and hopeless of stopping Mr. Linden she thought the next best thing was to expedite matters.

"When I take longest, mother,"—she suggested in a low voice.

"How long would she need to arrange orange flowers to her satisfaction—" said Mr. Linden,—"or white muslin?"

"O!—" said Mrs. Derrick setting down the teapot with her cup half filled. "I didn't know what you *were* talking about."

"I am talking about next Thursday," said Mr. Linden, with a gay gentleness of manner. "Because we have decided—or I have—that Thursday is to be the prettiest day of the week, and now we want to choose the prettiest time of day."

A little flush came into Mrs. Derrick's quiet face,—she said not a word.

"You are willing it should be then?" Mr. Linden said.

The mother's "yes" was very firm and clear, and yet not in just her usual tone. That came back a minute after with the relief which a thought of business always brings.

"That dress isn't made!" she said. Mr. Linden's "Faith!—" was expressive.

"I knew that it could be done in a day at any time, Endecott,"—said
Faith, very grave and flushed. "It is up stairs in my drawer, mother."

"Kept there by what piece of superstition?" he said smiling. "Did you think if you made it up that I would never come back?"

CHAPTER XLI.

Friday passed all too swiftly. Not in much *work*, so far as Faith was concerned—unless so far as Mr. Linden gave her work. Apparently she had been out of his sight long enough—he was not in the mood to let her be so any more. Saturday followed close in Friday's steps until after dinner, then came a move. For Pet and Reuben were to come in the afternoon train; and Mr. Linden going with Jerry to the station to meet them, summoned Faith to give "her sweet company."

So far as the station, Faith gave it; but there she drew back into the furthest corner of the wagon, and waited, while Mr. Linden walked up and down between the wagon and the front platform. Waited, and watched, furtively, everything; him and the people that spoke to him; with those strange eyes that saw everything new. Then came the whistle! the rush and roar of the train—the moment's lull; and then Faith saw the three she looked for coming towards her. Reuben a little in advance with Miss Linden's travelling bag, she with one hand on her brother's shoulder and her eyes on his face, coming rather slowly after,—talking, asking questions, some of which Faith could almost guess from the look and smile with which they were answered. It was a pretty picture; she felt as if she knew them both better

for seeing it. Before they had quite reached the wagon, Pet received an answer which made her quit Mr. Linden with a little spring and leave him to follow with Reuben. And Faith had opened the wagon door.

"Faith! you dear child!" said Miss Linden, "what have you been doing with yourself—or what has anybody done with you, to stow you away here like a forgotten parcel?" She had entered the wagon no further than to rest one knee there holding both Faith's hands and looking at her with full, bright, loving eyes. "How came Endecott to leave you here, alone?"

"Two people must be alone—if they are not together," said Mr. Linden.
"Pet, shall I put you in or out?"

She laughed, jumping into the wagon then and twining one arm about
Faith's waist, much like a spray of woodbine.

"What do you think I have asked him?" she whispered,—"and what do you think he has told me?"

"I don't know," said Faith;—"but I guess."

A significant clasp of the woodbine answered that—then the hand rested in a quiet embrace.

"How well he looks!" she said, her eyes taking glad note of one figure on the seat before them. "Faith, how are you?"

"I am well."—Nothing could be quieter in its kind. "Did he tell you what he is going to do to-morrow, Pet?"

"No—" she said looking her quick inquiry. Faith's face might have told her before she spoke; such a joy sat gravely on her brow and in the depth of her eyes.

"If you go to church to-morrow, you will know."

A sudden flush, both of cheeks and eyes, bore witness to the interest of this news. The look met Faith's for a moment—then rested on Mr. Linden, and then with that little tide of feeling deepening its sweet flow, the eyes fell, the unbent lips wavered and trembled. Faith ventured only a silent act of free-masonry; a fast clasp of her fingers round Miss Linden's hand that rested on her waist; but maybe never yet in their short friendship had they felt their hearts beat so close together. With one, there was perhaps some old recollection or association—some memory of the time when such a day had been first talked of, that made self-command a hard matter; for though the lips presently grew still, and the eyes quiet, the gravity that remained was easily stirred, and the voice spoke doubtfully.

There was more discussion of various things that evening than Faith cared for, but it could not be helped. Sunday brought a lull of discussions. But the gravity which sat on Faith's face that morning was not the less but the more. If a guardian angel had shewn himself bodily, his face might have worn such a pure distance from low and trifling things and like kindred with the blue sky and the truth it emblematizes. That day was the first of her new life to Faith. Not such to Mr. Linden; but it was the first of her seeing him publicly take the office to which his life was to be given, and in which hers was to be by his side. She was a very grave "sunbeam" when she set out to walk to church—and as clear!

There were sunbeams in plenty of the literal kind abroad; it was a perfect day; and everybody was glad of that, though some people remarked it would have made no difference if it had rained cannon-balls. Never did Pattaquasset see such a coming to church! never in the remembrance of Mr. Somers. They came from all over; the country was gleaned; and many a fire was raked up on the hearthstone that day which most Sundays got leave to burn and somebody to watch it. The fishermen came from Quapaw, and the labourers from the farms all over the country; those who did not directly know Mr. Linden, knew of him; and knew such things of him that they would not have missed this opportunity of hearing him speak, for a week's wages. The fathers and mothers of the boys he had taught, *they* knew him; and they came in mass, with all their uncles, aunts and cousins to the remotest degree, provided they were not geographically too remote. The upper society of Pattaquasset lost not a man nor a woman; they were all there, some with great love, others with great curiosity. The Stoutenburghs had plumed themselves. Mr. Simlins was as upright as his new beaver. Miss Essie De Staff with magnified black eyes; Judge Harrison with benevolent anticipation. Mr. Stephens the fisherman had driven his little lame child down to the Pattaquasset church, "for once;" Jonathan Ling was there with his wife, having left the eldest child to keep house, and both being in great smartness and expectation. Jonathan Fax was there and his new wife; the one with a very grave head, the other with a very light one, and faces accordingly. Mrs. Derrick and Pet had long ago been quietly seated; when through that full house, after her Sunday school duties were over, Faith came in. Her colour was very bright, and she trembled; but it was not because many saw in her an object of curiosity; though Faith remembered it,

at that minute she did not care. She felt the stillness of expectation that filled the house, with which the little murmur of sound now and then chimed so well; the patter of childish feet that followed her up the aisle spoke so keenly to her wrought up feeling of the other one of her class, who used to follow him with such delight, that Faith felt as if the happy little spirit long since received in at the golden gates, was even there in the church, to hear once more his beloved teacher. Who else?—what other angel wings stirred in the soft breeze that floated through from door to door?—what other unseen, immortal senses waited on those dear mortal lips?—Faith's step grew lighter, her breath more hushed; eyes might look at her—she looked not at them.

And eyes did look, from all sorts of motives; perhaps in the whole church there was not a person who did not try to see her, except the one who next to herself was the most interested—Pet never moved. Her head was bent, her hand half supporting half concealing in its position, like any statue she sat there, nor even stirred when the stir of every one else told who had come in. If she held her breath to bear every one of her brother's steps as he passed by, she did not look at him; did not raise her head till his first prayer was ended; then her rapt gaze was as unwavering.

The service which followed could not be measured by the ordinary line and rule of pulpit eloquence and power,—could not be described by most of the words which buzz down the aisles after a popular sermon. There was not the "newness of hand" of a young preacher—for almost from boyhood Mr. Linden had been about his Master's work. To him it was as simple a thing to deliver his message to many as to one,—many, many of those before him had known his private ministrations, and not a few had through them first known the truth; and now to all these assembled faces he was just what each had seen him alone; as humble, as earnest, as affectionate, as simply speaking not his own words,—for "Who hath made man's mouth—have not I, the Lord?" No one who heard the ambassador that day, doubted from what court he had received his credentials. "In trust with the gospel!" Yes, it was that; but that with a warm love for the truth and the people that almost outran the trust. As the traveller in the fountain shade of the desert calls to the caravan that passes by through the sand,—as one of the twelve of old, when Christ "blessed and brake and gave to his disciples, and the disciples to the multitude"; so did he speak from the words—

"Eat, O friends!—drink, yea drink abundantly, O beloved!"

There were some there who would never forget that day. There were many to whom it seemed, that not the warm summer breeze that floated in was gentler or sweeter than the feeling that filled the place. The little lame girl, and her older and rougher father and mother, listened alike to their dear friend with moveless eyes; and drank such a draught of those sweet waters as it was long, long since either of them had tasted in a church. It was a white day for all the fishing population; and nothing would have kept them from coming in the afternoon. Miss Essie's black eyes lost all their fire. Farmer Simlins, unknown to himself, sat and smiled. And the one who listened most tenderly and joyfully, listened indeed quietly to the last word, or till her face had leave to bow itself from sight; quietly then no longer, only that such tears come from no broken-up fountains of unrest. They came freely, as Faith recalled and applied the whole of her quoted sentence of Paul to the Thessalonians—

"*For as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel*, SO WE SPEAK."

She was very quiet when the benediction was spoken, but she drew her veil closely as they left the church.

It was a lingering getting out, even for them, because others would linger. Some turned to look, some stopped to speak; and if Mr. Linden had had twenty hands they would all have found employment. Part of this the two veiled figures saw as they made their way to the door, and there Miss Linden paused and looked back. The broad stream of sunlight that lay across the church, the shadowy background figures,—in that very spot of light, Mr. Linden,—made a never-to-be-forgotten picture. Reuben Taylor stood close behind him, a step back, looking down; little Ency Stephens perched up on the pew cushions had one hand; Robbie Waters—far down below the other. Phil Davids and his father, Squire Stoutenburgh, and some of the Quapaw fishermen made up the group. Pet gave one look, and then she went swiftly down the steps and on.

Slowly the people scattered away, up and down the road; not with the brisk steps and busy voices that give token the church service has but interrupted—not suspended—the current of everyday thought and behaviour. It was a fair picture of a Sunday in a New England village; the absolute repose of nature copied and followed by hands that other days let nothing stand still. Before Faith and Pet got home the road was almost empty. Mr. Linden had overtaken them, but all his greeting was to put Faith's hand on his arm—then he walked as silent as they. It was a little thing, and yet it touched the very feeling she had had all day—the beginning of her new way of life, with him.

The afternoon was like the morning. Not a creature was missing of all who from far and near had filled the house in the former part of the day! and doubtless it was well that Mr. Somers could not hear the spoken and unspoken wishes that would have unseated him and caused him to relinquish for ever his charge in Pattaquasset.

The afternoon air was enticing, the afternoon walk home very lingering; then standing in the hall to look and taste it still, the sweet peace of everything seemed to enter every heart. Even Pet, who all day had been unheard and almost unseen, stood with clasped hands looking out; and only the heavy eyes spoke of the oppression that had been. But as she looked the tears came back again, and then she turned to Mr. Linden—wrapping her arms round his neck.

"Endy, Endy!—do you remember the first time we talked of this day?"

Mr. Linden gave back her caresses without a word, but with a look of pain that Faith had rarely seen on his face. It was some minutes before he spoke. "Dear Pet—she knows it now!"

Miss Linden looked up then, mastering her tears, and with a broken "Forgive me, Endy—" she kissed him and went away up stairs. But Mr. Linden did not look out any more. He went into the sitting-room, and resting his face on his hand sat there alone and still, until Faith came to call him to tea.

CHAPTER XLII.

"Now my two pets," said Mr. Linden as they left the table Monday morning, "what are you going to do?"

"*I* am going to work," said his sister. "Mrs. Derrick and I have business on hand. You can have Faith."

"There is an impression of that sort on my own mind."

"But I mean to-day. Except for about five minutes every half hour."

"It would be needless for me to say what I am going to do," observed Faith quietly.

"If that is a little piece of self assertion," said Mr. Linden, "allow me respectfully to remark that my 'impression' had no reference to the present time. Do you feel mollified?"

"No," said Faith laughing. "You are wide of the mark."

"Then will you please to state your intentions?—So far from being needless, it will be what Mr. Somers would call 'gratifying.'"

"I don't know," said Faith merrily. "I understand that if I tell you, you will say I have no time for them!"—

"For them!—enigmatical. Who told you what I would say?—Ask me." But Faith laughed.

"I am going to make Pet and you some waffles for tea."

"Do they require more time than shortcakes?"

Faith stood before him quietly as if she had a great deal to say. "I am going to make bread, for mother and all of us."

"What else?"

"Sponge cake, I think."

"And after that?"

"Crust for pot-pie."

"De plus?"

"Curds,"—said Faith, looking down now.

"Pourquoi, Mademoiselle?"

"To eat," said Faith demurely. "You like them."

"Mademoiselle, I prefer you."

"Each in its way,"—replied Faith admirably well, but with a glance, nevertheless.

"There is only one in my way," said Mr. Linden. "Well does that complete the circuit?—I suppose nothing need go between cheese and bread *but* waffles?"

"I shall wish—and I suppose you would wish that I should, look over strawberries."

"Where do you commonly do all these things?"

"The sponge cake and the strawberries in the other room—other things in the kitchen."

"We may as well begin as we are to go on!" said Mr. Linden. "If you will not come and keep me company I must do that for you. Faith, I think Miss Essie's statement of facts was much like the artistic representation of lions and men, in the fable!"

Faith did not at all dislike this compounding of matters; and so the strawberries were looked over, and the sponge cake beaten in the dining-room; with various social enlivenings. For besides Mr. Linden's calls upon her attention, and the subjects by him presented to be looked over along with the strawberries, Faith made now and then a run into the kitchen to see Mrs. Derrick or Cindy there; and if the runs up stairs were less frequent, they took more time. For Miss Bezac had arrived, and she and Miss Linden were deep in the white folds of Faith's muslin dress. There too was Mrs. Derrick, for the touch and the making of that dress stirred her very heart. Faith was often in demand,—not to use her needle, but her taste—or to be fitted, or 'tried on,' as Miss Bezac said.

Coming back from one of these "trying" visits to the three workers, Faith found Mr. Linden by the sitting-room table; before him a package, in his hands a letter.

"Faith," he said, "come and look at this." Faith ran in from the strawberries.

"Rosy fingers are not needed," said Mr. Linden, "but as eyes are first called for they may pass. Sit down here by me, Mignonette, and take off this wrapping paper."

Which very curiously and amusedly, and now with a little suspicious tinge in her cheeks, Faith did; remarking that she could not help her fingers being rosy.

"Keep the roses to their chosen location," said Mr. Linden gravely, as the first paper parted right and left and shewed a second, which bore this inscription.—"For Mrs. Endecott Linden—with the warmest regards and respects of W. and L. Olyphant." Faith suddenly jumped up, pushed back her chair and whisked back to the strawberries, where she was found diligently putting the hulls into a dish by themselves.

"Mignonette, your fingers will be more rosy than ever." Mr. Linden spoke from the doorway where he stood watching her. Then coming forward he laid a key on the table. "That belongs to you."

"Wouldn't you be so good as to take care of it? You see I am busy."

"No my dear, I will not be so good. You shall have that pleasure—as a reward for running away. Would you like to hear this letter?"

"If you please—" Faith said with a little hesitation.

"You shall read it to yourself if you like better—" but he read it to her, after all. It was a pretty letter, shewing so well Mr. Linden's place in the writer's affection that Faith could not but enjoy it. Neither could she dislike the messages to herself though they did cost her a few roses. As to the contents of the package the letter gave no hint.

"What is that the key of, Endy?" she said, glancing up after the letter was finished.

"I don't know!"—Faith went on with her strawberries.

Through the open hall door came little uneven steps, tracking on through other open doors even to the dining-room,—there the steps and Charles twelfth came to a pause.

"Ma said," he began,—then fixed his eyes and mind on Mr. Linden with a concentration that was marvellous. The general attire and appearance of the little potentate were as usual, but both hands were in use to support a heavy mass of red coral, hugged up to his blue apron in the most affectionate

manner. With a sigh of relief Charles twelfth withdrew his attention from Mr. Linden long enough to set the coral on the floor, then gazed anew, with his hands behind him.

"Charley!" said Faith laughing,—"what are you doing!—and what have you done?"

"Ma said—" began the child, stopping short as before.

"Charles twelfth," said Mr. Linden holding out his hand "do you never use anything but your eyes? Come here and speak to me. Who is prime minister now?"

"You,"—was the very prompt reply. "Ma said so yesterday."

The laugh in Mr. Linden's eyes as he looked at Faith, was a thing to see. "Faith," he said, "the conversation is in your hands!"

Faith was in doubtful readiness to speak. "Charley!"—she said as soon as she could,—"come here. Was that all your ma said?"

"No," said the boy, "she said a heap more."

"Well what did you come here for to-day?"

"I came to fetch that—" said Charles twelfth with another sigh.

"Poor child!—What did you bring it for, Charley?"

