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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK LITTLE WOLF: A TALE OF THE WESTERN FRONTIER ***

Little Wolf. A TALE OF THE WESTERN FRONTIER.

**BY
MRS. M. A. CORNELIUS.**

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LITTLE WOLF.

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CHAPTER I.

A SAD BREAKFAST—THE SHERMAN FAMILY—THE LANGUAGE OF FLOWERS—WHAT A YOUNG MAN WAS SURE OF—THE PARTING.



Early in the morning of a long ago midsummer's day, the inmates of a quiet New England home were making unusual preparations for the approaching repast. The mistress of the house was ostensibly overseeing the table; but there was an uncertainty in her movements, which indicated a contradictory mingling of interest and abstraction, such as agitates the mind, when trifles intrude on more weighty matters. Not so the maid in attendance, who had served in her present capacity for more than twenty years, and was without dispute an adept in the culinary department, if not in affairs of the heart. She was not so obtuse, however, in the present instance, as not to perceive the uncomfortable state of her mistress, and, notwithstanding the pressure of business in hand, she magnanimously paused a moment to attempt a word of comfort. How to approach a subject which had been continually on the lips of the whole family for weeks, was now the poor girl's difficulty. Every instant was precious. She was in a measure neglecting the smoking viands under her supervision, and her long established reputation as cook was in jeopardy. At this critical juncture she blundered out, "Mrs. Sherman, it's a pity; indeed, it is, that he, that Edward, is bent on going." [Pg 6]

"Why, Recta," interrupted a musical voice reproachfully, "ma is already convinced that it is a pity Edward is going. It remains for us to persuade her that he will speedily return." [Pg 7]

"Bless my heart, is that Miss Louise?" said Recta, turning to the person who had so unceremoniously interrupted her condolences. "Well, now, I declare," she continued, "if I ain't beat. Young girls have great arts of covering up their feelings. There's Miss Louise taking on, and walking her chamber all night, and now she's telling me what to say as unconcerned as if this wasn't the last meal she was going to enjoy with her only brother."

"O fie, Recta, haven't I told you that Edward is coming home again soon," said Louise, and, she added with a blush, "You must have heard kitty in your dreams, and magnified her step into mine. You know you have often said my tread was as light as Tabby's." [Pg 8]

"But it wasn't, last night," persisted the other, "it was as heavy as lead."

The blush deepened on the young lady's cheek; not so much on account of the audacity with which this privileged servant had assailed her veracity, as for other and more private reasons, herein unfolded. It was not indeed, the distress occasioned by her brother's departure, which, as intimated in the preceding conversation, was about to occur, that she desired to hide; but there was one to accompany him, on whom she had bestowed more than a sister's love, and furthermore, this friend, having arrived the day before, had progressed, perhaps farther in his suit than on any former occasion. Such being the state of the case, it was natural, that, with her lover under the same roof, she should be jealous of exhibiting feelings, others than a sister's love would warrant. To cover her confusion, therefore, which Recta secretly exulted in having occasioned, she retorted; [Pg 9]

"Heavy footsteps! ridiculous! Look at me," and she drew up her slight little figure; "for shame, Recta; confess it was your heavy ears, and I'll forgive you."

Recta compressed her lips and Louise immediately changed her tactics.

"What a nice breakfast! Recta knows what Ned likes, don't she, ma? Fie! Ned wont stay long away from Recta and broiled chickens, will he, ma?"

Recta's lips visibly expanded. "I reckon he won't stay long away from Miss Louise and flowers," said she, glancing at a beautiful bouquet, which Louise held in her hand.

"Aren't they lovely, Recta? I've just gathered them fresh for Edward. Now I'll arrange them on the table, while you put on the hot dishes."

"Gathered for Edward, as much as they are for me," muttered the unconquered servant. "Roses and forget-me-nots mean—well, George Goodrich will know what they mean; that's enough."

[Pg 10]

As dispatch was no mean part of the cook's accomplishments, it was not long before the parties mentioned in her private conjectures were seated at the breakfast table, in company with the family, the names of all of whom we know already. It will be observed that allusion has been made to but one parent. The memory of the other, still lived fresh in the affections of his wife and children, and deserves first notice among those whose plans and persons we shall endeavor in a few words, to introduce more minutely to the reader.

Judge Sherman was a man, who, through a long and active life, was distinguished for inflexible integrity, and, by means of sterling talents, he rose to the first rank in his profession as a lawyer. He married at an early age, although his courtship approached closely to the term of years which Jacob served for Rachel. Political differences of opinion were the obstacles which opposed his suit. In those days the Federalists and Democrats indulged in animosities as bitter as those which existed between the Jews and Samaritans. The latter party, being in its infancy, could ill afford to lose even a petticoat from its ranks. Luckily for the young Federalist, the lady of his choice was in her heart a rebel to her father's will and purposes. But after she became Mrs. Sherman, the united influences of both did not annihilate the opposite party, as its future history, clearly demonstrates. The ball, set rolling by Jefferson, continued to roll on, and Judge Sherman, to the day of his death, never saw his favorite principles triumph. In his efforts of a pecuniary nature he was more successful. He had accumulated a handsome property, consisting mainly of many broad acres of well-cultivated Massachusetts soil, which, for a long course of years, had been in charge of a faithful and efficient tenant, occupying a cottage a short distance from his own dwelling, a plain old-fashioned house, situated on an airy knoll near the centre of his domains.

[Pg 11]

Here, for nearly two years after her husband's death, Mrs. Sherman lived in seclusion, receiving only occasional visits from her children, Edward and Louise. The son being engaged in studying his father's profession, while the daughter was at school preparing herself, it would be safe to say, to follow her mother's business. Indeed, it was a fixed fact in her own mind, that when George Goodrich, her brother's warm friend and her ladyship's still warmer admirer, should become established in his profession as a physician, she would then trust herself to his care, without fear of poverty or disease. But the young M. D. having no patrimony, and becoming disgusted with the slow path in which he was treading to fortune, resolved to turn his course into a rougher road at the far West.

[Pg 12]

About the same time, Edward Sherman, having been admitted to the Bar, with no other reason except Yankee restlessness and craving, turned his thoughts in a similar direction. On discovering to each other their mutual proclivities, the friends determined to set out together, as soon as Edward could gain his mother's consent, for the Territory of Minnesota. With characteristic nobleness and fortitude, Mrs. Sherman sacrificed her her own to her son's wishes, and it was not until the morning of his departure, that her courage faltered.

[Pg 13]

Mother-like she sat at the head of the table, unable to swallow a mouthful herself, while urging every delicacy upon her darling son.

"Do, dear Edward, have another cup of coffee," she pleaded, observing that his cup was empty, while his breakfast remained untasted.

"Well, just to accommodate," said Edward smiling. "I really have not much appetite this morning."

"I'm glad you can relish it, Mr. Edward," said Recta, in a whining tone. "It's seasoned with old Spot's cream, and I'm thinking it will be a long time before you'll taste any more tame milk, out there among them wild cattle."

[Pg 14]

At this remark, the great square dining-room rang with the laughter of the younger occupants of the old-fashioned straight backed chairs,—this being the only room in the house, to which the progressive spirit had not yet extended, except, indeed, that which was manifested in the cut glass decanters, standing *empty* on the handsome sideboard.

A deep convulsive sob broke from Mrs. Sherman, and the merriment instantly ceased. The mother leaned forward and covering her face with her hands, gave vent to her long suppressed feelings. Edward was by her side in an instant, and throwing his arms around her neck, exclaimed:

"Mother, I will not leave you!"

"Then I can't go alone," whispered George Goodrich to Louise.

"Ma," said Louise, "Dr. Goodrich says he will stay, too."

"No, not quite that," said the embarrassed lover.

"O, you must both go," interrupted Mrs. Sherman, recovering with an effort her presence of mind; "and we are wasting precious time," she continued, pointing to the clock, with returning firmness. [Pg 15]

The old clock which occupied one corner in seven feet grandeur, would as soon have thought of stopping to indulge in sighs and tears, as would Mrs. Sherman, when her spirit was moved to the necessity for action. So, all the scruples of her son were peremptorily shut out of existence, and Recta, frowned into silence, withheld the probe, which, having fallen into the common error, she had mistaken for the healing salve.

In passing briefly over the season of parting, there is an item which should claim special attention for a moment, as it is intimately connected with the destination of our adventurers.

As Edward stood by the family carriage, which was to transport them to the public conveyance, while waiting for his friend, who had appropriated to himself a private moment with Louise, Mrs. Sherman inquired rather anxiously, "Edward, have you that letter?" [Pg 16]

"Yes, mother," and, more to fill up an unpleasant gap of time than to prove his veracity, he produced from his pocket the missive. It was superscribed, "Dr. DeWolf, Chimney Rock, Minnesota Territory."

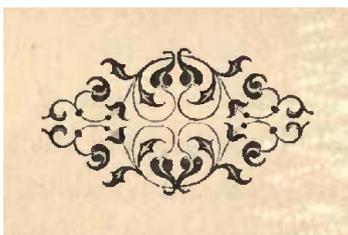
Prompted by the same motive which had actuated the other, Mrs. Sherman repeated some of her previous instructions.

"Now, Edward, when you arrive at Pendleton, by all means make an immediate effort to discover the whereabouts of Dr. DeWolf. I should much like to hear from your father's early friend. I think he states, in the only letter we have ever received from him, that he has fixed his home at Chimney Rock, in the vicinity of Pendleton. However, he may have removed from there by this time, although he was not of a roving disposition. The persuasions of an affectionate wife, who saw with anxiety, her husband's growing love for the wine cup, induced him to emigrate to the far West. In breaking away from the associations which led him to form the habit, she hoped he might attain that rank in his profession, which his brilliant youth had promised. Edward," and here Mrs. Sherman's voice sank to a whisper, "your father was saved about that time. It was by signing the Washingtonian Temperance Pledge. Be warned, my son, and flee the temptation which had well nigh stigmatized you as a drunkard's son. I have always intended to tell you this, but the subject was too harrowing. I could not do it." [Pg 17]

"You might have saved yourself the pain, now, mother," said Edward proudly; "There is no danger of *me*."

That positive declaration came from just such a son, as many a widowed mother and affectionate sister have doted on. Generous, warm-hearted, and strikingly handsome, Edward Sherman, appeared a perfect type of manhood. Were it not that the noblest forms have sometimes hid blemished souls the world had not so often been baptized in tears.

The lovers were now at hand. Time had flown with them on a "dove's wings," and its flutterings lightened their last adieu. [Pg 18]

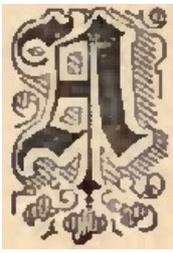


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CHAPTER II.

PENDLETON—THE REVELATION AT THE SALOON—EUPHONIOUS NAMES—THE ENCOUNTER—OUR HEROINE APPEARS AND HIGHWAYMEN DISAPPEAR.

journey of a few days brought our travellers to the lively, bustling village, which for convenience



we have named Pendleton, situated on the Upper Mississippi. After several hours of rest and refreshment at their hotel, they sallied out to enjoy a pedestrian excursion in the cool of the day. Not much of the place of their sojourn was visible. Gaslight, had not wandered so far from its birthplace. The enterprising inhabitants, however, had manufactured an article by the same name, but it was never known to generate light. The wagging of the machinery was all that came of it. [Pg 20]

"Lager Beer," pronounced Edward Sherman, glancing at the gilt letters, that stood out in bold relief on the illumined window of a fashionable saloon, which they were at the moment passing.

"Yes, lager beer," repeated George Goodrich, musingly. "Ned, what a nation of beer drinkers we are becoming. Not at the east only, but these western towns seem to have a beer saloon at every corner."

"Well, Doctor, what is more harmless than beer? Come, let us turn back and take a glass;" and suiting the action to the word, Edward had passed behind the screen which shaded the entrance, before the expostulations of his companion, who followed mechanically, could reach his ear.

While Edward was leisurely sipping his lager, the loud and angry voices of a party of young men, who were in the act of leaving an adjoining apartment, used as a billiard saloon, attracted his attention. As a lady proved to be the cause of the altercation, we will do them the justice to state that they were decidedly under the influence of stimulants, One of their number, less insane than his companions, was endeavoring to quell the disturbance. [Pg 21]

"Gentlemen," he said, "the name of a lady, whom we all respect should not be used too freely."

"Just so," chimed in another, "I say, let the matter rest."

"The hatchet is buried. Peace, peace, to Dr. DeWolf and his lovely daughter, forever," sang out the third.

The name and place, introduced in the quarrel, quite satisfied Edward that the daughter of his father's friend was the subject of the altercation.

"I've had a revelation to-night, George," said Edward, when they were again in the street. [Pg 22]

"Then your eyes were opened, and you saw the handwriting on the wall, did you? Pity, those poor fools we left behind, could not borrow your optics."

"Ah, Doctor, you're on the wrong track. It has been revealed to me, that Dr. DeWolf has a lovely daughter, and—come, now, don't interrupt me with your old-fashioned, worn-out temperance hobby—as I was about to say, I have in my possession a letter of introtion to said DeWolf. He was formerly a friend of father's, and, of course, it will be my duty to cultivate his acquaintance and that of his lovely daughter, as early as possible,—say to-morrow. What say you, friend sober-sides? You know, my particular weakness is a lovely lady."

"Why, it's no affair of mine, Ned. Flirting is out of my line. But, how do you know the lady is lovely?"

"Why, was it not revealed to me, through the imprudence of a whole bevy of her admirers." [Pg 23]

"O, but, Ned, the ravings of a set of drunken rowdies is not conclusive evidence."

"True," said Edward more seriously, "but," smiling again, "it's a young lady, anyhow, and I hope she is handsome."

Nothing further was said on the subject that evening, but, on the day following, young Sherman was informed by the landlord, of whom he inquired, that Dr. DeWolf resided at Chimney Rock, about five miles distant, and to the question, "Has he a family?" replied, "But one daughter, a beauty of some celebrity."

The informant observed the gratified twinkle in the eye of his guest and was not surprised when Edward ordered a carriage to be in readiness for him directly after dinner.

"The road is precipitous in some places, and horseback riding is considered safer," suggested the landlord.

"Well, two saddle horses, then," replied the other. [Pg 24]

Accordingly, at the time above specified, our adventurers, each mounted on a dapple gray, set out for Chimney Rock. The scorching sun, and dusty streets, and poor little withered flowers by the wayside, prodigals from the adjoining valley, were soon exchanged for the "Valley Road," fringed with the loveliest specimens of the floral family, and cooled by the shade of the surrounding bluffs. Like all other things in life, this part of their journey was of short duration.

"Half a mile on this road," said Edward, reining in his steed, and repeating previous instructions, "brings us to the 'Siamese Twins' a double bluff singularly joined towards the top by the projection of an enormous rock. Now, we are here, and no mistake, then turn to the right."

"And keep the road as best we may," said Dr. Goodrich, raising his hat, and wiping the perspiration from his brow. "Well, come on." [Pg 25]

They went on, on and on, over rocks and ledges and fallen trees; fording streams and climbing heights (for they had lost their way) until the lengthened twilight, attendant on the summer evenings of Minnesota, began to darken into night.

At this junction, when it may be readily imagined that Edward Sherman's ardor had somewhat cooled, and the emotions of his fellow traveller were not of the most agreeable nature, alternate snatches of song-singing and whistling were heard, not far distant. The bewildered parties rode hastily forward, and met the musician.

"Can you tell how far we are from Chimney Rock, my friend? We have lost our way," said Edward frankly.

"Why no, you ain't lost your way neither," replied the stranger roughly. "You are there, now. Just ride round the 'tother side of this bluff, and you'll see all there is of it."

"Well, can you inform me where Dr. DeWolf lives?"

[Pg 26]

"I guess I can. Keep right straight ahead, when you get the 'tother side of the Pass, there. That road takes you down to Hog Run, and the Run takes you to Beer Holler, and the brewery is right in the Holler, and 'tother side of that, on the hill, is Dr. DeWolf's."

"What a huddle of euphonious names," exclaimed the Doctor, after having proffered a "Thank you, sir," to the individual who had so opportunely appeared. "Beer Hollow will be just suited to your mind, Ned. In that romantic spot, inhaling the perfume of your favorite beverage, love making will be doubly intoxicating."

"Hush, Doctor, eavesdroppers ahead," said Edward, pointing towards the Pass.

Now, the Pass was nothing more than a narrow strip of table land, serving as a passage way between the Mississippi River, and a towering bluff. The view of the river was here intercepted by a thick grove of trees and shrubbery, which our horsemen had already entered. They did not, therefore, see the tiny green skiff, with its sprinkling of white letters on the bow, christening it "Comet," shoot ahead, and dart into the little cove near by, one of the most romantic and cosy of those emerald-hung parlors opening from the grand reception hall, of the "Father of Waters." Neither did they see the fair occupant rise on tip-toe, and peep mischievously, through the festooned loopholes of the forest.

[Pg 27]

But they saw the dark objects to which the last speaker had called attention, partially concealed by the trees. The beast on which Edward was mounted stopped suddenly, shivering, apparently with fear. Instantaneously, two dark figures darted from their lurking places, and, in low guttural tones demanded money. Unarmed, and completely in the power of the ruffians, who each, pistol in hand, held firmly by bit and bridle, the horse of his victim, the part of wisdom, seemed to be to surrender.

At that instant, a slight figure glided from the thicket behind the waylayers, and cautiously drawing forth a revolver which projected from the belt of the nearest, placed the muzzle at his back and fired. He fell with a deep groan. Another discharge followed quickly, and his companion reeled several yards, seizing convulsively trees and shrubbery, and finally, was heard sliding down the bank towards the river.

[Pg 28]

"Now, ride for your lives, there's more of them," said their deliverer, in a voice husky with excitement.

"What will you do?" said Edward.

"Take my skiff."

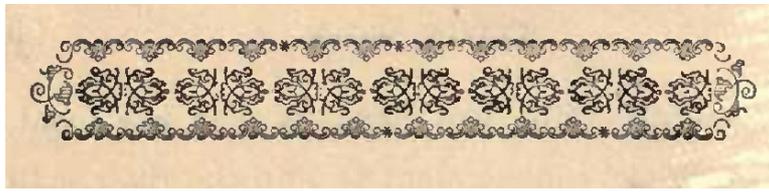
"No, mount here, quick," and he drew her up, and set off at full speed.

"Now, turn here, now up that hill; now we are there," the lady faintly articulated, as they flew along, and drew up before her father's door.

The house at which they had arrived, was the residence of Dr. DeWolf, and the heroine of the adventure, was no other than the Doctor's only daughter, quaintly named, Little Wolf. She had been, as was her wont, on a short independent trip up the river. In the full enjoyment of the romantic scenery and twilight hour, night had stolen upon her unawares. Warned of her imprudence by the distant clatter of horses, she immediately turned homeward. The swift current aided her efforts, and she neared the Pass, just in time to overhear all that was said. Not satisfied with the dim outline of objects, which a peep through the leaves disclosed, she sprang to the shore, and catching by the branch of an overhanging tree, drew herself up the steep bank. The part which she performed in the perilous encounter is already known to the reader, but the leading motives which prompted it, will be better understood hereafter.

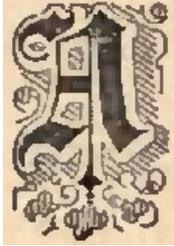
[Pg 29]

[Pg 30]



CHAPTER III.

A REIGN OF CONFUSION—BLOODY JIM—LITTLE WOLF'S ALLIES PREPARE FOR DEFENCE—FAMILY TROUBLE.



shout from the fugitives brought several faces to the window, and from the door hobbled an old man. He cautiously peered into the gloom, and finally at the sound of a familiar voice sidled up to Edward and his charge.

"'Tween you and me, what's the matter?" said he.

"It's me, help me down, daddy, do, I'm tired," said Little Wolf, in feeble tones.

"O, lamb, O, honey, O, pet, is it you?" exclaimed the old dotard, trembling with apprehension. "'Tween you and me, what has happened to the darling?" [Pg 31]

"O, nothing, daddy, only I saw Bloody Jim, and I'm afraid there's more of them."

"O, my Lord, did you? O, my Lord, the men are down to the brewery. O, my, 'tween you and me, what *shall* we do?"

Perceiving the old man's utter incapacity to the exigency, Edward threw his rein to the Doctor, and immediately bore the young lady into the house. The old man followed, grasping his arm, and shouting in his ear at every step, "'Tween you and me, she saw Bloody Jim, did she—she saw him—did she—ha!"

"In the ante-room, they were met by a little bustling elderly woman, in cap and spectacles. "O, daddy, what is it?" she exclaimed.

"O, mammy," he cried, releasing Edward, and laying hold on his wife,—a method by which he invariably compelled attention, "'tween you and me, she's seen Bloody Jim she has; she says there's more of them, she does." [Pg 32]

"Why, you, old fool, why don't you do something?" said the woman, shaking him off with a jerk. "Lock the doors, shut the windows, call Sorrel Top; blow the horn. Is the love hurt?" turning anxiously to Little Wolf, who was reclining on the sofa.

Mammy had hastily snatched up the small lamp, with which the apartment was dimly lighted, and, as she was scrutinizing her pet, Edward obtained a full view of the young lady's features. He gave a sudden start, and the blood rushed to his face. Was it the lady he had so frequently seen on Broadway, a few months since? he asked himself. Yes, the very same; that countenance was not easily forgotten. Why, she was a New York belle, was his first reflection. Our heroine's voice was still low and agitated as she replied, "O, no, mammy, not hurt, only frightened. You attend to the gentlemen and the house I can take care of myself. I feel better now." [Pg 33]

"Well, then, rest here, love; you look pale. Now don't move; don't get excited; nobody shall hurt the pet, I'll tell Sorrel Top to bring you a glass of water."

Amidst the slamming of doors and rattling of windows, mammy was heard calling at the top of her voice, "Sorrel Top, Sorrel, take a glass of water to the parlor;" and to the parlor hastened Sorrel Top. But meeting daddy at the door, she was forcibly detained, and subjected to his deafening vociferations, rendered doubly aggravating, by his using the ear of his auditor as one would a speaking trumpet. The burden of his song, was still "Bloody Jim, Bloody Jim!"

"Who cares for Bloody Jim;" said Sorrel Top angrily; "I don't care for him, nor none of his tribe. Let me go, you, torment."

Daddy held his ground, for he bore in mind firstly: that Sorrel Top was his fellow servant; secondly, she possessed no great strength of muscle or nerve, and, thirdly and lastly, that she was a helpless widow, whom it was no sin to call Sorrel Top, because of her enormous growth of reddish hair. [Pg 34]

Edward stepped forward to relieve Sorrel Top of the glass of water, which she was holding at arm's length, and at the same time suggested that a little brandy might be beneficial to the lady.

"Brandy! Brandy! did you say?" sounded in his ear like a knell, and he was caught in the old man's trap. "Laws! young man, she'd as soon drink a rattle snake; she's down on brandy; she's down on the hull of that infarnel stuff. Spirits of every kind is her abhorrence.

The Doctor was highly amused at his friend's predicament, and, giving him a sly wink, remarked, "Beer will do as well, Ned, and it is perfectly harmless, you know."

The Doctor's turn had come, In a still higher stage of excitement, daddy pounced upon him.

"Young man," he thundered, "beer harmless? 'tween you and me, lager beer is the devil's pison, slow but sure. Don't you believe me?" [Pg 35]

"Coax him away, Sorrel Top," said Little Wolf, rousing herself.

"Come, daddy, Miss DeWolf wants us to be off, she says so," said Sorrel Top, resolutely approaching him.

"Me go! O, no, 'tween you an' me, I must stay and protect the love." The Doctor was instantly released. His assailant had embarked in a new enterprise. But Sorrel Top was firm.

"What good are you doing, I should like to know," she said.

"What good be you a doing, you, hussy?" reiterated daddy; don't you hear mammy blowing the horn; 'tween me an' you, she's short winded. I'll protect the pet."

"Never mind me, daddy," said the young mistress, now quite revived; "if you ain't afraid, you had better assist mammy."

She had touched her would-be-protector in a sensitive spot, and he vehemently ejaculated "me afraid; not I. 'Tween you and me, what should I be afraid of, I would like to know?" [Pg 36]

"Why, of Bloody Jim."

The old man glanced dubiously towards the door, and slid out.

Edward eagerly seized the propitious moment to formerly introduce himself and companion, to their fair preserver. Mutual explanation followed, and Little Wolf cordially welcomed our friends to Chimney Rock. "Father is at the brewery," she said, "he'll be in directly; the horn is our alarm bell."

"Is there any further danger to be apprehended?" said Edward; "I think you killed them both."

Little Wolf suddenly changed countenance.

Her beautiful, bewitching face had been half hidden by curls, and covered with blushes, from the moment her faintness had passed off, and, but for the twinkle of those mischief-loving brown eyes, and certain unmistakable movements of her slight figure, she might have passed for meekness itself. To those, therefore, who were unacquainted with her peculiarly nervous and impulsive temperament, the change in her apperance was rather surprising. With one sweep of her plump little hand, she tossed back the ringlets from her brow, and frowningly declared she wished she had killed them. "I didn't kill them, though," she said, "or, at all events, I killed but one; the other, Bloody Jim, he's called, I cannot kill. I've tried it before. He's my evil genius. He carried me off bodily, once, just before I went away to school." [Pg 37]

"Indeed," said Edward, deeply interested, "how did you escape?"

"O, a gentleman rescued me."

Edward said "indeed" again, but his tone was *slightly* changed. He did not feel *quite* as comfortable, as he had a moment before; but in the unpleasant scene which immediately followed, his chagrin passed unnoticed. [Pg 38]

The sound of the horn, had brought to the house, all the loungers at the brewery who were in a condition to render aid, and some who were not. Among the last named was Dr. DeWolf, who staggered to the parlor, and boisterously demanded, "What's all this fuss about?"

He was in the first stage of drunkenness, and consequently more difficult to manage than he would have been an hour or two later, when he was usually brought home in a helpless condition.

Little Wolf made a desperate struggle to appear composed.

"O, nothing," she replied with the slightest possible quiver in her voice, "I saw Bloody Jim, that's all."