"Why for you," said Charley. "Ma said she didn't know when it oughter come—and she guessed you'd like it, 'cause it used to live off in the place where you said they eat up babies and people!" and Charles twelfth's eyes grew large and round with the announcement. "And ma said she's sorry 'twarnt more. I ain't."

Faith's eyes went to Mr. Linden with a flash and a burst of the uncontrollable little laugh; but after that they were suspiciously downcast, and Faith busied herself in providing little Charles twelfth with the refreshment of a good saucer of sugared strawberries, with which he sat down in a corner much consoled. And when he was setting off again, Faith gave him a whispered message to ask his mother to come and see her Thursday. Just what Mr. Linden saw in the piece of red coral he did not declare, but when Faith came back to the table he was looking at it very fixedly.

"Faith," he said, "that is not the worst token, nor the worst envoy—that might be. What a shy child you were that first time I took you down there! And you have not changed any too much," he added, carrying her off to the other room. "I am not sure that you ought to be indulged—suppose you open this box."

"You do it, please, Endecott!"—she said with a crimson rush to her cheeks.

"I do not believe there is any explosive material under such an address,—however, if there is I prefer that my hands should fire the train. Stand back, Faith!"—and with cautious and laughing deliberation the key was turned and the lid raised. It was a very plain lid, by the way—mere white pine.

"There is nothing here (that appears) but silk paper and cotton,—not gun cotton, probably," said Mr. Linden. "Faith, do you wish me to risk my safety any further?"

"Yes."—

"My dear, you must have more courage. If I am to open all your boxes I shall have my hands full, and —ne vous en déplaise—I would rather see the work in yours." And she was seated before the portentous pine box, Mr. Linden keeping his stand at her side. Faith blushed and didn't like it; but applied her fingers with a sort of fearful delicacy to the silk paper and cotton, removing one after the other.

The box had interior divisions, by way of help to the silk paper, its different contents being thus more securely separated. Faith's fingers exploring among the papers brought out first a silver chocolate pot, then the dainty china cups for the same, then the spoons, in size and shape just suiting the cups. Spoons and chocolatière were marked with the right initials; the cups—chocolate colour themselves, that no drop of the dark beverage might hurt their beauty—had each a delicate gilt F. L. twining about the handle.

If the givers could have seen the gift uncovered and inspected!—the rosy delight in Faith's cheeks, the pleasure in her eye! They would have considered themselves rewarded. She looked and bent over the pretty things, her attitude and blush half veiling her admiration and satisfaction, but there was no veiling them when she looked up at Mr. Linden. "I am so glad you like chocolate!"—she said naively.

But it was worth a hundred remarks of aesthetic criticism.

"I am so glad I do!" he said, stooping to kiss her. "Faith, one would almost imagine some bird of the air had told them our chocolate associations."

"Now won't you put these back for me?" said Faith,—"because, if that sponge cake is to get done to-day I haven't two minutes to lose!"

The pretty chocolatière was but the beginning, as Faith soon found. Found to her most utter and unbounded astonishment—though to that of no one else.

Tuesday arrived a packet from Madame Danforth, accompanied by a note of affection and congratulation. The present was peculiar. A satin sachet, embroidered after the little Frenchwoman's desire, and to do it justice very exquisitely scented, was the first thing. A set of window curtains and toilet cover, of a curious and elaborate pattern of netting, made of very fine thread,—a manufacture in which Madame Danforth delighted and on which she prided herself,—was the second thing. The third was a pretty breakfast service of French china.

Faith enjoyed them all, with some amusement and some pleasure of possession, and not a little affectionate remembrance. Even the sachet, in this view, was particularly precious; that was the only use Faith saw in it. But the next arrival gave her a great start.

It was again this time a deal box, but immensely heavy; and it was a strong box that Faith did not attempt to open; marked only 'Grover & Baker', which told her nothing. There was no occasion indeed. A note was delivered with the box, and a small covered basket. The note conveyed the assurance of Sophy Harrison's love and a request that Faith would let her shew it on the present occasion. It went on.—

"Papa has sent you, dear Faith, an odd thing for a present—for *such* a present—but I haven't been able to put it out of his head. He insists it is what you ought to have, and that he shall have the pleasure of giving it to you To save you the trouble of opening the box before you want it, I will state that it contains a *sewing machine*. Papa has taken great pains to satisfy himself—and it is certainly the best or one of the best. My offering, dear Faith, is in the basket, and may be looked at with less difficulty."

Miss Sophy's offering was a kindly one. She had sent a little invoice of silver spoons and forks. Faith was pleased; and yet she looked grave, and very grave, over these things. She made no remark whatever to say why.

If no one else knew there was to be a wedding, at least the express man did!—and probably in his mind joined these new packages with those he had so often brought before, very comfortably. The next arrival was a delicate pair of silver salt-cellars and spoons from Mr. Alcott,—then a little framed sketch from the Captain of the Vulcan, portraying the meeting of two steamers at sea, with these words underneath—'The despatch post'. At which Mr. Linden looked with much amusement. Faith was delighted.

First on Wednesday morning came Miss Bezac,—bringing the well assorted tokens of an elaborate needlebook and a simple bread trencher and knife; and staying only long enough to say, "You see, Faith, what made me think of this, was that the first time I heard of *that*, was when you came in for bread and milk. And now you'll have to think of me, whether you sew or eat!"—with which triumphant sentiment Miss Bezac departed.

They say ill news flies fast,—in this case so did the good: certainly people are quick to hear and understand what pleases them. The friends who had heard from Pet or Mrs. Iredell what was to be, had spread the information: and in the same sort of way, from two or three old family dependants another class of Mr. Linden's friends had heard it. Perhaps among all her presents the little tokens from these people touched her most. They came queerly done up and directed, sometimes the more formal 'Mrs. Linden' changed into an ill-spelled '*For Mr. Endecott's wife*'—or '*For the young lady, in care of Mr. Linden*'. She knew the names thereto appended as little as they knew hers,—could only guess the vocations,—the tokens were various. A pair of elaborately carved brackets,—a delicate rustic footstool, trimmed with acorns and cones,—a wooden screw pincushion, with a flaming red velvet top,—a case of scissors, pretty enough to have come from anybody, declared the trade of the sender by the black finger marks on the brown wrapper, and a most mysteriously compiled address. One of the old sailors who had crossed with Mr. Linden long ago, sent by Pet's hands a stuffed tropical bird of gorgeous colours; a woman who had once been upper servant in his mother's house, sent by the same messenger

a white toilet cushion, made exactly after one that had belonged to her mistress and which she had been allowed to keep. It was worth while to see Mr. Linden examine these things,—every name was familiar to him, every one called up some story or recollection. Alternating with these, came richer presents,—books and vases and silver; then from the poor people in and about Pattaquasset, a couple of corn husk mats, a nest of osier baskets. The children brought wild flowers and wild strawberries, the fishermen brought fish, till Mrs. Derrick said, "Child, we might as well begin to lay down for winter!"

Ency Stephens, having got Reuben to bring her two fine long razor shells, had transformed them into a pincushion. This she sent, with a kiss, by Mr. Linden.

"I half promised her that she might come before the rest of the world to-morrow, Faith," he said. "She never saw any one married, and has the greatest desire to see you—and I said if you were willing, Reuben should bring her here at one o'clock." Faith was just then exploring the contents of a new package—or rather two: one of as many spools of white thread as she had scholars in her little class, (presented by Robbie Waters,) the other a wee far-sent carved box of curled maple. She looked up with wet eyes.

"Oh let her come, Endecott—I should like to have her here."

Faith had been living in a strange atmosphere this week. The first presents that came simply pleased and amused her to a great degree; Judge Harrison's and his daughter's she saw with a strong admixture of painful feeling. But as tokens from rich and poor began to throng in—not of respect for her wedding-day so much as of respect and love for Mr. Linden,—Faith's mood grew very tender and touched. Never perhaps, since the world stood, did anybody receive wedding presents from friends known and unknown with a more gentle and humble heart-return to the senders. There was no least thing of them all that Faith did not dearly value; it told her of something so much better than the gifts, and it signified of a link that bound her with that. How beautiful to her eyes the meanest of all those trifles did seem! and for the rest, she was as quick to be delighted with what was really beautiful and glad of what would be really useful, as any sensible child could have been. So the amusement with which the week began changed into a grave, loving, and somewhat timid appreciation of each new arrival.

Meanwhile, on Faith's table stood a little silver saucepan sent by Mrs. Somers with the sage remark that she would want it for others if not for herself; and near by, a beautiful butter cup and knife from Mrs. Stoutenburgh. With the butter cup trotted down a little mountain pony, with the daintiest saddle and bridle that the Squire could find for money.

Miss Linden's love had chosen for itself sundry channels; from the silver knives—of all sorts—which made their appearance now, to various comforts, great and small, which were to await her brother and sister in their new home. In those Mrs. Iredell too had a share; her present token was a silver tea-service, whereon the chasing developed itself in sprays of mignonette. A mark of attention which Mr. Linden at least appreciated.

CHAPTER XLIII.

It was very early indeed in the still sweet morning of Thursday, when Faith threw open the windows and blinds of the sitting-room. No one was abroad, and not even a wind moving. The leaves of the trees hung motionless; except where a bird stirred them; the dawn was growing slowly into day; sweet odours called forth by the dew, floated up to the windows, and the twitter and song of the birds floated in. The freshness and stillness and calmness of all the earth was most sweet. Faith could not read; she knelt upon a low cushion at the open window and leaned her arms upon the sill to look out, and breathe, and think and pray. The morning was not unlike her. She was as fresh, and as grave, and as still; and there was a little flutter now and then too in her heart, that went with nothing worse than the song of the birds, though it stirred something more than the leaves of the branches. So Mr. Linden found her.

So she met them all at breakfast, with the same unready eyes and lips that Mr. Linden had seen before. It was odd how Faith seemed to have put off the full realization of Thursday till Thursday came. After breakfast she was making her escape, but was detained before she reached the staircase. What it was that Mr. Linden fastened in her dress, Faith could not have told; neither did his words tell her.

"You must not think me extravagant, Mignonette,—these are some old gems of mine which I want you to wear in this form." He gave her one grave kiss and let her go. Faith sped up stairs; and with a fluttering heart went to see what Mr. Linden had done.—Yes, they were gems,—clear, steadfast, as the

eternal truth which they signified, the blue sapphires shone upon Faith's white dress.

Faith was alone; and she sat before the glass an odd long while, studying the brooch where Mr. Linden had placed it. Her head upon her hand, and with much the same sort of face with which she used long ago to study Pet's letters, or some lesson that Pet's brother had set her. From the sapphires Faith turned to her Bible. She was not, or would not be interrupted, till it was time to attend to business.

The first business was presented for her attention by Miss Linden, who came in, basket in hand. There was no need to ask what it was, such a breath of orange flowers and roses filled the room. She found Faith ready; her hair dressed as it always was; her mind too, to judge by appearances. Only Faith was a little more quiet than usual. With the very quietness of love and sympathy, Pet did her part; with the swiftest fingers, the most noiseless steps. Silent as Mrs. Derrick or Faith herself, only a sparkle of the eyes, a pretty flush on the cheeks, said that she viewed the matter from a greater distance. And yet hardly that, so far as one of the parties was concerned. Never putting her hand forward where Mrs. Derrick's liked to be, it was most efficient in other places. Both used their skill to put the soft muslin safely over Faith's smooth hair, but then Mrs. Derrick was left to fasten and adjust it—Pet applied herself to adjusting the flowers. How dainty they were: those tiny bunches! sprays of myrtle and orange flowers, or a white rose-bud and a more trailing stem of ivy geranium; the breast-knot just touched with purple heliotrope and one blush rose. Kneeling at her feet to put on the rosetted slippers, Pet looked up at her new sister with all her heart in her eyes. And Faith looked down at her—like a child.

She had been dressed in Pet's room—her own, as being larger and more commodious than the one where Faith had stowed herself lately; and when the dressing was done she sat down by the open window, and with the odd capriciousness of the mind at certain times, thought of the day when Mr. Linden had thrown her up the cowslip ball,—and in the same breath wondered who was going to take her down stairs!

But she sat quiet, looking as fair in her soft robe with its orange flowers as if they and she had been made for each other. Faith's hair, in its rich colour, was only dark enough to set off the tender tints of her flowers and dress; it wanted neither veil nor adornment. The very outlines of her figure betokened, as outlines are somewhat apt to do, the spirit within; without a harsh angle or line. And nothing could be too soft, or strong, or pure, to go with those eyes. She sat looking out into the orchard, where now the noonday of summer held its still reign—nothing there but the grass and the trees and the insects. The cowslips were gone; and Mr. Linden——

Pet finished all that had been left unfinished of her own dress, then in her rose-coloured summer silk, white gloves in her hand, white flowers on her breast, she came and stood by Faith. Mrs. Derrick had gone down stairs. It was close upon one o'clock now; the shadows were losing their directness and taking a slant line, the labourers were coming back to their work, standing about and taking off their coats, waiting for the clock to strike. Miss Linden stood drawing on her gloves. Faith gave her one swift glance, which rested for a second on her face with a look of loving gratitude. A flush rose to her cheek, as if it might have been the reflection of Miss Linden's dress; but it was not that, for it paled again.

One o'clock!

It would have seemed a less weird sort of thing if the clock had made a little more fuss,—twelve strokes, or even eleven, would have been something tangible; but that one clang—scarce heard before it was gone, dying away on the June breeze,—what a point of time it seemed! The waves of air were but just at rest, when Mrs. Derrick opened the door and came in; her black dress and white cap setting off a face and demeanour which, with all their wonted sweet placidness, and amid all the tender influences of the day, kept too their wonted energy.

"Come, pretty child!" she said.

Faith was ready, and followed her mother without a question. In the hall Mr. Linden stood waiting for her, and she was given into his care; though again Faith lost the look which passed between the two,—she saw only the startling white of Mr. Linden's gloves. He handed her down stairs, then gave her his arm and took her in; Mrs. Derrick going first, and Pet following.

There were but six or eight people there. On one side sat Mrs. Iredell in her rich dress; the rest were standing, except little Ency Stephens, who was in one of her perched-up positions by the window. Mr. Somers was lingering about *his* position, his wife and Mr. and Mrs. Stoutenburgh were opposite to Mrs. Iredell. Reuben Taylor furthest back of all, in the shadow of Ency's window. Her little cry was the only sound as they came in, and that hardly louder than a sigh of delight.

Faith did not hear it nor look at anybody. Yet she did not look dismayed at all nor abashed. A piece of

very timid gravity the person nearest her knew her to be; but hardly any person further off. A very lovely mingling of shy dignity and humility was in her face and air as she stood before Mr. Somers; those who saw it never forgot.

Except I must that same Mr. Somers! He saw only a pretty bride, whose orange flowers and roses were very sweet. He had seen many pretty brides before, and orange flowers were not new to him. And he pronounced his part of the service which followed, with gratification, certainly. Mr. Somers was always gracious, and to-day he was admiring; but yet with no more sense of what he was about than when a hundred times before he had pronounced it for—very different people!

However, there is a great system of compensations in this world; and on this occasion there was in other members of the party so much sense of what was doing, that it mattered little about Mr. Somers' want of it. It mattered nothing to Faith, how his words were spoken; nobody that heard them forgot how *hers* were—the sweet clear sounds of every syllable; only that once or twice she said "yes" where by established formula she should have said the more dignified "I do." Perhaps "yes" meant as much. Those who heard it thought it did.

For Mr. Linden, his senses not being troubled by shyness, just because his own heart was so thoroughly in what he was about he did perceive the want of heart in Mr. Somers. And, in the abstract, it did not suit his notions that even a man who had married five hundred other people should put such questions to Mignonette, or to him, in a commonplace way. So far his senses perceived, but Mr. Somers could reach no further. One touch of Faith's hand had banished the officiate to another planet; and the vow to love, cherish, and honour, was taken, word for word, deep in his own heart; the grave, deliberate accents of assent seeming to dwell upon each specification. Yes, he took her "for better for worse, in sickness or health, for richer for poorer," every word was like the counting over of gold to him, it was all "richer." Even the last words, the limit fixed, shone with light from another world. "Till death shall you part;" yes, but to them death would be but a short parting. And standing side by side there with the blessing of his earthly life, Mr. Linden thanked God in his heart for the future "life and immortality" to which He had called them both.

Mysterious is the way in which events are telegraphed from the inside of a house to the exterior thereof. Hardly were Mr. Somers' last words spoken, Faith was not yet out of Mr. Linden's hands, when there came a peal from the little white church as if the bell-ringing of two or three Sundays were concentrated in one. Much to the surprise of Mr. Somers; who, to speak truth, rather thought the bells were his personal property, and as such playing truant. But in two seconds the other bell chimed in; and all that could ever be known, was, that Phil Davids and Joe Deacon had been seen in closer attendance on the two churches than they were wont to be week days. Meantime the bells rang.