"That's enough," murmured the parent, sinking into a chair. The very mention of that name seemed to have completely sobered him. For, bloated and inebriated though he was, paternal love still lived, a green spot in the waste, which alcoholic fires had not yet burned out. He sat for a moment in silence, pressing his hand to his brow, and then, without appearing to notice his guests, abruptly left the room. [Pg 39]

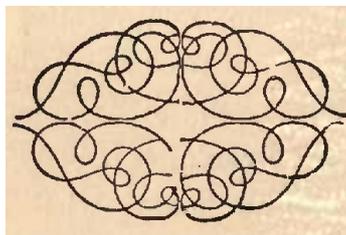
His daughter hastily excused herself, and followed him. Once outside the door, she drew a long breath, but shill choking down her mortified feelings, she bounded across the adjoining room, and meeting mammy, paused to give a few necessary orders.

"O, laws, honey," objected mammy, "I can't do nothing, and I can't get nobody else to do nothing. O, laws, honey, what if Bloody Jim should come? the men are half of 'em drunk; we'll all go to destruction together."

"O, fudge, mammy, Bloody Jim is shot; there's no danger. Come, now, you do as I tell you. I *must* go to my room a minute." and she flew into the hall and up the long staircase, as if she had wings, leaving mammy muttering to herself.

"Poor motherless child; sich as this is enough to make the honey stiddy; dear me, there's no [Pg 40]

stiddyng her—clean gone mad, I declare.



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CHAPTER IV.

MORE TROUBLES—WHO WAS BLOODY JIM—HIS ATTEMPT AT KIDNAPPING LITTLE WOLF—THE CAUSE OF HIS HATRED AND OF THE TERROR HE INSPIRED.



uite like a little fury, Little Wolf burst into her own private apartment. Locking the door, she stopped suddenly and stamped, in a paroxism of grief and vexation.

"A drunkard's child!" she said scornfully "Disgrace!—I hate everybody!—I wish I'd shot myself!—I wish I was dead!—I wish father—" she did not finish the sentence; a loud knock at the door interrupted her.

"Who's there?" she asked.

"Me," said Sorrel Top.

"Go away," said her young mistress, imperatively.

"Mammy sent me," said Sorrel Top, "the Doctor is dying."

"O, God!" exclaimed Little Wolf, in an agony, "I have got my wish."

Trembling violently, she descended to the parlor and found her father stretched out on the sofa in an apoplectic fit. Wild and reckless as her words had been, Little Wolf would not for the world have seen her wishes fulfilled, and she was spared the remorse, which under the peculiar circumstances, her father's death would have occasioned.

Not having perceived how completely her information respecting Bloody Jim, had brought her father to his senses, she little dreamed that, while she was giving orders to mammy, he was in another part of the house inspecting the fastenings of the doors and shutters. Finding all secure, he returned to the parlor, in order to learn the particulars of her meeting with the being, whose very name had created such terror and dismay throughout the household. Observing young Sherman and Dr. Goodrich, he attempted to address them, but suddenly lost the power of speech.

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It was many hours before Dr. Goodrich dared give any encouragement of his recovery to his almost distracted daughter. All night long, she watched, with the young physician and Edward, by his bedside.

Daddy and others, kept a bright look out for the enemy; but he had been too badly wounded, to attempt any further violence that night.

For reasons unknown to any except the parties concerned, Dr. DeWolf had, in the person of Bloody Jim, a revengeful and deadly enemy. He belonged to the Red River half-breeds. Several years before, while a company of his people were encamped in the vicinity of St. Paul, on the upper Mississippi, for the purpose of trafficking with the whites, Dr. DeWolf had paid them a chance visit.

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As some alleviation to the insupportable loneliness, which the recent death of his wife occasioned, he accepted the invitation, of his friend and financial adviser, Squire Tinknor, to spend a few weeks with him, in the place above mentioned. This friend, was unfortunately, for a man of the Doctor's irregular habits, wealthy, wild and dissipated. Together they sought out and visited every place of amusement. Returning in company, from a horse race, one pleasant afternoon, they came in sight of the tented village, occupied by this demi-savage people. The novelty attracted the Doctor's attention and he insisted on alighting. "I must see what they've got in there," he said, pointing towards a tent from which the sound of music was heard.

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Peeping slyly through a crack in the canvas, he saw the music-maker, a young girl, carelessly drawing a bow across the strings of a dilapidated violin, while her own very sweet voice, dropped out a gay stanza, in broken English. She was alone; so the Doctor boldly lifted the door and went in. Five, ten and fifteen minutes, his companion impatiently awaited his appearance, and at length, seriously disturbed at his absence, he shouted his name.

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"Yes, yes," said the Doctor from within, "I'm coming."

"What detained you so deuced long," said his friend, when they were again on their way.

"O, playing the agreeable to a little fool, who was sawing away on a greasy fiddle," said the recent widower of forty-five, or more. He was careful not to mention that the "little fool," was beautifully formed, with ruddy cheeks, with dark, loving eyes and, being rather handsome himself, he had conceived the idea of captivating her silly heart. The story of the "Spider and the fly," fitly illustrates the means by which his purpose was afterwards accomplished.

His innamorata had innocently informed him that her protector, "brother Jim," spent the most of his time in the city, and the Doctor soon discovered that her savage looking relative frequently drank to excess. Under such favorable circumstances it required but little management to elude his vigilance. But, after the mischief was done, it was not so easy to escape a brother's revenge; especially as that brother's naturally ferocious nature had already acquired him the title of "Bloody Jim."

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Not many months after the Doctor had returned home, his punishment began. He had just gone to the brewery to spend the evening, when his little daughter came running in.

"O, papa," she exclaimed, panting for breath, "I met such a great tall man out here—he wasn't an Injin—he talked a little like one, though. He had on a blue coat with bright buttons, and he had such *awful* eyes; O, dear!"

"What did he say, daughter?" said the Doctor, catching up his child, and pressing her to his heart.

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"O, he said, 'what name?' I told him papa always called me daughter, mamma used to call me Little Wolf, and daddy and mammy called me honey, pet, dove, love, and *every thing*, I wish I had a regular name, papa—I mean to give orders to be called Little Wolf, for mamma knew best, and she called me so."

"Little Wolf it shall be," said obedient papa. "But what next did the man say?"

"O, he said 'papa's name.' I said Dr. DeWolf; than he made such a coarse noise in his throat, just like an Injin; I thought he wanted to get me, so I ran in here, quick."

Dr. DeWolf groaned in bitterness of spirit. He thought of Bloody Jim, and was tortured with vague fears of what might be. He did not spend that evening in drinking at the brewery. But it was the last night his child knew a father's care. After that, he did nothing but drink, drink. He had drunk before, in spite of the pleadings of his wife, whom his conduct had brought to a premature grave, and, as trouble increased, he drank yet the more.

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From the moment Bloody Jim saw the Doctor's beautiful child, he worked to gain possession of her and spared her father's life for a time. In pursuance of his plans he returned to the Red River country and gathered about him a set of lawless wretches, whom he had before led on to deeds of violence, and brought them to Chimney Rock. The gang secreted themselves among the towering bluffs in the vicinity, and, while watching for their prey, robbed all who came in their way. The frequent outrages committed on travellers, spread alarm throughout the surrounding country, and officers of justice were dispatched in search of the perpetrators. In this state of affairs, Bloody Jim, resolved at once to make a bold attempt to capture the coveted prize, and quit the country. Selecting for his purpose, the hour when the Doctor was in the habit of leaving home for the brewery, he lurked in ambush, until Little Wolf, who usually accompanied her father the most of the way, should return home alone, and, when the opportunity came, seized suddenly upon her, and, in spite of her struggles, bore her away towards the river. Leaping into a canoe, he threatened her with instant death, if she made the slightest resistance, and pushed out for the opposite shore. It was quite dusk when they landed on the other side. The poor frightened child, now for the first time broke the silence. She begged to be taken home again; but her captor only laughed horribly. "I Bloody Jim," said he; "how you like to be my wife?"

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"O, take me home, I'm only a little girl," pleaded Little Wolf with quivering lip.

"You be big, by and by."

As he said this, an unseen hand laid him senseless on the beach. The same individual who dealt the blow, returned the child safely to her home, and leaving her to tell her own story, disappeared.

A chill of horror crept over the Doctor, when mammy, the next morning, related to him, her pet's adventure. He wrote immediately to his friend, Squire Tinknor, for advice. "Send the child away to boarding school," was the counsel given, and forthwith, the Doctor acted upon it.

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Four years at school, and a winter of fashionable life in New York, transformed the little miss into an accomplished young lady.

When about to return home, she purchased a superb brace of pistols. At her request, Mr.

Marston, the brother of the young lady whose hospitality she had shared, selected them for her. As he was one of those quiet, fatherly sort of young men, who naturally win the confidence, if not the love, of young ladies, she felt no hesitancy in opening her heart to him, on the subject of the pistols. She also related to him the story of her wonderful escape from Bloody Jim, and positively declared that if he ever came near her again, she intended to shoot him through the heart.

"But how would you reward the person who rescued you," said Mr. Marston, eagerly.

"O, I'd do anything in the world for him," she replied, "if I only knew who he was."

"Would you love him?"

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"Yes, I'd love him."

Just then the peculiar expression of her sober friend's face startled her, and she added, with one of her merry laughs, "provided he was not a poky old bachelor."

The bachelor perceiving that his time had not yet come, allowed the little would-be Amazon to depart, without again making the slightest approach to the subject nearest his heart.

Her skill in the use of the silver-mounted weapons, excited great admiration in the breast of daddy, whom she usually allowed to assist in setting up a target, because she could not well get rid of him. His eulogies were, on the whole, rather gratifying to her vanity, for before his sight failed him, he had been no mean marksman.

Entirely unconscious of the dangerous resistance to be met, Bloody Jim made his second attempt on Little Wolf's freedom. She was returning from a long tedious walk, among the bluffs, at the close of a Spring day; her revolvers hid away in the holders, beneath her mantle, when suddenly, her enemy appeared in her path. Little Wolf stood for a moment as if spell-bound. Again she heard that horrid guttural laugh and saw those fiendish black eyes. "I got you now," was all he had time to say, before a ball from her pistol pierced him. She saw him fall, and fled. As nothing more was heard from him, or his men, it was generally supposed that Little Wolf had put an end to his life.

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Like one risen from the dead, he appeared to her in his attack upon Dr. Goodrich and Edward Sherman, at the Pass. She knew he must have gone there to watch for her, and in saving others, she had also saved herself.



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CHAPTER V.

DR. GOODRICH LEAVES WITH DADDY AS GUIDE—DADDY'S WAR-LIKE PREPARATIONS—HIS TESTIMONY TO THE CURSE OF STRONG DRINK—WHAT THEY DISCOVERED ON THEIR WAY TO THE VILLAGE.



orning dawned fresh and beautiful. Dr. DeWolf's symptoms continued favorable. Refreshed and re-invigorated, after an hour's repose, the watchers gathered around the breakfast table with cheerful faces. Too young and mirthful to be very seriously affected, for any great length of time, by what had occurred, Little Wolf joined with her guests in sipping coffee, and talking over the events of the preceding evening with becoming composure.

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During the meal, she slipped out to peep into the invalid's apartment. As she flitted from the room, the Doctor turned to Edward, who was gazing after her with an expression of intense admiration. "Ah, Ned," said he "your time has come."

"Fact, Doctor, I do feel queer. The little witch is too much for me."

"What can I do for you?" said the Doctor, with a professional nod.

"O, leave me here to-day, Doctor. Positively, I can't go back with you."

"What, Ned, allow me to fight my way alone, through a band of desperadoes?" said the Doctor, with feigned trepidation.

"Pshaw, Doctor! there's no danger; their chief is dead, or wounded, and they've fled long before this time."

Their young hostess broke in upon the conference with a smiling face. "Papa is resting very

quietly," she said; "but I fear a return of his complaint. I shall feel anxious 'till you return, Doctor, if indeed, you still think you must go back this morning. Could not Mr. Sherman go for you? Daddy might show him the way."

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Edward cast an imploring look towards the Doctor, who magnanimously sacrificed his own ease to the wishes of his friend. "It will be necessary, for me to go myself," he replied; "but give yourself no uneasiness, Miss DeWolf. I do not think your father will have a second attack. I will accept your offer of a guide, and, with your permission will leave my friend, Mr. Sherman, as my proxy."

There was a slight dash of malice in the Doctor's last words, which Edward was too grateful to notice.

When the hour for setting out arrived, daddy appeared, armed and equipped, for what his fears had magnified into an exceedingly perilous journey. At sight him, of Little Wolf burst into an uncontrollable fit of laughter. His little, insignificant figure was girded by an old leathern belt, which was literally stuck full, of such weapons as he could hastily pick up, about the premises.

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"Bless me! what do you expect to do with that outlandish outfit?" said his young mistress, when she was able to speak.

"Why 'fend myself, to be sure," replied the old man indignantly.

"O, fie, daddy," said she coaxingly; take off that heavy old belt. Why it makes you look so, and sweat so, too. Come, now, if you will, I'll lend you one of my pistols."

The old man's rising temper was quite mollified, at the proposal of Little Wolf; for to sport those pistols, had been an honor, to which he had hitherto aspired in vain.

"Well, now, I'll explain the case, honey," said he, attempting to approach her; "'tween you and me _"

"O, no, no," said Little Wolf, putting her fingers to her ears, and slipping our of his way.

"Bless her heart," said daddy, turning to the Doctor; "that's just the way she used to run away from me, when she was a little gal. 'Tween you and me, though, I was only going to tell her, how it wasn't the heft of this ere belt, that made me sweat so. It was sharpening these ere, on the old grindstone," and he drew forth a couple of large butcher knives, which glistened brightly in the sunbeams.

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"O, those knives are just what mammy wants in the kitchen; I heard her say so," said Little Wolf appearing on the piazza with the pistols.

It required a vast amount of coaxing to bring the old man to terms, but finally a compromise was effected, and stowing a knife away in his coat pocket, he set out with one of the pistols, the Doctor being armed with the other.

Instead of the short cut of the night before, the Doctor chose the more circuitous route through the village; if a cluster of dilapidated houses might be dignified by that name. Dr. DeWolf's old brown residence, situated on a high hill, with its piazza stretching across the front, was the most imposing edifice to be seen. The remaining comfortless dwellings, mostly log cabins, and board shanties, with their broken windows and ragged inmates, who flocked out to gaze at the strangers, presented an appearance desolate in the extreme. Even the shadow cast by old Chimney Rock, after which the place was named, added a darker aspect to the scene. Chinmey Rock was an irregular old bluff, standing like a grim old castle by the riverside, its chimney-like summit, rocky and bare, the most conspicuous object in the landscape.

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"What a God-forsaken place," exclaimed the doctor, involuntarily.

"'Tis so, this ere is a broke-down, one-horse concern, and that ain't the wust on't, nuther," said his companion; who was almost bursting with communicativeness.

"Well, what is the worst of it?" inquired the Doctor, as much to gratify the old man's weakness, as to satisfy his own curiosity.

"Why, Doctor, 'tween you an' me, there's awful doin's here. Ye see, sence that saloon was sot up in one end of the old brewery, all the men here have got to drinking, and 'tis astonishing how men will act, when they git soaked in liquor. I've heered temperance lecturers tell stories that would make your har stand on ind; that was when I was young, and there was a great excitement on the subject. I signed the pledge then, and I never broke my word on no account, or I expect I should be as bad as the rest of them here. I've had to stand out agin hard persuasions. They've tried to git me to take a glass of lager; sez they, 'lager won't hurt nobody;' sez I, 'it's hurt you.' You see, it don't require no argument, I can pint 'em to facts. Now, there's Prime Hawley; when he come here to live, he was a fine, stiddy young man; his wife was as pretty as a rose, and as happy as a lark. Somehow, Prime got to going to that saloon. Well, I gin him fair waning. Sez I, 'Prime, they'll get the halter on ye, if ye go there;' sez he 'I guess not, a glass of lager won't hurt nobody;' but now, sure as fate, he's the worst of 'em all. He's whipped and frightened his putty wife most to death, and she's got sickly now. Some say he's even jined Bloody Jim's gang. 'Tween _"

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"Hark!" said the Doctor, suddenly interrupting the narrator.

Deep, agonizing groans were distinctly heard in the direction of the Pass, which they were nearing.

"O, murder, what's that?" shouted daddy; and he wheeled his horse about and galloped homeward.

"Stop, come back here," shouted the Doctor, at the top of his voice.

The old man reluctantly obeyed. Approaching within a short distance of the Doctor, he motioned that individual towards him. "O, Doctor, 'twont do fur to go furder," said he; "'tween you and me, I've heern say, that's jist the way them robbers do, when they want to ketch anybody. There goes that yell agin. O, that ere *is* awful; we'll get ketched; it won't do fur to stay here."

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Exasperated beyond endurance at the cowardice of his guide, the Doctor bade him remain where he was, while he went forward to reconnoitre. A short ride round the point of the bluff brought him directly upon the bleeding form of the desperado, who had attacked him the preceeding evening. Hailing daddy, he alighted and approached the apparently dying man.

"Prime Hawley, by gol!" exclaimed daddy, as he came up. "Why, Prime," said he, hopping briskly down from his saddle; "twixt you and me, how did you get in this ere fix?"

"Oh! oh!" groaned Prime, "take me home; I'm dying."

"I'll take him home if you say so, Doctor," said daddy, "his heft is nothing, and it's near by."

"Very well, I'll follow with the horses."

"I say, Prime," said the old man, when they had nearly reached the home of the sufferer, "tween you and me, aint had nothin' to do with Bloody Jim, have you!"

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"Yes, I have; curse him!"

"He ain't nowhere 'bout here now, is he?"

"I expect not, oh! oh! I wish he was suffering as I am."

"O, Miss Hawley, 'tween you an' me, here's a sore trial fur you," said daddy to a pale-faced, delicate looking woman, who met him at the cabin door with looks of alarm.

Mrs. Hawley trembled violently, and her pale face grew a shade paler, but she asked no questions, as she led the way to the bed. Her silence, at first, impressed the Doctor with the idea that she was accessory to her husband's guilt, and he watched her closely. No tear dimmed her eye, no sigh escaped her, yet she seemed painfully alive to the agony which her miserable husband endured, while the Doctor was dressing his wound.

"Do you think he will live, Doctor?" she enquired in a sort of hopeless, melancholy tone, as Dr. Goodrich was about to leave.

"It is an exceedingly critical case," replied the Doctor, "he may possibly recover."

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"'Tween you and me," said daddy, coming between them, "I'd like to know how Prime got that shot?"

Poor Prime shook his head imploringly towards the Doctor, who went to him, and quieted his apprehensions in a few whispered words. "I don't care," said Prime, "only it would kill her to know it."

As they were passing the old brewery, when they were again on their way, a man came out and accosted them. "Hello, old Roarer," said he, addressing daddy, "how is Dr. DeWolf, this morning"

The old man straightened himself in his saddle, and preserved a dignified silence.

With an oath, the man commanded him to speak, but daddy rode calmly on; his indignation got the better of his cautiousness.

"I'll pound you to a jelly," shouted the man after him,

"I'll risk it," said daddy addressing the Doctor.

Now daddy was not really a natural coward. But it cannot be denied that old age and extreme cautiousness had greatly moderated the courage which he possessed in his youth. "'Tween you and me," he continued, "that Hank Glutter is the meanest critter that ever trod shoe-leather. I've heern poor Mrs. Hawley plead with him not to sell Prime liquor, and I've heern him order her out of the saloon, and I've follered her hum, to see how she took it. Well, it was dreadful to see her goings on. She'd bounce on to the bed and groan there, then she'd bounce up and throw herself on the floor and groan there, and moan and holler right out; O, it seemed 'zif she never would get cool. She'd walk the floor, and wring her hands and take on awful. Them was the times when she was young and was full of grit—I've been watching her lately, and she's acted rather different. Ye see she was down to the brewery night afore last, I seen her coming hum and I knowed she was dreadful riled about something, so I kept my eyes on her; Lord! if she didn't drop, right down on her knees afore her bed, and let off all her feelins in a wonderful strange way. Seems 'zif she just talked to the Lord. When she riz up, she looked kinder quiet and resigned like, just as she did to-day; sez I to myself, if there's a God in heaven, he's heern that woman. I expected he would send

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fire down and burn that old brewery that very night, but there it stands and that old cuss, that hollered after me, is alive yet. 'Tween you and me, them things is kinder strange, now aint they, Doctor?"

"Rather strange," replied the Doctor dryly.

After riding a few moments in silence, daddy ventured to make still another attempt to open a conversation. "'Tween you and me, Doctor, was you acquainted with Miss Sherman?"

"What Miss Sherman?" said the Doctor in surprise.

"Why, young Edward's mother, down in the old Bay State. I ain't heern nothin' from the folks down thar since I left. I seed young Edward didn't know me, but I've dandled him on my knee many a time, when he was a leetle shaver. 'Tween you and me there was a gal working at Judge Sherman's that I had a liking fur, so Sundays, I used to go down thar sparking, I'd kinder like to know if that gal's spliced yet."

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"What was her name?"

"Her name was Miss Orrecta Lippincott; they generally called her Recta, in the Judge's family."

"Recta is single yet, I saw her just before we left; but why did'nt you marry her?"

"'Tween you and me, Doctor, I was a fool, I've allers felt a kinder hankering after her. I can't get over them fust feelings I had, to this ere day. Is she handsome yit, Doctor?"

"Not very."

"Well, I used to tell her if she got old and grey, it wouldn't make no difference in my feelins," said the old man, rubbing his great, coarse hand across his eyes.

"'Tain't natur," he began after a moment's pause, "to keep our feelings shet in allers. Now, mammy is chuck full of spunk since she's married me, so I aint let on to nobody. Ye see, if she got hold on't, she'd never give me a minute's peace."

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"Well, why didn't you marry Miss Lippincott?"

"'Tween you and me, Doctor, I got it into my head that she liked Sam Brown. Ye see, there was a man told me that he seed him and her kiss, right afore Judge Sherman's gate. Wall, this feller was allers puttin' me up to think that Orrecta was flirty like, and I was jest fool enough to believe him, so I jest packed up my duds and cum out West, with Dr. DeWolf. He'd been teasing me to cum 'long with him fur some time. Ye see, I'd allers been his gardener, ever since he was married. Miss DeWolf that's dead now, she sot heaps by me. 'Now, Philip,' says she—ye see my real name is Philip Roarer—'we can't get 'long without you, fur to milk the cow and make the garden'. I could see that her eyes was a leetle watery like, and I knew that she hated to cum off alone, with the Doctor, 'cause sometimes when he got a leetle tight, he didn't treat her nun too well. But the Doctor got 'long fust rate, when he fust got here; he didn't drink much and he made heaps of money, he and a cronym of hisn, named Squire Tinknor. He lives in St. Paul now, and does the Doctor's business fur him yet. Ye see, Squire Tinknor can drink a barrel of liquor and not feel it, but the Doctor gets crazy enough, on nothing but lager. 'Tween you an' me, that old brewery in the holler has played the devil with the Doctor. I told Hank Glutter how it would be, when he fust sot up the saloon in't. Sez I, 'Mr. Glutter, I'd rather you'd chop this ere right hand of mine right off, than to place that are temptation afore Dr. DeWolf.' Sez he, 'What's the harm of a leetle beer?' Sez I, 'Ain't you goin' to sell nothin' else?' Sez he, 'O, I may keep a few liquors jest for variety.' Seems zif I should sink when he said that are, but I jest felt zif I couldn't gin up, so I let right into him. It didn't do no kinder good though. Sez he, 'If I don't sell it somebody else will, and I might as will make money on it as anybody.' Well, the long and short of it is, Doctor, he has got rich on't and now, 'tween you and me, he's kinder hanging 'round the honey, but I guess he'll git his walkin' papers afore long; ye see, the honey she's alive, every inch on her."

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[Pg 69]

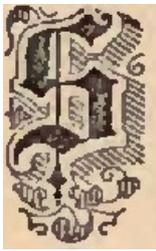


[Pg 70]

CHAPTER VI.

THE SALOON KEEPER—COMFORTING REFLECTIONS—THE UNWELCOME CALL—DIABOLICAL PLOTTING.

wearing vengeance on daddy, who had treated him with such unqualified contempt, Hank Glutter entered his saloon. He was a young man of about thirty years of age, rather below medium



height. His form was well developed, his complexion light, and his hair curled in luxuriant ringlets. He was exceedingly vain of his appearance, and, when in good humor, caressed his whiskers incessantly. He was of a respectable family and his education was liberal, and yet he was nothing more than a smooth-tongued, hard-hearted, revengeful villain. [Pg 71]

He had aspired to Little Wolf's hand, but, on making some unmistakable advances to that lady, he was promptly repelled.

The supreme contempt with which she invariably treated him exasperated him to such a degree, that he conceived the diabolical project of placing her in the power of Bloody Jim, with whom he had already had some secret dealings.

At his suggestion, Bloody Jim made overtures to Prime Hawley to assist in the undertaking. Prime, being in exceedingly indigent circumstances, could not resist the tempting reward offered.

The plan to capture Little Wolf, and convey her across the river, in her own skiff, to a point, where, having in mind his defeat on a former occasion, he had stationed a guard, was well laid, but miscarried, as we have already seen.

Bloody Jim was but slightly wounded, and he soon recovered sufficiently to seek a place of safety, leaving Prime Hawley, as he supposed, dead. [Pg 72]

Hank Glutter could gather no satisfactory information from the intoxicated set, who that night returned from Dr. DeWolf's, and, as we have seen, daddy was disinclined to relieve his suspense; therefore, he resolved to go in person to the Doctor's, and ascertain, if possible, the precise position of affairs.

By way of smoothing his ruffled plumes, he hastily swallowed a stimulating draught, and very soon a more complacent expression settled upon his countenance.

Approaching a large mirror, he bestowed a momentary attention upon his dress, but lingered lovingly over his glossy ringlets. "Miss DeWolf was a fool to turn the cold shoulder to me," said he to himself, as he gave the finishing touch to his soft flaxen hair. "I wonder if Bloody Jim really got her. If he has, wouldn't she be glad to fly to my arms, though."

These comforting reflections were entirely dispelled, when a few moments afterwards, he was ushered into the parlor at Dr. DeWolf's, and in utter astonishment, beheld Little Wolf on apparently intimate terms with the handsome stranger. She was holding an earnest conversation with Edward concerning her father, and did not at first notice the presence of the intruder, who was, by this time, heartily wishing himself behind his bar again. But, contrary to his expectations, the young lady granted him a gracious reception, and introducing him to Mr. Sherman, almost immediately excused herself to attend upon the invalid. [Pg 73]

The young men left alone entered into conversation, and, so well did Hank Glutter conceal his true character, that Edward was quite well pleased with his appearance, and at the close of the interview, accepted a polite invitation to accompany Hank to his saloon, and when there, was easily persuaded to take a glass of lager beer. The day was hot and the lager of the finest quality, so before he left, he drank several glasses more, and while thus engaged, confided to his entertainer the whole story of his adventure with Bloody Jim. [Pg 74]

"But what became of the men who were shot," said Hank, burning with impatience to learn the fate of his accomplices.

"O, we left the dead to bury their dead, Mr. Glutter. Miss DeWolf is confident there is a gang of the ruffians. I intend to make it my business to look after them a little."

"So do I," said Hank, and as soon as Mr. Sherman was gone, he proceeded to put his dangerous threat into execution, by calling upon Mrs. Hawley.

"Good morning, Mrs. Hawley," said he in his blandest tone, as she slowly approached the open door, in answer to his gentle tap. "Is Prime at home?"

He was about to enter, but Mrs. Hawley quietly motioned him back, and herself stepped outside, "Mr. Hawley is very ill," said she, "and unable to see company."

"May I not be allowed to see him a moment?"

"No, sir."

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"Just for a moment," he persisted, "I am really anxious to see Prime."

"No, sir; his life might be the forfeit."

"Now, really, Mrs. Hawley—"

"Mr. Glutter," said she, interrupting him, "have you forgotten your conduct to me the last time we met?" and a burning spot came to her cheeks, and scathing words dropped from her lips. "You know too well, sir, that my home is desolate, my heart is broken, and my husband is murdered, all through the influence of your cursed business. I thought I would treat you politely, Mr. Glutter, but I cannot. God forgive me. Leave me; the very sight of you makes me desperate. Leave me, I say, if you would not again have the curse of a drunkard's wife fall upon your blackened soul."

"What a perfect she-devil you are," said Hank, now throwing off all restraint. "I mean to see Prime, spite of you."

"Try it, if you dare," said she, and her eyes flashed and sparkled with a desperate purpose, as she planted herself in the door. [Pg 76]

Just then, Dr. Goodrich and daddy, on their return trip, were seen approaching.

"You'll repent this," said her persecutor with an oath, and immediately withdrew.

He went directly to the cove where Little Wolf's boat was usually moored. It was not there, and he took courage.

"Bloody Jim could not be hurt much," he soliloquized in an undertone, "or he couldn't have taken the boat away. I shall manage that girl yet, and that Sherman, too, if he don't take care of himself. They'll be lovers, I see that plainly enough. So much the better; moonlight walks will follow, as a matter of course. Now we'll see who will beat in this game."



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CHAPTER VII.

MUSIC—THE WARNING—PREPARATIONS FOR WINTER INTERRUPTED—THE WELCOME BOAT.



Three months had passed, and during that time, Dr. DeWolf had entirely recovered his health. Prime Hawley was up and doing, following with renewed vigor his former pursuits; threats and entreaties had wrung from him a half-hearted confession, but, out of pity for his wife, the affair was hushed up, and he was saved from merited punishment.

Bloody Jim had not been seen or heard of, and he alone carried the secret of Hank Glutter's criminal designs. [Pg 78]

Edward Sherman had become an almost daily visitor at Dr. DeWolf's, and while his friend Dr. Goodrich was establishing himself in his profession at Pendleton, he was gradually gaining a more certain hold, on the affections of Little Wolf.

Our heroine was still, to all appearance, the same little bundle of contradictions that she had always been.

"There, I'm always sure to do the very thing I say I will not do," she said to herself half pettishly, as she opened her piano with a jerk, and ran her fingers carelessly, over the keys, one fine October day.

Very soon she was quite absorbed, in practicing a difficult piece of music, which her lover had, heretofore, recommended in vain.

"O, Miss DeWolf, there's a squaw here that wants to see you," said Sorrel Top, bursting suddenly into the room.

"O, she's begging, no doubt. Give her what she wants, Sorrel Top, I'm engaged just now," and Little Wolf went on with her music. [Pg 79]

"There, I told you so. I knowed Miss DeWolf wouldn't have nothing to do with squaws, or injins, nor nothing else that's low," exclaimed Sorrel Top, loud enough to be heard by her young mistress, who always made it a point to do the very thing it was expected she would not do.

The dumpy little copper-colored creature, enveloped in an Indian blanket, before whom Sorrel Top had drawn herself up with a triumphant toss of the head, was just making a second plea, when Little Wolf made her appearance.

"I want to hear music, do tell the lady I want to hear music," she said in very good English.

"O, if that's what you want, come this way," said Little Wolf, leading on to the parlor.

The Indian followed, pattering along in her soft moccasins, leaving Sorrel Top quite crest fallen. [Pg 80]

"Now here is where the music comes from," said Little Wolf, placing her hand upon the instrument, and following her piece of information with a lively air.

"Now, how do you like that?"

"It is very pretty; may I try to make music?"

"Certainly," said Little Wolf, vacating her seat with infinite condescension. The maiden drew her blanket more closely around her, and made it fast. Her exceedingly small and finely formed hands were now at liberty, and, instead of the discordant notes which her auditor fully expected, a flood of harmonious sounds burst upon her ear.

"What does this mean?" exclaimed Little Wolf in utter astonishment, when the strains had ceased.

The performer bent upon her a long searching look, and enquired, "Are you Miss De Wolf?"

"I am."

The strange visitor immediately rose and approached the door.

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"There! stop; who are you?" demanded Little Wolf, vehemently.

"Hush! I was going to bolt the door," and she deliberately turned the key in the lock. "I'm your friend, young lady, and I'm come to warn you of impending danger."

Little Wolf slightly paled, but she stood firm awaiting further developments.

"Too much time has been wasted already," she began, "Bloody Jim is here, at Chimney Rock, waiting for the first favorable moment to kidnap you, and murder your servants, and set fire to your home. He is now more daring and reckless than ever. Three times you have thwarted him, and he still carries the scars he has received at your hands. This is the day, and, for ought I know, the very hour, that he designs to fall upon you. It was to be when your father was helplessly intoxicated, and yourself entirely off your guard. I think he has two or three accomplices living in this place. I love Bloody Jim, steeped in crime as he is, and I beg of you, if it shall be possible for you to save yourself without taking his life, you will do so. I have now done all I can for you; good bye."

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"There, you shall not go," exclaimed Little Wolf, springing towards her, "you must stay and assist me."

"I can do nothing more for you, Miss De Wolf, indeed, I cannot. I have told you all I know. My journey has been exceedingly painful and perilous, and I am completely exhausted. If I am discovered, I must inevitably lose my life. I do not dread death, but if alive, and you should be captured, I might possibly render you some assistance. Now you must not detain me."

"Well, but who are you," persisted Little Wolf, "that you are able to give me all this information, and yet cannot give me any aid?"

"I can, in all probability, aid you more by going than by remaining," said the other hurriedly. "My skin is stained, my clothes are stuffed to give me this fleshy appearance, but you will recognize me if we meet again. My name is Antoinette Le Claire. Now I *must* go. The good Lord help you," and she waddled off, in precise imitation of a fat old squaw.

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"Now I must be brave," thought Little Wolf, pressing her hand on her brow, while she tried to think what plan to pursue.

Her first thought was for her father's safety, who was, as usual, at the brewery, where he had gone soon after dinner, and as he had not been there long, she hoped he was not, as yet, intoxicated.

Stepping to the door, she hailed daddy, who was busy storing away some vegetables in the cellar, for winter use. "See here, daddy, I want you to go down to the brewery as quick as you can, and tell father—well, tell him I'm sick, and want to see him right away."

"'Tween you and me, honey,"—

"O, go, this minute, daddy," and she shut the door in his face, and proceeded to the kitchen, where she found mammy quietly smoking her pipe in the corner.

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"O, mammy, where is Sorrel Top?" said she.

"Sorrel Top, why she's picking grapes for that are jelly you wanted made. I'm going to help her when I git rested, and slick up a leetle."

"No, mammy, you must help me. Bloody Jim is around here somewhere, and he's going to try to kill us all and burn the house. I've just sent daddy for father, and you had better call Sorrel Top. I'll get my pistols, and we'll secure the house."

"O, laws a mercy! how did you find it out, honey?"

"Wait 'till we are safe and I'll tell you."

"O, honey, did you tell daddy?"

"No."

"O, I'm awful glad, he'd be so frustrated you know."

"Yes, I know; now don't you get frustrated, and let it out quite yet, you had better tell Sorrel Top, though."

Sorrel Top was duly informed, and they all set to work, and had made what arrangements for their safety they could, when daddy returned. [Pg 85]

"'Tween you and me, Honey, the Doctor can't come."

Little Wolf knew, by the expression on the old servant's face, why her father could not come, and she went up close to him, and whispered, "Is he very bad, daddy?"

"O yes, pet, 'tween you and me, he's dead drunk."

A shiver ran through the daughter at this intelligence, and she now felt strong suspicions that Hank Glutter was implicated in her enemy's plot, and the condition of her father indicated that the crisis was near at hand.

"Well, daddy, cannot you get him some way?" she enquired, after a moment's thought, "can't you get some of the men to help you?"

"There ain't nobody there but Hank Glutter."

"Well, won't he assist you?"

"Bless your heart, honey, no—he ordered me off when I was there just now, and said things it wouldn't do for you to hear, no how." [Pg 86]

"If you should write him a little billet and ask him, may be he would," suggested mammy.

The note was speedily dispatched, and ran thus:—

"Will Mr. Glutter do Miss DeWolf the favor to assist the bearer, in bringing her father home."

"Now, honey, 'tween you and me," said daddy, who soon after returned in high displeasure, "that Hank Glutter can lie as fast as a hoss can trot. He turned red clar up to his har, when he read your billet, and sez he to me, 'go tell Miss DeWolf that I've sprained my right arm, and can't lift a pound.'"

"The Lord be praised, there's a steamer coming," exclaimed Little Wolf.

All eyes were instantly turned in the direction of the river, and several miles away, the smoke bursting from the tall pipes of a steamboat, and curling towards the clouds, was distinctly visible. [Pg 87]

"Now, daddy, you must take that boat and carry a letter to—to Mr. Sherman, and we'll see if we can't outwit Mr. Glutter."

"O, but, honey, 'tween you and me, them 'taters and things must be got in. What if we should have a frost to-night, and spile 'em. Hank will send the Doctor home when it's time to lock up, and it don't make much difference whether he's here or there."

"Yes, it does, daddy, and I'm bound to have father home, now I've set out, so you run to the landing, and give the signal."

"Hurry him up, mammy," she whispered to her housekeeper, and immediately went to her writing desk.

"Laws, how can I leave them are taters, mammy?" he said, appealing to his better-half.

"Laws, you can git back in time to kiver 'em up; you'll better let 'em spile and keep on the right side of the pet. Likely she's got something *particular* she wants to say to Mr. Sherman; girls is up to sich things. There, now, you'd better leave, that are boat is heaving in sight." [Pg 88]

Chimney Rock was one of those insignificant points, on the Upper Mississippi, where steamers seldom had occasion to land, and it became necessary to hoist a signal, when any of the inhabitants wished to take passage on a boat from that place.

Daddy vigorously waved his red flag to and fro, and the result was, in ten minutes, he had embarked on board the steamer "Golden Era," with Little Wolf's communication stowed safely away in his pocket.



CHAPTER VIII.

THE LOVE-LETTER—DISCUSSION—A QUICK RIDE—TOO LATE— VIOLENCE AND DEATH.



r. Goodrich's cosey office, situated on the corner of Second and Centre Streets, in the village of Pendleton, was a convenient lounging place for Edward Sherman, and it so happened that on the very day that Little Wolf had dispatched her messenger, he had repaired thither to read his newspapers and letters, smoke cigars, and indulge in the comfort which a confidential chat with a friend, generally affords to a companionable mind. [Pg 90]

"See here, Doctor," said he, depositing the bundle of mail matter on the office table, and seating himself in an arm-chair beside it.

"Anything for me?" said the Doctor, who was busy arranging some papers.

"A letter from *her*," said Edward, with slow, droll emphasis.

"Really, Ned, that is decidedly cool. How long do you propose to make me wait for it?"

"Help yourself, Doctor. It's there among the papers," said Edward, lighting a cigar.

Occasionally, Edward glanced over the top of his newspaper to observe the animated countenance of his friend, as he perused the lines traced by the hand of love.

Having thus marked his progress to the end, he enquired, "Now, Doctor, what says my little sister?"

"She says, Ned, 'this is now the middle of Autumnn.'"

"O, is that *all*?"

"Well, the next in order is, 'and mother is expecting Edward home soon.'"

"That is just what I have been expecting to hear for a week past, Doctor. You know I have made my success with Miss De Wolf the condition on which I should be induced to locate here. Well, I'm pretty sure of her, and I have at length determined to hang out my shingle, and go to work. I can see no way but to persuade mother and Louise to come out here and live with us." [Pg 91]

"Then, you are really engaged to Miss De Wolf, Ned?"

"Why, no, not exactly. I doubt whether we shall ever, really, be formally engaged. I wouldn't be surprised if she told me, an hour before our marriage, that she didn't intend to take me; but then, I know she will. Poor old daddy has frequently volunteered the information that the Pet will never marry a man, who has been guilty of drinking a glass of lager beer. He says she is bitterly opposed to anything that will *'toxicate'*, but I suspect the experience she has had with her father has put those ultra notions into her head."

"No wonder, Ned; the fact that there are hundreds of such cases as Dr. De Wolf's has influenced my opinion on the subject to a greater extent, perhaps, than any other, and really, I'm glad Miss De Wolf favors total abstinence; I hope she will convert you." [Pg 92]

"Never, my friend. I shall always adhere to the principle that a man is capable of controlling his appetite, within the bounds of reason. Let a man but *will* to drink moderately, and he can."

"But, Ned, a person seldom *wills* to drink moderately, but ends by *willing* to drink immoderately. Now in such cases what becomes of your theory?"

"The fact is, Doctor, you and I have so often discussed the subject, that I believe there is nothing new left to be said, on either side. I wish Hank Glutter was here, and he would show you in five minutes, why we should not deprive ourselves of the gifts of Providence, simply because others have abused them."

"I pity a drunkard, Ned," said the Doctor, very quietly, "but I despise a drunkard-maker, and the less conversation I have with one of that class, the better." [Pg 93]

The color quickly mounted to Edward's face, but a loud knock at the door suspended his reply.

"Come in," said the Doctor, and in stalked daddy.

"'Tween you and me, Mr. Sherman," said he, approaching Edward, "the honey has sent you a letter; here it is."

Edward received the letter with a mixture of surprise and pleasure, which he could not conceal.

Unfolding it with nervous haste, he ran his eye over the few brief lines. "Good heavens!" he exclaimed, starting to his feet, "Bloody Jim is at Chimney Rock again."

Daddy sprang forward, with dilated eyes and open mouth, and fastened his grip upon Edward, who comprehended in an instant why the old man had not been apprized of the nature of his errand, and he resolved on returning him to his former state of blissful ignorance. [Pg 94]

"Let me see; have I made a mistake?" said he, again looking over the letter, "Bloody Jim is not at Chimney-Rock, after all."

"'Tween you and me, what made you think he was?" said daddy, whose panic began to subside.

"O, I saw his name, and took it for granted he was there. I did not quite make out what was said."

"The billet was writ in a hurry, Mr. Sherman; you must excuse it. The honey is the most distinctest writer I knows on. She got a wonderful education down thar, in New York; 'tween—

"Miss DeWolf wants me to go to Chimney Rock immediately," said Edward, arresting the words on the lips of his garrulous visitor.

"Sartain, I know'd it."

"The Doctor will go with us, and I want you to go to Frink's stable and order the horses; we will be ready by the time you come round."

"I'll dew it."

"Now in the name of wonder, what does all this mean?" exclaimed the Doctor, as daddy slammed the door behind him. [Pg 95]

Edward handed him Little Wolf's letter, which merely stated that Bloody Jim was at Chimney Rock, and she was momentarily expecting violence at his hands.

No time was lost in vain conjectures; a constable was engaged, and the friends had already buckled on their armor, which consisted of pistols and bowie knives, when daddy returned with their horses. They were fleet-footed animals, and he was himself well mounted.

Not long were the horsemen in reaching the well-known "Pass," and as they emerged from the trees, and approached the house, no indication of the threatened hostilities appeared. But still they dashed along over the fallen leaves and faded turf, and drew up in front of Dr. De Wolf's.

All was quiet about the old brown house. They dismounted and approached the door, daddy leading the way, with the air of a conqueror. He saw in imagination his young mistress triumphing over the discomfited Hank Glutter, and he greatly gloried in the anticipated conquest. [Pg 96]

His companions were secretly uneasy at the unusual stillness which reigned around, and when he attempted to open the front door, and it resisted his efforts, Edward anxiously stepped forward and knocked loudly and hurriedly.

"Never mind," said the old man complacently, "I guess them women folks have gone out. I'll just step around the back way, and let you in."

The gentlemen followed him without ceremony into the kitchen, and the first object that met their horrified sight, was mammy, stretched lifeless on the floor.

It would be impossible to describe the grief and terror which took possession of daddy, or the agony of doubt which sent Edward like a madman through the house. As he flung open the door of a spacious sleeping apartment on the second floor, clouds of smoke and flame drove him back. A pile of light bedding and other inflammable articles had been set on fire near the centre of the room, but the fire had not, as yet, communicated itself to the building, and Edward, finding water near by, soon succeeded in extinguishing the flames. [Pg 97]

While he was thus engaged, Sorrel Top emerged from an adjoining chamber, trembling so as to be scarcely able to stand.

"Where is Miss De Wolf?" exclaimed Edward.

"O, they've carried her off; oh! oh! oh!"—and a long shudder shook her frame.

"Sorrel Top," said Edward, assuming calmness in order to allay her fears, "there is no immediate danger, and I want you to tell me as distinctly as you can, all that has occurred."

"O, Mr. Sherman, Bloody Jim has been here. I expect it was he, and we were watching for him, too, but we didn't any of us see him come. I was watching on the east side of the house, and mammy was watching in the kitchen, and I could see Miss De Wolf through the long hall, standing right by that window there, looking out, and Bloody Jim came up behind her sly, and caught her before she saw him at all. She screeched out, and tried to get away, but he held her tight, and hollered, 'come on, boys.' and two men run right in, and they tied her hands, and stopped her mouth, and just strapped a big blanket around her, and carried her off, and I ran and hid, for I thought they'd kill me if they saw me." [Pg 98]

"How long since they were here?" said Edward, eagerly.

"O, it's only a little while, and may be you can ketch 'em," said Sorrel Top, brightening up a little.

Sorrel Top's reply infused a bright ray of hope into Edward's highly wrought feelings, and, accompanied by his friends, he immediately started in pursuit.

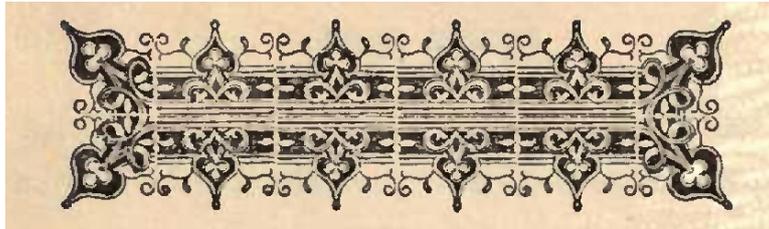
Just outside the house they met Mrs. Hawley, who informed them, that sometime before she had seen three men going towards the brewery. To the brewery they quickly went. The wily proprietor denied having seen the fugitives, and feigned excessive emotion when informed of [Pg 99]

their inhuman deeds.

"In what direction would you advise us to search, Mr. Glutter?" said Edward.

"O, you had better strike off among the bluffs. They could hardly take the river by daylight without being discovered. Probably they will reach some point above here after dark, and cross to the other side under cover of night. I will dispatch a messenger to Pendleton for aid. My men, unfortunately, are gone after grain, and I am uncertain when they will return. Dr. DeWolf, I am sorry to say, is perfectly helpless to-day. While I was out a few minutes he helped himself too freely."

Hank Glutter faithfully performed his promises. The same evening officers of justice were sent out from Pendleton, and a party of young men volunteered their services, and like Edward and the Doctor, travelled many miles. But all in vain, Bloody Jim had escaped with his prize.



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CHAPTER IX.

BLOODY JIM'S ADVANTAGES—THE FAINTING CAPTIVE—THE TRAGIC QUARREL—OUTWITTED AT LAST—THE REFUGE.



is intimate acquaintance with the wild region of country, over which he directed his course, gave Bloody Jim an immense advantage over his pursuers.

While they were floundering in treacherous sloughs, or climbing unknown heights, he was riding safely and swiftly along in company with his prisoner and the two villians, whom Sorrel Top described as having assisted in kidnapping her mistress.

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Little Wolf was so narrowly watched by the trio that escape seemed impossible.

As each hour bore her farther from civilization, and nearer to the Red River country, her heart sank within her.

She was compelled to pursue her journey a large portion of each night, and when her captors stopped for rest and refreshment, she was either lashed to a tree, or bound, so as to be unable to rest with the slightest ease or comfort.

Under such rigorous treatment her strength rapidly declined, and, at the close of the third day, entirely failed. They had reached the foot of a beautiful wooded bluff at a bend in the Mississippi, where the town of St. Cloud has since been located. Here they were suddenly brought to a stand; the poor jaded captive had fainted.

Bloody Jim saw her reeling in her saddle and instantly threw his brawny arm around her frail form. Dismounting, and laying his unconscious burden on a bed of dry leaves, which the wind had gathered under a huge oak, he produced from his knapsack a bottle of brandy, and proceeded to wet her face, and force a few drops into her mouth.

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At the sight of the long-concealed bottle, his men chuckled with delight, and as soon as Little Wolf exhibited signs of returning life, they requested a "treat."

Bloody Jim, now deeming himself beyond pursuit for one night at least, acceded to their wishes, and also himself indulged in his favorite beverage.

Little Wolf gathered from their conversation and movements that they designed to camp for the night at their present station, and their occasional rude allusions to herself filled her with terror. She struggled to throw off the oppressive faintness which she felt a second time stealing upon her, but, when she saw Bloody Jim approaching her, the horrors of her situation completely overcame her, and she again swooned.

"Ugh!" grunted the disappointed savage, giving her inanimate form a rude kick.

"She wake before morning," suggested one of his comrades encouragingly, as he passed him the precious bottle.

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Bloody Jim took it, put it to his lips, drained it dry, and handed it back.

This was too much for his already half drunk consoler; he angrily flung the empty bottle into Bloody Jim's face, and in retaliation received in a twinkling his death stab.

Half breed No. 3 observed the transaction with evident satisfaction. He applauded the murderer and cajoled him into furnishing from the bowels of his knapsack a fresh supply of the poisonous liquor.

After gratifying their rum appetite to the full, the athletic men gradually became as helpless as infants, and, sinking on the ground as the darkness gathered around them, they fell into heavy sleep.

In about an hour Little Wolf partially recovered, but, supposing herself to be closely guarded, and still suffering from extreme lassitude, she closed her eyes, and gradually fell into profound slumber.

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The hours glided on. The waning moon looked sadly in through the branches of the old oaks upon the sleepers. There lay the murdered man with his upturned, ghastly face; scattered near him were the fragments of the broken bottle. Yet a little further on were the prostrate forms of his guilty fellows, and still beyond reclined the innocent one.

There was a rustling among the leaves and light footsteps drew near, and Antoinette Le Clare gazed upon the scene. She was still habited in her Indian costume. Softly approaching Little Wolf she as softly awoke her.

Little Wolf looked up wildly into the dark face that bent over her and recognized it in a moment. Antoinette silently assisted her to rise, undid her fetters, and taking her hand, noiselessly led her from the spot.

The staggering gait of her companion disclosed to Antoinette her extreme weakness hoping to revive her drooping energies she whispered "Courage a little longer, Miss de Wolf, and you are safe."

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"I've courage enough to put an end to them," said Little Wolf, with a momentary flash of her wonted spirit, "but I'm so dizzy."

"Well, rest here while I bring my pony."

"No, I'll go with you," and by an act of the will Little Wolf forced herself along until they reached the shaggy little Indian pony on the glade.

This they both mounted, Little Wolf still struggling bravely with her increasing illness. But it was all in vain; a violent fever was seizing upon her. She was alternately distressed with hot flashes and cold chills, and worse still, her mind began to wander.

Antoinette was in deep distress. Her plan to fly for protection to the nearest settlement was completely frustrated. It was too far; she could not hope to reach it in safety. But, thinking she might possibly discover a place of refuge in some other direction, she turned her horse and dashed off she knew not whither.

Having rode on for several miles over prairie and oak openings, determining to put all possible distance between herself and Bloody Jim, a most welcome sight met her view.

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It was a log cabin standing on an eminence, comfortable in appearance and snugly embosomed in a grove of trees.

As there was no enclosure around it, she rode close to the door, and, without dismounting; knocked loudly with her riding whip.

An echo was her only reply. The same results followed repeated attempts to obtain a hearing, and she came to the conclusion that the house was either unoccupied, or the inmates were insensible to noise. The former proved to be the case, and what was more unpleasant, the door was firmly fastened.

Letting the invalid—whom she had supported partly by her arm and partly by fastening her blanket around both—slide softly to the ground, Antoinette dismounted and effected an entrance through a small window. There was but one room in the dwelling, and this was scantily furnished. A bed, a cook-stove, a flour barrel and a chest occupied each a corner.

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On a couple of hooks that were fastened to a beam overhead rested a rifle, and from a peg at the side was suspended a violin. A hat, an old pair of boots, pushed partly under the bed, and several other articles of men's wearing apparel lying about the room, proclaimed the abode of a single man.

The door was secured within by a wooden bar, which Antoinette speedily removed, and, by extraordinary exertions on the part of her friend, Little Wolf was removed to a comfortable couch in the cabin.

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CHAPTER X.

THE KIDNAPPER'S SURPRISE—ON THE WRONG TRACK—BLOODY JIM'S CAPTURE—THE POWER OF HABIT—DISPAIR—THE ROTTEN PLANK.