It was done; and those downcast eyes must be lifted up, if they could. But Faith was not unlike her usual manner. The slight air of timidity which sat with such grace upon her was not so very unusual; and that besides touched only or mainly one person. With blushing quietness she let her friends kiss and congratulate her. It was rather kiss and caress her; for they came about her, that little bevy of friends, with a warmth that might have thawed Mr. Somers. Mrs. Derrick and Pet glad and silent, Reuben Taylor very shy, the Stoutenburghs in a little furor of interest which yet did not break pretty bounds. And then Faith went up to Ency where she sat by the window, and gave her two kisses, very grave and sweet.

"How beautiful you are, ma'am!" was the child's truthful comment.

"Do you know who 'Miss Faith' is now, Ency?"—"Yes sir," the child said, then shy of speaking it out, "Stoop down and I'll tell you."

Mr. Linden bent his head to hear the whisper, giving her a kiss in return, and then carried Faith off to the next room; where presently too the little lame girl was perched up at such a table as she had never dreamed of before.

It was a pretty gathering, both on the table and around it. The party of friends, few enough to be choice, were good and different enough to be picturesque; and had among them a sufficient amount of personal advantages to be, as Ency said, "beautiful." The table itself was very plain with regard to china and silver; but fruit is beautiful, and there was an abundance of that. Coffee of course; and cream, yellow as gold, for coffee and fruit both. There were more substantial things, to serve as substitutes for dinner, attesting Mrs. Derrick's good housekeeping at once, and the loving remembrance of friends. There had been little need to do much in the house. Mrs. Iredell had taken the wedding cake into her charge, which Mrs. Stoutenburgh not knowing had taken it into hers, and into her hands as well; so Faith had both the bought cake, of the richest and best ornamented to a point, and the home-made; with plain icing indeed, but wherein every raisin had been put with a sweet thought.

"This is—ha!—a very agreeable occasion!" said Mr. Somers, smiling at the ornamented plum cake which was before him. "I—a—really, I don't see, Mrs. Derrick, how anything could be improved for the pleasure of the party. We have done a good thing, and to good people, and it's been well done;" (Mr. Somers vaunted himself), "and in a good time,—ha—this is the prettiest month in the year, Mr. Linden; and now we are all enjoying a pleasant sight, before us and around us, and I enjoy my coffee also very much, Mrs Derrick. The only bad thing about it is—ha—that it rather spoils one for the next occasion. I assure you I haven't seen anything like it in Pattaquasset, since I have lived here! I wasn't married here, Mrs. Stoutenburgh, take notice."

"I hope you don't mean to say you saw anything that was on the table the day *you* were married, Mr. Somers!" said Mrs. Stoutenburgh irreverently.

"Let's hear what you mean by well done,—let's hear, Mr. Somers," said the Squire.

"He means securely," said Mrs. Somers.

"I feel sure," said Mr. Somers with exquisite significancy, "I feel sure that *part* of my audience were at no loss for the meaning of my words. Experience, somebody says, is the best commentary—hey, Mr. Linden? is it not so?"—"What, sir?"

Mr. Somers laughed, gently. "I see you coincide with me in opinion, sir."

"I coincide with him in the opinion that it was well done to ring the bells," said Mrs. Stoutenburgh. "Reuben, I guess that was your doing."

"Never mind whose it was," said the Squire, "the bells were never put to a better use, week days, I'll venture. Mr. Linden, won't that lady by you let me give her another piece of chicken?"—"No, sir," came in a low voice that had a private chime of its own.

"Little bird," said Mr. Linden, softly, "do you know that all your compeers live by eating?"—"Crumbs" said Faith with equal softness.

"But of proportionate size!"—"Yes," said Faith.

"You know," he said in the same low voice, "to go back to our old maxim those bells may stand for the music, and we have certainly spoken a few sensible words; but if you do not look up how will you find the picture?"—She raised her eyes, but it was for a swift full glance up into his face; she looked nowhere else, and her eyes went back to her plate again. The involuntary, unconscious significance of the action made Mr. Linden smile.

"I have had mine now, Mignonette, and Ency spoke true."

"How long does it take people to get married," came in a good-humoured kind of a growl from the room they had left, the door to which was ajar. "Ain't it done yet?"

"There's Mr. Simlins, Endecott," whispered Faith, colouring.

"Come in and see," said Squire Stoutenburgh. "Who wants to know?" Wherewith the door was pushed open, and Mr. Simlins long figure presented itself, and stood still.

"What are you uneasy about, Mr. Simlins?" the Squire went on. "You may go and shake hands with Mr. Linden, but don't congratulate anybody else." The farmer's eye rested for a moment on Faith; then he went round and shook hands with the bridegroom.

"Is it done?" he asked again in the midst of this ceremony.—"Yes."

"Past all help, Mr. Simlins," said Mrs. Somers.

"I am glad, for one!" Mr. Simlins answered. "Mayn't I see this cretur here? I wish you'd stand up and let me look at you."

Faith rose up, he had edged along to her. He surveyed her profoundly.
"Be you Faith Derrick?" he said.—"Yes, sir."

He shook *her* hand then, holding it fast. "It's the true, and not a counter," he remarked to Mr. Linden. "Now, if you'd only take Neanticut, I could die content, only for liking to live and see you. Where *are* you going to take her to?"—"I am not sure yet."

"I guess I don't want you at Neanticut," said the farmer, taking a cup of coffee which Faith gave him.

"Last Sunday fixed that. But there'll a bushel of Neanticut nuts follow you every year as long as I'm a Simlins, if you go to the Antipathies. No, I don't want anythin' to eat—I've done my eatin' till supper-time."

The door-knocker warned the party that they must not tarry round the lunch-table, and before Mr. Simlins had a chance to say anything more he had on his mind, the principal personages of the day were receiving Judge Harrison and his daughter in the other room. Mr. Simlins looked on, somewhat grimly, but with inward delight and exultation deep and strong. Miss Sophy was affectionate, the judge very kind; the congratulations of both very hearty; though Judge Harrison complained that Mr. Linden was robbing Pattaquasset, and Sophy echoed the sorrow if not the complaint. In the midst of this came in Miss Essie de Staff, with a troop of brothers and sisters; and they had scarcely paid their compliments when they were obliged to stand aside to make room for some new comers. Miss Essie's eyes had full employment, and were rather earnest about it.

"She's beautifully dressed," she remarked to Mrs. Stoutenburgh, evidently meditating a good deal more than her words carried.

"Why, of course!" was Mrs. Stoutenburgh's quick response, "and so is he. Don't be partial in your examinations."

"Oh he, of course!" said Miss Essie, in the same manner.

"I never saw two people set each other off better," said Mrs.
Stoutenburgh.

"Set each other off?" repeated Miss Essie. "Why he'd set anybody off! I always admired him. Look at her! she hasn't an idea how to be ceremonious." Faith had been speaking to Mrs. Iredell. Just then a rosebud having detached itself from her dress, she went round the room to Ency by her window and gave it to her. Near this window Miss Linden had placed herself; the table before her covered with wedding cake and white ribbon, Reuben Taylor at her side to cut and fold, her little fingers daintily wrapping and tying up. Ency already held her piece of cake and white ribbon, and with the promise of other pieces to take home, watched Miss Linden's proceedings with interest. It was a busy table, for thither came everybody else after cake and white ribbon. Thither came Mrs. Stoutenburgh now, quitting Miss Essie.

"Faith, what do you think Mr. Stoutenburgh asked me Sunday?"—"I don't know. What?" asked Faith, with her half-shy, half free, very happy face.

"You should have heard him!" said Mrs. Stoutenburgh, laughing, but speaking in the softest of whispers. "You should have heard the dismal way in which he asked me if Mr. Somers would go anywhere else, if he could get a chance."

Faith smiled, but evidently to her the question whether Mr. Linden should stay in Pattaquasset had lost its interest.

"O I can find her, never fear!" said Miss Bezac, followed by Mr. Linden in Faith's direction. "Though I don't suppose you ever did fear anything. And I do suppose, if I've thought once I have fifty times how she'd look to-day, and I was right every time. Don't she look! I always told her she didn't know what she wanted—and I'm sure she don't now." With which Miss Bezac gave Faith as hearty a congratulation as she had yet received. "Well," she said, turning to Mr. Linden, "do you wonder I wanted to make it?"—"Not in the least."

"But what do I want, Miss Bezac?" said Faith laughing and looking affectionately at her old friend and fellow-work-woman.

"Why I should think nothing," said Miss Bezac. "So it seems to me. And talking of seams—didn't I do yours! Do you know I should have come before, but I never can see two people promise to love each other forever without crying—and crying always makes rusty needles—so I wouldn't come till now, when everybody's laughing." Faith was an exception, for her amusement grew demure. And Miss Essie approached.

Now Miss Essie's black eyes, although bright enough, were altogether gracious, and in a certain way even propitiatory. They were bent upon the gentleman of the group.

"Mr. Linden," said the lady with her most flattering manner, "I want to know if you have forgiven me all my dreadful speeches that I made once."

"Miss Essie, I never questioned your right to make them, therefore you see my forgiveness has no

place." Miss Essie looked as if her "study" of Mr. Linden hadn't been thorough.

"That's very polite," she said; "too polite. But do you think Mrs. Linden will ever let me come into her house?"

"Why not? It cannot be worse than you imagined."

"Because," said Miss Essie, earnestly, "I want to come, and I am afraid she will not ask me. I go everywhere, and wherever you are I shall be sure to come there some time; and then I want to see you and see how you live, and see if my theory was mistaken. But I drew it from experience!"

"Did you ever hear of the ice palace the little brook built for himself?" said Mr. Linden.—"Lowell, oh yes!"

"Mrs. Linden thinks she would like to try that."

If ever black eyes were thoroughly puzzled, that were Miss Essie's. She glanced from Mr. Linden to Faith, who had fallen back towards another part of the room, but whose cheek gave token of her having heard and noticed. Miss Essie's eyes came back; she looked a little mortified.

"I see you have not forgiven me," she said. "But, Mr. Linden, I only spoke of what I had seen. I had been unfortunate; and I am sure I needn't confine myself to the past tense! I knew nothing, you know."

"Miss Essie," he said, smiling, "your frame for the picture may be correct, but the picture will be different. As you will see when you come."

"Then you will let me come?"—"I will let you come. Only if you hear that Faith is not at home, do not feel sure of the fact till you have looked in my study."

Miss Essie's face for a moment was notable. She was in a certain way satisfied, and yet it wore a sort of compound mortification inexplicable very likely, to the lady herself, and perhaps, that only an acute eye of another would have read.

Before this dialogue had reached so much of a culmination, Mr. Simlins, who had been standing looking at everything like a good-humoured bear, made his way across the room, and through the people to Faith, where she had shrunk back out of the way.

"I can't stay here all the afternoon!" said he, "and I s'pose it aint expected of me. Can't you step over yonder and let a man have a chance to say a word to you, before I go?"

Faith agreed to this proposition, not knowing that it was going to take her literally into a corner; but to one of the further corners of the room Mr. Simlins strode, and Faith went after him; and there he sat down and she was fain to do likewise. Then he wasn't ready.

"I had somethin' to say to you," said he, "but I don't know how to say it!"—"Try, Mr. Simlins," said Faith, smiling.

"How does the dominie manage to talk to you?" said he, looking at her. "*I* don't see how he can get on with it."

Faith grew crimson, and grave.

"Well," said the farmer, smiling a bit, "I s'pose I'll have to get it out somehow. You see, Faith, the thing is, in my mind, I want you to have something that'll make you—you and him too—think of Pattaquasset and me once in a while. Now I'm goin' to give you that black heifer. If you can, I hope you'll take her with you whereever you're goin'—if you can't, why you may turn her into cash; but I guess you can. She's a real Simlins—she'll run, if you don't keep a fence round her; but if you treat her right, she'll give you all *your* dairy'll want for some time to come; and the very plague you'll be at to keep her shut up, will make you think of me."

"Dear Mr. Simlins!" Faith said with her eyes full, "there is no danger about that!"—

"No!" said he rising; "and when you think of me I know you'll do something else for me. Good-bye, till you get back again." Off he went. Other people followed. The room had thinned a little, when Pet left her table in Reuben's charge and came to Faith's corner.

"Poor child," she said, "you must be tired. Faith, I shall defy ceremony, and put you in Aunt Iredell's chair; she is going to lie down. Oh! how did that man get here?—and George Alcott!" Pet faced round upon Faith, folding her hands with an air of dismayed resignation.

"What's the matter, Pet?"—"I thought I was safe here," said Miss Linden. "Faith, I did not suppose ubiquitous people found their way to Pattaquasset. You'll have to run the gauntlet of that man's compliments, child, however, Endy is a pretty good safeguard."

Before Faith could see much of what was going on, Mr. Linden was at her side. "Mrs. Linden—*Mr. Motley*," was all he said; and Faith found herself face to face with one of those two well-remembered strangers. So well remembered that a slight glance at him was arrested, by what at first she did not recognize, and unconsciously she gave Mr. Motley for a second a look sufficiently like what he had seen before to identify her. That second brought it all back. A blush of most rosy beauty came upon Faith's face, and her eyes fell as if no one was ever to see them again. Mr. Motley's eyes, on the contrary, expanded. But the whistle which rose politely to his lips, was held in polite check—by Mr. Linden's presence or some other consideration—and with no further sign than an under breath "Linden!" Mr. Motley gave the bride his hand, claiming that privilege in easy, musky words, on the score of old acquaintanceship with the bridegroom.

"I trust Mrs. Linden has been well since I last (and first!) had the pleasure of seeing her? Apart from the occasion—it seems to me that she is looking even better than then—though *then* I should not have believed that possible."

"It is a long time, sir," Faith said gravely.

"Linden," said Mr. Motley in a sort of aside, "even your symmetrical taste must be satisfied!"

"With what?" said Mr. Linden. Which rather shortly—put question brought Mr. Motley to a stand. Much as when one pushes on into daylight through the filmy finespun work of a spider, that respectable insect looks about, considering where he shall begin anew.

"It is so long," said Mr. Motley with soft emphasis, "that I could hardly have hoped to be remembered."

"If I recollect right," said Mr. Linden, "if you did not misstate the case, it was the charms of your conversation that made the impression."

"You are the most inconvenient person to talk to!" said Mr. Motley with a glance at the handsome face. "Like a quicksand—closing around one. Mrs. Linden, do you not find it so? Ah George!—talking to Miss Pet as usual. Permit me—Mrs. Linden, Mr. Alcott. George, you cannot have forgotten Mrs. Linden?" That George had not was very clear.

And that Faith had not forgotten, was very clear. She lifted her eyes once more, to see if the second *was* the second; and then stood with the most exquisite cheeks, though perfectly quiet. Her gloves had not been put on again since the lunch, and the hand that held them bore also the ring which had been the gentlemen's admiration.

"Now what do you think, George," said Mr. Motley, "of Linden's letting me tell Julius Harrison that whole story, and never giving the least hint that he knew the lady referred to? Except, yes once indeed, I do remember, Mrs. Linden, his face took a warm reflection of the subject, but I thought that was due to my powers as a colourist."

"You couldn't high-colour that picture," said Mr. Alcott, in a tone Faith remembered well. "Mrs. Linden, I hope we are to see you at Newport."

Faith felt in a tumult with all these "Mrs. Lindens." But all that seemed unquiet about her, besides her cheeks, was the flashing ring.

"Well, we must tear ourselves away from this place of fascination," said Mr. Motley. "I believe, Mrs. Linden, we ought to apologize for our intrusion, but it was an old saying among this gentleman's friends that he never would submit to 'bonds and imprisonments'—(there goes the Bible again!) and some of them had a long-standing permission to come and believe their eyes if such an event ever should take place. I can hardly, now!"

"Why do you, sir?" Faith asked simply.

"Really, madam, because I can't help it! One look at you, Mrs. Linden, is enough. In some circumstances all a man can do is to surrender!"

"He needn't till he's summoned," said George Alcott shortly. Though whether he had acted so wisely himself was a question, as Mr. Linden said amusedly after they were gone.

Faith turned away, feeling as if she had rather more than enough, and occupied herself with Reuben and Ency again. Then came in Farmer Davids and his wife, and Phil. Phil was forthwith in a state of "glamour;" but Faith brought him to the table and gave him cake and discoursed to him and Reuben; while Mrs. Davids talked to Mrs. Derrick in wonderful delighted admiration; and the farmer as usual fixed upon Mr. Linden.

"We had the uncommon pleasure of hearin' you speak last Sunday, sir," said Mr. Davids with great seriousness. "I sha'n't forget it, what you said. And you don't know where you're going to fix yourself, sir?"

"Not certainly."

"I would rather than half what I sell off the farm, that it was going to be where I could be within reach of you, sir! But wherever 'tis Phil, and I, we consulted how we could contrive to show our sense of this day; we're plain folks, Mr. Linden, and we didn't know how to fit; but if you'll let us know where you're goin' to be, Mrs. Davids she wants to send your wife a cheese, and there's some of Phil's apples, and I want you to have some Pattaquasset flour to make you think of us. And if you'll only think of us every year as long as they come, it's all I ask!" It was said with the most honest expression of struggling regard, and respect, that wanted to show itself.

Then Mr. Linden was claimed by a new comer. Sam Stoutenburgh, fresh from College, Quilipeak, and the tailor, presented himself. Now it was rather a warm day, and trains are not cool, and haste is not a refrigerator, nevertheless Sam's cheeks were high coloured! His greeting of Mr. Linden was far less off-hand and dashing than was usual with this new Junior; and when carried off to Mrs. Linden, Sam (to use an elegant word) was "flustered."

"Miss Faith," he began. "No I don't mean that! I beg your pardon, but I'm very glad to see you again, and I wish you were going to stay here always."

Faith laughed. "Will you stay here always yourself, Sam?"

"O I don't know," said Sam. "It's a while before I've got to do anything yet. But Miss Faith—I mean! since you will go, won't you please take this?" and Sam presented a tiny box containing a pretty gold set cornelian seal, engraved with a spirited Jehu chariot running away! "It'll remind you of a day *I* shall never forget," said Sam both honestly and sentimentally. If Mr. Linden could have helped Faith answer, he would!

Faith's face was in a quiver, between laughter and very much deeper and stronger feeling; but she shook Sam's hand again gratefully.—"I shall never forget it, Sam, nor what you did for me that day. And I hope you'll come and see me somewhere else, some time."

Then Mr. Linden spoke. "No one can owe you so much for that day's work as I, Sam; and since she is running away again you must do as you did then, and find her."

Sam was somewhat touched and overwhelmed, and went off to talk to
Reuben about Miss Linden's dress. A little while longer and the room
was cleared. The two collegians came last of all to say good-bye,
Reuben lingering behind his friend.

"You know," said Mr. Linden, holding the boy's hand, "you are coming to study with me, Reuben, if I live; we will not call it good-bye. And I shall expect to see you before that in vacation."

"And you know, Reuben," said Faith, very low, "you have been a brother to me this great while."

Reuben looked down, trying for words. Then meeting Faith's eyes as he had done that very first time —what though his own were full—he said, "I am not sorry, ma'am, I am glad: so glad!" he repeated, looking from her face to Mr. Linden's. But his eyes fell then; and hastily clasping the hand she held out to him, he bent his face to Mr. Linden's and turned away. One quick step Mr. Linden took after him, and they left the room arm in arm, after the old fashion.

With Mr. Linden, when he came back, was an oldish gentleman, silver-haired, with a fresh ruddy face; not very tall, *very* pleasant-looking. Pet's exclamation was of joy, this time, and she ran forward to meet him. Then Mr. Linden brought him up to Faith. "Mignonette, this is my dear friend, Mr. Olyphant." And Mr. Olyphant took both her hands and kissed her on both cheeks, as if he meant to be her friend too: then looked at her without letting go. "Endecott!" he said, turning to Mr. Linden, "whatever you undertake you always do well!" And he shook Faith's hands again, and told her he could wish her joy with a clear conscience.

The timid little smile which this remark procured him, might have confirmed the old gentleman in his first-expressed opinion. Mr. Olyphant studied her a minute, not confusingly, but with a sort of touched kindliness.

"*What* do you call her, Endecott?" he said.—"Any sweet name I can think of," said Mr. Linden, smiling, "just now, Mignonette." Which remark had a merciless effect upon Faith's cheeks.

"It suits her, Mr. Olyphant," said Pet.

"So I see, Miss Pet. Do you think I have lost my eyes? Endecott, are you going to bring her to the White Mountains?"—"I think so, sir: that is my present inclination."

"How would you like it, Mrs. Linden?"—"I think I should like it, sir."

"Not afraid of the cold?"—Faith's smile clearly was not afraid of anything. So was her answer.

"You must have a house midway on the slope," said Mr. Olyphant; "half your parish above your heads, half at your feet: and you will have plenty of snow, and plenty of work, and not much else, but each other. Endecott's face says that is being very rich but he always was an unworldly sort of fellow, Mrs. Linden; I don't think he ever saw the real glitter of gold, yet."

Did her eyes? But they were unconsciously looking at riches of some kind; there was no poverty in them. "I like work, sir."

"Do you think she could bear the cold, Mr. Olyphant? how are the winters there? That is what I have thought of most."

"I am no more afraid of the cold than you are, Endecott." How gently the last word was spoken! But Faith clearly remembered her lesson.

Mr. Linden smiled. "She is a real little Sunbeam," he said. "You know they make light of cold weather."

"Light of it in two ways," said Mr. Olyphant. "No, I don't think you need fear the winters for her; we'd try and protect her."

"Do you see how much good the Sunbeam has done him, Mr. Olyphant?" said Pet.—"I see it, Miss Pet; it does me good. I meant to have been here to see you married, Endecott, and missed the train. I shall miss it again, now, if I am not careful. But you must come up and stay with us, and we'll arrange matters. Such neighbours may tempt me to winter in the mountains myself, and then I shall take charge of you, Miss Pet."

"I should like that," said Pet.

"I see, my dear Mrs. Linden," said Mr. Olyphant, smiling at her, "I see you follow one of the old Jewish laws."

"What is that, sir?"—"You know it was required of the Jews that they should bear the words of the law 'as frontlets between the eyes'. Now—if you will forgive me for saying so—in your eyes is written one of the proverbs."

"Look up, Mignonette, and let me see," said Mr. Linden. But oddly,
Faith looked down first; then the eyes were lifted.

"Is truth a proverb?" said Pet laughing.—"O you see too many things there!" said Mr. Olyphant,—"this is what I see, Endecott—'The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her.'"

A little veil of shyness and modesty suddenly fell around Faith. Even her head drooped. But Mr. Linden's lips touched the fair brow between those very fair eyes.

"I cannot praise your discernment, sir," he said. "It is not more true than evident."

"I cannot half congratulate either of you," said Mr. Olyphant, smiling, "so I'll go. Good-bye, Miss Pet—remember next winter. Mrs. Linden, we shall expect to see you long before that time. Let me have a word with you, Endecott." And Faith was again left alone, entirely this time, for Miss Linden went up stairs to attend Mrs. Iredell.

As they turned to go out, Faith turned the other way, and sat down, feeling overwhelmed. Everything was very still. Pet's light steps passed off in the distance; through the open windows came the song of kildeers and robins, the breath of roses, the muslin-veiled sunshine. Then she heard Mr. Olyphant's

carriage drive off, and Mr. Linden came back. Faith started up, and very lovely she looked, with the timid grace of those still dyed cheeks and vailed brow.

"My poor little tired Mignonette!" he said as he came up to her. Then lifted her face, and looking at it a moment with a half smile, pressed his lips again where they had been so lately. But this time that did not satisfy him.

"Endy," she said presently, "please don't praise me before other people!"

"What dreadful thing did I say?" inquired Mr. Linden, laughing. "Do you know I have hardly seen my wife yet?"—To judge by Faith's face, neither had she.

"If I speak of her at all I must speak the truth. But Mr. Olyphant knows me of old; he will not take my words for more than they are worth."

A slight commentary of a smile passed, but Faith did not adventure any repartee.

"Are you very tired?"—"Oh no!"

"Little bird!" said Mr. Linden, holding her close. "What sort of a sweet spirit was it that said those words at my side this morning?"

There was no answer at first; and then, very quaint and soft the words—"Only Faith Derrick."

"'Only.'—Faith, did you hear my parting direction to Miss
Essie?"—"Yes."

"Do you agree to it, Mrs. Linden?"

He had spoken that name a good many times that day, and to be sure her cheeks had more or less acknowledged it; but this time it brought such a rush of colour that she stooped her face to be out of sight.

"Do you want Miss Reason to answer that question, sir?"—"No, nor Miss anybody."

"Prudence would say, there are shortcakes," said Faith.

"Where?"—"In—hypothesis."

"If your shortcakes outweigh my study, Faith, they will be heavier than
I ever saw them!"

"You wouldn't take Reason's answer," said Faith.

"What would it have been?"

She looked up, a swift little laughing glance into his face.

"Parlez, Madame, s'il vous plaît."

Her look changed. "You know, Endy, I would rather be there than anywhere else in the world."

It moved him. The happiness to which his look bore witness was of a kind too deep for words.

"Do you know, love, if we had been going at once to our work in the mountains, I should have asked a great many people to come here to-day."

"Would you? why, Endy?"—"To let them see my wife. Now, I mean to take her to see them."

Faith was willing he should take her where he pleased, though she made no remark. Her timidity moved in a small circle, and touched principally him. Mingling with this, and in all she did, ever since half past one o'clock to-day, there had been a sort of dignity of grave happiness; very rare, very beautiful.

"I wonder if you know half how lovely and dear you are?" said Mr. Linden, studying the fair outlines of character, as well as of feature. But Faith's eye went all down the pattern of embroidery on her white robe, and never dared meet his. "Have you any idea, little Mignonette of sweetness, after what fashion that proverb is true?"

She looked up, uncertain what proverb he meant; but then immediately certain, bent her head again. Faith never thought of herself as Mr. Linden thought of her. Movings of humility and determination

were in her heart now, but she knew he would not bear to hear her speak them, and her own voice was not just ready. So she was only silent still.

"What will make you speak?" said Mr. Linden, smiling. "I am like Ali Baba before the storehouse of hid treasure. Is this the 'Sesame' you are waiting for?" he added, raising her face and trying two or three persuasive kisses.

"There was nothing in the storehouse," said Faith laughingly. "No words
I mean."—"I am willing to take thoughts."

"How?"—"Which way you like!"

"Then you will have to wait for them, Endy."

"Mignonette, I am of an impatient disposition."

"Yes I know it."

"Is it to be your first wifely undertaking to cure me?" he said, laughing.—"It takes time to put thoughts into action," said Faith, blushing.—"Not all thoughts, Mignonette."

She coloured beautifully; but anything more pure and sweet than those first wifely kisses of Faith could not be told. Did he know, had he felt, all the love and allegiance they had so silently and timidly spoken? She had reason to think so.

CHAPTER XLIV.

In a low whitewashed room, very clean though little and plain, where the breeze blew in fresh from the sea, Faith found herself established Friday afternoon. Mr. Linden had promised to show her the surf, and so had brought her down to a little village, long ago known to him, on the New England shore; where the people lived by farming and fishing, and no hotel attracted or held an influx of city life. It was rather late in the day, for the journey had been in part off the usual route of railway and steam, and therefore had been longer if not wearier. But when Faith had got rid of the dust, Mr. Linden came to her door to say that it would be half an hour to supper, and ask if she was too tired to walk down to the beach.

The shore was but a few hundred yards from the little farmhouse; green grass, with interrupting rocks, extending all the way. Faith hardly knew what she was corning to till she reached the brink. There the precipitous rocks rose sheer a hundred feet from the bottom, and at the bottom, down below her, a narrow strip of beach was bordered with the billowy crest and foam of the sea. Nothing but the dark ocean and the illimitable ocean line beyond; there was not even a sail in sight this evening; in full uninterrupted power and course, from the broad east, the swells of the sea rolled in and broke—broke, with their graceful, grand monotony.

The beach was narrow at height of tide; now the tide was out. Fishermen's boats were drawn up near to the rocks, and steep narrow pathways along and down the face of them allowed the fishermen to go from the top to the bottom.

"Can't we get down there?" said Faith, when she had stood a minute looking silently. Her face showed an eager readiness for action.

"Can you fly, little bird?"—"Yes—as well as the fishermen can!"

"If you cannot I can carry you," said Mr. Linden.—And doubtless he would have found some way to make his words good had there been need; as it was, he only guarded her down the steep rocky way, going before her and holding her hand in a grasp she would have been puzzled to get away from. But Faith was light and free of foot, and gave him no trouble. Once at the bottom, she went straight towards those in-coming big waves, and in front of them stood still. The sea-breeze blew in her face; the roar of the breakers made music in her ears. Faith folded one hand upon the other, and stood motionless. Now and then the wind caught the spray from some beaten rock and flung it in her face, and wave after wave rose up and donned its white crest; the upstanding green water touched with sunlight and shadow, and changing tints of amber and olive, down which the white foam came curling and rushing—sweeping in knots of seaweed, and leaving all the pebbles with wet faces. Mr. Linden let her look without the interruption of a word; but he presently put his arm round her, and drew her a little into shelter from the strong breeze. It was a while before she moved from her steady gaze at the

water; then she looked up, the joy of her face breaking into a smile.

"Endecott, will you show me anything more grand than this?"

"You shall tell me when you have seen the uprising mists of Niagara," he answered, smiling, "or the ravines between snowcaps 'five thousand summers old.'"

Her eye went back to the sea. "It brings before me, somehow," she said slowly, "all time, and all eternity! I have been thinking here of myself as I was a little child, and as I shall be, and as I am," she added, with her inveterate exactness, and blushing. "I seem to see only the great scale of everything."

"Tell me a little more clearly what you see," said Mr. Linden.

"It isn't worth telling. I see everything here as belonging to God. The world seems his great work-place, and life his time for doing the work, and I—and you," she said, with a flash of light coming across her face, "his work-people. And those great breaking waves, somehow, seem to me like the resistless, sure, beautiful, doings of his providence." She spoke very quietly, because she was bidden, evidently.

"Do you know how many other things they are like?—or rather how many are likened to them in the Bible?"—"No! I don't know the Bible as you do."

"They seem to be a never-failing image—an illustration suiting very different things. 'The wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest,' and then, 'O that thou hadst hearkened to me I then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea.'"

"There is the endless struggle of human will and purpose against the divine—'The floods have lifted up, O Lord, the floods have lifted up their voice; the floods lift up their waves. The Lord on high is mightier than the noise of many waters, yea, than the mighty waves of the sea.' 'Fear ye not me? saith the Lord: will ye not tremble at my presence, which have placed the sand for the bound of the sea by a perpetual decree, that it cannot pass it: and though the waves thereof toss themselves, yet can they not prevail: though they roar, yet can they not pass over it?' And so in another place the image is reversed, and God says, 'Behold I am against thee, O Tyrus, and will cause many nations to come up against thee, as the sea causeth his waves to come up.' Could anything be more forcible?"

A look was Faith's answer; it spoke the kindled thoughts at work.

"Then you know," Mr. Linden went on, "how often the troubles of God's children are compared to the ocean; as David says, 'All thy waves are gone over me.' But then the Lord answers to that, 'When thou passest through the waters I will be with thee, and through the floods, they shall not overwhelm thee;' and David himself in another place declares it to be true—'O Lord God of hosts, who is a strong Lord like unto thee? or to thy faithfulness round about thee? Thou rulest the raging of the sea: when the waves thereof arise, thou stillest them.'—I suppose," he added, thoughtfully, taking both her hands in his, "this is one sense in which by-and-by 'there shall be no more sea'—except that 'sea of glass, upon which they stand who have gotten the victory!'"

Another look, a grave, full look, came to him from Faith; and grave and soft her eye went back to the sea. The sunbeams were all off it; it was dark and foamy. Speaking rather low, half to her half to himself, Mr. Linden went on,—"'And they overcame by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony: and they loved not their lives unto the death.'"

Her look did not move. Mr. Linden's went with it for a minute or two, but then it came back to her differently.

"My darling, I am afraid to have you stay here any longer."

"We can come again!" said Faith gleefully, as she turned away. "I want to look at them a great deal."

"We will come again and try how far a 'ladder' can reach from this low sand."

She looked back for another glance as she began to mount the rocky way. The mounting was an easy matter, for Mr. Linden came close and took hold of her in such fashion that she was more than half carried up.

"Do you feel as if you had wings now?" he asked her, after a somewhat quick "flight" up half the way.

"Folded ones," said Faith, laughing and breathless. "I don't know what sort yours can be! I can go up by myself, Endecott."

"With folded wings, as you remark, Mrs. Linden. Do you remember that infallible way of recognizing 'earth's angels,' when they are not pluming themselves?"—"They never do plume themselves," said

Faith, stopping to look at him.

"Not when they are carried!"

Faith's laugh rolled down the rocks; and then as they reached the top she grew timid and quiet, a mood which came over her whenever she remembered her new position and name in the world.

There is no room to tell all the seaside doings of those days; the surf bathing, and fishing beyond the surf. A week passed there, or rather more; then, Mr. Linden having business in New York, the "wooden horse" went that way. We cannot follow all its travels. But we must stay with it a day in the city.

CHAPTER XLV.