It was late on the following morning when Bloody Jim awoke. He rubbed his eyes and scratched his head with a vacant stare, for he did not at first remember where he was. When the objects by which he was surrounded had sufficiently refreshed his memory he began to look about for his prisoner and, behold, she was nowhere to be seen.

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He ground his teeth with rage. "Ketchum," he said, giving his still snoring companion a tremendous shake, "wake up, that d—d gal is gone."

"Gone!" exclaimed Ketchum, starting up and beating around among the bushes, "she aint gone far I reckon."

"She has too," said Bloody Jim, following his exclamation with an oath.

"How do you know, Jim?"

"That horse she's taken, Ketchum, will travel like lightning."

Now it so happened that the animal alluded to had broken loose during the night, and, as Bloody Jim had appropriated his services without consulting his master, who was an honest farmer living in the vicinity of St. Paul, the sagacious beast deliberately set out to return to his former comfortable quarters.

The natural conclusion of the villains was that Little Wolf had fled on their missing horse, and so when they had succeeded in finding his track they followed it. Mile after mile of their former route was retraced. Hour after hour they plodded on, scarcely stopping to give their beasts necessary rest until the night overtook them, and then were only delayed for a short time. They rose with the moon, and, in a few hours actually came in sight of the deserter. He was drinking at the river's brink within sound of the roar of St. Anthony's Falls. Perceiving his pursuers approaching, the noble beast threw up his head, gave a loud snort and darted off.

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Bloody Jim gave an impatient grunt, but Ketchum clapped his hands with delight. "Golly: the gal must be near here," said he.

"No, me think she got to the tavern on yonder hill. We must find a hiding place, Ketchum, and me have the gal yet, or the constable have me."

Bloody Jim little thought when he made his boast that he would be in the power of the constable before night, but so it was. The riderless horse having been seen at St. Anthony's, suspicions were aroused, a search was instituted, and the result was the capture of the imprudent and high-handed outlaw.

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To all questions put to him concerning Little Wolf, he had but one answer, "me not know."

Threats and bribes elicited nothing more and it was generally supposed that he had murdered her. But as the whole affair was shrouded in mystery, there was some few inclined to the opinion, that she was secreted in some place, from which the protracted absence of Bloody Jim would give her an opportunity to escape. Among the last named was Dr. Goodrich and Edward Sherman.

The Doctor was not at the examination of the prisoner, and Edward hastened to inform him of the result. He was at his old haunt, and, as usual, under the influence of stimulus when Edward entered.

"No satisfactory information could be obtained from the old scoundrel," said he, throwing himself upon a lounge.

The events of the past few days had worn upon him, and his anxious look did not escape Hank Glutter, who turned away to conceal his exultation.

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"Poor fellow, he too mourns for her," thought Edward, mistaking his movement for one of grief.

After a moment's silence, Hank poured out something from the bar. "Drink this, Sherman," said he, passing it to Edward, "I see you are tired; it will strengthen you."

Since Edward's entrance, Dr. DeWolf had sat gazing at him fixedly. The bleared, dull light of his

eyes gave place to a keen, wild expression as Edward accepted the proffered glass.

"Mr. Sherman," said he, in an unusually strong voice, "do you see what is in that cup?"

"Why, yes, doctor; it is wine."

"Yes, surely it is wine," replied the other "and your inexperienced eye sees nothing more than a harmless beverage; neither did this bleared and bloated old man see more than that in his wine years ago. Ah! could he have seen in his youth the vision in his cup which he now sees in that which you now hold to your lips, he might have been saved from a life of disgrace and ruin. The chain which once bound me was as light as that which now binds you."

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"No chain binds *me*," said Edward proudly. "I need not drink this unless I choose."

"It seems but yesterday, Edward Sherman since I addressed similar language to your father, and well do I remember his arguments to induce me to abandon every beverage that could intoxicate. I recollect how I loathed the drunkard, as you do me, and how my proud heart rebelled at the humiliating thought that habit would ever become too strong to be controlled by my will; but boastings were vain; the time will shortly come when I shall sink into a drunkard's hell—and you, poor Hank, will be there too," he continued, turning to Hank Glutter, "you will be sent down to wait upon your customers. You must stand behind your flaming bar and pour out the liquid fire and brimstone for such as I; but, never mind, the traffic will enrich you with showers of molten gold. No drop from God's pure fountain to cool your parched tongue. One long eternal blaze shall light up your saloon. Drunken devils reeling to and fro—Oh! I see them now"—and the doctor gave, a fearful shriek and fell upon the floor.

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He raved frightfully for hours, but in an interval of calmness was removed to his desolate home.

The loss of his wife had entirely unfitted daddy for active service, and Sorrel Top, on account of her youth and inexperience, was an inefficient nurse: consequently Mrs. Hawley's services were engaged. Edward also bestowed every attention in his power, but the delirium tremens had fixed upon his aged friend and his horrid imaginings continued for days.

It was impossible for Edward, who was the soul of humanity, to witness unmoved the doctor's terrible agony, and, at such seasons, he would invariably resolve that he would put forth an effort to reclaim him. "I will reason with him and show him the folly of his course," said he to himself.

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When the invalid was able to bear conversation, Edward approached him on the subject as delicately as possible.

"Dr.," said he, "I am young to advise one like you, but if you would permit me, I think I could prescribe a remedy for your disease, and one that would ensure you a hale, hearty old age."

"I know what you would say, Edward," replied the Dr., rising upon his elbow, "but I cannot do it. I cannot let drink alone. I must drink if it kills me. Times without number I have forsworn it, and I will never add another broken vow to my perjured soul. If you would be useful in the cause of temperance, Edward, if you would save such as I, and, what is more important, if you would save the young, then use all your influence to stop the liquor traffic."

"Oh, I'm not at all ultra," said Edward, somewhat embarrassed, "I have never given the subject which you mention much thought."

"Then it is high time you should," said the Dr., warming up with a look of lofty enthusiasm, "I am sober now, Edward, and I may never be in my right mind again. I *must* drink to-day, I know I can get it, and I will have it; I suppose you would say, 'if he will go to the devil, let him go;' but I say, if there was no drink to be had, if it were not sold here, if it were not sold elsewhere, I could not get it, and I should be saved. A law prohibiting the sale of intoxicating drinks is what is most needed. I know these sentiments coming from one like me sound strangely, but, Edward, such a law enforced in my native state would have saved me, and I know it. Such a law now enforced in all our states would restore many a besotted husband to a broken-hearted wife; many a lost son to a widowed mother, many a darling brother to a distressed and mortified sister. It would bring light and gladness to thousands of sorrowful hearts and homes; it would feed the hungry, clothe the naked. Less blood would cry aloud to heaven for vengeance, and less crime of every description would be committed. This lovely territory will soon become a state; here you will rise to eminence in your profession. I know it will be so. You possess your father's talents, and you also possess his high social qualities, which, at one time, brought him to the verge of ruin. Judge Sherman did not at first love drink, but he often drank to please his friends. His associates tarried at the wine, and he would be one with them. The secret, Edward, of the fall of nine-tenths of our young men is social drinking; now, moral suasion has saved many, and no doubt will save many more. But would you give the serpent his death wound, then bring the arm of the law down upon him and it is done."

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"The prohibitory liquor law of Maine has been said to have worked wonders," said Edward rather faintly, "but it is thought to be unconstitutional, by many of our best lawyers."

"Undoubtedly it has been so declared," said the Dr., "but I would be sorry to believe the opinion correct; would not you, Edward?"

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The Dr. fixed his piercing eyes upon Edward, for he began to suspect that his young friend's views did not coincide with those which he had expressed.

Edward moved uneasily in his chair, bit his lips, and finally stammered out, "Well, I don't know Dr., really, it seems like depriving a man of his liberty to legislate upon what he shall, or shall not sell."

"Even if he sells that which he knows will craze his neighbor's brain, and cause him to commit the most atrocious crimes? When an individual directly, or indirectly aids and abets crime, ought he to escape punishment?"

Edward saw that he stood upon a plank of the rotten old platform, upon which so many have broken through, though they still hold to the decaying posts, and he ingeniously evaded the question.

"I'm afraid, Dr., you are over-exerting yourself," said he, "I will leave you to rest while I walk out and breathe the fresh air."



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CHAPTER XI.

HARMLESS CONSPIRACY—THE GHOST—THE WIFE MURDERER— TIPLING AND TATTLING—MISREPRESENTATIONS.



r. Glutter, Dr. DeWolf wants you to fill this flask with brandy," said Sorrel Top entering the saloon of the former, about an hour after Edward had left the latter to repose.

"Certainly," said Hank, with a bland smile.

"Allow me to speak with you a moment, Mr. Glutter," said Edward Sherman, hastily leaving his seat near a billiard table, where he was watching the progress of a game, and taking Hank aside.

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They whispered earnestly together for a few moments. "Very well," said Hank in conclusion, "I am willing to try that experiment if you wish it, but the Dr. is very stubborn, I have often tried to check him." Then turning to Sorrel Top, "Tell the Dr. I have no brandy."

"Has no brandy?" exclaimed the Dr. as Sorrel Top delivered her message; "it's a lie. O, I see how it is; Mr. Sherman was there, was he not?"

"Yes, sir."

Here the subject dropped, and the Dr. was unusually quiet and patient during the remainder of the day. But when Edward kindly offered to sit by him during the night, he would not listen to him.

"No, no," said he "I am quite well; the parade of watchers would only disturb my rest," so Edward contented himself to retire about midnight.

The Dr. lay perfectly quiet for an hour or two after Edward left him; he then crept softly out of bed, partially dressed himself, noiselessly out of bed, partially dressed himself, and then wrapping a sheet around him, crept out of the house, by a window which opened from the room to the piazza. Gliding down the steps and along the well-worn path he soon reached the brewery, and, as he was familiar with every part of the establishment, found no difficulty in gaining access to the saloon.

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The proprietor was lying fast asleep in a room from which he could see and be seen by any one behind the bar. At the first click of the bottles he partially aroused and opened his eyes upon his ghost-like visitor.

Enveloped in white, and seen in the obscure light, the Dr.'s most familiar friends could not possibly have recognized him, and to Hank's half awakened vision, he presented a really supernatural appearance.

Hank was not naturally superstitious, and, obeying his first impulse, he shouted out, "Who in the d—l are you?"

The Dr. made a warning gesture with his hand, as if to compel silence, and the audacious questioner instinctively recoiled further back in his bed. His courage began to fail him, and a mixture of fear and astonishment kept him silent while his visitor remained, which was only long enough to secure the prize he was seeking among the contents of the shelves.

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Not suspecting the full extent of the paralyzing effect his presence had had upon Hank, and fearing he might attempt to follow, the Dr. took a circuitous route home, and in his haste stumbled over something which he discovered to be a shivering, half naked child, crouched upon the ground.

"What are you doing out here this time of night, my little fellow?" said he.

"I'm afraid of papa," sobbed the child, "he said he'd skin me alive if I didn't get out of his sight."

"What is your name? Where do you live? what bad thing have you been doing?" said the Dr., all in a breath.

"I live in a shanty out there, I am Fanny Green. I ain't done anything bad but cry, and I couldn't help it, for papa was striking mamma so." [Pg 123]

"Well, come with me, Fanny, I'll take you to your home, and I won't let your papa hurt you."

"Are you an angel?" said Fanny, feeling of the hand that held hers.

"No, I'm a man, my little girl."

"I thought you were one of those angels dressed in white that mamma told me about; they take folks to heaven, and I want to go there, I don't want to go home."

They had now reached the wretched hovel that the child called her home, and she began to weep afresh.

"O, no, no! I dare not go in," she said, clinging convulsively to her protector, "I'm afraid he will kill me."

While she was speaking, the door was roughly flung open, and her unnatural parent rushed out, brandishing a heavy club; but, at sight of the figure clad in white, he dropped his bludgeon and ran off, howling like a wild beast deprived of its prey. [Pg 124]

With a glad cry the child bounded into the shanty, and he heard her childish voice saying "mamma, don't be afraid any more, papa has gone way off."

On reaching his room, the Dr. was relieved to find that his absence had remained undiscovered, and he drank himself off to sleep. He was, however, suddenly awakened quite early in the morning by loud exclamations coming from daddy, and, in the intervals, he distinguished the sound of the same childlike voice which was associated with his night's adventure. Immediately calling his old servant, he inquired the meaning of the commotion.

"'Tween you and me," said daddy indignantly, "there's more distruction; little Fanny Green's mother is dead; that brute of a husband has fairly killed her; knocked her skull in with a club."

"When did it happen?"

"O, in the night; Fanny had run out door for to get out of his reach, and 'tween you and me, she says a man with a white dress on led her back, and she found her mother dead on the floor. O! we're havin' on't dreadful now days; spirits walking the airth, never no good comes of sich things." [Pg 125]

The murder and the reputed ghost, whom several of the inhabitants testified to having seen at the midnight hour, was the absorbing topic of conversation in the immediate neighborhood where the tragedy was enacted.

For several days succeeding the affair Hank Glutter's saloon was the general rendezvous of the wonder-loving country people round about. All appeared to enjoy the tipping vastly more than Hank himself.

It was not the thought of the needy wife sighing for the hard earned shilling, with which to provide for the many little forms that must go half clad, and the little feet uncovered during the approaching winter, for want of those bits of metal ringing out so sadly as they fell into his drawer, that clouded his unusually complacent smile; neither was it the remembrance of the cruel part he had acted in Little Wolf's abduction that shook his sin-stained soul. He affected to discredit the appearance of the much-talked-of apparition, and yet he was continually tormented with a vague dread of a second visit from his ghost-ship, which he would have persuaded himself was entirely a creature of the imagination, had not his missing fourth proof brandy bottle proved the contrary. [Pg 126]

He had resolved not to mention the occurrence that had so strangely disturbed him, but, being one day alone with Edward, who had called particularly to make one of a company who were going out the day following to renew the search for Little Wolf, he ventured to communicate his secret to him.

"Why, Mr. Glutter, why didn't you tell me before?" said Edward smiling in spite of the sad errand that had brought him there, "all this time you have needlessly tormented yourself."

"How so, Mr. Sherman?"

"Why, Dr. DeWolf swallows a portion of that fourth proof every day. I have no doubt it was he who paid you the visit. I am certain that he knows something about the murder of Mrs. Green, [Pg 127]

and he must have been the man in white that little Fanny talks about. I see it all clearly now; Dr. DeWolf is the ghost, and he has kept his bed to prevent suspicion."

"I was confident," said Hank with a look of infinite relief, "that the Dr. would have his dram, spite of our machinations. I have known several such cases of apparently insatiable thirst, and it was impossible to keep liquor away from them. Sorrel Top's husband, Harry Herrick, was the worst case of the kind that ever came under my observation. He drank quite moderately at first, but suddenly appeared to have lost all control over his appetite. I reasoned with him in vain, and finally, out of pity to his family I refused him admission here altogether. Well, the result was he stole from my cellar what he could not beg; for the miserable creature was penniless, and before I was aware of it, he actually drank himself to death. It happened while Miss DeWolf was away at school, and on her return my conduct was basely misrepresented to her, and she espoused the widow's cause and took her into her family, and ever after has treated me with contempt. However, I harbor no ill will towards Miss DeWolf. I would gladly make one of your party, were it not entirely impossible for me to leave here; but believe me, I wish you success, Mr. Sherman."

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CHAPTER XII.

THE COTTAGE IN THE GROVE—THE DISGUISE—BACK TO HEALTH—IMPATIENCE—SEARCHING THE BOX—ANTOINETTE LA CLAIR'S STORY.

Very sad and dreary seemed the hours to Antoinette La Clair, as she watched by Little Wolf's bed side. While her loving hand bathed the burning brow, and her soft musical voice soothed the wild ravings of the invalid, she thought much upon the strange loneliness of their situation. Day after day passed by, and no living soul approached the cottage. She often wondered why it's owner came not, and it was a mystery to her, why Bloody Jim had not discovered their retreat.

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From the first, she had taken the precaution whenever she appeared outside to disguise herself in the various articles of clothing, which she found strewn about the house, and, as she went to procure water from the spring, which was at some distance from the house, she would assume the air and gait of a logy country boy. Her sun-burnt straw hat with its crown piece flapping about in the wind; great coarse boots slipping hither and thither on her little feet and her other generally loose fitting attire would, but for her absorbing anxiety, have excited rather more than a smile on her usually melancholly countenance.

It was well that the fact of having remained unmolested for nearly three weeks did not lesson her vigilance on one eventful occasion. It was about sun rise; as she was toiling up the eminence with a heavy bucket of water, which an occasional mis-step would send splashing over her great awkward boots, she saw a man approaching the spring. It was Ketchum; and, as she recognized him, her breath came quicker and she hurried onward and upward. She had nearly reached the top of the hill when she heard him calling out,

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"Hello there, boy!"

She turned round, sat down her bucket and stood in a listening attitude.

"I say boy, who lives yonder?"

"I du," she replied in exact imitation of backwoodsman twang, and, taking a step or two downward, she stooped forward and appeared to be attentively eyeing her new acquaintance.

"Be you the man they're looking fur?" she at length drawled out.

"Who's looking fur?" said he with a start.

"Them men at our house."

"No, you fool of a boy."

The last she saw of Ketchum he was hurrying off with all his might.

Antoinette fairly ran into the house and closing and barring the door she fell upon her knees, and, from her full heart went up to Heaven a song of thankfulness. Blessings multiply when gratitude reigns in the soul; so while Antoinette still knelt a change came over Little Wolf and consciousness returned.

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"Where am I?" she faintly articulated, as her watchful and tender nurse arose and approached the bed.

"You are safe, thank God," said Antoinette bursting into tears.

Antoinette now felt new courage, and, when Little Wolf was able to bear it, she related to her that part of their flight of which the illness of the other prevented her having any recollection; but carefully avoided any allusion to her own personal history.

Little Wolf longed to penetrate the mystery that hung over her benefactress, and she would often say to herself, as she sat propped up with pillows watching Antoinette's quiet movements about the house, "how I wish I knew more about her; what a romance!"

But as her strength increased, other desires shared her thoughts more largely.

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"How are we to get out of this place?" she frequently exclaimed, and, as often, Antoinette would meekly reply, "The Lord will provide a way."

"Well why don't the Lord provide a way to get us away from here?" she said one day rather impatiently as she sat by the window looking out into the sunshine, "I'm sure I'm well enough to travel now, and winter is coming on and, when once the snow falls, we shall freeze and starve shut up here."

"We shall hardly freeze with that big wood pile at the door, or starve with a cellar full of vegetables," said Antoinette pleasantly.

"O Antoinette, I'm sure your faith hangs on the cellar and woodpile; but, dear me, I've seen neither; I must peep into the cellar right away."

"Let me lift the door for you Miss DeWolf."

A light trap door led to the vegetable kingdom underneath. One glance at the potatoes, cabbages and onions, which were only a part of the products of the garden, piled up in this ten by twelve hole in the ground was enough, as Little Wolf declared, to strengthen the weakest faith.

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"Now, if we only had wings, we might mount to that nice dried venison in the garret," she said, glancing upward through a square opening cut in the rough boards overhead. "I wonder how they managed to hang it so high; I do believe the place has been inhabited by a giant. Now where shall we hide when we see him coming? O, I'll get into that huge chest, we little folks might both hide there. I wonder I hadn't thought of it before. Why I'm just beginning to feel like myself; I see how it is, I've been petted and babied too long. Please help me lift this heavy lid. O, its locked—O here's the key sticking just in this niche, O—what a sight!"

Here indeed our heroine had penetrated into the mysteries of a heterogeneous mass. Cooking utensils, carpenters' tools, crockery, salt, pepper, and various other condiments used in the culinary department were huddled together in one end, while the remainder of the space was appropriated to books and clothing, and a bachelor's work box, which, for all the order it boasted, might have belonged to the indulgent mother of ten children.

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Antoinette watched her friend with an amused expression of countenance, as she flew from one article to another really delighted to find some amusement, however simple, to while away the tedious hours.

"O, John Hanford is our landlord's name. Here it is on the fly leaf of this book, and here is a book purporting to be the property of Antoinette La Clare. Why Antoinette, I thought the honor of discovering the contents of this box belonged to me; but really I see you have been here before me."

"No, Miss DeWolf, I never saw the inside of the box before, I thought there was no key."

"Is it possible? Why what does it mean? Here is surely an old bible with your name written in it in full, 'Antoinette La Clare,' now here it is, you can see for yourself."

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Antoinette eagerly took the book, and, having examined the name, proceeded to look it carefully through. It was a pocket bible of the English version in old fashioned binding, and bore marks of long and frequent use.

Little Wolf watched Antoinette's varying countenance as she turned over the leaves. A ray of pleasure, at first, lighted up her sad, wistful face, but slowly faded leaving her apparently more wan and sad than ever, as she returned the volume in silence.

A vague suspicion of evil crept into Little Wolf's mind. How came Antoinette's name in the book and why was she so silent, and why had she appeared so satisfied to remain where they were, if she knew no more about their present abode than she had professed, were a few of the many questions, which awakened distrust, suggested to her busy brain.

The chest had lost its interest and down came the cover with a bang, sadly startling poor Antoinette, who had walked to the window to hide her fast falling tears.

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Little Wolf saw the tears and Antoinette felt that she had seen them, and the way was made easy for her to say, "O, Miss DeWolf, I'm a child of sorrow. I am sometimes almost overwhelmed with sorrow. Come, let us sit down together, and I will try to tell you why it is. It seems but a few days

since I gaily roamed about my childhood's home, hand in hand with brother Jim, or bloody Jim, as he is called."

"Bloody Jim your brother! It cannot be so!" interrupted Little Wolf in amazement, "I thought he was a half breed."

"So he is a half breed; and he is also my half brother; my father was of French descent and, when a young man, he went to the Red River country and engaged in trapping, and trading with the Indians. For several years he made his home principally among the Chippewas, and, like many others of his class, married an Indian woman; brother Jim was the fruit of this marriage. His mother was accidentally drowned when he was quite an infant; soon afterwards my father returned to Canada, leaving his little son in charge of his Indian grandmother. While there he became acquainted with my mother, whom he made his wife with the understanding that she should accompany him to his wild home and be a mother to his motherless child. Perhaps it may be a mystery to you, Miss DeWolf, that a young and cultivated woman could have been so readily induced to expose herself to the hardships and dangers of frontier life."

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"O, no!" broke in Little Wolf, enthusiastically, "not if she did it for love."

"What do you know about love, Miss DeWolf?"

A conscious blush overspread the pale young face, for Antoinette accompanied the question with a wistful enquiring look, that seemed to reach to her very heart.

"O nothing, my very good, penetrating friend; please go on with your story. Was your mother happy?" she asked with a kind of nervous haste, as if to compel an immediate compliance with her request.

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"I can not say," said Antoinette very obligingly relieving the embarrassment she had occasioned, "I should think she must have been happy, though, for I believe her short life was a very useful one. She died at my birth having been a wife but one year. During that time, she had by many acts of kindness greatly endeared herself to the savages, and the young Indian woman, who had assisted her in nursing brother Jim, for the love she bore my mother, reared her little daughter with unusually tender care. My father survived her loss but a few weeks, and then brother Jim and myself were thrown entirely upon the care of our kind nurse. My mother had taught her to read and she in turn imparted such instruction to us as she had received, or rather I should say her pains were mostly bestowed upon me, for I was her pet.

Brother Jim grew up like the savages around him, only, if possible, more vindictive and revengeful in his nature. I was the only being for whom he seemed to entertain the least affection, and he certainly lavished upon me wonderful tenderness and love. In his early youth he gathered for me the rarest flowers, and, as he grew older, he brought me game and the choicest fruits, and seemed never so happy as when promoting my comfort. For my amusement he brought me a violin from the distant settlement of Peminaw, and at length, gratified my curiosity by taking me with him in one of his frequent visits thither. While there my fair skin attracted the attention of a missionary's family, and as brother Jim was rather proud of my parentage, they readily elicited a correct account of my birth from him, and by appealing to his pride, at length wrung from him a reluctant consent to place me for a time under their tutorage, where, beside making rapid progress, I cultivated my naturally correct taste for music. Under their hospitable roof, amid the refinements and courtesies of civilized life I spent many happy months."

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"At length the last painful illness of my faithful nurse, who had never ceased to mourn my absence, recalled me to her. After her death I was exceedingly sad and lonely, and, to add to my sorrows, brother Jim had acquired a love for strong drink, and frequently came to our lodge in a state of intoxication. I grieved over his infatuation and reasoned with him in his sober hours, but all in vain; he grew worse and worse, and often treated me harshly. In despair I went to the trader who I knew supplied him with whiskey and entreated him with tears not to sell him any more. I received from him only insults."

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"Of course, you might have known what to expect from one of that class," said Little Wolf with flashing eyes, "I discovered long ago, that there was no mercy in the heart of the liquor dealer. They know it's a mean business and any one who engages in it must first harden his heart enough to turn away from tears of blood."

"I don't think *all* who engage in the traffic realize the consequences accruing from it," Antoinette mildly replied. "I am sure no humane person would continue in it, if they once took into consideration the vast amount of misery occasioned by it. I am sure brother Jim was bad enough before he began to drink; but after that he became as unmanageable as a wild beast. Still, alone in the world, I clung to him with all the warm affection of my nature."

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"A few months after the death of my nurse, he was persuaded to join a party from Peminaw, who were going on their annual visit to St. Paul for the purpose of trading with the whites. At my earnest request he permitted me to accompany him. I was then in my fifteenth year, and mere child as I was, he left me the first day of our arrival entirely alone in our encampment at St. Paul, while he went with the rest of the company to the city.

"By chance a gentleman passing, heard the sound of the violin, with which I was beguiling the tedious hours, and came into my tent. At first I was quite alarmed at sight of a stranger, but his

words and manner immediately won my confidence, and put my fears to rest, and, I confess, I was lonelier when he left me and glad when he came again. He knew my unprotected situation, and always made it a point to come when brother Jim was absent. It would be quite impossible for me to describe to you the subtle influence which this person gained over me. I learned to love him with all the ardor of which my passionate and imaginative nature was capable. It was the first unbounded devotion of a warm and innocent heart that he betrayed. I have no words with which to convey an adequate idea of the anguish which I suffered at parting with him. He promised to follow me and make me his wife, but he never came, and at a time when I was least able to bear it, I was subject to brother Jim's fury. His cruelty brought me near to death, and my sufferings only aggravated his bitterness and wrath. With awful curses he swore vengeance on the man for whom I would even then have laid down my life.