Everybody who has travelled on the great route from Pattaquasset to New York, knows that the scenery is not striking. Pleasant it is, and fresh, in fresh seasons of the year; cornfields and hayfields and sparkling little rivers always make up a fair prospect: but, until the towers of Quilipeak rise upon the sight, with their leafy setting of green, there is nothing to draw much notice. And less, afterwards. The train flies on, past numberless stopping-posts, over bridges, through towns; regaling its passengers with hay, salt water, bony fish, and (in the season) dust; until the matchless flats, marshes, pools, sights, and smells crowd thick about Haarlem river, and lure the traveller on through the sweet suburbs of New York. Hither, business demanded that the "wooden horse" should come for a day or two; here they were to be received by one of the many old friends who were claiming, all over the country, a visit from Mr. Linden and his bride. Through the dark tunnel the train puffed on, the passengers winking and breathing beneath the air-holes, dark and smothered where air-holes were not; then the cars ran out into the sunlight, and, in a minute more, two of the passengers were transferred to the easy rolling coach which was in waiting for them, and drove away. Past warm brick fronts and pavements; past radish boys and raspberry girls; past oranges, pineapples, vegetables, in every degree of freshness except fresh. Of all which, even the vegetables, Faith's eyes took most curious and intent notice—for one minute; then the Avenue and fruit stalls were left behind; the carriage had turned a corner, and, in another minute or two, drew up before an imposing front in Madison Square. And there, at the very steps, was a little raspberry girl. How Faith looked at her!

"Raspberries to-day, ma'am?" said the child, encouraged by the look, or the sweet face.—"No, dear, I don't want any."

Faith went gravely up the steps. It was her first introduction to New York. But Mr. Linden's face wore a smile. There was no time to remark on it, for the door opened and a second introduction awaited her. An introduction to another part of the world. A magnificent house, every square yard of which, perhaps, taken with its furniture and adornments, had cost as much as the whole of Faith's old home. A palace of luxury, where no want of any kind, material, could be known or fancied. In this house they were welcomed with a great welcome by a stately lady, Mr. Linden's old friend and his mother's; and by her family of sons and daughters, who were in another style, and whose vivacious kindness seemed disposed to take up Faith bodily and carry her off. It was a novel scene for Faith, and she was amused. Amused too with the overpowering curiosity which took the guise, or the veil, of so much kindness, and beset her, because—Mr. Linden had married her. Yet Faith did not see the hundredth part of their curiosity. Mr. Linden, whose eyes were more open, was proportionably amused, both with that and with Faith's simplicity, which half gratified and at least half baffled it. The young ladies at last took Faith up to her room; and, after lavishing all sorts of attentions upon her, and making various vain efforts to understand her, gave her the information that a good deal of company was expected to dinner, and left her, baffled and attracted almost in an equal degree.

They did not seem to have as puzzling an effect on Faith; for when Mr. Linden came out of his own dressing-room, he found her ready, and looking as fresh and cool as if she had just come up from the sands at Bankhead. She was dressed in a light muslin, but no more elaborately than she used to be at Pattaquasset; only that this time her ruffles were laces. She was a little more dainty for the dinner-party. Mr. Linden came with a knot of glowing geraniums—"Jewess," and "Perfection," and "Queen of the Fairies;" which, bound together as they were with white ribband, he first laid against her dress to try the effect (well deserving his smile of comment) then put in her hand to make fast. They set off all the quiet elegance of her figure after their own style, which was not quiet.

"Now, Mignonette," he said, "I suppose you know that I am to have the pleasure of introducing my wife to sundry people?"—"I heard they were coming," said Faith.

"If you will only stand by and look on, it will amuse you very much."

"It will amuse me anyway," said Faith, "if,"—and what a rose colour came up into her face—"if, Endy, you are satisfied."

Mr. Linden folded his arms and looked at her. "If you say anything against my wife, Mrs. Linden, her husband will not like it—neither will yours."

"That is all I care about, not pleasing those two gentlemen," said Faith, laughing.

"Is that all? I shall report your mind at rest. Come, it is time this little exotic should appear." Faith thought as she went with him, that she was anything but an *exotic;* she did not speak her thoughts.

There was a large dinner company gathered and gathering; and the "pleasure" Mr. Linden had spoken of—introducing his wife—was one enjoyed, by him or somebody, a great many times in the course of the evening. This was something very unlike Pattaquasset or anything to be found there; only in Judge Harrison's house little glimpses of this sort of society might be had; and these people seemed to Faith rather in the sphere of Dr. Harrison than of his father and sister. People who had rubbed off every particle of native simplicity that ever belonged to them, and who, if they were simple at all—as some of them were—had a different kind of simplicity, made after a most exquisite and refined worldly fashion. How it was made or worn, Faith could not tell; she had an instinctive feeling of the difference. If she had set on foot a comparison, she would soon have come to the conclusion that "Mr. Linden's wife" was of another pattern altogether. But Faith never thought of doing that. Her words were so true that she had spoken, she cared so singly to satisfy one person there, and had such an humble confidence of doing it, that other people gave her little concern. She had little need, for no word or glance fell upon Faith that did not show the eye or the speaker won or attracted. The words and glances were very many, but Faith never found out or suspected that it was to see *her* all this party of grand people had been gathered together. She thought they were curious about "Mr. Linden's wife;" and though their curiosity made her shy, and her sense of responsibility gave an exquisite tenderness to her manner, both effects only set a grace upon her usual free simplicity. That was not disturbed, though a good deal of the time Faith was far from Mr. Linden's kelp or protection. A stranger took her in to dinner, and among strangers she made her way most of the evening. But though she was shy, Faith was afraid never but of one person, nor much of him.

For him—among old acquaintances, beset with all manner of inquiries and congratulations—he yet heard her voice whenever it was possible, and knew by sight as well as hearing all the admiration she called forth. He might have said as at Kildeer river, that he found "a great deal of Mignonette." What he *did* tell her, when the evening was over, was that people were at a loss how to name the new exotic.

"How to name *me*, Endecott?"—"As an exotic."

"I don't wonder!" said Faith with her merry little laugh. "Don't philosophers sometimes get puzzled in that way, Endecott?"—"Scientific philosophers content themselves with the hardest names they can find, but in this case such will not suit. Though Dr. Campan may write you in his books as 'Lindenethia Pattaquassetensis—exotic, very rare. The flower is a double star—colour wonderful.'"

Faith stopped to laugh.

"What a blunder he will make if he does!" she said. "It will show, as Mr. Simlins says—that he don't understand common vegetables."

"Well translated, Mignonette. How will it show that, if you please?"—"He has mistaken one for a trumpet creeper."

"A scarlet runner, I suppose."

"Was I?" said Faith seriously.

"According to you. I am in Dr. Campan's predicament."

"I should think *you* needn't be," said Faith, simply. "Because you know, Endy I never knew even how to climb till you showed me."

Mr. Linden faced round upon her, the quick flashing eyes answering even more than his. "Faith! what do you mean?" But his lips played then in a rare little smile, as he said, very quietly, in his former position, "Imagine Mignonette, with its full sweetness—and more than its full colour—suddenly transplanted to the region where Monkeys and Geraniums grow—I like to think of the effect."

"I can't think of any effect at all," said Faith. "*I* should look at the Monkeys and Geraniums!"

"Of course—being Mignonette. And clearly that you are; but then how can Mignonette so twine itself round things?"

Faith thought it did not, and also thought of Pet's charge about "charming;" but she left both points.

"Most climbers," said Mr. Linden, with a glance at her, "have but one way of laying hold; but this exotic has all. There are the tendrils when it wants support, and the close twining that makes of two lives one, and the clasp of a hundred little stems that give a leaf or a flower wherever they touch."

"Endecott!" said Faith, with a look of astonished remonstrance and amusement in one.—"What?"

But the smile and blush with which Faith turned away bespoke her not very much displeased; and she knew better by experience than to do battle with Mr. Linden's words. She let him have it his own way.

The next day business claimed him. Faith was given up to the kindness and curiosity of her new friends. They made good use of their opportunity, and their opportunity was a good one; for it was not till late in the day, a little while before the late dinner hour, that Mr. Linden came home. He found Faith in her room; a superbly appointed chamber, as large as any three of those she had been accustomed to. She was standing at the window, thoughtfully looking out; but turned joyfully to meet Mr. Linden. Apparently he was glad too.

"My dear little Mignonette! I feel as if I had not seen you for a week."

"It has been a long day," said Faith; who looked rather, it may be remarked, as if the day had freshly begun.

"Mignonette, you are perfectly lovely! Do you think you will condescend to wear these flowers?" said Mr. Linden, drawing her to a seat by the table, and with one arm still round her beginning to arrange the flowers he had thrown down there as he came in.

Faith watched him, and then looked up.

"Endecott you shouldn't talk to me so. You wouldn't like me to believe you."

Mr. Linden finished setting two or three ruby carnations in the green and purple of heliotrope and sweet-scented verbena; then laid the bunch lightly upon her lips and gravely inquired if they were sweet.

"Yes," Faith said, laughing behind them. "You are not hungry?"

"Why? and what of it?"—"You don't seem to remember it is near dinner-time."

"Dinner time is a myth. My dear, I am sorry I give you so much uneasiness. I wish you could feel as composed about me as I do about you. What have I done with that white ribband!—don't stir—it is in some pocket or other." And the right one being found, Mr. Linden unwrapped the piece of ribband and cut off what he wanted, remarking that he could not get used to giving her anything but blue.

"Well, why do you then?" said Faith.—"I feel in a subdued state of mind, owing to reproofs," said Mr. Linden, with the white satin curling round his fingers. "I may not tell anybody what I think of my wife!"

Faith looked amused, and yet a soft glance left the charge and the "reproof" standing.

"I feel so composed about you," Mr. Linden went on, drawing his white bows—Faith did think the eyes flashed under the shading lashes—"so sure that you will never over-estimate me, much less speak of it. But then you know, Mignonette, I never did profess to follow Reason."

He was amused to see the little stir his words called up in Faith. He could see it in the changing colour and rest less eye, and in one look of great beauty which Faith favoured him with. Apparently the shy principle prevailed, or Faith's wit got the better of her simplicity; for she rose up gravely and laying her hand on the bunch of flowers asked if she should put them on.

"Unless you prefer my services."

She sat down again immediately, with a face that very plainly preferred them. Half smiling, with fingers that were in no haste about their work, Mr. Linden adjusted the carnations; glancing from them to her, trying them in different positions, playing over his dainty task as if he liked it. The flowers in place, his full smiling look met hers, and she was carried off to the glass "to see his wife." Hardly seen, after all, but by himself.

"She looks ready for dinner," said Faith.

"Your eyes are only to look at," said Mr. Linden with a laughing endorsement of *his* thoughts, and putting her back in the dormeuse. "Suppose you sit there, and tell me what efforts they have made in the way of seeing, to-day."

"Efforts to see all before them, which was more than they could," said Faith.

"What did they see? not me, nor I them, that I know."

"That was another sort of effort they made," said Faith smiling—"efforts to see what was *not* before them. I watched, whenever I thought there was a chance, but I couldn't see anything that looked like you. We must have gone half over the city, Endecott; Mrs. Pulteney took me all the morning, and her daughters and Mr. Pulteney all the afternoon."

"Know, O little Mignonette," said Mr. Linden, "that in New York it is 'morning' till those people who dine at six have had their dinner.

"Like the swell of some sweet tune
Morning rises into noon,—

was written of country hours."

"I guess that is true of most of the other good things that ever were written," said Faith.

Mr. Linden looked amused. "What do you think of this?—

And when the hours of rest
Come, like a calm upon the mid-sea brine,
Hushing its billowy breast—
The quiet of that moment too is thine;
It breathes of Him who keeps
The vast and helpless city while it sleeps."

"I never saw the city when it was asleep," said Faith, smiling. "It didn't look to-day as if it could sleep. But, Endecott, I am sure all the pretty part of those words comes from where we have been."

"The images, yes. But connect any spot of earth with heaven, by any tie, and it must have a certain sort of grandeur. You have been working in brick and mortar to-day, Mignonette, to-morrow I must give you a bird's-eye view."

Faith was silent a minute; and then said, "It don't look a happy place to me, Endecott."

"No, it is too human. You want an elm tree or a patch of dandelions between every two houses."

"That wouldn't do," said Faith, "unless the people could be less ragged, and dirty, and uneasy; and their houses too. There's nothing like it in Pattaquasset."

"I have great confidence in the comforting and civilizing power of elm trees and green grass," said Mr. Linden. "But Carlyle says 'Man is not what you can call a happy animal, his appetite for sweet victual is so enormous;' and perhaps New York suffers as much from the fact that everybody wants *more*, as that some have too little and others too much."

"Do *these* people want more?" said Faith softly.

"Without doubt! So does everybody in New York but me."

"But why must people do that in New York, when they don't do it in Pattaquasset?" said Faith, who was very like mignonette at the moment.

"The appetite grows with indulgence, or the possibility of it. Besides, little bird, in Pattaquasset you take all this breeze of humanity winnowed through elm branches. There, you know, 'My soul into the boughs does glide.'"

"No," said Faith; "it is not that. When my soul glides nowhere, and there are no branches, either; in the Roscoms' house, Endecott—and poor Mrs. Dow's, and Sally Lowndes',—people don't look as they look here. I don't mean *here*, in Madison Square—though yes I do, too; there was that raspberry girl; and others, worse, I have seen even here. But I have been in other places—Mr. Pulteney and his sisters took me all the way to the great stone church, Endecott."

"Well, Sunbeam, it has been a bright day for every raspberry girl that has come in your way. What else did you see there."—"I saw the church."

"Not the invisible" said Mr. Linden, smiling, "remember that."

"Invisible! no," said Faith. "There was a great deal of this visible."

"What thoughts did it put in your head?"—"It was very—wonderfully beautiful," said Faith, thoughtfully.

"What else?"—"I cannot tell. You would laugh at me if I could. Endecott, it didn't seem so much like a church to me as the little white church at home."

"I agree with you there—the less show of the instrument the sweeter the music, to me. But the street in front of the church, so specially filled with beggars and cripples, I never go by there, Faith, without a feeling of joy; remembering the blind man who sat at the Beautiful gate of the temple; knowing well that there is as 'safe, expeditious, and easy a way' to heaven from that dusty side-walk, as from any other spot of earth. The triumph of grace!—how glorious it is! *I* cannot speak to all of them together, nor even one by one, but grace is free! 'Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts.' Faith, I have been thinking of that all day!"

She could see it in his face—in the flush on the cheek and the flash in the eye as he came and stood before her. She could see what had been all day before his eyes and mind; and how pain and sympathy and longing desire had laid hold of the promise and rested there—"Ask and ye shall receive." Unconsciously Faith folded her hands, and the least touch of a smile in the corners of her mouth was in no wise contradictory of her eyes' sweet gravity.

"I saw them too," she said, in a low tone. "Endecott, I would rather speak to them out there, under the open sky, if it wasn't a crowd—than in the church?"

"I should forget where I was, after I began to speak," said Mr. Linden; "though I do love 'that dome—most catholic and solemn,' better than all others."

"Mr. Pulteney asked me how I liked the church," said Faith.

"He did not understand your answer," said Mr. Linden smiling, "I know that beforehand. What was it?"—"I think he didn't like it," said Faith. "I told him it seemed to me a great temple that men had built for their own glory and pleasure, not for the glory and pleasure of God."

"Since when, you have been to Mr. Tom Pulteney like a fable in ancient Greek to one who has learned the modern language at school and forgotten it."

"He did not understand me," said Faith, laughing and blushing a little. "And I was worse off; for I asked him several questions he could not answer me. I wanted to go to the top, but he was certain I would be too tired if I did. But I heard the chime, Endecott! that was beautiful. Beautiful! I am very glad I was there."

"I'll take you to the top" said Mr. Linden, "it will not tire me. Faith, I have brought you another wedding present—talking of 'ancient' things."

"What is that, Endecott?" she said, with a bright amused face.—"Only a fern leaf. One that waved a few thousand years before the deluge, and was safely bedded in stone when the children of Israel passed through the Red Sea. I went to see an old antiquarian friend this morning, and out of his precious things he chose one for mine." And Mr. Linden laid in her hand the little rough stone; rough on one side, but on the other where the hammer had split it through, the brown face was smooth, and the black leaf lay marked out in all its delicate tracery.

"Endecott, what is this?" Faith exclaimed, in her low tones of delight.—"A fossil leaf."

"Of a fern? How beautiful! Where did it come from?" She had risen in her delight, and stood by Mr. Linden at the dressing-table.—"This one from Bohemia. Do you see the perfection of every leafet?"

"How wonderful! how beautiful!" Faith repeated, studying the fossil. "It brings up those words, Endecott:—'A thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past; or as a watch in the night.'"