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"As soon as my strength would permit, I fled to my friends at Pembina. I told them all, even of my shame, which a little grave had forever hid from the world. Like true Christians they soothed my sorrows, and gave me the place in their family which their only daughter, who had married and left them during my absence, had occupied. Several years had passed away, and the good missionary died. His wife soon followed him, and I was again left alone. I had never seen brother Jim since I left him, but had frequently heard of his wicked deeds. I thought now that I would go with my life in my hand and seek him out and try once more by affectionate persuasion, to induce him to give up his reckless life. Accordingly, I mounted my pony and set out for my former wild home. Reaching the lodge after nightfall, to my surprise I heard voices within. I did not go in, but stood listening at the entrance. I heard brother Jim and his companions propose a plan to capture you. They were to start that very night; so I hid myself among the trees and waited until they were gone. Then I went in for the night, and the next morning set out to do what I could towards rescuing you.

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"Now I have told you all, Miss DeWolf, and our Heavenly Father alone knows our future. As for my name in that bible, you know as much about it as I do. I never saw the book before."



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CHAPTER XIII.

**TWOFOLD AGONY—DR. GOODRICH'S PROMISE—HOME AGAIN—
LILLY FOOT—THE CONVALESCENT—THE NEIGHBORHOOD
WEDDING—NEWS FROM CHIMNEY ROCK—THE SHERMAN
FAMILY AT THE WEST.**



Edward Sherman was still where we left him, listening graciously to the pretended good wishes of Hank Glutter, when Dr. Goodrich, who happened to pass that way, saw him through the window and beckoned him out side.

"I expected to have met you at Dr. DeWolf's," said he, "and I brought a letter for you."

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Edward took the letter and read it carefully through, turning very pale as he did so. It was from his sister Louise, and contained a brief account of the dangerous illness of his mother, with a request for his immediate presence at home. His extreme paleness and the trembling hand, with which he in silence offered the open sheet for the Doctor's persual were all the outward sign of his soul's agony; agony for a beloved and dying mother; agony for the beloved, lost one, for whom, in company with a few friends, he was about to go in quest.

While the Doctor was running over the communication, Edward tried to calm the surging tempest within, sufficiently to decide him how to act.

"Doctor," said he, "I must go to mother, can you, I know it will be difficult, but *can* you take my place in the company to-morrow?"

"I will go, and, by the love I bear your sister, I promise to do what I can."

"Let me hear from you by mail," said Edward, wringing his hand.

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Edward had now barely time to return to Pendleton, and hastily get his trunk in readiness for the forthcoming steamer.

At the sound of the bell he was ready to embark and a few days rapid travelling brought him

worn and weary to the old homestead. It was evening when he arrived, and, as he approached the house, he saw a light in his mother's room. His apprehensions were so great that he had not the courage to enter, and, listening near the window, he distinguished his mother's voice in conversation with Louise.

"I would not be surprised to see him this very evening," he heard his sister say.

"Miss Louise," called out Recta's familiar voice. "Miss Louise, won't you please come here quick. Old Spot has got into the front yard; there she is nibbling at that rose bush under the window. I can't see nothing but the white spot in her face; but I know it must be her, she's such an unruly critter; won't you just hold the light while I hist her out?"

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"O where's Lilly Foot," said Louise, "she'll drive her out while you open the gate. Here, Lilly Foot."

Lilly Foot came growling along from the vicinity of the barn, where, after the fatigue of bringing the cows from the distant meadow, she had gone to rest and recruit for night watching.

Having forgotten at the beginning of our story to introduce Lilly Foot under the family head we will pause for a moment and give her the notice to which her position and worth entitle her. She was a very respectable looking animal of the canine species originally coal black with the exception of one white foot, from which she derived her name, but now grown grey in the service of the family.

From puppyhood to old age, this faithful creature had made it her daily business to keep the cows, sheep, pigs, and poultry each in their proper places, and, having been raised on a quiet, orderly New England farm, had never in the course of her whole life, had occasion to perform more onerous nightly duties than to sleep with one eye open; consequently, she had come to consider regular rest as her lawful right, and was in no mood to bear the present encroachment.

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"I believe the dog is getting old and cross," said Recta in a voice very like that which had occasioned her censure. "Here Lilly Foot, there's Old Spot; take her."

The words had scarcely left Recta's lips before Lilly Foot saw and flew violently at the object indicated,

"Lilly Foot."

They all heard—Edward's voice that came from the rose bush, and it would be difficult to say from which of the three, Louise, Recta, or Lilly Foot, he received the warmest greeting.

Mrs. Sherman had passed the crisis, of her disease, and Edward, assured of her convalescence, sought her bedside with a buoyant step.

"My dear son, to have you here is all the medicine I need now," she said, as she held him to her bosom.

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The first greetings over, Edward's unnatural strength produced by anxiety and excitement gave way, and he lay down to rest that night prostrated in body and mind.

Confused images of his mother, Little Wolf, and Bloody Jim crowded his unquiet dreams, and he awoke in the morning comparatively unrefreshed, and the old load in his bosom but little lightened. Soon after breakfast he signified his intention of riding over to the Post Office, two miles distant.

"O no," said his sister playfully, "mother will be disappointed; she expects to have you all to herself this morning. I made it a point to go for the mail every day until she was taken sick. Let me go this time, I really need a horseback ride. If I get a letter for you, you shall have it in just fifteen minutes."

"From now?"

"No; from the time I get it."

"I am overruled," laughed Edward, and he went to his mother's room. Scarcely had he seated himself when Mrs. Sherman enquired,

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"Has Dr. DeWolf's daughter been found yet, Edward?"

"No, mother."

"How dreadful! Dr. Goodrich said in his last letter he had but little hope of seeing her alive. I was gratified to hear that you were in pursuit, and that you were situated so you could do your father's old friend a favor. I wish you would tell me the particulars of the sad affair."

Mrs. Sherman wondered at Edward's prolonged silence, as he sat there utterly unable to say a word. She was beginning to have a vague conception of the truth, when he turned to her and said in a voice which the effort to control rendered scarcely audible.

"Mother, I expected to have made Miss De Wolf my wife. I can not talk about it now."

But Mrs. Sherman led him gently on by means which true mothers know so well how to use, to unburden his heart, and ere long her sympathy ran so high as to propose that he should return to

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Minnesota, and if need he should return to Minnesota, and if need be spend the winter there.

"If I could take you and Louise with me," said he.

Just then Louise came, in high spirits.

"O mother," said she, "you must hurry and get well in time to attend Maria Dole's wedding. I met her going to shop. She wants me to be one of her bridesmaids. Now guess who she is going to marry; but of course you'd never guess for you are not acquainted with the gentleman; so I may as well tell you at once; John Hanford, from the wilds of Minnesota. Maria says she is afraid of being carried off by the bears, but still too willing to venture a home in the woods for her dear Johnny's sake. I did not tell her about Dr. DeWolf's daughter, I was afraid it would stop the wedding, Maria is such a timid creature. Brother, do tell me about that horrible affair."

"Tell her mother," said Edward and immediately left the room.

While Mrs. Sherman was explaining the matter, Edward was walking up and down the lawn in front of the house, vainly considering the probabilities of a favorable termination of his troubles. [Pg 154]

"What can we do for poor Edward?" said Louise, after a long silence, "I think he ought to go back."

"He was saying when you came in if he could only take you and me."

"Well why not?" said Louise eagerly, "I am sure if you keep on getting well as rapidly as you have for a few days you'll be about the house in a week."

"When we hear from Dr. Goodrich, my dear, we shall be better able to decide what is best for us to do."

"Then all we can do is to wait in patience."

Wait they did for over a week before the looked-for intelligence arrived, and the following is the contents of Dr. Goodrich's letter.

"DEAR SHERMAN. All our efforts have proved unavailing. We could not find the least clue to aid us in our search. I am now inclined to think that Miss DeWolf has voluntarily secreted herself until such times as she hopes to return unmolested by Bloody Jim, whom, if my conjectures are correct, she no doubt thinks still at large. As for Bloody Jim his lips are forever closed. In attempting to escape from prison last evening he was shot dead. [Pg 155]

I learn with pleasure from your letter which I have just received, that your mother's health is rapidly improving. Take courage Ned, the same hand that restored one loved one can also restore the other. You say you must return. Why not bring your mother and sister with you? A change of climate would no doubt benefit both. I think there will be time for you to come before navigation closes. The weather continues splendid. I am now at Dr. DeWolf's. He is worse again; I think he cannot last long. He is literally drinking himself to death. Mrs. Hawley still attends on him. Sorrel Top and daddy do not get along very well together, but between them the Doctor's house is well cared for.

If it will be any comfort to you I will say that I have sanguine expectations of again seeing Miss DeWolf safe at home, [Pg 156]

Yours with more sympathy than I can express.

G. GOODRICH."

Louise received a letter from the same hand, but it being an entirely private affair we can only speculate upon its contents. Doubtless among other things there were unanswerable arguments in favor of a western trip, for when the reading was over, she was the first one to say.

"I think we had all better get ready as soon as we can and start for Minnesota."

Edward being of the same mind, and Mrs. Sherman willing to gratify her children, it was not many days before the arrangements were all made for the journey. Recta and Lilly Foot were to be left in sole charge of the house; the tenant having promised the assistance of one of his sons when required.

The wedding ceremony of John Hanford and Maria Dole having been performed the evening previous to their departure, they traveled in company with the bridal pair.

Maria Dole was the only daughter of a neighboring farmer, and the two girls had from childhood been on intimate terms, and Louise had hoped some day to call her sister; but she loved the gentle girl none the less for the step she had taken, and Edward's regard for her seemed to have suddenly increased. The conduct of her husband who was a bashful soul, exceedingly shy, and sparing of his husbandly attentions, gave Edward frequent opportunities during their trip of cultivating a more familiar acquaintance with her than he had ever imagined possible. [Pg 157]

"Some women appear to better advantage after marriage and Maria Dole is one of them," he said in a very decided manner to his sister after having been engaged in a long conversation with the newly-made wife. "She can converse now and she never could before."

"Yon mean, brother, you were afraid of each other before. It was my fault; you both knew what

my wishes were, and it spoiled all. To have carried out the romance of the thing, you ought to have discovered her perfections before it was too late."

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Louise quite forgot for the moment her brother's affliction, but on second thought said no more.

"I am sorry Mr. Hanford is going to take her so far from any settlement," said Edward, not appearing to notice what had been said, "he tells me his nearest neighbor is ten miles distant."

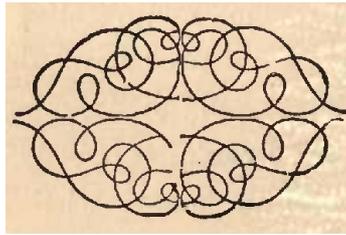
"How lonely Maria will be, I'm glad we are all to visit her in the Spring," said Louise, alluding to a promise made to that effect.

"Mr. Hanford rather insists upon my going out with them now, but I could not promise until I had seen the Doctor. If I decide to go I can overtake him by the next steamer, as he will stop for a day or two at St. Paul."

The next day after the above conversation, the party having arrived at Pendleton, separated; Mr. and Mrs. Hanford continuing up the river to the head of navigation, while the Sherman family were introduced to comfortable quarters provided by the forethought of Dr. Goodrich.

By the advice of his friends, who plainly saw, that under the circumstances, he could not content himself to remain where he was, Edward decided to join Mr. Hanford at St. Paul, and the following chapter will chronicle the result.

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CHAPTER XIV.

ROUGH ROADS—THE HAPPY BRIDEGROOM—JACOB MENTOR'S EXPERIENCE—FAIRY KNOLL—A JOYFUL MEETING.



he prospect of a change from steamboat navigation, always so delightful on the upper Mississippi, to jolting and jarring over a rough extent of country in a heavy, lumbering wagon, suited to the unimproved state of the roads, was anything but agreeable to Mr. and Mrs. Hanford, as they surveyed the uncomely vehicle drawn up before their hotel.

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Edward had overtaken them, and with Mr. and Mrs. Hanford, stood waiting on the porch, while Mr. Hanford made every arrangement for their comfort, of which the state of the case would admit. The cushions and buffalos at length fixed to his satisfaction he assisted in his wife, and after a small strife, in which each contended for the seat which neither wanted, Edward prevailed, and planted himself beside the driver, while Mr. Hanford, looking remarkably happy for a vanquished man, took his place beside his wife.

The sober driver, Jacob Mentor by name, looked over his shoulder and carefully surveyed his load before starting. The trunks were firmly strapped on behind, and a half a dozen chairs were also disposed of in the same way. A small sized dining table, bed downward, rested behind the seats, so hugged up by boxes and bundles, that it appeared impossible for any number of bumps or thumps to disturb its quiet. The two beaming faces, just in the van of all this array, did not escape the eyes of honest Jacob.

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"I guess yer pretty comfortable to start on," said he.

"All right," said Mr. Hanford, "drive on."

It would be a matter of surprise how it had entered into the head of a plain, common-sense, matter-of-fact young man like John Hanford, to bestow the name of "Fairy Knoll" on the little hillock in the wilderness, where stood his solitary cabin, did we not remember that at the time he was completely under love's influence. The name given under such circumstances was music to him as it fell frequently from the lips of his young bride on their toilsome journey thither.

"I hope the fairies at Fairy Knoll will have a nice fire to welcome us, she said, as the day was drawing to a close, and they were nearing her future home.

"Are you very cold?" said her husband, drawing her more closely to his side.

The day had been unusually chilly, and towards night the autumn winds got up a boisterous frolic, and swept past, dashing from their wings light flurries of snow directly in the faces of our travelers, and the delicate bride, unused to such rough play, had at last hid her face behind her veil and wished for the warm fireside. Before she had had time to reply to Mr. Hanford's question, Edward produced a neat little flask encased in silver, and unfastening from the stopper a tiny cup of the same make, he filled it with the sparkling fluid, at the same time giving orders for the wagon to stop.

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"Now here is something almost equal to a warm fire," he said offering Mrs. Hanford the cup.

"What is it?" said she, hesitatingly.

"Pure domestic wine, some of Col. Wilson's best, he presented it to me just before I left home, and gave me his word it was unadulterated," said Edward, with great assurance.

"Col. Wilson's wines are justly popular," said Mrs. Hanford, sipping the beverage; but it is whispered that the Colonel uses alcohol in their preparation."

"O, very likely," said Edward carelessly. "I have no doubt of it, but this he assured me was unadulterated. Have some, Mr. Hanford?"

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"I don't care if I do. It is really very fine," he said, returning the cup, "quite stimulating, but I prefer a little brandy to any other stimulant; it takes right hold."

"You surely don't drink brandy!" exclaimed the young wife, anxiously.

"Only a little, occasionally, when I need it to keep the cold out. O never fear, my dear," he continued observing the look of concern upon his wife's countenance. "I'm a good temperance man, but not a teetotaler; that is drawing the reins rather too tight."

Meantime, Edward had offered the driver a drink, but the man shook his head; "No, thank you," said he, "I'd rather not take any."

"Not take any!" said Edward, "why, sir, it will do you good."

"I'm not sick," said the other.

"But you are cold," said Edward, mistaking his modest demeanor for bashfulness.

But the earnest and decided shake of the head by which he refused the second invitation, signified more than words that he was an adherent of the total abstinence principles.

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"What a simpleton," said Edward to himself, as the individual by his side shiveringly gathered up the reins and drove on.

But the individual's ruminations were of quite a different character, and something after this wise: "Shiver away, old man, it is better to shiver than to drink." Be it known that for many years this grey headed man had without measure, poured down the alcoholic fire. When at length overcome by it, a good Samaritan had discovered him lying sick by the wayside, and had humanely assisted him to rise, and had set him upon the beast commonly known as "Total Abstinence," upon which he had ridden with great comfort and safety up to the time of our story. Moreover being satisfied that the animal was of good parts and *sure-footed*, he was not at all inclined to exchange the faithful old creature for any of the best bloods belonging to the domestic wine family. He had not forgotten that apparently harmless little hobby-horse whose *cognomen* was Lager Beer, which he had sported in his youth, but which at last got unruly; whether from having been stabled with vicious beasts, or from a bad quality which it inherently possessed, he was not in a condition to inquire the first time it played off its pranks upon him. But one thing was certain, after several months of docile behavior, one fine morning his pet landed him very unceremoniously in the gutter, after which, on various occasions, he mounted nearly all the beasts in the stable, whiskey, rum, brandy, etc., but they, one and all, proved vastly more refractory than the first named, and, as we have seen, he was at length left battered and bruised by the way side.

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It is needless to state that Jacob Mentor's experience had not, nor was it likely to benefit any so much as himself; for who, among the thousands tampering with stimulating drinks, could be made to believe that a glass of beer, or an occasional sip of wine would result in their final overthrow?

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Such, at all events, was not the opinion of our young friends journeying in the direction of "Fairy Knoll; for more than once the wine went round as the night winds whistled colder. But the tedious road had at length an end, and about dark, the heavy wagon lumbered up under the shadows of Fairy Knoll.

"It won't do to drive up that hill with this heavy load, the horses are too much jaded," said Jacob.

"Then we'll walk up," said Mr. Hanford, jumping out. "Come now, Mrs. Hanford," proudly stretching out his arms, "I will carry you up. Mr. Sherman follow me; the path is a little slippery,

and we shall have to step carefully."

By reason of his burden and the icy path, Mr. Hanford was sometime in reaching his cabin, but he made short work of getting inside; for, having bestowed several impatient thumps upon the window which he declared frozen down, he suddenly threw himself against the door, and crack went the wooden fastening, and open flew the door, and a most unexpected scene burst upon his astonished vision.

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Surely here were the fairies, and here the warm fire for which his shivering little wife had been wishing. Surprise held him upon the threshold; but Edward, who instantly recognized in one of the so-called fairies, the person of Little Wolf, sprang forward with a shout of joy.

"The honey, sure as I'm alive," cried Jacob Mentor, pressing eagerly after him. "Laws," said he, precipitately dropping his bundles in the middle of the floor, and rushing up to Edward, "how came the little creature here?"

Edward silently held the little creature in his arms as if he would keep back the dear life that appeared leaving her, and when Jacob's eye fell upon the white, upturned face, he drew back with a look of alarm.

When this and that restorative had been resorted to with happy effect, and Little Wolf no longer required undivided attention, at her suggestion Antoinette La Clare briefly related the story of their escape from Bloody Jim. Mutual explanations followed, discovering to Antoinette the fact, that she had taken refuge in the house of her cousin, for such John Hanford proved to be, his mother's sister having married Antoinette's father.

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Amid the general rejoicings and congratulations, Edward naturally alluded to the death of Bloody Jim, and the means by which it was accomplished. "We are fairly rid of him now," he said, turning to Little Wolf, who had quietly slipped from his embrace and perched herself upon the big chest, "the ball made sure work."

The color had come to her cheek, and there was great joy in her eye, but Edward's unlucky words made her pale again, and she looked quickly and apprehensively towards Antoinette.

The poor girl shiveringly hid her face in her hands and sobbed audibly.



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CHAPTER XV.

BUSY PREPARATIONS AND THE CLIMAX—THE LOVERS—TOM TINKNOR'S DISCOVERY—GENERAL REJOICINGS—THE IDOL DEFACED.



he next morning the cottage on the knoll presented a scene of busy preparation, the climax of which brought forth Little Wolf rosy, and roguish, wrapped in blankets and shawls, sufficient, we doubt not, to have covered over more land than the nether garments of the famous Ten Breeches.

She was now in readiness for her homeward journey. The long-wished-for time had come, and with it, ten thousand joyous emotions, which, amid all the changes of after life, she never forgot. Her heart had put forth its life flower, and who ever forgot a like season of bloom.

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Edward was here, there, and everywhere, arranging for her comfort, and he looked very proud indeed when he handed, or rather lifted the lady in blankets into the big wagon, and took his seat beside her.

They were to go alone, Antoinette having accepted a pressing invitation to remain with her newly-found cousins. The driver of the day before did not, as on a previous occasion, wait for orders. Before the adieu were fairly spoken he cracked his whip and drove off at a rate, which, in his cooler moments, he would have pronounced absolutely ruinous to his carefully preserved establishment. The fact that said establishment comprised all the earthly possessions of honest Jacob, was of itself a sufficient guarantee for the safe transportation of his employers. But when added to this was a natural cautiousness and benevolence of disposition, which could not but be observed on the most casual acquaintance, few could have lost their assurance, even on the verge of a precipice, when he held the reins.

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His extreme caution made him a favorite teamster, not only overland, but especially on the Mississippi; when at certain seasons there was danger in travelling on the ice. At such times, Squire Tinknor and Dr. DeWolf had taken some pains to secure his services, when exchanging family visits, and he had frequently been entrusted with the sole charge of Little Wolf, when she was but a child, and delighted with the long icy trip.

In those days, the little lady had completely won the heart of her protector, and he had never before had occasion to be jealous of attentions which she was pleased to receive from any of her friends, except, indeed, when Daddy would sometimes infringe upon his rights, by officiously lifting her in and out of his sleigh. Nor could he be said to be jealous now. It was only the same disagreeable sensation which affectionate sisters sometimes experience on the occasion of the marriage of a favorite brother. Had Jacob been questioned on the subject, he would have stoutly declared that he was glad of it; for that was just what he tried to say to himself, when he saw Edward put his dearly beloved pet into the wagon. But even his fine horses, which he hurried off with such unseemly haste, ought to have known it was not so.

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"Why, what has got into the man? he has almost taken your breath away," said Edward tenderly.

"A little more careful, sir," he said, as Jacob turned his head at his loud exclamation.

"Yes, yes; I beg pardon, I was careless."

The speaker was evidently ashamed of his freak. A second look at the happy couple, and a kind word from his pet, "Dear Jacob, I believe old Grey and Bill remember how I used to want to go fast when we went so much together," soothed his turbulent feelings and he went on quite slowly, picking up some crumbs of comfort in default of the whole loaf.

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The loaf, be it remembered, had fallen into the hands of the voracious couple just behind him, and if greedily devouring it during the entire day would have made a finish of it, the deed would have been done. But the more they fed on it, the larger and sweeter it grew, and, by the time they had arrived at Squire Tinknor's, their loaf had grown to be almost as much as they could carry.

Squire Tinknor, it will be remembered, was an old acquaintance of Dr. DeWolf, and, as we have elsewhere stated, the two gentlemen were on intimate terms. Having at one time been his partner in some extensive land speculations, the Squire had, since that period, acted as the doctor's financial agent and advisor. He was generally shrewd and reliable in his business transactions, although his appetite for drink occasionally got the better of his judgment. This known discrepancy of character was tolerated in society rather as an amiable weakness, than a vile habit, for none had the hardihood to frown openly upon a man of Squire Tinknor's wealth and position.

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His family consisted of a wife and one son. The latter, a handsome, dashing young man, he had secretly desired to see attracted towards the daughter of his friend, and in this had not been disappointed. Thomas Tinknor had, from a boy, bestowed his choicest attentions upon the young lady, and when she was carried off, he had sworn to bring her back, or "die in the attempt." To this end he had faithfully mounted his horse each day since her disappearance, and had ridden several miles into the woods, always going out in high spirits, and returning somewhat dejected.

It was in this condition that he might have been seen approaching his father's house just as Jacob Mentor drew up before the gate. His heart beat quickly, for he instantly recognized the toss of that little head, enveloped as it was in hood and veil. He was not slow in extending to Little Wolf a warm welcome. So warm indeed, was it, and of such vapory stuff is comfort made, that Edward's ponderous loaf evaporated, leaving only a small fragment such as could be drawn from a stolen glance of the eye, while she was being carried into the house, and transported from the arms of Mr. Tinknor the younger, to the arms of Mr. Tinknor the elder, and lastly, affectionately folded in the embrace of Mrs. Tinknor.

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"You see everything I have on is borrowed," said Little wolf, as Mrs. Tinknor was assisting her in undoing her wrappings, "but I hope to be at home in a day or two."

"Home in a day or two!" interrupted Tom, "Not in a month or two, if I can prevent it."

"I intend to be at home to-morrow, provided the steamers are still running," said the young lady decidedly.

"O, now, you are too bad to treat us so shabbily," said Tom, coaxingly, "do stay until the river freezes, and I'll take you down on the ice."

"Thank you, Mr. Tinknor, I must go to-morrow."

Tom Tinknor, knew from past experience that to attempt further persuasion was entirely useless, and he said no more, silently indulging the hope that the ice would blockade the river before morning. His desires were in part gratified. The next day it was ascertained that no steamers would venture forth among the floating ice cakes, and Tom was exultant.

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In this mood he determined to give Little Wolf a surprise party, and thus alleviate, in some degree her disappointment. His parents heartily co-operated in his project, and the trio immediately set about making preparations for the entertainment of a large circle of friends.

It was decided that Edward should be initiated into the secret, and the task of hoodwinking their

prying and discontented young guest, was assigned to him. By ways and means known only to a masterly hand, Edward contrived on that eventful day to perform the feat, in which, no doubt, the whole Tinknor family combined would have failed.

For when evening came on, and the company were assembled, Little Wolf most unexpectedly found herself in the midst, an object of universal interest. A more beautiful object could scarce have been found. At all events, so thought Edward Sherman, as he mingled in the throng, great billows of gladness surging in his soul. His cup of joy was large and full. He was holding it with a firm hand, and he said in his heart, "I shall never be moved." [Pg 178]

The evening was drawing to a close, but the feasting and toasting was still kept up. The wine went round, and the adventures of our heroine continued to be commemorated in appropriate sentiments. While the guests still lingered, a shade of anxiety might occasionally be traced on many a fair face, as husband or brother, or "that other," exhibited unmistakable signs of an overheated brain.

Little Wolf's cheek grew pale, as from time to time she observed the rising flush on Edward's brow. He was exceedingly susceptible to the use of stimulants, and was rapidly thrown into a highly exhilarated condition, making him for a time brilliant, but finally entangling his talk in a labyrinth of meaningless and silly words. When in the latter condition which was not observable until just before the party broke up, he conceived the unlucky idea of urging upon Little Wolf a glass of his favorite drink. "Permit me," said he, stepping, or rather swaggering up to where the lady stood, "to—to—," and suddenly appearing to notice the extreme pallor that overspread her countenance, he stammered, "to bring the blushes to those cheeks." [Pg 179]

It was enough. The heart at once threw its crimson mantle upon her face, but alas! it was dyed in shame. Poor Little Wolf had no words at command. There, before her, stood the man in whom, a few hours before she had felt so much pride and confidence. Her heart's best feelings had gone out to him, and here was her idol horribly defaced, and he knew it not. He even held invitingly towards her the instrument that had done the mischief, and, while the cup still shook in his trembling hand, he began to wonder at her silence. [Pg 180]

She once or twice moved her lips, as if to speak, but the words died away. She was not faint or weak, but was for the moment paralyzed. When the quick reaction came, on fire with indignation she acted with characteristic energy and decision, and all heard the crash of the goblet, as with one rapid sweep of her little hand she dashed it to the floor, and fled from the room.