"Yes, and these—'The counsel of the Lord, that shall stand.' Compare this fern leaf with the mighty palaces of Babylon and Nineveh. Through untold ages this has kept its wavy fragile outline, *they* are marked only by 'the line of confusion and the stones of emptiness.'"

Faith looked up, with such an eye of intelligence and interest as again would have puzzled Mr. Pulteney.

"Did your old antiquary send this to me, Endecott?" she said looking down at it again.—"To you, darling."

"I have seen nothing so good to-day, Endy. I am very glad of it."

"Do you remember, Sunbeam, the time when I told you I liked stones? and you looked at me. I remember the look now!" So did Faith, by the conscious light and colour that came into her face, different from those of three minutes ago, and the grateful recognition her eyes gave to Mr. Linden.

"I don't know much more now," she said, in very lowliness, "about stones, but you can teach me, Endecott."

"Yes, I will leave no stone unturned for your amusement," he said, laughing. "Faith, if I were not so much afraid of you I should tell you what you are like. What else have you seen?"

"Tell me what I am like, Endecott."

"What sort of consistency is that—to coax me when I don't tell you, and scold me when I do?"

"It's curiosity, I suppose," said Faith. "But it's no matter. I saw all that strange place, Broadway, Endecott; we drove through the whole length of it."

"Well?" said Mr. Linden, throwing himself down in the arm-chair and looking gravely up at her. But then the lips parted, not only to smile but to sing a wild Scotch tune.

"O wat ye wha that lo'es me,
And has my heart in keeping?
O sweet is she that lo'es me,
As dews o' summer weeping,
In tears the rosebuds steeping;
O that's the lassie o' my heart,
My lassie ever dearer;
O that's the queen o' womankind,
And ne'er a ane to peer her!"

"If thou hast heard her talking,
And thy attention's plighted,
That ilka body talking
But her by thee is slighted,
And thou art all delighted.
O that's the lassie o' my heart,
My lassie ever dearer;
O that's the queen o' womankind,
And ne'er a ane to peer her!"

"Did you see anybody like that in Broadway, Faith?"

Blushing how she blushed! but she would not say a word nor stir, to interrupt the singing; so she stood there, casting a shy look at him now and then till he had stopped, and then coming round behind him, she laid her head down upon his shoulder. Mr. Linden laughed, caressing the pretty head in various ways.

"My dear little bird!" he said. Then presently—"Mignonette, *I* have been looking at fur cloaks."

"Don't do such a thing again, Endy."

"I shouldn't, if I could have quite suited myself to-day."

"I don't want it. I can bear the cold as well as you."

"Let it make up for something which you do want and haven't got, then; you must bear the cold Polar fashion. But at present, there is the dinner-bell."

They went down; but with the fossil and the fur, Faith was almost taken out of New York; and astonished Mr. Pulteney once or twice more in the course of the evening, to Mr. Linden's amusement.

CHAPTER XLVI.

The Hudson river railway, on a summer Saturday afternoon. Does everybody know it? If not, let me tell the people who have not tried it, or those more unfortunate ones who are tried by it, and driven into the depths of newspapers and brown literature by the steam pressure of mountains, clouds, and river, that it is glorious. Not on a dusty afternoon, but when there has been or is a shower. Not the locomotive, or the tender, or the cars, though the long chain has a sort of grandeur, as its links wind into the bays and round the promontories, express. But get a river-side seat, and keep your patience up the lumbered length of Tenth Avenue, and restrain your impatience as the train goes at half-stroke along that first bit of road where people are fond of getting on the track; watch the other shore, meantime, or the instructive market gardens on this; then feel the quickened speed, as the engine gets her "head;" then use your eyes. Open your windows boldly; people don't get cold from our North river air; never mind the sun; hold up a veil or a fan; only look. See how the shore rises into the Palisades, up which the March of Improvement finds such uncertain footing: how the rising points of hill are rounded with shadow and sunlight, and green from river to crown. See how the clouds roll softly up on the further side, giving showers here and there—how the white-winged vessels sail and careen and float. Look up the river from Peekskill, and see how the hills lock in and part. Think of the train of circumstances that rushed down Arnold's point that long ago morning, where a so different train now passes. Mark the rounding outlines of the green Highlands, and as you near Garrisons' let your eye follow the sunbeam that darts down the little mill creek just opposite the tunnel. Then on through those beloved hills, till they fall off right and left, and you are out upon Newburgh bay in the full glory of the sunset. After this (if you are tired looking) you may talk for a while, till the blue heads of the Catskill catch your eye and hold it.

The blue range was a dim outline—hardly that—when Faith reached her journey's end that night. She could hear the dash of the river, and see the brilliant stars, but all details waited for morning; and the morning was Sunday. Balmy, cloudless, the very air put Faith almost in Elysium; and between dreamy enjoyment, and a timid sense of her own new name and position, she would have liked for herself an oriole's nest on one of the high branches. Failing that, she seemed—as her hostess and again an old friend of Mr. Linden's told him—"like a very rosebud; as sweet, and as much shut up to herself."

Truth to tell, she kept something of the same manner and seeming next day. The house was very full, and of a very gay set of people; of whom Faith's friend, Mr. Motley, was one. Faith met their advances pleasantly, but she was daintily shy. And besides, the scene and the time were full of temptations to dream over the out-of-door beauty. The people amused her, but often she would rather have lost them in the hills or the sunset; and was for various reasons willing that others should talk while she looked.

So passed the first two days, and the third brought an excursion, which kept the whole party out till lunch-time. But towards the end of the day Mr. Linden was witness to a little drama which let him know something more of Faith than he had just seen before.

It was near the time of dressing for dinner. Mr. Linden was already dressed and had come to the library, where, in a deep recess on one side of the window, he was busy with a piece of study. The window was very large, and opened upon a green terrace; and on the terrace, in a garden chair, just outside the open window, sat Faith; quietly and intensely, he knew, enjoying the broad river and the mountain range that lay blue in the sunlight a few miles beyond; all in the soft still air of the summer day. She distracted Mr. Linden's thoughts from his study. He could see her perfectly, though he was quite out of her view. She was in one of the dainty little morning dresses he had sent her from the place of pretty things; nothing could be more simple, and it suited her; and she looked about as soft and still as the day. Meanwhile some gentlemen had entered the library, and drew near the window. Faith was just out of their range, and Mr. Linden was completely hid in his recess, or doubtless their remarks would have had a different bearing The remarks turned upon Faith, who was here as well as in New York an object of curiosity to those who had known Mr. Linden; and one of the speakers expressed himself as surprised that "Linden" should have married her.

"Wouldn't have thought it,—would you?" said Mr. Motley. "To be sure; he's able to do all the talking."

"She does very well for the outside," said another. "Might satisfy anybody. Uncommon eyes."

"Eyes!" said Mr. Motley. "Yes, she has eyes!—and a mouth. I suppose Linden gets some good of it—if nobody else does. And after all, to find a woman that is all eyes and no tongue, is, as you remark, uncommon."

"She's not quite stylish enough for him," said a third. "I thought
Linden would have married a brilliant woman."

"He'll be a brilliant man, if you tell him that," said Mr. Motley. "Corruscations, and so forth. I never thought I should see him bewitched—even by a rose leaf monopoly."

The conversation was interrupted. It had not been one which Mr. Linden could very well break; all he could do was to watch Faith. He could see her slightly-bent head and still face, and the colour which grew very bright upon the cheek nearest him. She was motionless till the last words were broken off; then, with a shy movement of one hand to her cheek, covering it, she sprang away, as lightly as any bird she was ever named after.

Mr. Linden was detained in the library, where, as the dinner-hour drew near, other members of the family began to gather. A group of these were round the table, discussing an engraving; when Mr. Linden saw Faith come in. He was no longer in the dangerous recess; but Faith did not come near him; she joined the party at the table. Mr. Linden watched her. Faith's dressing was always a quiet affair; to-day somehow the effect was very lovely. She wore a soft muslin which flowed about her in full draperies; with a breast-knot of roses on its white folds. Faith rarely put on flowers that Mr. Linden had not given her. To-day was an exception; and her white robe with no setting off but those roses and her rich hair, was faultless. Not merely that; the effect was too striking to be absolutely quiet; all eyes were drawn to her.

The gentlemen whom she had heard speak were among the party; and no eyes were more approving. Mr. Linden watched, as he might, without being seen to watch. Faith joined not only the party, but the conversation; taking her place in it frankly; showing no unwillingness to give opinions or to discuss them, and no desire to avoid any subject that came up. She was taking a new stand among these strangers. Mr. Linden saw it, and he could guess the secret reason; no one else could guess that there was anything to give a reason for, so coolly, so naturally, it was done. But the stand was taken. Faith had not stepped in the least out of her own bounds; she had abated not a whit of her extreme modesty. She was never more herself, only it was as if she had laid down a self-indulgent shyness which she had permitted herself before, and allowed Mr. Linden's friends to become acquainted with Mr. Linden's wife. But with herself! Her manner to-day was exceedingly like her dress; the plainest simplicity, the purest quality, and the roses blushing over all. It fascinated the gentlemen, every one of them. They found that the little demure piece of gravity could talk; and talk with a truth and freshness of thought too, which was like the rest of her, uncommon and interesting, soft and free, at once. Faith went off to dinner on the arm of one of her maligners, and was very busy with company all the evening after, having little to do with Mr. Linden.

She had escaped to her room earlier than he, however; and when he came in she was sitting thoughtfully before the open window. She rose up directly, and came to him, with the usual smile, and with a little hidden triumph dancing in her eyes, and an odd wistful look besides of affection and humility. She only came close to him for a caress, without speaking. Mr. Linden took her face in both hands and looked at it—a beautiful smile mingling with the somewhat moved look of his own.

"What a child you are!"

The colour rushed all over Faith's cheeks.

"Why?—" she whispered. The answer to which, cheeks and brow, and lips, might spell out as best they could.

"Do you know why I did not come with your flowers,
Mignonette?"—"Before dinner?—no. I got some for myself."

"I was on my way for them, and was entrapped and held fast. My little Mignonette! I never thought to have you put your hand to your cheek in that way again!"

"Again, Endecott! Who told you?" said Faith, as usual jumping to conclusions.

"Who told me what, my beauty?"

Faith's eye fell in doubt, then looked up searchingly.

"I believe you know everything; but you don't look displeased. How *did* you know, Endecott?"—"I saw and heard. And have seen and heard since," he added, smiling.

A question or two found out exactly how it had been; and then Faith put the inquiry, simple to quaintness, "Did I do better to-day?"—"If you are so anxious for me—" he said, stroking back her hair. "They did not deserve to have one of my wife's words, but her words were admirable."

It was worth while to see Faith's cheeks.

"Will you trust me to ride with Mr. Middleton to-morrow?" she asked presently, smiling.

"No. Yes—I will trust you but not him."

"Does that mean that you will trust me to go?"—"Not with him."

"But what shall I do?" said Faith, flushing after a different fashion—half laughing too—"I told him I would go, or that I thought I would go."

"Tell him that you think you will not."

Faith looked a little troubled: she foresaw a charge of questions she did not like to meet.

"Are you afraid of the horse, Endy?" she said, after a pause, a little timidly. "No, darling."

Faith was pretty just now, as she stood with her eyes cast down: like a generous tempered horse first feeling the bit; you can see that the creature will be as docile as possible, yet he is a little shy of your curb. Anything like control was absolutely new to her; and though her face was never more sweet, there was with that a touch of embarrassment which made an inexpressibly pretty mixture. Mr. Linden might well be amused and touched, and charmed too, all in one.

"Mr. Motley asked me to ride too," she said after a minute, blushing a little deeper, and speaking as if it were a supplement to her former words. "He wanted to show me the Belle Spring. I had better give them both the same answer."

"Has nobody else preferred his request? they are just the two people with whom I do not want you to ride," said Mr. Linden, smiling. "I shall have to ask you myself, or claim you. Mrs. Linden, may I have the honour?"—Faith gave him a very bright answer of a smile, but with a little secret wish in her heart that the other people had not asked her.

Her denial, however, was perfectly well taken by Mr. Motley; not indeed without a little bantering talk and raillery upon the excessive care Mr. Linden bestowed on her. But Mr. Middleton, she saw, was not pleased that she disappointed him. Within two or three days Faith had become unmistakeably the centre of attraction to all the gentlemen of the neighbourhood. To walk with her, to talk to her, to attend upon her, were not a coveted honour merely, but a coveted pleasure. It was found wonderfully refreshing to talk to Faith: her eyes were something pleasant to look at, for more than George Alcott; and the truth of her enjoyment and gratitude made it a captivating thing to be the means of exciting them.

Mr. Middleton was one of those men who think very much indeed of the value of their approbation, and never bestow it but where they are sure the honour of their taste and judgment is like to be the gainer—one of those men who in ordinary keep their admiration for themselves, and bestow in that quarter a very large amount. Faith's refusal to ride with him touched him very disagreeably. It was impossible to be offended with her, but perhaps all the more he was offended with somebody; and it happened unluckily that some reported light words of Mr. Motley about Mr. Linden's care of his wife, and especial distrust of the gentlemen who had asked her to ride, reached Mr. Middleton's ear in a very exaggerated and opprobrious form. Mr. Middleton did not know Mr. Linden, nor know much of him; his bottled-up wrath resolved that Mr. Linden should not continue long in his reciprocal ignorance. And so it fell out, that as this week began with showing Mr. Linden something of Faith that he had not seen before, it did not end without giving her a new view of him.

It was a captivating summer morning when the cavalcade set forth from Rye House, on a picnic to Alderney, one of the show places in the neighbourhood. It seemed fairyland to Faith. The beautiful country over which they travelled, in summer's luxuriance of grass and grain; the river rolling below at a little distance, sometimes hidden only to burst upon the view again; and towering above all, unchanged beyond the changing lights and shades of the nearer landscape, the long mountain range. The air was perfection; the sounds of voice and laughter and horses' brisk feet helped the exhilaration, and the lively colours and fashion of caps and habits and feathers made pretty work for the eye. Faith's ears and eyes were charmed. At a cross road the party was joined by Mr. Middleton; whose good humour, at present in a loose-jointed state, was nowise improved at the sight of Faith. She rode then, at any rate; and she sat well and rode fearlessly, that he could see; and his eye keen for such things, noted too the neat appointments of her dress, and saw that they were all right, and fitted her, and she fitted them; and that her figure altogether was what no man might dislike to have beside him, even a man so careful of his appearance as Mr. Middleton. Not near Faith did he come; but having noted all these things with gathering ire, he sheered off to another part of the troop.

It was a pretty day to Faith, the whole first part of it. The ride, and the viewing the grounds they went to see. These were indeed naturally very noble; and to Faith's eyes every new form of natural beauty, of

which her range had hitherto been so very small, was like a fresh draught of water to thirsty lips. It was a great draught she had this morning, and enjoyed almost to the forgetfulness of everything else. Then came the lunch. And that was picturesque, too, certainly; on such a bank, under such trees, with such a river and mountains in front; and Faith enjoyed it and them so far. But it was splendid too, and noisy; and her thoughts went at one time away very far, to Kildeer river, and remembered a better meal taken under the trees, with better talk, and only Bob Tuck to look at them. She stole a glance at Mr. Linden. He was doing his part, and making somebody very comfortable indeed—Faith half smiled to see it.

Mr. Middleton at another part of the assembled company, had been getting his temper up with wine and his ill humour with the various suggestions and remarks of some careless gossipers at his side. Finding that he winced under the mention of Mrs. Linden and the ride, they gave him that subject with as many variations as the Katydid polka,—the simple "She did"—(or rather "She *didn't*")—skilfully diversified and touched up,—which brought Mr. Middleton's heavy piece of displeasure, already primed, loaded, and at full cock, to the very point where his temper struck fire. He left the table and drew towards Mr. Linden, who was talking in the midst of a group of ladies and gentlemen. Middleton knew which was he that was all.

"You, sir!" he said, like a surly bull-dog, which term describes both his mental and physical features, "my name's Middleton; I want you to take back what you've said about me."

Mr. Linden at the moment was in the full tide of German talk with one of his old fellow students from abroad; his excellent poise and play of conversation and manner setting off the gesticulations of the foreigner. With a look of more surprise than anything else he brought eyes and attention to bear upon Mr. Middleton.

"What, sir?" he said.

"Will you take back what you've said about me?" The dogged wrath of the man was beyond the use of many words, to which indeed he was never given.

"I have not said anything, sir, which requires that." And with a bend of the head, cool and courteous as his words, Mr. Linden dismissed the subject; and placing himself on the grass with his friend and some others, fell back into the German. Middleton followed fuming.

"I've come to speak to you!" he said, beginning with an execration, "and you must get up and answer me. Will you take back what you said?" Stooping down, he had thrown these words into Mr. Linden's ear in a way to leave no doubt whom they were meant for.

"I have answered you, sir."

"That is to tell you what I think of it!" said Middleton, dashing in his face the remains of a glass of wine which he had brought with him from the board on purpose.

He was on his feet then! with what a spring! as in the fairy tale the beautiful princess of a sudden became a sword. Just such eyes of fire Mr. Middleton had never been privileged to see. But Faith saw the hands drop and grasp each other, she saw the eyes fall, and the colour go and come and go again, with a rush and swiftness that was startling to see. Absolutely motionless, the very breath kept down, so he stood. And even his assailant gazed, in a sort of spell-bound wonder. The twittering birds overhead, how they carolled; how softly the leaves rustled, and the river sent up its little waves: and the sunshine and shadow crept on, measuring off the seconds. The pure peace and beauty of everything, the hush of human voices, were but the setting of the deep human struggle. The victory came.

With a face from which at last the colour had taken its permanent departure, Mr. Linden looked up and spoke; and something made the very low tones ring in the air.

"I have said nothing about you which needed apology, Mr. Middleton. You have been misinformed, sir." And with that same bend of dismissal Mr. Linden drew himself up and walked away, bareheaded as he was. The trees hid him in a moment.

Then there came a stir.

"What a coward!" cried George Alcott, pressing forward, "to do that to a man who you knew wouldn't knock you down!"

The young German had started up, sputtering strange things in his native tongue.

"Mr. Linden is an excellent commentator," said one young lady, who took the liberty of speech pretty freely. "How clear he makes it that 'The discretion of a man deferreth his anger; and it is his glory to

pass by a transgression.'"

"I really thought," said Mr. Motley, in a make-believe whisper, "when Middleton first came up, that he had been taking a glass too much, but now I see that he took just half a glass too little!"

"Sir," said Colonel Rye, stepping forward, a man of most noble character and presence both, "Mr. Linden is my guest and friend, you must answer this to me."

Before Mr. Middleton could make answer, Faith had come in between and laid hold of the Colonel's hand. She was white, and quiet, but she could not at once speak. All around stood still.

"Sir," she said, in words that were well heard for everybody held his breath, "Colonel Rye, this is Mr. Linden's affair."

"I beg your pardon, my dear young lady—it is mine."

"No, sir," said Faith he felt how eagerly her fingers grasped his, "it is in Mr. Linden's hands. He forgives Mr. Middleton entirely."

"I don't forgive him!" said the Colonel, shortly.

"Sir," said Faith, "Colonel Rye, this is not what Mr. Linden would wish. Endecott will tell you, sir, that he has passed it by. Don't undo what he has done! No true friend of Mr. Linden will make any more of this."

"I am willing to answer it to anybody," said Middleton, gruffly, but as if half ashamed of himself.

"There is nothing to answer to any one," said Faith, quitting the Colonel, and turning to him; her face was so white and gentle that it smote him, and those very steady sweet eyes had a power in them just now that broke his doggedness. "There is nothing to answer to any one, unless Mr. Middleton," (how soft her voice was), "unless you find you were wrong, and choose to tell Mr. Linden, which I dare say you will. Colonel Rye, will you see, for Mr. Linden's honour, that this goes to no harm?"—The extreme gentleness and the steady firmness of Faith ruled them all; and at her last appeal the Colonel's only answer was to take her in his arms and kiss her, an acknowledgment Faith would willingly have gone without. But it was good for a promise.

"Mr. Alcott," she said seeking him in the group, "you said we would go down the bank—." Faith did not finish her sentence, but he saw her wish to finish it by action.

She went with him till they were out of sight and away from everybody; then slipped her arm from his and begging him not to wait for her sat down on the grass. For a while she sat very still, whether her heart was fuller of petition or thanksgiving she hardly knew. She would have rejoined Mr. Alcott much sooner if she had guessed he was waiting for her—like an outpost among the trees; but all the time had not brought back Faith's colour. After a while, other steps came swiftly over the turf as she sat there, and before she had raised her head it was lifted up for her.

"My precious wife! what are you doing here?" Very low the tones were, very grave, very tender.

Faith sprang, and after an exploring glance into his face, knelt on the grass beside him and threw her arms round his neck, pressing her cheek very close as if she would take off or share the affront that had been offered to his. That for a minute—and then changing characters—she raised her head and pushing the hair back from his brow with her soft hurried fingers, she covered that and his face with kisses—with a kind of eager tenderness that could not say enough nor put enough love and reverence into every touch. All this while she was still; she did not shed tears at all, as some women would have done; and she said not one word.

Perhaps surprise made him passive: perhaps the soothing of her caresses was too sweet and too much needed to be interrupted, even by a return. He let her have her way, nor even raised his eyes. One arm indeed was round her, but it left her free to do what she liked. If Faith needed any light on what the morning's work had been, it was furnished by those few minutes. Only at last, with a sudden motion Mr. Linden brought her lips to his, and gave her back principal and interest.

"You blessed child!" he said. "Are you a veritable angel already?"—"I should have brought you a palm-branch, Endy." For almost the first time he had ever heard it so, Faith's voice was unsteady.

Had she not done it? Mr. Linden did not say so, as he took grave note of her pale cheeks. Presently rising up he passed his arm round her, and took her up the bank to the rest of the party, nor let go his hold till she was seated between Mrs. Rye and himself. Then from the fern leaf in his hand, he proceeded to give them both an account of ferns in general—living and fossil, extant and extinct; with

his usual happy skill and interest, and—except that the lips never broke into a smile—with just his usual manner. And never had the grave depth of eye been more beautiful, more clear. Not Faith alone watched it with loving admiration, but no one any more than she ventured word or look of sympathy.

When at last the various groups began to draw in towards a centre, and ladies put on their riding hats, and grooms were buckling girths again, Mr. Middleton with two or three others was seen advancing towards Mr. Linden's quarter. Mrs. Rye rose hastily.

"I am sorry to find that I made a mistake, sir," said Middleton, with a sort of unwilling courtesy; "I was under misinformation—and I was not aware of your profession. I beg your pardon for what has occurred."

Mr. Linden had risen too, and with folded arms and the most unmoved face stood watching the party as they came up.

"It is granted," he said, offering his hand. "But permit me to say, Mr. Middleton, that you made a third mistake, equally great if the other two had not existed."

Mr. Middleton's private thoughts were perhaps not clearly disentangled. At all events he had no desire to multiply words, and turned off.

"So, he has spoken, has he!" said Colonel Rye, coming up. "Like a bear, I dare say. Why do you think I didn't fight him, Endecott?"

A smile came over Mr. Linden's face then—bright and stirred.

"I think, sir, you yielded to Mignonette's power, as I did long ago."

"You?—Did he?" said the Colonel, turning.—"No, sir; never!" said Faith, laughing and blushing till her cheeks were brilliant. The Colonel smiled at her.

"My dear," said he, "you conquered me! and I don't believe any other man more invincible than myself. Is this your horse? No, Motley; no, George; she is going to have an old cavalier for her ride home."

And much to Faith's pleasure, so she had.

CHAPTER XLVII.

October's foliage had lost its distinct red and purple and brown, and had grown merely sunburnt; but the sky overhead still kept its wonderful blue. Down the ravines, over their deep shadow, October breathed softly; up the mountain road, past grey boulders and primeval trees and wonderful beds of moss, went the stage waggon. The travellers were going by a somewhat long and irregular route, first up one of the great highways, then across to that spur of the mountains where they were to live. Mrs. Derrick was to follow in a few weeks with Mr. Stoutenburgh.

It was late and dusky when the stage waggon transferred the travellers to Mr. Olyphant's carriage, which was waiting for them at a certain turn of the road. Mr. Olyphant himself was there, with extra wrappings for Faith; and muffled in them she sat leaning in the corner of the carriage, tired enough to make the rest pleasant, awake enough to hear the conversation; feeling more like a bird than ever, with that unwonted night air upon her face, and the wild smell of woods and evergreens and brooks floating about her.

At Mr. Olyphant's they were received with warm wood fires and excellent supper, the welcome spending itself in many other ways. But though Mr. Linden did take her to the door for one minute to hear a pouring mountain torrent, she could see nothing that night. The stars overhead were brilliant, the dark hill outline dim—the rushing of that stream—how it sounded! Faith's whisper was gleeful.

"Endy, I can't see much, but it feels lovely! I am so glad to be here!"

The morning was wonderful. Such a sunlight, such an air, such rejoicings of birds and brook and leaves. Mr. Olyphant's house stood on one side of a woody slope, rocks and trees crowned to the very top; in the ravine below, the brook Faith had heard. She could see it now, foaming along, quieting itself as it came into smoother circumstances. The most of its noise indeed seemed to be made in some place

out of sight, higher up. This slope was not very high, other ridges before and beyond it looked down, not frowningly, in their October dress. Not much else could be seen, it was a mere leafy nest. A little faint line of smoke floated over the opposite ridge, glimpses of mountain paths here and there caught the sunlight, below Faith's window Mr. Linden stood, like some statue, with folded arms.

Faith hastily finished her dressing. As soon as that was done she knelt at her window again, to look and to pray. Those hills looked very near the sky; life-work there seemed almost to touch heaven. Nay, did it not? Heaven bent over the glorious earth and over the work to be done there, with the same clear, fair, balmy promise and truth. Faith could almost have joined the birds in their singing; her heart did; and her heart's singing was as pure and as grave as theirs. Not the careless glee that sees and wants nothing but roses in the way; but the deep love and gladness, both earthly and heavenly, that makes roses grow out of every soil. So she looked, when Mr. Linden first discerned her, venturing from the hall door and searching round for him.

"O little Sunbeam!" he said, "how you 'glint' upon everything! there is a general illumination when you come out of the door. How do you feel this morning?—rested?"—

"As if I never had been tired." And Faith might have said, as if she never would be tired again; but only her eye revelled in such soft boasting. "Where is our home now, Endecott?"

The ridge before them, on the other side of the ravine, rose up with swifter ascent into the blue air, and looked even more thick set with orange trees: but where it slanted down towards the more open country, a little break in the trees spoke of clearing and meadow and cultivation. The clearing was for the most part on the other side, but a bit of one green field, dotted with two or three dark objects, swept softly over the ridge line.

"Are you in the sight-seeing mood?" said Mr. Linden, with a look as gladsome as her own.—"Yes; and seeing sights too. But where is that, Endy?"

"I shall take you there by degrees; wait a moment," and he went in for the glass. "Now, Mignonette," he said, adjusting it for her, "I wish to ask your notice for a little black spot on that bit of clearing. But first, what does it look like to you, a hut or a summerhouse?"—"It's too far off; it looks like nothing but a black spot."

"Now, look," said Mr. Linden, smiling. O wondrous power of the glass! the black spot remained indeed a black spot still, but with the improvements of very decided horns, black tail, and four feet.

"Somebody lives there," said Faith. "It's a cow."—"Most true! What cow do you suppose it is, Mrs. Linden?"

Faith put down her glass to laugh at him. "It's no friend of mine," she said. "I have a few friends among cows, but not many."

"My dear Mrs. Linden, you always were rather quick at conclusions. If you look again, you will see that the cow has a surrounding fence of primeval roots, which will keep even her from running away."

Faith obeyed directions, carefully. "Endy," she said in an oddly changed tone, "is it my black heifer?"—"It is not mine," said Mr. Linden.

"But I didn't know she had come!" said Faith; then putting up her glass again to scan the far-off "black spot" and all around it, with an intenseness of feeling which showed itself in two very different spots on her cheeks.

"Put down your glass, Faith," said Mr. Linden, "and look up along the ridge to that faint blue wreath over the yellow treetops; that is your first welcome from my study."

She looked eagerly, and then a most delighted bright smile broke over her face as it turned to Mr. Linden.

"How do you know it is in your study, Endecott?—and who has lighted it?"—"Some one! We'll go over after breakfast and see."

At breakfast many things were discussed besides broiled chicken. And afterwards there came to the door two of the rugged, surefooted, mountain horses, saddled and bridled for the expedition. On the porch steps a great lunch basket told of Mrs. Olyphant's care; Faith was up stairs donning her habit. Mr. Linden ran up to meet her.

"Faith," he said, laughingly, "Malthus has just confided to me, that 'if Mrs. Endecott has any things to take over,' they would make the way wonderfully pleasant to him."

"Who is Malthus?"

The shy blush on Faith's cheek was pretty to see.

"He is an old servant of mine, who has been with Mr. Olyphant, and is coming to me again."

Faith thought it was good news, and as good for Malthus as anybody. An important little travelling-bag was committed to him, and the cavalcade set forth.

The way was far longer than the distance seemed to promise, having to follow the possibilities of the ground. A wild way—through the forest and over the brook; a good bridle path, but no better. The stillness of nature everywhere; rarely a human habitation near enough to afford human sounds. Frost and dew lay sparkling yet on moss and stone, in the dells where the sun had not looked; though now and then a sudden opening or turn showed a reach or a gorge of the mountains all golden with sunlight. Trees such as Faith had never seen, stood along the path in many places, and under them the horses' footfalls frightened the squirrels from tree to tree.

"Is this the only way of getting about here, Endecott?"

"This, or on foot, in many directions. That part of our parish which lies below us, as Mr. Olyphant says, can be reached with wheels. But look, Mignonette!"

The road turned sharply round a great boulder, and they were almost home! There it lay before them, a little below, an irregular, low, grey stone cottage, fitting itself to the ground as if fitting the ground to it had been an impossibility. It was not on a ravine; the slope went down, down, till it swept off into the stubble fields and cleared land below. There was the sound of a great waterfall in the distance; close by the house a little branch stream went bounding down, and spread itself out peaceably in the valley. Dark hemlocks guarded the cottage from too close neighbourhood of the cliffs at the back, but in front the subsiding roughness of nature kept only a few oaks and maples here and there. The cleared ground was irregular, like the house, running up and down, as might be. No moving thing in sight but the blue smoke and the sailing clouds and cloud shadows. The tinkle of a cow-bell made itself heard faintly; the breeze rushed through the pines, then slowly the black heifer came over the brow of her meadow and surveyed the prospect.

Faith had checked her horse, and looking at it all, up and down, turned to Mr. Linden. There was a great deal in her look, more than words could bear the burden of, and she said none. He held out his hand and clasped hers speakingly, the lips unbent then, though they went back to the grave lines of thought and interest and purpose. It was not merely *his* home he was looking at—it was the one to which he was bringing her. Was it the place for Mignonette? would it be too lonely, too cold? or was the whole scene that lay before them, in its wild beauty, the roughness covered and glorified by that supreme sunlight, a fair picture of their life together, wherever it might be? So he believed; the light grew and deepened in his own eyes as he looked,—the grave purpose, the sure hope; and Mignonette's little hand the while was held as she had rarely felt him hold it before.

Presently she bent down so that she could look up in his face, answering him then with a smile.

"Endy, what are you thinking of? I am very happy." The last words were lowered a little.

Mr. Linden's eyes came to her instantly, with something of their former look, but very bright; and bending off his horse he put one arm round her, with as full and earnest a kiss as she had ever had from him. "That is what I was thinking of," he said, "I was thinking of my wife, Mignonette."

"Aren't you satisfied?" she said in her former tone.—"Perfectly."

The look made a very personal application.—Faith shook her head a little, and they rode on.

The cottage door was very near presently: Faith could see all the minor points of interest. Malthus, who had got there by a short cut, waited to take their horses; then a white cap and apron appeared in the doorway for a second and vanished again.

"You will find another of our old dependants here, Faith," said Mr.
Linden.

"Who is that?" she said quickly.—"There were three women in our house," said Mr. Linden, "that Pet and I called respectively, 'Good,' 'Better,' and 'Best,' this is Best. Hers was a name in earnest, for we never called her anything else; and it was always the desire of her heart first to see my wife and then to live with her. And I was sure she would please you."

"What must I call her?—*Mrs*. Best?" said Faith. "No, you must call her nothing but 'Best.'"

"That's excellent!" said Faith gleefully. "I thought there was nobody here but *one* friend of yours, Endecott. Now I shall get in order directly."

"*That* is what you thought you were coming to," he said, coming to her side to lift her down. "How would you like to be taken right back to Mr. Olyphant's?"—"Not at all!"

In answer to which she was lightly jumped down from the saddle and carried off into the house; where Mr. Linden and Best shook hands after a prolonged fashion, and the old servant—not that she was very old neither—turned glad, and eager, and respectful eyes upon her new mistress, touching that little hand with great satisfaction of heart.

"It's warmer in the study, sir," she said, "and there's a fire in the kitchen, if Mrs. Endecott would like to see that. And shall I make one anywhere else, ma'am?"

Best's white cap and apron were very attractive, and so, on the other hand were Faith's blush and smile.

The hall in which they stood, rather a wide one, cut the house from front to back, with no break of stairway. Through the open back door Faith could see the dark cliff, and hear the brook. Mr. Linden asked where "she would go first?" Faith whispered, "To the study." He smiled, and opened the one door at her left hand, and led her in.