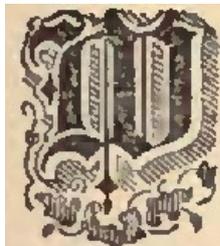
Did she forgive him? She said in her heart she would not.



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CHAPTER XVI.

PAINFUL RECOLLECTIONS—THE LAST BOAT OF THE SEASON— RUFFLED PLUMES—RECONCILIATION.



hen Little Wolf awoke the next morning, her mind instantly reverted to the painful subject, that had banished sleep from her eyes the greater part of the night, and, as the shameful scene came up again vividly before her, she buried her face in her pillow and groaned aloud. While thus indulging afresh her grief and mortification, she was aroused by a sound which turned her thoughts in another direction. She started up eagerly and threw open the window which commanded an extended view of the river, and, in the distance, she could just discern through the fast falling snow, a brave little steamer, as if by magic ploughing its way up through snow and ice. [Pg 182]

Little Wolf hung out of the window half in fear lest the welcome vision should vanish; but it kept steadily onward, drawing nearer and nearer to its destination, and soon she had the satisfaction of seeing it safely moored, and, by the active discharge of freight, it was evident that it would attempt a downward trip.

The thought of home banished every other from her mind, and she hastily drew inside and shook the white flakes from her glossy hair, and began to arrange them in curls. But the unruly locks had blown about so long in the wind, and got so cold and tangled and required so much coaxing and brushing, that Little Wolf began to despair of ever getting them in order. [Pg 183]

Just then she observed on the dresser a bottle of what she supposed to be pomatum, but in

reality, a mixture for the lungs, made of honey and other ingredients, which by exposure to the cold had partially congealed. She caught it up and literally saturated her hair in the contents and then with great spirit proceeded to her task.

At the first onset the brush stuck fast; "Dear me what ails it?" she ejaculated throwing down the brush and making desperate dives with a coarse tooth comb.

By this time her pretty tangled ringlets had stiffened into a striking resemblance to cork screws interspersed with porcupine quills. By a succession of impatient jerks she endeavored to bring the wayward mass to submission; but the more she attempted to separate and arrange, the closer the loving locks embraced each other, and she was beginning to despair of conquering the difficulty, when she heard a light knock and Mrs. Tinknor's kind voice said "May I come in?"

"O dear, yes," said Little Wolf, springing to the door, "do come in, my dear Mrs. Tinknor, and tell me what this horrid pomade is made of." [Pg 184]

"Why, dear child, what have you been doing to yourself? your hair looks as if ten thousand furies had been tearing it."

"O Mrs. Tinknor, it is this horrid pomade."

Mrs. Tinknor's eye fell upon the offending preparation. "Why, bless your heart my child," she exclaimed in dismay, "you have been using Aunt Betsy's cough medicine."

Little Wolf threw herself on the bed convulsed with laughter, and Mrs. Tinknor heartily joined in the merry peals.

"I came to tell you," said Mrs. Tinknor, when somewhat composed, "that a steamer has just arrived, and Mr. Tinknor and Tom have gone out to ascertain when she will return, if at all."

"O, I know she's going back right away," said Little Wolf springing up. "I saw them hurrying off the freight; O dear, what shall I do with my hair?" She was beginning to feel too anxious to laugh now. [Pg 185]

"Come to my room, dear, it is warmer there and I can soon wash it out for you. Now put this shawl around you; never mind dressing, we have the house all to ourselves you know."

"Suppose I were to get caught in this ridiculous plight," said Little Wolf, pushing her feet into her slippers, "I wouldn't have Tom see me for the world."

"Then run along quickly and make sure," said Mrs. Tinknor, laughingly, "I think we needn't feel concerned about the gentlemen coming back for half an hour," she added, as Little Wolf ran on before.

Now the gentlemen had already returned, bringing Edward with them. The latter, having forstalled them at the boat, met them as he was hurrying to Little Wolf with the necessary information. On coming in they unluckily took possession of the very room through which the ladies would pass in order to reach Mrs. Tinknor's apartment.

Reassured by her hostess, Little Wolf pushed confidently forward, making bold and decisive charges at the obstructing doors, and in this manner, made her way directly into the presence of the two young gentlemen, Mr. Tinknor having gone in search of his wife. [Pg 186]

Here she was brought to a sudden stand, but it was only for an instant, for Little Wolf, like a true womanly general, was skilled in retreat when caught in ruffled uniform. She turned and darted through the door which stood accommodately open, and although Edward's suppressed smile, and Tom's uproarious laugh, goaded her on, she stopped long enough to lock them in, thus cutting off pursuit which Tom evidently meditated; he having, in consideration of their long and intimate acquaintance, felt himself warranted in chasing after her, and was at her heels, when he suddenly found himself a prisoner.

"O Wolf, Wolf, he shouted, pounding upon the door, "the boat, the boat, she'll leave"—

"When will she leave?" said Little Wolf, stopping short.

"Let me out and I'll tell you, come, be quick, there's no time to be lost. If you want to go here's Mr. Sherman to take charge of you." [Pg 187]

"I can take care of myself," muttered Little Wolf, but, while she paused she had additional cause for mortification; for Squire Tinknor had found his way to his wife, and her only refuge was behind Mrs. Tinknor's flowing skirts. Here she partially screened herself, while he informed them that the boat would attempt a downward trip in the course of an hour. "Ha, ha, ha," concluded the Squire, "if sis is bent on going, she must make haste out of that plight."

By the united efforts of her friends, Little Wolf took passage for Chimney Rock, and Edward, looking very handsome and self-possessed, acted as her escort.

Without explanation, without apology, without so much as a look of contrition from her travelling companion, at the first interview Little Wolf forgave all the pain and mortification he had made her feel. She had forgiven him without knowing it. She thought herself still angry because her heart ached. [Pg 188]

Edward was surprised. He had expected to meet indignant looks, and perhaps reproachful words;

he had feared even worse, for he well knew the decision that marked Little Wolf's forming character, and he had armed himself to meet the treatment which he felt he justly merited. But his chosen weapon of defense was pride and so was useless when opposed to Little Wolf's unusual gentleness. He was subdued, and when man's proud spirit is once subdued by the forbearance of the woman he loves, that woman henceforth becomes to him an object of adoration.

Edward had the day before called Little Wolf, darling, now he called her angel, and before he parted from her he had said "my angel," and she had smiled upon him when he said it.



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CHAPTER XVII.

WINTER SPORTS—THE DOCTOR'S VISITS—PREPARATIONS FOR NEW YEAR'S DAY—A DISCUSSION.



Winter had fairly set in. The December winds had for several weeks, blown upon the "Father of Waters," and he slept like a huge giant, all unmindful of the western breezes which came to fetter and play their pranks upon him. Many wild revelries did those winged sprites hold upon his grim visage, and many a day did the pleasure loving inhabitants of the lively village of Pendleton go forth and join the grand revel. On such occasions the newly made playground resounded with merry shouts and tinkling bells, for there skating and sleigh-riding and other winter sports were brought to perfection.

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Our young friends of the "Bay State" were quite at home amid such scenes, and nearly every day, might be seen dashing up before their hotel, a fanciful little sleigh drawn by a fine spirited grey, who chafed and stamped, and shook his necklace of silver bells, as if to signal the fair lady, whose coming he so impatiently waited. His temper, however, was seldom severely tested, for it was Dr. Goodrich who sported this elegant little establishment, and Louise Sherman well knew at what hour of the day to be in readiness for a ride.

Occasionally the duties of his profession detained the doctor beyond his usual time, and then came Louise's turn to feel the least bit in the world uneasy and anxious. But one day there was a delay of the kind which passed apparently unheeded by her. She had as usual brought out her little fur cap with its red ribbon ties and deposited it with her gloves upon the table, and having arranged her mantle near the fire, and put her overshoes in a warm place upon the hearth, she seated herself by the window, just opposite her mother who has taking her afternoon nap in an easy chair. Here she sat for some time anxiously watching the sleeper, and evidently waiting for her to awaken. At length Mrs. Sherman opened her eyes, and, as she caught Louise's eager glance gave a little start. "Hasn't the doctor come yet?" she asked.

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"No mother, but I'm all ready, and I'm glad you are awake, for I wanted to tell you before I left, that Edward had ordered wine for New Year's, and he said if it came while he was out, he wished it put in his private room."

"Wine for New Year's! exclaimed Mrs. Sherman in unfeigned astonishment.

"Why yes, mother, Edward says our friends will expect it of us."

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"I cannot consent to it," said Mrs. Sherman decidedly, "we shall have a plentiful supply of refreshments, and, Louise, I'm surprised that you should, in the remotest manner, give your sanction to your brother's foolish proposal."

"But, mother, said Louise, eagerly, "Edward says that it is pure domestic wine, and I don't see what harm that can do."

"It was pure domestic wine that made Noah drunk, my dear."

"O dear," said Louise rather impatiently, "I wish old Noah had never got drunk, if"—

Just then she happened to glance out of the window, and saw the doctor drive up, and consequently her frowns and Noah's sins were burried in oblivion, and a smile and a blush bloomed upon their tomb.

Louise had just done tying on her cap when the doctor appeared at the door, and, while he was exchanging civilities with her mother, she slipped out and ran to her brother whom she saw coming in the passage.

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"We can't have it Ned," she whispered, "mother has set her foot down."

"Yes?"

"Yes Ned, she has."

Edward frowned slightly, but said nothing, for by that time, the doctor was hastening his sister away and his mother was gently calling him.

"Edward."

"Yes mother," and, entering her room, he threw himself carelessly into the seat which Louise had vacated.

For a few moments both were silent, and as the son looked into the mother's face, he plainly saw that she was filled with grief and anxiety; and his heart smote him for he really loved and revered his mother; but he resolved to appear as if he had observed nothing amiss, and, taking his hat to leave, he said quite cheerfully, "well mother what are your commands?"

"Edward I have a request to make of you," replied Mrs. Sherman with some feeling in her tone. [Pg 194]

"Speak, mother dear," said he, falling pleasantly into his seat.

"It is my request, Edward, that you do not provide wine, or any other stimulant for our New Year's entertainment."

"What, not coffee, mother?" said Edward laughingly.

"You know very well what I mean," said Mrs. Sherman with a faint smile.

"Of course it shall be as you wish," said he more seriously, "but really, mother, I think you are too strict. I am afraid our friends will have a mean opinion of our hospitality."

"They will, of course, understand that we are principled against the use of intoxicating drinks.

"As a beverage," chimed in Edward with a touch of irony in his tone.

Mrs. Sherman looked hurt, and Edward repented again. "Mother," said he, "forgive me, I did not intend to wound you. Let us drop a subject upon which we cannot agree.

"But, Edward, I cannot bear that we should differ. I have always endeavored to instil correct principles into the minds of my children, and now, just as they are on the threshold of what might be a useful life, I find the tares which an enemy had sown beginning to spring up. [Pg 195]

"But mother, you know I do not approve of indulging to excess any more than you do. It is only the total abstinence principles to which I object, and even Louise says she can see no harm in an occasional social glass."

"Does Miss DeWolf say the same," said Mrs. Sherman fixing her eyes on Edward.

"I do not know, I am sure," replied Edward nervously twirling his hat, "I have never had any conversation with her on the subject."

"Miss DeWolf is orthodox, I am prepared to testify," exclaimed Louise, tripping into the room, and, before any question could be put as to the cause of her sudden return, she gratuitously gave the information.

"A man had a fit or something," she said, "and I must forsooth, lose my ride, for the doctor's motto is business before pleasure; a very good motto when I am not concerned, but if the man could only have been taken an hour or two later, it would have been a great accommodation. However," and she glanced archly at her brother, "I should then have lost the opportunity of eavesdropping, and consequently of giving in my testimony in favor of my future sister-in-law." [Pg 196]

"Thank you, I suppose you obtained your information of my future brother-in-law."

"No matter how I got it, but I'm fully prepared to prove that the young lady's principles are severely 'touch not, taste not, handle not.' We have a great work before us, Ned, for they will not easily be persuaded to our opinions I can assure you."

"I do not wish to influence my friends to think just as I do," said Edward, proudly.

"Well, somehow you have managed to make me think as you do, for you know I was once as strict as mother."

"I hope you have not changed your views on my account, Louise." [Pg 197]

"No, not exactly, Ned, yet, I must confess, your arguments have had great weight with me."

"I would advise you to reconsider, and think independently," said Edward rather sharply.

Louise was silent, and Mrs. Sherman now seized the opportunity to change the topic to one more intimately connected with their future plans and prospects. In this the attention of the trio was absorbed until towards evening, when they were interrupted by the doctor's well known knock.

The doctor looked pale and worn, and, as he seated himself, Edward remarked, "you look tired doctor."

"Yes, I *am* tired," replied the doctor, "I am tired of the world, or rather I am tired of the way we are living in it. I have had an aggravated case of delirium tremens on my hands this afternoon, and I wish every liquor seller in Pendleton could have looked in upon that distressed family. A young and interesting wife, and several small children were compelled to witness a scene of suffering, the horrors of which were truly appalling."

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"It is strange," said Edward, "that men will make such beasts of themselves."

"It is strange," said the doctor, "that if men have no hearts of pity, that we can not have laws to prevent the sale of the poison."

"But, doctor, men are not compelled to buy it."

"But, Sherman, men *will* buy it, and will drink it, the proof of which is before us every day we live. These temperance societies are no doubt most of them useful to society, but they do not deal the death-blow to the monster. Nothing but the law can do that. I know your opinion, Sherman, but in the name of humanity, what are we to do?"

"Why, doctor, we shall have to let men kill themselves if they will be so foolish. We cannot forbid the sale of pistols, because men often use them for purposes of committing suicide; and, even to suppose that a man is quite certain when he sells a deadly weapon to another, that he will use it for the purpose of self destruction, I hold that he has the legal right to sell it; that he has no moral right I readily admit."

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"I do not understand law, Sherman; *perhaps* our constitution is so framed that the people have not the power to say whether or not, our nation shall become a nation of drunkards; perhaps the thousands of intelligent men, who, heart-sick as I am this day in view of the dreadful consequences accruing from the sale of intoxicating drinks, have ignorantly petitioned their state legislature for a prohibitory law, which they had no power to enact; perhaps those judges are correct who have said their state can not have a law that would restore peace and happiness to thousands of families, whose sorrow it is too harrowing to think upon. I say, *perhaps*, for, I cannot but hope that judges who are equally intelligent and who have told us differently may not be mistaken. One thing is certain, the hand of the liquor dealer must be stayed, or in every house there will be one dead."

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"Public opinion might do much towards accomplishing the desired object," suggested Mrs. Sherman."

"True enough, Mrs. Sherman, said the doctor, "but public opinion must have its naps, and at best it is seldom half awake and it requires an immoderate amount of force to bring the sleepy thing to the right standpoint."

"Well, doctor, I am willing to use my little strength in the cause, although I regret to say that my efforts as far as my family are concerned have proved entirely fruitless."

The doctor turned a surprised look towards Louise, whose face was instantly suffused with blushes.

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CHAPTER XVIII.

THE NEW YEAR'S BALL—A CHECK TO FESTIVITY—THE MIDNIGHT RIDE—DEATH IN THE OLD BROWN HOUSE.



oliday festivities and dancing parties were words synonymous in the early settlement of Minnesota, and, although Mrs. Sherman would have been shocked at the bare idea of her daughter attending a public ball in her native village, the influences of a new country so wrought upon her prejudices, that her scruples gradually yielded; and, when Louise rather doubtfully asked permission to attend a party of the kind to be given on New Year's Eve, she gained a reluctant consent.

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"I could not consent on any account, Louise," said her mother with a view to excuse this apparant departure from her principles, "if I had not sometime ago had some conversation with the doctor on the subject. I have great confidence in his judgment, and, I am sure he would not desire it, if it were not a proper place for you. However, I have my misgivings, for I never was allowed to go to such a place when I was young," and she sighed, "but

as the Doctor says, there is no other amusement for the young in this new country," and she sighed again. "Is Miss DeWolf going, Louise?"

"Yes, mother, Ned says he had hard work to persuade her to go. She don't like to leave her father. What a pity he is such a sot. I believe I should detest such a father. I don't see how she can be so good to him."

"She is a dutiful daughter, Louise, and a noble girl, and I hope nothing will ever happen to prevent her becoming Edward's wife." [Pg 203]

"What can prevent it mother? I'm sure Ned is handsome, and talented and rich enough for anybody."

"I don't know what could prevent it, Louise, but I shall be glad when they are really married. I think a wife of the right stamp would have a great influence on Edward."

"Why, mother, I'm sure Ned's principles are good, and he is steady enough for a young man; I don't see what particular advantage a wife would be to him."

Mrs. Sherman only sighed.

Louise looked a little disconcerted. "Why, mother," said she, "you act as if you thought something terrible was going to happen to Ned and me, and our only escape was matrimony."

"Louise," said Mrs. Sherman after a pause, "could not Miss DeWolf be prevailed upon to spend the day of the party with us; she would only be a few hours longer away from her father."

"Why yes, I think so," said Louise thoughtfully. "Ned could go for her in the morning. O yes," she concluded decidedly, "Ned can manage that I know." [Pg 204]

Little Wolf spent the day above mentioned in Mrs. Sherman's family. She was happy; happier than she had been since her return home. The memory of the dreadful night which she passed at Squire Tinknor's had ever since haunted her. It was only when in Edward's presence that she forgot it, and it would even sometimes cloud a moment of such companionship, as comes only to those whose very life is bound up in another's. She often said to herself, it was his first mistake, it would never be repeated; he would not dare to indulge again, now that he was convinced how a stimulant would effect him. But, spite of all her attempts at self-control, whenever the well remembered scene came up before her, she was ready to cry out with anguish. The society of Edward's mother, comforted, and reassured her. The son of such a mother was exalted, if that were possible, in her opinion, and she instinctively gathered renewed confidence in her own future happiness. [Pg 205]

During the day, Mrs. Sherman's penetrating eye was frequently fixed upon Little Wolf, as if she would read her very soul, and the glimpses which she caught, shining out in her words and actions were on the whole satisfactory.

Louise, who was naturally rather yielding and dependent, involuntarily deferred to her young companion, whose opinions were always independent and often expressed with marked decision. In fact, before the day was ended, Little Wolf's force of character was felt and silently acknowledged; and little, and rosy, and curly though she was, she had become a power in the Sherman family. But what beauty, what sweetness, what love is potent when opposed to a depraved appetite? But why anticipate?

As Edward was busy in his office the greater part of the day, and the doctor in his professional duties, they saw but little of the ladies, and Mrs. Sherman, anticipating their wishes, advised Little Wolf and Louise to dress at an early hour of the evening, in order to enjoy a quiet social hour all together before the party. [Pg 206]

The mysteries of the toilet occupied more time than they had calculated upon, and, just as they were in the midst of an important discussion, as to whether pink or white flowers became Louise best, they heard the gentlemen come in.

"There they come," said Louise, "I hear them in the parlor; do, mother, tell them we are most ready!"

"Now Miss DeWolf," said she, turning to Little Wolf, as her mother left the room, "how do you think I look?"

"Why you look like a prim puritan. The roses in your hair look as if they had been taught to grow very properly all their lives and they were not going to depart from early habits, even if they were going to a 'hop.'"

"Now, do you think they look stiff?" said Louise anxiously.

"Just a little, Miss Louise."

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"Please arrange them for me," said Louise, stepping up to Little Wolf.

Little Wolf gave the offending flowers several slight twiches, this way, and that. "There, how do you think they look now," said she.

"O they do look lovely," said Louise, glancing at herself, admiringly in the mirror, why could not I fix them so?"

Little Wolf gave her head a slight toss of triumph, thereby creating a breezy excitement, quite becoming among her ringlets, and the moss rose buds with which they were ornamented. Her dress was white and gauzy, and her every movement floated it gracefully about her slender figure.

Louise was also dressed in white, but there was an air of precision about her, with which although it accorded well with her conservative character, she was evidently dissatisfied, when comparing her appearance with Little Wolf's.

"I wish my hair would curl like yours," she said, glancing from the reflection of her own smoothly braided locks, to Little Wolf's dancing ringlets. [Pg 208]

"Why I'm sure you look very beautiful indeed, beautiful as a bride, Miss Louise; now, go ask the doctor if you don't. Don't wait for me, the doctor is waiting for you; I'll come directly when I get this lace fixed."

"Well, remember *somebody* is waiting for you," said Louise, as she left the room.

A shower of compliments fell upon Louise as she presented herself to her brother and lover. "Now don't waste any more admiration on me, either of you," said she, "save it for Miss DeWolf, she is the most beautiful thing I ever saw. She is grace itself. She touches a ribbon and it knots itself into an exquisite shape, she lays her hand upon lace and it fastens and floats, she gently pats a flower, and it instantly assumes its most graceful attitude. O Ned, how happy you will be."

The words were still upon Louise's lips when Little Wolf joined the circle, and somehow, she instantly caught the expression of Edward's face, and read in it those emotions, with which our pen intermedleth not. [Pg 209]

It was very pleasant to look into that quiet parlor, presided over by Mrs. Sherman, who sat regarding her happy children with so much tenderness and pride. But we must not linger, for there are other scenes to be presented.

It was near the midnight hour when pleasure ran highest in the brilliantly lighted ballroom that Edward might be seen leading Little Wolf to a seat. She had appeared on the floor many times, and had at length acknowledged herself weary.

"What a handsome couple," whispered Louise to the doctor, nodding significantly towards them, and her whisper was echoed by many others.

There was a deep red spot in Edward's cheek, and a flash in his eye, which some might have attributed to the excitement of the occasion, but the doctor and those who knew him well, interpreted it differently. He had several times during the evening left the room with one or two of his friends, who were in the habit of indulging in a social glass, and Edward's principles were not such, as to shield him from their influence. [Pg 210]

Little Wolf's quick eye followed him when he went and when he came; not indeed with a suspicion of the truth, for it did not occur to her that he was being led into temptation, but the fact was about to burst upon her.

"Excuse me for a few moments, love," whispered Edward as he seated her, "I will be back in time to dance the old year out and the new year in with you; the next is to be our wedding year, is it not?"

Little Wolf smiled and fluttered her fan to conceal her confusion.

Two gentlemen were engaged in conversation near Little Wolf, and, as Edward left her one of them remarked, "What a pity so many of our promising young men are falling into the habit of drinking. There is young Sherman, if I am not mistaken, under the influence of stimulant." [Pg 211]

Although not intended for her ear, Little Wolf caught the words, and her bright smile faded, and her busy little fan dropped in her lap. The wound so lately healed was reopened, and in it had fallen a corrosive poison. She felt the aching pain, and the eating smart, she begged Dr. Goodrich to take her from the room. She had arisen and was leaning on his arm when Edward returned.

"I see my bird is on the wing," said he claiming Little Wolf's hand for the forming cotillion.

Little Wolf caught his breath as he leaned towards her, and grew paler, "I cannot dance," said she drawing back.

Edward looked surprised, but the doctor knew what all meant and he turned with her towards the door, when who should they see, but daddy, making his way towards them.

He had evidently come in haste, for his great rough over-coat was only partly buttoned, his leggins were put on awry, his over shoes were untied and the strings dangled under his feet somewhat retarding his shuffling locomotion. With fur cap drawn low so as to protect his face as much as possible from the biting winds, beard white with frost, and clusters of snow flakes resting upon his broad shoulders, Daddy pushed forward into the throng. [Pg 212]

Little Wolf no sooner saw than she ran up to him, "What's the matter Daddy?" said she.

"Twixt you and me, Honey," said he clutching her by the arm, "the doctor is pretty nigh done fur."

Little Wolf waited for no futher explanation. She gave her little dimpled arm a jerk and was out of

the room in a twinkling.

"Bless me, twixt you an'me, it will go hard with the Honey," said Daddy addressing Dr. Goodrich, "your services is needed. Miss Hawley said fetch you right along with the Honey, and, doctor hev' her wrap up right smart, its awful cold and blowy—howsoever, I clapped in two big buffaloes, for I know'd putty well how gals is dressed at sich places. Laws, I expect them are buffaloes would keep her warm if she hadn't nothing on but that are outside fish net."

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For once Daddy made no useless delays. He saw that Little Wolf was well wrapped in as they sped along the frozen river. The horses were put to their utmost speed, but in vain. Little Wolf arrived a few minutes too late to attend her dying father.

With a despairing wail she threw herself beside his dead body. She did not weep, but moaned so pitifully that it was distressing to listen to her.

Mrs. Hawley at length went to her and gently raised her up and removed her hood and cloak. In her haste, Little Wolf had made no change in her dress, and she was too much absorbed in grief to once think of her appearance. The rose buds fell from her hair on the still face of the corpse and her white robes floated over it, while Mrs. Hawley tried to soothe and speak words of comfort to her.

But suddenly her eye fell upon a form at the opposite side of the bed. It was Hank Glutter. She was pale before, but at sight of him she became absolutely ghastly. Slowly she arose to her feet and went around to where he stood. "Mr. Glutter," said she solemnly, raising her hand, as if to pronounce upon him some dreadful anathema.

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"Miss DeWolf," said Hank, eagerly interrupting her, "do not curse me."

"Vengeance is mine, and I will repay, saith the Lord," burst from Little Wolfs white lips.

Is there not a curse which the liquor seller cannot escape?"



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CHAPTER XIX.

NEIGHORLY SYMPATHY—LITTLE WOLF'S BOSOM FRIEND—A DISAPPOINTED LOVER.



he news of the sudden and unexpected death of Dr. DeWolf, quickly spread among the few poor families living in the vicinity, casting a gloom over the little community, where he had been so long well known, and, before strong drink got the mastery of him, greatly respected and beloved. Many a sorrowful face looked out from doors and windows towards the old brown house on New Year's morning, and one after another, the sympathising neighbors offered their assistance at the door of the bereaved, whose sunny face had often cheered their own quiet homes.

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But poor Little Wolf at the time knew nothing of their kind intentions. After the first burst of grief, leaving all arrangements which the occasion required to Dr. Goodrich, she shut herself in her own room, and none dared intrude upon her night of sorrow, except indeed Daddy, who was indefatigable in his attentions. The kind hearted old man wrapped himself in blankets, and lay down near her door, and, at intervals, during the hours of that cold January morning, he crept in softly and replenished the fire, and, after lingering a moment in the vain hope that she would notice and speak to him, he would go away muttering pitifully to himself, "poor Pet, poor Honey."

About daylight, worn out with anxiety and fatigue, he fell asleep, and a few hours after was awakened by a hard thump on the head and starting up, he saw Sorrel Top, just gathering herself up from a fall.

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Who told you to lie down there like a dog, for folks to stumble over?" said she angrily, I thought you were going to take care of Little Wolf, and here I find you snoring away and she may be frozen to death, for all you know."

"Tween you an'me," said Daddy looking rather mortified, "I'm afeared that are fire has gin' out."

"Of course it has—there ain't a good fire in the hull house. It takes Mrs. Hawley all the time to tend the door and tell the folks we don't want their help, and when the funeral will be;—I tell ye, we ain't hardly had a mite of rest since the doctor was brought home."

"Tell Miss Hawley I'll be down there in five minutes," said Daddy decidedly.

"It don't make much difference whether he's here or not," said Mrs. Hawley, when Sorrel Top had delivered his message.

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"O he'll be handy to talk," replied Sorrel Top with a grim smile.

"Tween you an' me, it ain't no time fur to be jokin'," said Daddy, who had come in time to catch a few words, and had a suspicion of what was passing between the women, "I guess," he continued "if you could see how broke down the Honey is, you'd begin to think it was a serious matter."

"We do already think it a very serious matter, Daddy," said Mrs. Hawley with great feeling, and I wish Miss DeWolf would let me do something for her."

"Taint no use saying a word to her, I don't open my head when I go into the room, but I'd lay down my life fur to ease her," said Daddy the tears coming to his eyes. "Tween you and me, it ain't no common trouble workin' on the pet," he said, coming close to the two and speaking low, "I've knowed her sence she was a baby, I've seen all of her putty ways, and none of her bad ways, fur she never had none; she hes growd up perfect and she allers treated the doctor dutiful, and she's got nothin' to reproach herself fur. I'm afered," and he sank his voice to a whisper, "the Honey has got a separate trouble."

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"What that trouble was Daddy did not define for he was interrupted by a knock at the door, which he opened and ushered in the Sherman family.

"Tween you and me, the Honey ain't spoke nor slept, nor eat," said Daddy, in answer to Mrs. Sherman's enquiry after Little Wolf, "but maybe it will ease her a leetle to know that you are here," he said, looking sideways at Edward.

Daddy fidgeted around Little Wolf for several moments, before he could muster courage to break the silence, and tell her who were waiting below, and he almost regretted having done so, when he saw the look of agony, which the information brought to her face.

"Daddy," said she in a choking voice, "ask Mrs. Sherman to my room, the others will excuse me to-day."

It was some alleviation to Edward's disappointment, as he rode home with Louise, to know that his mother was to be Little Wolf's companion and consoler until the arrival of her old friends, the Tinknors, who had been sent for, to be present at the funeral.

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During the few days they were together, Mrs. Sherman strove by every means she could devise to give her young friend some relief from the distress of mind, under which it was evident she was laboring. But she was at length obliged to return home, leaving to Mrs. Tinknor's skill the trying case, which had baffled her own benevolent efforts.

It was the day on which her father's remains had been consigned to their last resting place in a secluded part of his grounds, beside the grave of her mother, that Little Wolf sat alone by her upper window looking sadly out towards the burial spot, which she had left only a few hours previously.

The Squire and Mrs. Tinknor were in the parlor below, engaged in conversation concerning the events of the past few days, and Tom Tinknor, to whom the solemnities of the occasion had been extremely irksome, was wandering aimlessly about the house with hands in his pockets, occasionally checking himself in the very act of whistling away the oppressive silence.

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The sudden opening of a door gave him quite a start, and turning quickly, he saw Daddy, who said good naturedly, "I guess ye're skeered ain't ye? 'Tween you an' me I've felt ruther shaky myself lately in this ere great big house, where there is so much spare room, fur ghosts and sperits of pussens is apt fur to hang around the house where they die."

"O, that's all nonsense, Daddy," said Tom, "I thought you knew too much to believe in such things."

"Wall, I don't really believe in 'em, but I did feel kinder queer like, last night when I went through that are long hall to the Honey's room, but I never hev really seen a sperit yet, but I've seen shaders that looked mighty like 'em, and I ain't no doubt, if there is any, I shell see 'em, fur the Honey says I'm uncommon sharp that are way. Laws, she ain't afearred of nothin: why, she went inter the doctor's room, the next day after he was laid out, and stayed thar ever so long all alone, and wouldn't even come out fur to see Mr. Sherman, 'Tween you an' me, I guess the Honey is throwin off on that are Sherman, fur ye see I hed to go right inter the ball-room fur her, the night the doctor died, and I see her, with my own eyes, draw away from him as if he had hurt her, and I kinder hed a inklin that may be he'd been drinking a leetle too much, fur, to my sartin knowledge, she ain't 'lowed him fur to come nigh her sence. But I guess its affectin' her serious, fur she does 'pear to feel the wust she ever did, and I used to say, sometimes, when the doctor was brung hum dead drunk, she couldn't feel no wuss if he was really dead; but them times was nothin' to the way she broke down the night he died. 'Tween you an' me," said Daddy, as if suddenly recollecting himself, "it wouldn't be best fur to say nothin' about this to nobody, fur the Honey likes to keep her own affairs strict."

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"Certainly not," said Tom, and he walked straight to the parlor, and repeated to his parents every word he had heard.

"She certainly grieves more than is natural considering the circumstances," said the Squire, "and if the old man's conjectures are correct, you are here just in the nick of time, Tom."

"I don't know about that," said Tom, rather dubiously, "she will have to change wonderfully if she gives a fellow a chance to see or speak to her while we stay."

"I shall try to prevail upon the poor child to come down awhile this evening," said Mrs. Tinknor very gently.

"A handsome fortune is not to be obtained by marriage every day," said the Squire.

"A noble-hearted, whole-souled woman like Little Wolf is not to be obtained every day," said Mrs. Tinknor, "but, I never thought," said she affectionately regarding her son, "that Little Wolf cherished other than a sister's love for Tom."

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Tom was silent, and, after a short pause, Mrs. Tinknor said, "when you came in Tom, I was telling your father of a conversation I had with Little Wolf last evening, concerning her going home with us, but she thinks it best, on account of her dependent family, not to break up house-keeping before Spring."

"Displaying thereby very little financial ability," said Tom, rather contemptuously.

"Tut, tut," said the Squire, "Little Wolf is posted. She knows just as much about her father's affairs as I do, She would give me no rest months ago, until I spread out the whole thing before her, and I believe her to be as capable of managing the property, as a woman can be.

"I reminded her of the extra expense attending house-keeping," said Mrs. Tinknor, "but she said she felt it her duty to provide for those poor creatures in her employment. There's Daddy, you know, cannot, more than earn his board, and Mrs. Hawley besides being feeble, has no other home, and nobody would do as well by an inefficient girl like Sorrel Top, as she does, and then she has decided to take Fanny Green into her family for the winter."

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"Now, who is Fanny Green?" broke in Tom.

"Why, she is the little girl whose father killed his wife in a fit of intoxication, and then ran off leaving the child to the charity of strangers, and I think Little Wolf said, she was cruelly treated in the family where she is now living, and the family do not wish to be burdened with her.

"Well, *well*" said Tom, drawing a long breath, "I'm convinced Little Wolf will be a moping old maid, dressed in black, managing well her property, devising philanthropic plans for the benefit of paupers, she is getting too good for any man that lives."

"The best of it is, she does not even know she is doing a good thing," said Mrs. Tinknor smilingly.

Tom got up and walked impatiently to the window. Having accompanied his parents, with a view, to himself wipe away the few natural tears, that he imagined bedewed the rosy cheeks of Little Wolf, and pour into her willing ear a volume of cheering words, as he should ride by her side on their return trip, and, finally, to prevail upon her to reward his unequalled constancy, by becoming his wife, he was quite unprepared to meet the pale anguished face beneath the long black veil of which, for the first time, he caught a glimpse on the funeral day. Having witnessed the quiver that shook her delicate frame, as the grave received its dead, he lost all confidence in his pre-arranged means of consolation, and the words of his mother, not having been calculated to reassure him he was now thoroughly annoyed at the course things had taken.

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But as Mrs. Tinknor well knew that Tom's feelings were evanescent, and seldom went beyond the surface, she immediately arose to go to Little Wolf, comforting herself with the reflection, that the storm she was leaving would be of short duration.



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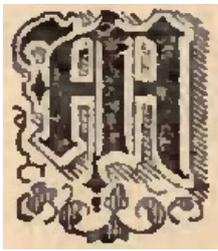
CHAPTER XX.

A WEIGHT OF SORROW—MARRYING A DRUNKARD—SUSPENSE.

meantime Little Wolf had not stirred from her place by the window, neither had she withdrawn her gaze from the desolate scene without. All nature was shrouded in snow. On the ground, on every tree and shrub, and in the air; snow was everywhere. But Little Wolf was too much absorbed in her own reflections to bestow a thought upon the raging storm.

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From the graves of her parents, dimly seen through the whirling flakes, her mind had wandered



to an equally painful subject, upon which the timely appearance of her beloved friend, Mrs. Tinknor, gave her the longed for opportunity to converse. She had always confided in that lady, as in a mother, and in the present instance, nothing was withheld pertaining to her feelings past and present towards Edward Sherman, and the relation in which he stood to her.

Mrs. Tinknor's previous interview with Tom had in a measure prepared her for Little Wolf's communication, but the tearless eye, so full of anguish, the white cheek and compressed lips, all so unlike her brilliant little friend, struck her painfully; and indignation towards the author of so much wretchedness was the uppermost feeling as, in conclusion, Little Wolf pleadingly asked, "what can I do, my dear Mrs. Tinknor?"

Now Mrs. Tinknor was a mild, undemonstrative woman, not prone to giving advice, but the memory of all the wrongs which she had endured through the intemperance of her husband, wrongs which had sunk deep within her bleeding heart, nerved her to raise a warning voice, to save, if possible, one whom she really loved from a life, to which it made her shudder to look forward, and she freely and earnestly answered.

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"Think no more of one, who, if you were to become his wife, would make your life, beyond all expression, miserable."

Little Wolf laid her hand quickly on that of her friend and looking straight into her eyes said vehemently, "I cannot, no, I cannot do that, could you?"

"Could I, rather, did I," said Mrs. Tinknor, drawing a long breath, "I had not the decision that marks your character, darling, and consequently am a drunkard's wife."

Mrs. Tinknor's voice fell very low, as she repeated the last words, and Little Wolf involuntarily clasped more closely the hand on which she had laid her own.

"You are not, really, what you called yourself, Mrs. Tinknor," she whispered, "nobody calls Squire Tinknor that, oh, do not talk so."

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"I do not like to say it my dear, and I never said it before, but for your sake I lay open the hidden part of my life, and after you have heard me through I shall never give another word of advice as to your future course."

"I was just of your age, darling, and about to be married when an intimate friend said to me," "I'm afraid Mr. Tinknor is fond of drink, I saw him go into one of those drinking saloons." I answered carelessly; for I did not wish her to know that she had made me anxious; but that evening I repeated her words to my lover. He made light of it, and said a friend invited him to drink and he did not like to refuse; that he might be a man among men, that there was no danger, he could stop when he pleased, he only drank socially, never for the love of it.

"But my fears were aroused and I begged him with tears, to give up social drinking all together, and he finally appeared hurt, and finally asked me if I could not trust him, and I said yes; for he was so noble, so full of warm affection, that I was sure I could win him from those habits, which threatened to darken our sky. I ventured forth on a dangerous sea, and clouds and storms have been my portion.

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"Spite of all you love him, and he loves you," Little Wolf ventured to say, "and while there is love there is hope, and some little comfort; life is not entirely aimless and barren."

Mrs. Tinknor so pitied Little Wolf, who had so bravely risen above all the misfortunes to which her young life had been subjected, only to sacrifice herself to a most unfortunate attachment, that, for the moment, she was silent not knowing what to say.

"O do not look so hopeless, dear Mrs. Tinknor," said Little Wolf eagerly, "tell me there is something to live for."

"We may, to be good, and do good," said Mrs. Tinknor slowly, as if to make quite sure of answering wisely.

Little Wolf caught at the words, "that is just what you are doing," she said, "and why may not I? I know you think I could not do as you have done; but you do not know how my heart is in this thing. I did not know myself until the trial came, why, Mrs. Tinknor, I could sacrifice my soul for his sake."

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"O darling, darling, I cannot bear to hear you say so. I cannot bear to have you sacrifice yourself to one who would not even control a vitiated appetite for your sake. Believe me you will regret it, if you become the wife of an inebriate."

"O he is not that, he is not that."

"He may not have come to that yet, dear child, but you have seen and heard enough to convince you that he is on the road from which few turn back. He has already felt the debasing effects of intoxicating drink and still he keeps on, and shall that noble soul of yours be for a whole life time bound to one with whom eventually there can be no sympathy? God forbid. You may remember, although you were very young, what your dear mother's sufferings were; could she speak to you now, what think you would be her advice?"

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"O my dear, patient, loving, broken hearted mother," and Little Wolf burst into a paroxysm of

tears.

Mrs. Tinknor leaned very tenderly over her young friend and kissed her cheek, and, after this little act of love and sympathy, she went down stairs, without so much as having hinted at the object for which she came. However to the surprise of all, Little Wolf spent the evening in the parlor with her guests, and at her earnest solicitation, they consented to delay their intended departure for a few days.

It was a sore disappointment to Edward Sherman to be obliged to meet Little Wolf day after day under the watchful eye of Tom Tinknor. But, to Little Wolf it was an infinite relief, for Mrs. Tinknor's words "think no more of one who if you were to become his wife, would make your life beyond all expression, miserable," rang continually in her ears: and, while her heart prompted her to a different course, her intellect in a measure approved the advice. Consequently she naturally shrank from a private interview, before her mind was fully prepared to meet the exigency.

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The subject was not again broached between Mrs. Tinknor and herself until the morning that the first named started for her home, and it was only at the moment of their last fond leave taking, that Little Wolf leaned over the side of the sleigh and whispered in her ear, "I shall never be able to write to you about it, but if *he* refuses to accept the condition which I feel I *ought* to make, I will just send you a lock of my hair and you will know it is all over with us."

Her lip quivered as she turned away and as the Squire drove off, Tom who had observed her agitation said to his mother, "she is tender hearted, that savage Little Wolf after all."



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CHAPTER XXI.

DADDY'S DIPLOMACY—A PASSAGE AT ARMS—FANNIE GREEN—A CATASTROPHE.



sudden sense of responsibility seemed to fall upon Daddy, as with Little Wolf, he watched the Squire's swift gliding sleigh, and its occupants, until they had dwindled together, a mere speck on the silent river.

"'Tween you and me, Honey, it won't du for you to be shiverin, here in the snow. Mr. Tom said I was fur to take care of you when he was gone; 'tween you and me Mr. Tom is oncommon nice young man, oncommon, considerin his father, very oncommon."

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"How so Daddy?"

"'Tween you and me he's a teetotaler, out and out, and the Squire ain't. I ketched him sneakin off down to the brewery several times. I kinder think Tom takes after his mother, and its a good sign fur boys to take after their mother. Now there's Mr. Sherman, he takes after his father. His every motion is like the judge. To be sure, the Judge was a wonderful smart man, but then when I lived in them parts he was in the habit of drinkin, pretty heavy. Afore I left he signed the pledge, but there ain't no tellin how he would have turned out if he had lived."

It was plainly to be seen in whose interest Daddy was enlisted. His diplomatic efforts were listened to with great composure and he could only speculate on the result as he went into the house with Little Wolf.

The parlor was in a state of confusion, Mrs. Hawley and Sorrel Tom having combined forces to raise the greatest possible amount of dust and disorder out of the material at hand; such as the ashes from the Squire's segar inadvertantly dropped, the dirt from Tom's boots which he never remembered to clean, and Daddy's careless litter in making the fire. The light litter was easily disposed of, but the inevitable stain left by the melted snow upon the carpet occasioned an angry outburst from Sorrel Top, who did not see her young mistress just behind.

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"Tom Tinknor is a filthy fellow," said she, and I'm glad he's gone; he kept me cleaning up after him all the time, and now here's two more great spots to be scrubbed."

"'Tween you and me Tom didn't make them are," said Daddy indignantly.

"He did, too."

"He didn't nuther, I see Mr. Sherman set in that are very spot yesterday."

At the commencement of the dispute, Little Wolf slipped away and sought refuge in her own room, and Daddy embraced the opportunity to lecture Sorrel Top soundly.

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"'Tween you and me, you've disgusted the Honey," said he, "speakin so unrespectful of her friends."

"She don't know nothing about it," said Sorrel Top.

"'Tween you and me she stood right behind you and heered the hull," said Daddy triumphantly.

"I don't believe it," said Sorrel Top, getting very red in the face.

"I'll leave it to Miss Hawley," said Daddy.

Mrs. Hawley corroborated the statement and Daddy continued his lecture.

"Tain't never best to speak disrespectful of nobody," said he, "I never du, except of them are liquor sellers, and sich low critters. 'Tween you an' me, Mr. Tinknor is a very respectable young man; he told me he'd never drunk a drop of liquor in his hull life, except once when he had the colic, and it ain't likely he'll ever tech the infarnel stuff agin, for he ain't subject to colic, and if he should be tackled with it, I've told him how to doctor with hot plates and yarb tea. I advised him not to send fur no doctor, fur ten chances tu one, they would prescribe brandy. Them doctors, as a general thing, don't know no better than to prescribe things fur young men that gits 'em in the habit of drinkin. I wouldn't hev the Honey heard you run down Mr. Tom, as you did, fur no money. I hope this will be a warnin fur you to be oncommon keerful of that are tongue of yourn in futur."

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"I guess Miss DeWolf can tend to her own affairs without anybody's help," said Sorrel Top, not in the least dismayed by Daddy's expostulations. "I wonder what has sot you agin Mr. Sherman, he is much more agreeable than Tom Tinknor, and I had rather clean up his dirt a thousand times, than so much as set a chair for that silly Tom."

"You never had no penetration, no how," said Daddy contemptuously, "if you ever marry you'll get a drunken loafer to wait on, no doubt."

With this unkind prophesy on his lips, Daddy got himself out of the sound of Sorrel Top's retort as quickly as possible, and, as he could whenever it suited him, make an errand to Little Wolf's room, he very soon made it convenient to start with an armful of wood in that direction.

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The fire was burning very briskly and Little Wolf sat before it in an attitude of deep thought, so Daddy very gently put down the wood, and was going out, when his young mistress called after him.

"Daddy."

"Yes, Honey."

"Daddy, I've been thinking of going for Fanny Green to-day."

"'Tween you and me, its a oncommon fair day, likely you wouldn't take no cold.

"Well, daddy, we will drive over for her, early this afternoon."

The honor of riding with Little Wolf and the errand on which, they were going combined to form an occasion of deep interest with Daddy who hastened down, eager to impart the information he had obtained. But, as only Sorrel Top was visible, and she in a fit of sulks, in the bringing on of which he had been instrumental, he delayed his important communication for a more appreciative audience, and contented himself with the performance of what he considered a solemn duty.

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"'Tween you and me, its never best to pout," said he, "I've seen many a handsome face spiled by it."

Having administered this inflammatory admonition, Daddy betook himself to the wood pile, where he pecked away with uncommon assiduity until he was called to dinner.

Putting away his ax with alacrity, he hurried into the house, with an air of a man of business, and soon, under the influence of a very palatable dinner, his tongue loosed more agreeably.

"'Tween you and me, the Honey and me have been talkin the matter over," said he, "and we are going fur to fetch Fanny this afternoon."

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"You ain't told us no news," said Sorrel Top, "has he Miss Hawley?"

"I didn't go fur to tell no news, a man never expects to tell *women* any news."

Daddy told this little fib good naturedly, although it was evident that he was the least bit annoyed.

Sorrel Top delighted in view of Daddy's discomfiture, and her temper restored, condescended to disclose the part she was to act in the matter.

"I've just been fixing a bed for her in the little room inside of Miss DeWolf's," said she "and as it ain't at all likely she'll be very tidy, brought up as she has been in that old shanty, I expect to

have to teach her to keep it in order."

"'Tween you and me, it's time I was gittin ready fur to fetch her," said Daddy glad of an excuse to terminate the interview.

Little Wolf was on the veranda when Daddy drove up, for she was aware that her spirited little saddle horse, Fleet Foot, was as a general thing rather restive in harness. However, on the present occasion, his behavior was unexceptionable, and, in a few minutes, he was trotting off, the perfection of docility. [Pg 243]

It was about a half an hour's drive to Mr. Wycoff's the farmer in whose family Fanny Green was living, and it was not to be expected that Daddy could by any means remain silent for that length of time, and as the subject most likely to interest his young mistress, he fixed upon Fleet Foot.

"'Tween you and me, Fleet Foot is oncommon stiddy to-day."

"Yes," said Little Wolf, absently.

"'Tween you and me hosses is like pussens, they ken be coaxed better than driv, fur generally speakin, coaxing brings 'em round when driving won't. It always makes my blood brile tu see a hoss abused, and the men that du it ain't much better than them are liquor sellers, and I have always said that they were the meanest of God's creation. 'Tween you and me, if common folks had had the care of Fleet Foot, you couldn't do nothin with him. He's naturally as full of fire as an egg is of meat, and he's a very knowin hoss tu; the minute you're in the saddle he pricks up his ears, and dances off like a young colt, fur he knows you like fur to have him prance and show off; but when I back him, he knows just as well he's got a stiddy old man aboard. When I fust took him out this afternoon, he went a caperin and carcerin round, and one spell I cum mighty nigh not gittin harness on him, but laws if anybody ken manage a hoss I ken," and Daddy unconsciously gave the reins a triumphant jerk, which instantly increased Fleet Foot's speed to what the careful old man considered an alarming degree, and by the time they had reached their destination, he was nearly out of breath, and had become quite nervous in his efforts to check the spirited animal. [Pg 244]

"'Tween you and me, it wont du to keep Fleet Foot standing long in the cold," suggested Daddy anxiously as Little Wolf was alighting.

Sharing Daddy's anxiety Little Wolf stated to Mrs. Wycoff as concisely as possible, the object of her visit, and that individual brought the affair to a crisis in the following summary manner. [Pg 245]

"Here's the girl, take her. Fanny put on your hood, and that old cloak that was your mother's. Mr. Wycoff has given you to this lady, and she's in a hurry. Now be quick."

Fanny's little white tear stained face fairly shone with delight, as she followed her new found friend to the sleigh. No alteration had been made in the mantle which was once her mother's, and Daddy wrapped her carefully in its ample folds and stowed her away at his feet, and she looked her last upon a house where she had suffered, as ill treated, motherless children sometimes do suffer.

From the day of her mother's death, she had excited Daddy's earnest sympathy. He had seen her carried home by Mr. Wycoff, whom he knew to be a hard man, and fond of strong drink. Mrs. Wycoff had the reputation of being no better than her husband, and Fanny's fate was generally commiserated when it was known that she was to be nurse and chore girl in that family. She had been there but a few months, however, when the infant under her charge suddenly sickened and died, and as she was too small and delicate to be put to hard labor, the family had no futher use for her. These facts coming to Little Wolf's knowledge through Daddy, she had successfully employed him to gain Mr. Wycoff's consent to give the child up to her." [Pg 246]

There was a world of gratitude in Fanny's sweet blue eyes, when occasionally she would modestly turn them up to Little Wolf as they rode in silence.

Daddy was to much absorbed in holding the reins to think of anything else, and as they neared the last long hill he drew a sigh of relief, "'tween you an' me, we're all right so fur," he said.

The words were scarcely out of his mouth before they were half way up the hill. Just on the brow they saw a two horse team, which as the road was narrow and the sides precipitous and rocky could only be passed with safety where it then was. Imagine then the dismay of the little party as they saw the heavy sled descending, and the driver madly urging on his horses. [Pg 247]

Daddy shouted at the top of his voice, Little Wolf sprang upon her feet and waved her handkerchief with all her might, and little Fanny said despairingly, "Oh its Mr. Wycoff, he is drunk, oh he *will* run over us."

Down, down, with fearful rapidity came the heavy team, the driver flourishing his whip and shouting dreadful oaths; while like lightning leaped Fleet Foot onward to his destiny. An instant more and Little Wolf had thrown Fanny from the sleigh and leaped after her down the side hill. There was a crash, a prolonged neigh; Fleet Foot's death yell, as, for an instant, he hung suspended from the sleigh, which had caught on a projecting rock, and all was silent save the distant clatter of horses' hoofs and the faint hallos of the drunken maniac.

At the moment of the collision, Daddy had risen to his feet and was in some unaccountable way thrown uninjured into the road. Although stunned and bewildered by the fall, his faculties [Pg 248]

gradually brightened and he was soon in a condition to survey the scene.

On a ledge of rocks overhanging the precipice was the forlorn wreck of the once fanciful little sleigh. In the depths below lay Fleet Foot, stretched motionless upon the rocky bottom. The deep ravine into which he had been plunged ran angling, and formed the point, where by her presense of mind Little Wolf had saved herself, and Fanny from almost certain death.

At this point the hill was less steep, and the snow had fallen to a great depth, forming a bed as soft as down, and cushioning the very rocks. Upon this capacious couch of unsullied whiteness, lay Little Wolf and Fanny.

Powerless himself to render any assistance, Daddy opened his mouth and there went forth a wail such as caused Little Wolf to start and shudder as she thought of what it might portend. But her worst fears were in a moment dispelled, as she saw Daddy's anxious face bending imploringly over the bank.

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"Honey" said he most dolefully.

"Yes, Daddy."

"'Tween you an' me, you ain't hurt nun, be you?"

"Not very much, Daddy, but when I try to rise I only sink deeper in the snow. Hark! I hear the sound of bells."