Not yet in perfect order, the bookshelves yet unfurnished, it looked a very abode of comfort; for there were basking sunbeams and a blazing fire, there were shelves and cupboards of various size and shape, there were windows, not *very* large, it is true, but giving such views of the fair country below, and the brook, and the ascent, and the distant blue peaks of the range. Warm-coloured curtains, and carpet, and couch had been put here under Mr. Olyphant's orders; and here were things of Mr. Linden's which Faith had never seen—his escritoire and study table among others. *Her* table, with a dainty easy-chair, at the prettiest of all the windows, she knew at a glance—unknown as it was before; but the desk which she had had long ago, stood on the study table, nearer his. Mr. Linden brought her up to the fire, and stood silent, with his arms wrapped about her for a minute; then he stooped and kissed her.

"How does it look, Sunbeam?"

Faith was grave, and her eye went silently from one thing to another even after he spoke, then turned its full sunny answer upon him. Faith certainly thought he did too much for her; but she spoke no such thought, leaving it as she had once meant to leave other thoughts, for action.

"You can put your books right in, and then it will be beautiful," she remarked. "And look down the mountain, out of that window, Endecott."

She was taken over to the window for a nearer view and placed in her easy-chair to take the good of it.

"Do you see that little red speck far down at the foot of the hill?"
Mr. Linden said, "in that particularly rough steep place?"—"Yes."

"That is the best thing we can get for a church at present."

Faith thought it would be a very good sort of a "thing" when he was in it; but, as usual, she did not tell all her thoughts. They came back to her easy-chair and table, and from them to Mr. Linden's face, with a look which said "How could you?" But he only smiled, and asked her if she felt disposed to go over the rest of the house.

For a house that was not in order, this one was singularly put to rights. Boxes and packages and trunks there were in plenty; rolls of carpet and pieces of bedsteads, and chairs and tables, and everything else; but they were all snugly disposed by the wall, so that the rooms could be entered and the windows reached. The inside of the cottage was, like the outside, irregular, picturesque, and with sufficient capabilities of comfort. The kitchen was in a state of nicety to match that of Best; in a piece of ground behind the house, partly prepared for a garden, Malthus was at work as composedly as if they had all been settled in the White Mountains for the last ten years.

Lunch was taken somewhat informally; then the riding habit being changed for a working dress, Faith set about reducing the rebellion among boxes and furniture. Best had reason presently to be satisfied not only with the manners but the powers of her new mistress; though she also judged in her wisdom that the latter needed some restriction in their exercise. Gentleness was never more efficient. The sitting-room began to look like a sitting-room; tables and bookshelves and chairs marched into place. Meanwhile Faith had been getting into pleasant order one of the rooms up stairs, which, with what

Mrs. Olyphant had done, was easy; enjoying the mountain air that came in through the window, and unpacking linen and china. Mr. Linden, on his part, had been as busy with some of the rougher and heavier work, opening boxes and unpacking books, and especially taking care of Faith; which last work was neither rough nor heavy. She was amused (edified too) at the new commentary on his former life which this day gave her: to call upon servants when they were present, seemed as natural as to do without them when they were absent. Faith mused and wondered a little over the old habit which showed itself so plainly, thinking too of his life in Pattaquasset.

The day had worn on and faded, and Faith was still busy in a hunt for some of her wedding presents which she wanted to have on the tea-table. But Mr. Linden for some time had missed her; and entering upon a tour of search, found her in a large closet near the kitchen, with a great deal chest on one side and a trunk on the other. Between them, on her knees, Faith was laying out package after package, and pile after pile of naperies lay on the floor around her; in the very height of rummaging, though with cheeks evidently paled since the morning. Mr. Linden took an expressive view of the subject.

"Mignonette, I want my tea."

"Yes!" said Faith eagerly, looking up and then at her work again, "just so soon as I find some things —"

"I don't want 'things,' I want tea."

"Yes; but you can't have tea without things."

"I will be content with six napkins and ten tablecloths—just for to-night, as we are in confusion."

"And no spoons?" said Faith. "Here they are."

"Yes; here they are," said Mr. Linden, "and here is everything else.
Just look at the state of the floor, for me to walk over."

"Not at all," said Faith; "please keep out. I will have tea ready very soon, Endy."

"You shall not have anything ready," and Faith found herself lifted from her kneeling position, and placed in a not uncomfortable nest of things, "Now, Mrs. Linden, whatever of those packages your hands may touch, shall lie on the floor all night. But as you see, my hands have a different effect." And swiftly and surely the "things" began to find corner room in the closet.

"Endy," said Faith, catching his hands, "please don't! Just go away, and leave me here for three minutes."

"Not for one. I'll turn them all out again in the morning, after the most approved fashion."

Faith sat down, the swift colour in her cheeks testifying to a little rebellion. It was swift to go, however, as it had been to come; and she sat still, looking on at Mr. Linden's work, with a little soberness of brow. That broke too, when she met his eye, in a very frank and deep smile.

"Well?" he said, laughing and leaning back against the closet door.

"Will you let me go and get tea now?" she said, with the same look.—"You pretty child! No, I want Best to get tea—and you to be quiet."

"I'll come and be quiet in three minutes, Endy, after I get rid of the dust," she said, winningly.

"Genuine minutes? If Ariel 'put a girdle round the earth' in forty, you should be able to put one round your waist in three—I suppose that is included in a feminine 'getting rid of the dust.'"

Faith's face promised faithfulness, as she ran off towards the kitchen; where in less than three minutes she and Best had proved the (sometimes) excellence of women's business faculties. Meantime a strange man lifted the latch of the kitchen door, and carefully closing it after him, remained upon the scene of action.

"How d'ye do?" he said. "Is the new man come?"—"Everybody's new here," said Faith. "Whom do you mean?"—"Couldn't tell ye the first word! But I've been after him better'n three times, if he ain't," the man spoke as if it was "worse" instead of better.

"Whom do you mean?" said Faith more gravely; "the minister?"—"Now that's what I call hitting the nail," said her visitor. "Well if he's here, just tell him to come up the mounting, will ye?"—"When?"

"Moon sets close on to nine, and its lighter afore that."

"Where is the place?" said Faith, now very serious indeed; "and what do you want the minister for?"—"I don't want him, bless you!" said the man. "If I did, I shouldn't be standin' here. It's an old soul up our way. He's got to go up to the bridge and over the bridge and 'tother side of the bridge, and so on till he comes to it. And the bridge is slippy." With which summing up, the man turned to the door, rattling the latch in a sort of preparatory way, to give Faith a chance for remarks.

"But who wants him there and what for? you haven't told me."—"Why it's old Uncle Bias. Sen he's sick he's got something on his mind, never seemed to afore, and he's in a takin' to tell it. That's all." And he opened the door.

"Why won't to-morrow do as well as to-night?"—"Wal," said the man slowly, "s'pose it might. Nevertheless, to-morrow ain't worth much to him. Nobody'd give much for it."

"Why?"—"'Taint certain he'd get what he paid for."

"Is he very sick?"—"Very enough," said the man with a nod, and opening the door.

Faith sprang forward. "Stop a minute, will you, friend, and see Mr.
Linden."

"That's his name, as sure as guns," said he of the "mounting." "No, thankee, I don't care about seein' him now, next time'll do just as well, and it's time he was off."

"Then wait and show him the way, will you? how is he to find it?"—"Do tell!" said the man slowly, "if he can't find his way round in the moonlight?"—"Better than most people," said Faith; "but I think he would like to see you."

The man however chose to defer that pleasure also to "next time," and went off. Faith went to the study. Coming up behind Mr. Linden where he was sitting, and laying both hands on his shoulders, she said in a very low and significant voice, "Endy, some one wants you."

"Only that you never assert your claims," he said, bringing the hands together, "I should suppose it must be the very person whom I want."

Her head stooped lower, till the soft cheek and hair lay against his.
But she only whispered, "Endy, it is some one up the mountain."

"Is it?" he said, rousing up; but only turning his lips to her cheek.
"Well, people up the mountain must have what they want. Is it now,
Faith?"

"Endy—they say it's a dying man."

"Where? Is the messenger here?"—"I couldn't make him wait—he thought he had business somewhere else. The place is—I dare say Malthus knows—up the mountain, beyond the bridge—you are to go over the bridge and on till you come to the house. And he says the bridge is slippery." Only a fine ear could detect the little change in Faith's voice. But she knew it was noticed, from the smile on the lips that kissed her, two or three times. Then Mr. Linden disengaged himself and rose up.

"Faith," he said, "you are to wait tea for me, and in the mean time you must take one of Miss Bezac's cups of comfort and lie down on the sofa and go to sleep. Your eyes will be just as good guiding stars sleeping as waking."

She said not another word, but watched him go off and out into the half dark wilderness. The moon shone bright indeed, but only touched the tops of many a woody outline, and many a steep mountain side rose up and defied her. Faith smelled the wild sweet air, looked up and down at the gleams of light and bands of shadow; and then came back to the study where the fire blazed, and sat down on the floor in front of it; gazing into the red coals, and following in fancy Mr. Linden on his walk and errand. It took him away from her, and so many such an errand would, often; but to speak comfort to the dying and tell the truth to the ignorant.—Faith gloried in it. He was an ambassador of Christ; and not to have him by her side would Faith keep him from his work. That he might do his work well—that he might be blessed in it, both to others and himself, her very heart almost fused itself in prayer. So thinking, while every alternate thought was a petition for him, weariness and rest together at last put her to sleep; and she slept a dreamless sweet sleep with her head on Mr. Linden's chair.

She awoke before he got back, though the evening was long set in. Feeling refreshed, Faith thought herself at liberty to reverse orders and went to the forbidden closet again, and to further conjurations with Best. They could not have taken long; for when, some hour later, Mr. Linden was nearing the house on his return, he had a pretty view of her, standing all dressed before the fire in his study. The

glow shone all over her—he could see her well, and her fresh neatness. He could see more. Faith Linden to-night was not just the Faith Derrick of old time; nor even of six months ago. The old foundations of character were all there, intact; but upon them sat a nameless grace, not simply of cultivation, nor of matured intelligence, nor even of happiness. A certain quiet elegance, a certain airy dignity—which had belonged to her only since she had been *Mr. Linden's wife*. She stood there, waiting now for him to come home.

The firelight caught behind her the gleam of silver, whether Mr. Linden could see it or not, where the little chocolatière stood brilliant. Faith had found that in her last rummaging. Miss Bezac's new trencher and bread knife were on the table too, with a loaf of Mrs. Olyphant's bread; and the fireshine gleamed on Mr. Alcott's saltcellars, and on the Mignonette tea service. Faith evidently had pleased her fancy. But now her fancy had forgotten it or left it in the background; and for what, was well shown by her spring as she caught the sound of the coming step. She met Mr. Linden at the door, gladness in every line and movement, and yet the same grace over all her action now, that a minute before was in all her repose. She said nothing at all.

"Watching for me, my dear child!" he said. "Faith, you have been on my heart all these hours."

She waited till he had come up to the fire, and then softly inquired, "What for?"—"'What for no?'" he said, smiling, but giving her face a somewhat earnest consideration. "Have you been asleep?"—"Yes. And then I thought I might go after my chocolate pot, in the closet."

"Sensible child! What did you think upon the great question of setting forth to see me safe over the bridge?"—Her face changed, though smiling. She whispered—"I did see you safe over it." But his lips were grave instantly, and the eyes even flushed. And Faith could see then that he was exceedingly tired. Gently her hands rather insinuated than pushed him into the chair, and she ran away to give an order; coming back to do two or three other things for his comfort. Still silent, standing there beside his chair, she presently stooped and put her fresh sweet lips to his. Roses full of dew are not sweeter; and if roses were sentient things their kisses could not give sympathy more fragrantly, nor with more pure quiet. Holding her fast, Mr. Linden asked what she thought of her share of clerical duties, on the whole?

Faith answered somewhat quaintly, "Not much."

"You don't!—What a triumph for Miss Essie! Were you lonely, Faith?"

She was going to answer, then sprang away from him, for Malthus came to the door. And the table was spread, with as dainty exactness as if there were no disorder anywhere in Mr. Linden's household. The little chocolatière steamed out its welcome, Malthus was gone, and Faith stood by Mr. Linden's chair again.

"It is ready, Endecott."

He had watched her from under the shadow of his hand, her soft arranging steps and touches. "Faith," he said, looking up, "is this the night when I am to have sugarless tea, to remind me of the over-sweetened cup of long ago?"

Her smile and flash of the eye were conscious as well as bright. "I guess, sugar is 'potent' yet, Endy."

"*You* are!" he said. "Have you been lonely, my dear child? You don't answer me."

She hesitated a very little. "I felt you were away, Endy—but I didn't wish you here. No, I wasn't lonely." His eyes spoke a full understanding of both parts of her sentence. But his words touched somewhat else.

"Those poor people up on the mountain! poor as unbelief could make them. Faith, I must go there again in the morning."

"Is it far?"—"Pretty far. On the crest of the ridge."

"What about them, Endy?"

"What were you looking for, here in the embers?"—"I?" she said, the colour instantly starting as she understood his question. "I was looking for you, then."

"I was sure of it. I saw myself distinctly portrayed in a piece of charcoal."

She laughed, gaily and softly. "Wouldn't you like to have some tea, and then tell me what you saw up

on the mountain?" she whispered.—"Ah, little Sunbeam," he said, "I spent some weary hours there. No, I don't want to tell you about it to-night. And so at last I came home, thinking of the scene I had been through, and of you, left alone here in this strange place. And then I had that vision of my wife."

She was silent, her face showing certainly a grave consciousness that he was tired, and a full entering into the feeling of his work; but for herself, a spirit as strong in its foundations of rest, as full of joy both in his work and in him as a spirit could be. So till her eyes met his, then the look broke in a winsome little confessing smile, and the eyes fell.

"Don't you want something better than visions?" she said.—"Is that a challenge?" He laughed and rose up, carrying her off to her place at the table, and installing her with all the honours; and still holding her by the shoulders asked "if she felt like the head of the house?"—"No indeed!" said Faith.

"What then?"—"You know," said Faith, colouring, "what I am."

"Mrs. Endecott, I suppose. I have noticed, Mignonette," said Mr. Linden as he went round to his chair, "that when ever you see fit to agree with me, it is always in your own words!"

Which remark Faith benevolently answered with a cup of cocoa, which was good enough to answer anything.

THE END.

PRINTING OFFICE OF THE PUBLISHER.

Typographical errors silently corrected:

Chapter 2: =who have them.= replaced =by who have them."=

Chapter 2: =in one sphere!"= replaced by =in one sphere!'"=

Chapter 2: =down the forfeits."= replaced by =down the forfeits.=

Chapter 3: =looked her eye= replaced by =looked, her eye=

Chapter 4: =spirit of light.= replaced by =spirit of light."=

Chapter 4: =commandment.= replaced by =commandment.'=

Chapter 5: ="don't you come= replaced by =don't you come=

Chapter 7: =Sally. I've nothin'= replaced by =Sally. "I've nothin'=

Chapter 7: =hammer and nails."= replaced by =hammer and nails.=

Chapter 8: =ever was tired= replaced by =ever was tried=

Chapter 11: ="Now how is this= replaced by =Now how is this=

Chapter 14: =truth forever.'"= replaced by =truth forever.'=

Chapter 15: =drop the sail?= replaced by =drop the sail?"=

Chapter 15: =old protegées= replaced by =old protégées=

Chapter 15: =pullin' em through= replaced by =pullin' 'em through=

Chapter 15: =what he said that for= replaced by =what he said that fur=

Chapter 28: =Endy," said Faith", "I shouldn't= replaced by =Endy," said Faith, "I shouldn't=

Chapter 30: =Look Endy= replaced by =Look, Endy=

Chapter 33: ="What's the state= replaced by =What's the state=

Chapter 33: =make butter, she said= replaced by =make butter," she said=

Chapter 35: =Faith, I'm afeard!= replaced by =Faith, I'm afeard!"=

Chapter 39: =so Dromy could do= replaced by ="so Dromy could do=

Chapter 42: =deplaise= replaced by =déplaise=

Chapter 43: =want anything to eat= replaced by =want anythin' to eat=

Chapter 43: =gentleman's admiration= replaced by =gentlemen's admiration=

Chapter 43: =I do remember= replaced by =I do remember,=

Chapter 43: =vous plait= replaced by =vous plaît=

Chapter 43: =where her pleased= replaced by =where he pleased=

Chapter 44: =been in part of= replaced by =been in part off=

Chapter 44: ='And they overcame= replaced by ="'And they overcame=

Chapter 44: =only to look at;"= replaced by =only to look at,"=

Chapter 44: =O litte Mignonette= replaced by =O little Mignonette=

Chapter 45: =heard her talking.= replaced by =heard her talking,=

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