"Well, now, if there ain't Mr. Sherman coming down the hill," said Daddy delightfully. "'Tween you and me, Honey, that are Mr. Sherman will hev fur to help you git out. His legs is a heap longer than these old stumps of mine."



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CHAPTER XXII.

THE RESCUE.



he circumstances which had brought Edward Sherman so opportunely to the scene of disaster were simply these:

On his way to call upon Little Wolf he had ridden round to Hank Glutter's saloon in order to leave a package of Eastern papers, as an act of courtesy in return for previous favors from Hank. As he pulled up before the door, Mr. Wycoff, urged by the proprietor, came reeling out with blood-shot eyes, and swearing that he would never leave the place without another drink. Hank had some trouble in coaxing him on to his sled, and getting him started for home. Having rid himself of his troublesome customer, he turned his attention to Edward.

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"Come in, Mr. Sherman," said he, "I am at liberty now. That man Wycoff has been quite an annoyance to me of late. He has no control over his appetite, and consequently ought never to drink; but I can't refuse him, and it wouldn't mend the matter if I did, for he can easily get it elsewhere, and, perhaps, where no discrimination would be used, and he would become too much intoxicated to get home at all; but drunken loafers are not allowed to hang around here."

"I have brought some papers which I thought you might like to look at," said Edward taking no notice of what the other had said.

"Thank you, Mr. Sherman, you had better come in a while. I have just received some sherry said to be very fine. I would like your judgment upon the quality of the article."

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"Another time, Mr. Glutter; I am in something of a hurry to-day."

"Well, just wait a minute," said Hank, and he darted in and brought out a bottle and slipped it in the corner of the sleigh under the buffalo. "There," said he, "try it at your leisure, Mr. Sherman."

"Thank you, Mr. Glutter,—good day," and Edward hastened to the home of Little Wolf.

When informed by Sorrel Top that Little Wolf had gone to Mr. Wycoff's for Fanny, his pride was at the moment piqued; for he well knew that she had reason to suppose that he would visit her that afternoon. Since the memorable New Year's eve, when leaning upon Dr. Goodrich's arm, she had so resolutely turned away from him, he felt that all was not right between them; and he had looked forward with longing impatience for the hour, when, once more alone with her, he could

ask an explanation. Although he was confident that she was then absent purposely to avoid him, alarm for her safety overcame every other feeling, and with a foreboding heart, he turned in the direction she had taken.

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From the top of the hill he saw enough to hasten him down to Daddy, and from thence through snow and rocks to Little Wolf.

"Are you hurt, darling?" he said, eagerly grasping her hand.

Little Wolf uttered an exclamation of pain and fainted. Edward turned pale. "Daddy," he shouted, throw down that bottle in the corner of the sleigh."

"What is it you want fur to give her," said Daddy, doubtfully.

"It's wine; throw it down here quickly."

"She won't tech the infarnel stuff."

"She has fainted, you simpleton; give me the wine."

"'Tween you and me, there ain't no bottle here," said Daddy, doggedly. "Sprinkle a little snow in her face, and she'll come too."

"Daddy," thundered Edward, completely exasperated, "throw down that wine, or I'll know the reason why."

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"The reason why, is," said Daddy, deliberately, "there ain't no bottle in this ere sleigh—'tween you and me, this ere hoss of yourn is gettin mighty oneasy, I'm obleeged fur tu stand at his head every minute."

"Hitch him somewhere, Daddy, and throw the buffalo over him—the bottle is under the buffalo, you'll find it and bring it."

"No I won't bring it nuther," muttered Daddy to himself."

"I guess there's something the matter with Miss DeWolf's arm, she couldn't use it when she tried to get up," said a voice close behind Edward.

He turned and saw that the suggestion had come from Fanny Green, who lay a short distance off, cosily wrapped in the form of a little black bundle.

"Are you hurt, Fanny?" he said.

"O no, I'm not hurt a bit," she answered brightly. "I prayed that I might be saved, and I was saved."

"I wish you would pray we might get safely up this steep place into the road," said Edward.

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"Miss DeWolf is very little, replied Fanny hopefully, "I guess you can carry her up. If my cloak was off, I think I could walk by myself."

Edward undid her cloak and stood her upon her feet. He then raised Little Wolf in his arms, and staggered a few feet in the snow, and laid her down again, almost discouraged. But as he could devise no other plan to rescue her from her unpleasant situation, he redoubled his efforts. He occasionally stumbled against rocks, and fell into drifts, but always so as to shield his burden from harm.

Daddy was stubborn in withholding the bottle, and Little Wolf at length awoke to consciousness without it. Awoke to feel herself pressed close to Edward's throbbing breast, to listen to endearing words, that warmed into new life and vigor the hope in which she had indulged. The hope, that possibly, through her influence, he might be persuaded to give up the only habit which marred his otherwise unblemished, character.

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"Darling, darling, you are safe now with me," he whispered, as she unclosed her eyes; "were you hurt by the fall?"

"Only my arm, Edward; it is very painful. I'm afraid it is broken—oh, put me down, the pain makes me faint."

"I love so to hold you to my heart," he said as he let her slip softly on the snow, and examined the wounded member.

"It *is* really broken, just above the wrist," he said in surprise, how careless I have been!"

Edward was not skilful in surgery, but he did the best he could with pocket handkerchief bandages.

Little Wolf nerved herself to bear the pain which every movement aggravated, and Edward again lifted her up.

"Now, darling, we shall soon get to the top."

"Where is Fanny?" said Little Wolf, suddenly remembering her protege.

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"O, she is somewhere, working her way along in my track," said Edward.

Both looked back, and not far behind saw Fanny kneeling with closed eyes beside a snow capped rock. Her tiny hand, rough and red with cold and toil, clasped devoutly upon her breast, and her lips moved as if in prayer. The little black quilted hood she wore had fallen back, revealing soft golden hair, radiant in the slant rays of the declining sun, and upon her cheek a tear glistened like a dew-drop on a flower.

"The tears came to Little Wolf's eyes. "Poor little thing! she feels forsaken," she whispered, "let us wait and encourage her."

While they were waiting a neighboring farmer happened along; a strong, stalwart man, who joined right heartily in helping them out of their difficulty.

The first thing that Edward did when he reached the sleigh was to search for the bottle of sherry. "Strange," said he to Little Wolf, "Mr. Glutter certainly put a bottle of sherry here as I came along, and now it is nowhere to be found. I wish I had it for your sake."

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Daddy glanced furtively at Little Wolf, who, suspecting the truth, murmured something about feeling better.

"He ain't a goin fur to git none of that infarnel stuff down the honey," said Daddy to himself, as the sleigh with Edward, Little Wolf, and Fanny disappeared down the other side of the hill.

A consultation was next held between Daddy and the farmer as to the probable condition of Fleet Foot, which was speedily ascertained by the latter who chanced to have a rope with him suitable for letting himself down to where he could test the case. Scaling the rocks with his temporary ladder, he returned the verdict "died of a broken neck."

"I was pretty nigh sartin he was stun dead," said Daddy, gravely. "I'm much, obleeged to ye, neighbor; I guess I'll go hum, bein I can't du nothin fur the poor critter.—I tell ye, neighbor, these are things takes right hold on me. Fleet Foot was a buster, and I sot heaps by him, and so did the honey. 'Tween you and me, that cussed, infarnel liquor drinkin is at the bottom of a awful heap of trouble. If I could make the laws, the hull infarnel stuff would be handled like pison and pistols, ruther keerful."

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"Wycoff is pretty well off, I guess he can be made to pay pretty heavy damages," said the farmer.

"'Tween you an' me, that ere is poor consolation. Supposen the honey's neck had been broken, and the chances was agin her, what money du ye think could pay for her life? I tell ye what, the thing is all wrong, liquor makin and liquor sellin does mischief that no money can't pay fur."



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CHAPTER XXIII.

AN INDIAN MESSENGER—FROZEN TO DEATH.



he evening hour drew on. Little Wolf lay upon her bed feverish with pain. Her arm was in bandages, and Dr. Goodrich stood by soothing and encouraging her. Louise Sherman having arrived, kindly relieved Mrs. Hawley, who embraced the opportunity to slip out and regale herself with a cup of tea.

As she approached the kitchen, the sound of Daddy's voice reached her ear, and the few words that she caught hastened her footsteps thither.

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"It was as much as ever I could du fur to hold Fleet Foot," he was saying as she opened the door.

"Go on, Daddy," said Mrs. Hawley as he paused at her entrance, "I want to hear all about it."

"Wall, as I was a tellin Sorrel Top," he continued, "I was pretty nigh done out a holdin Fleet Foot, when we got tu that are long hill, fur I was a leetle afeared he might git the better on me, but the Honey want, she ain't never afeared of nothin nor never was, but she was oncommon quiet, she hadn't spoke for a long time—when, all at once, jest as we was agoin up the hill, what should we see but Wycoff's big team a tearin down like Jehu. He was a swearin and a cussin and there want no dodging of him. I riz right up and hollered, and the Honey riz up and hollered and shook her handkerchief, but it want no use. Down, down it cum like lightning, sled and all. Fleet Foot got skeered with the hollerin and he jest *went it*. Wall, the Honey ketched up Fanny in a jiff, and tossed her out, and was out herself afore I knowed it, and I was jest a goin fur to git out when the teams cum together kersmash, and I was pitched head fust clean over Wycoff's sled inter the

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road, and would no doubt hev been killed but my time hadn't come. "Tween you and me, it is *foreordinated* that we won't die till our time comes. Fur you may pitch a man about, and break him all tu bits and he lives and gits well. But when his time comes, the prick of a pin will kill him and nothin on airth ken save him. Wall, the fust thing I did when I found myself alive, was to look for the Honey, and afore I hed a chance fur to help her, that are Sherman happened along, and left me in charge of his hoss, while he went fur to fetch her. The fust thing I hearn was a great hollerin fur a bottle of wine that he had in his sleigh. Wall, I took the infarnel stuff and slung it as fur as I could see and told him there want nun there."

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"Miss DeWolf would give you fits if she knew what you'd done," said Sorrel Top, "the wine want yourn."

"Wall, it was the devil's, and I slung it tu him," retorted Daddy triumphantly, "that are Sherman was riled, and I let him sweat, fur I want a goin fur to hev him pour pisen down the Honey. No doubt, if he had gin it tu her, her blood would hev got heated and fever hev sot in. Some folks don't seem to know nothin about them things," said the speaker darting a contemptuous glance at Sorrel Top.

"Well, Daddy, what happened next?" said Mrs. Hawley, soothingly.

"I ain't a goin fur to tell nothin more tonight," said Daddy decidedly. "If folks can't listen without interruptin me, they may wait till they ken," and he shot another meaning glance at the offending Sorrel Top.

"I guess," said Sorrel Top with some asperity "you're not the only one that can tell me about it, is he Fanny?" she said turning to Fanny Green, whom she discovered to have fallen fast asleep in her chair.

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"'Tween you an me," said Daddy rather dryly, "I guess you won't hear no more of that are story to-night."

Sorrel Top's temper was slightly ruffled and she began to shake Fanny rather roughly. "Wake up, Fanny," said she "wake up."

"Oh! Mrs. Wycoff, don't whip me," mourned Fanny piteously, as she opened her eyes, "I didn't mean to go to sleep, but I was so tired."

"Don't you know no better than to treat a little motherless thing in that are way?" said Daddy coming indignantly forward. "Come here, Fanny," and he took the child tenderly in his arms; "if anybody speaks a cross word to you in this are house, they'll git reported."

By degrees Fanny awoke, and was borne off to bed by Mrs. Hawley.

Scarcely had they gone when a new object of interest attracted Daddy's attention. There was a slight rustling at the outside door, and in stalked a sturdy Indian in blanket and leggins and soft moccasins, causing his firm tread to fall noiselessly, and giving Daddy a superstitious start, as if he had seen an apparition. The red man stated in broken English that he had brought a letter a long way from the "lodge of the pale face, to the Wolf squaw."

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Daddy hastened to put the letter in Little Wolf's hand. It proved to be a rather lengthy communication from Antoinette La Claire, and as all were interested, at Little Wolf's request, Louise proceeded to read it aloud.

"Fairy Knoll, Jan. 20th, 18—.

MY DEAR MISS DEWOLF:

A faithful Indian, known for a long time to cousin John, has called here on his route to Chimney Rock and I embrace the opportunity to write to you, as it will probably be the last I shall have before spring opens.

Cousin John has fitted up a cosy little room for me in the loft. It is hung around with skins and blankets, and is made comfortably warm by the fire below. There is one little window from which I obtain a fine view of the "City of Trees," which you used so much to admire. They are now shorn of their foliage, and snow and ice cover the branches, and, forsaken by their summer inhabitants, they stand and sadly moan day and night.

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But these mournful sounds pass unheeded, by the happy couple in this peaceful cottage. Not a cloud has yet darkened their "honeymoon." All their hours are pleasant hours, and all their dreams are pleasant dreams. On these wintry mornings we rise rather late; after the sun has peeped in at the window a long time.

Cousin John goes out in the warmest part of the day to split rails, but, even then, he finds it convenient to take his brandy bottle with him. He is a firm believer in the efficacy of brandy to keep out the cold. But when, with the experience I have had, I see him in perfect strength and health, go out day after day with that little flask in his side pocket, I pray that it may never become a snare to him.

Yesterday morning, as he was about starting, I ventured to remonstrate with him. "Cousin John" I said, "I would not take the brandy to-day, I do not think you will

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miss it." He laughed good naturedly, and turning to Cousin Maria, he said, 'Maria dear, Antoinette is concerned about my morals. Shall I tell her of a certain lady who drained Mr. Sherman's wine bottle on her way to Fairy Knoll?'

Cousin Maria blushed and said, "I am sorry John that I ever touched it. Let us now mutually pledge ourselves never again to drink anything that will intoxicate." But Cousin John only laughed, and kissed his young wife tenderly and went away to the wood, taking the brandy bottle with him.

When he came home at night, and the supper was over, and he had, as usual, seated himself by Maria and taken her hand in his, (at which signal I invariably become suddenly sleepy and am obliged to retire,) I stole away from the scene, and sitting down by my little window, looked out into the faint moonlight, and thought much and long upon the joys and sorrows of earth, but most upon its sorrows, for the "whole creation groaneth," and my own heart is always sorrowful.

I do not know why, but it may have been, and probably was, because all the anguish and sorrow that has ever come under my personal observation, has been occasioned by that drink that "biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder," that the scene of the morning mingled with the thought of my cousins below eagerly quaffing their cup of bliss; the sweetest that earth offers to youthful lips. 'Can bitter drops ever mingle there?' thought I. 'Can the honey become wormwood and gall, and every joy be forgotten? Can the little speck that I thought I saw this morning on the horizon become a great cloud and overshadow us all?' In imagination I saw lovely cousin Maria pale and faded, and careworn, and cousin John's noble and manly countenance bloated and brutish, as I have seen men become by the use of stimulating drinks, and involuntarily I threw up my hands and cried, 'Is there none to help?'

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It may have been a morbid condition of the mind that wrought these sad fancies, and I am sure those who have never realized the danger of the cup would treat them lightly, but you dear friend, know that from just such beginnings the most harrowing sorrows have sprung.

I know cousin John would smile if he knew what a serious matter I have made of a thing that he considers so trifling, and he is so good and kind to me, and his whole soul so free from vice, that I almost regret having put these thoughts on paper. But out of the fulness of my anxious heart I have written as perhaps I ought not.

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God grant that all my fears may prove groundless, and that the serpent's sting may never, never more through another's infatuation reach our hearts, or yours.

I was at length aroused from my reverie by our Indian visitor. I caught a glimpse of him just as he emerged from the woods, and before I could go down to announce his coming, he was within, and by his noiseless footfall had taken my cousins greatly by surprise. Maria was smoothing her ruffled hair and looking rather annoyed at the unceremonious intrusion, while cousin John and his visitor were deep in the mysteries of "jargon," which being interpreted by my humble self was truly startling and shocking.

He stated that two "pale faces," were lying a short distance off, frozen to death. His supposition was that they had indulged too freely in "fire water."

Cousin John immediately accompanied him to the spot, and found indeed two men cold and stiff in death, and the empty bottle found upon their persons gave evidence of the cause. The Indian recognized one, having seen him with my dead brother, and said he was "no good pale face," and his name was Prime Hawley. They found in the pocket of the other an old letter addressed to "Hiram Green, Chimney Rock." You may possibly know something about the latter.

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"Fanny Green's father, and Mrs. Hawley's husband," ejaculated Little Wolf. "Hark, Louise," she added in a whisper, "they have heard it all."

Sounds of distress were heard in the adjoining room where Mrs. Hawley was engaged in putting her little charge to rest. Both she and Fanny had heard every word of the letter and the news of the unhappy death of the husband of the one, and the father of the other, burst suddenly upon them, and deep and tearless groans of Mrs. Hawley and Fanny's heart breaking sobs mingled together.

"Put the letter away Louise, *do*," said Little Wolf, turning her face away with a heart truly sick.

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CHAPTER XXIV.

A CRISIS—PRIDE AND FOLLY.

For weeks Antoinette's letter lay in the drawer where Louise had hastily thrust it, and no one had read it to the end.

Mrs. Hawley's health, which had been feeble for a long time, rapidly declined after the news of her husband's death, and in a few days she took to her bed, and shortly after died. The sickness and death of a member of her family, combined with her own sufferings so absorbed the mind of Little Wolf, that at the time she thought of but little else. But when it was all over, and her arm had partially healed, she began to realize acutely the anomalous position in which the purpose she had formed placed her to Edward.

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It is true he came every day, and always with words upon his lips that sent the hot blood to her cheek, and each time she strove in vain for courage to approach the subject upon which hung her destiny. It was no wonder that she thus halted; that her heart stood still at the bare possibility of losing its idol; for, orphaned and alone, beyond it she saw no light in her path; only fearful darkness like the shadows of death.

There had been no word of explanation, and Edward seemed to have forgotten that he had ever desired any, and he had settled into his former assurance. His mother had, of late, spoken to her confidentially of the time when, as Edward's wife it would be her pleasure to relieve her of all troublesome cares; and Little Wolf listened in silence and in agony. She longed to unbosom her feelings but restrained herself with the resolve that she would, without delay, make them known to Edward.

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In this state of mind she one day opened the drawer where lay Antoinette's letter and taking it out sat down to read it. She found nothing of interest in the contents, except that which she had previously heard, until her eye caught the postscript at the bottom which read thus:

"One day later. The Indian stayed yesterday to assist in burying the dead. He has just breakfasted and will start in a few moments, and I hasten to tell you the good news. Rejoice with me, all my fears are put to flight. Last night my conscience told me that I ought to invite cousin John to read this letter. He looked so serious when he had done so, that I was afraid I had offended him. But this morning to my utter astonishment he handed me a Total Abstinence Pledge, drawn up in due form, with his own name and Maria's signed to it, and playfully bade me write my name with theirs. "For," said he, "Antoinette, I intend in future to look well to the morals of my household, and see that they touch not, taste not, handle not, any beverage that will intoxicate." I burst into tears, and he said, "O well, if you feel so badly about it, you need not sign it," but he well knew they were tears of joy, and there would be no trouble about signing it. Would that the head of every family in the land, might do as cousin John has done. Then indeed, there would be rejoicing around many a fireside, where now sits sorrow and despair.

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In love and haste,

"ANTOINETTE,"

Little Wolf sat pondering over what she had read, never dreaming that her lover was peeping in upon her through the half open door. But Edward was to full of what he had come that day especially to say, to delay long, and he tapped lightly to attract her attention. Little Wolf welcomed him to her side, with the determination that she would then and there speak frankly upon the subject, which had so long pressed upon her mind.

But Edward had scarcely seated himself before he began in high spirits to speak of family arrangements.

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"Louise and the doctor," said he, "have finally fixed upon their wedding, and darling," he said, lowering his voice, and speaking earnestly, "it remains for you to say whether or not, ours shall be at the same time.

Little Wolf's pulse quickened almost to suffocation, but she controlled herself bravely, and placing her finger on the last passage in Antoinette's letter, she said, "read that, Edward."

Edward did as she desired, and again turned upon her a questioning look.

"Now, Edward," said Little Wolf, smiling although her lip slightly quivered, "I am ready to set up house-keeping with you any time, provided you will put your name with mine to a pledge like that

of which you have just read."

Although she had spoken playfully, Edward saw she was deeply in earnest, and his pride kindled, as the truth flashed upon him.

"Darling," said he, reproachfully, "I may have given you reason once, in an unguarded moment, to fear for me, but I had hoped that that scene had long since been forgotten." [Pg 276]

"It will never more be remembered, nothing of the kind will *ever* be remembered," Little Wolf hastened to say, "If I but have your promise."

"Well, then," said Edward clasping her in his arms, "I promise."

In due time Little Wolf disengaged herself and opening her writing desk, she drew him towards it, saying, "Now, Edward, you draw up the document, and we will both sign it."

"What document do you wish me to draw up? Is not my pledged word to love, cherish and protect you not enough, you little infidel?" said Edward gayly."

"It is my request that you draw up a pledge promising to abstain from all intoxicating drinks, and sign your name to it, and I will put mine to the same," said Little Wolf, in the same gay humor.

"Why, darling," said Edward, in surprise, "my promise was all you asked."

"O yes, your promise to sign a total abstinence pledge was all I did ask," said Little Wolf cheerily, "and now, all I ask is that you do as you agreed." [Pg 277]

"I did not understand it so," said Edward, "but never mind, darling; now listen to me. Would you, provided it were in your power, prevent my taking a harmless glass of beer in a warm summer day?"

"Well, Edward, of course I would not wish to prevent your indulging in any *harmless* enjoyment, but don't people sometimes get intoxicated on beer?"

"Only slightly elevated," said Edward laughingly.

"O, Edward!" broke forth Little Wolf in agony, "I wish you could see this thing as I do but you cannot."

There was silence for a few moments, which Edward broke by saying, sympathizingly, "I know why you feel as you do, darling, and I do not wonder at it, but warned by my own, as well as the experience of others, I shall keep a strict watch over myself for your dear sake, and I assure you there is no danger of me." [Pg 278]

"Then," said Little Wolf, despairingly, "I cannot persuade you to pledge yourself to total abstinence?"

"No," said Edward decidedly, his pride deeply wounded by her implied doubts of his inability to control his appetite, "if you feel that you cannot trust yourself with me after all I have said, I can say no more."

Had Edward fallen dead at her feet, Little Wolf could not have looked at him more hopelessly. But Edward was blind to her mute anguish, and mortified and impatient at her silence, and little dreaming of what her answer would be, he at length asked rather coolly, "Do you really feel that you cannot trust your happiness with me?"

Little Wolf struggled a moment for composure, and then bowed her head in the affirmative.

Edward's flushed face suddenly paled. "Very well," said he proudly, and without another word abruptly withdrew. His quick, impetuous footsteps echoed through the hall; the front door opened and closed, and soon the distant tinkling of bells announced that he had really gone. [Pg 279]

As the lovely violet closes its leaves when the shadows of night gather round, so closed the flower, which, in the sunshine of love, had bloomed in the heart of Little Wolf. She neither wept nor made any other demonstration of sorrow, but as she sat silent and alone her lips grew firm, and her eyes brightened and the pupils expanded, and her whole being seemed rising up in supernatural strength to bear the blow.



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CHAPTER XXV.



n his way home, Edward Sherman found himself suddenly assailed by a chorus of eager voices, as he unexpectedly encountered a sleighing party of gay young friends. They were bound for a settlement near by, where rural festivities were in anticipation.

As he reluctantly drew up alongside of the capacious establishment, where nearly a dozen ladies, (including his own sister), and about the same number of gentlemen were cozily stowed away, he was beset with urgent solicitations to join their company.

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The affair, they stated, had been gotten up on a short notice during his brief absence from the city, and his sister had been inveigled into it, with the expectation of meeting her brother, and particular friend Dr. Goodrich. But the doctor had given them the slip, and they could not, on any account dispense with his society. Louise joined her entreaties with the others. "I will ride with you, brother," she said, if you will only go."

"No, no;" objected the gentleman who sat next her, "I will propose a more fitting expedient. Let Mr. Sherman close his eyes and throw a soft snow ball into the crowd, and upon whomsoever the ball shall rest, let her be transferred to his sleigh."

The proposition at first occasioned quite a tumult, but finally all laughingly agreed to it. Into their midst quickly flew the lump of glittering snow and rested upon the belle of the party, Miss Clara Hastings, and Edward in triumph bore off the crested prize.

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Miss Hastings, we have said, was the belle of the party, nor was this all; she was one of the most popular young ladies in the city of Pendleton. Her father, Judge Hastings, a man of talent, and high standing, had bestowed every advantage upon his only child, and she, petted and caressed in society as well as in the family circle, handsome and dashing in appearance, with spirits unbroken, gave life and interest to every amusement in which she was engaged. The turn the affair had taken was therefore as much regretted by her friends, as it was gratifying to Edward, to have obtained so agreeable a companion.

The lady herself did not appear in the least disturbed by the change. On the contrary, as they started off in advance of the rest, her smiling face indicated the satisfaction which she felt at the result; for from the first of her acquaintance with Edward, she had conceived a decided partiality for him.

"It will be nice to get there and rest and warm before the others arrive," she said, as they rapidly outdistanced the other sleigh.

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"Yes, and have a little time all to ourselves," Edward replied, in pretty much the same style in which he would have addressed Little Wolf, had she been by his side.

Miss Hastings looked surprised and tossed her head proudly, freeing the plumes in her jaunty little cap of their snowy remains, and, as the soft particles showered upon Edward, and pelting his cheek, he turned and looking her full in the face said, "those little ice bolts, Miss Hastings, serve to remind me of what a lucky individual I have been this afternoon."

"Have you always been lucky, Mr. Sherman?" said Miss Hastings waiving the intended compliment.

A look of pain crossed Edward's face, but he answered quickly, almost defiantly, "Not always," and giving his horse a smart cut, he created such a jingling among the bells, that farther conversation was rendered impracticable,

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"The destination was soon reached, and, being joined by the remainder of the party, the evening hours charged with pleasure flew rapidly, to most of the assembled guests. But neither Edward, nor Miss Hastings were in their happiest mood, and the latter complaining of a headache Edward signified his willingness to conduct her home before the party broke up.

Again in the open air, her indisposition was relieved, and she chatted cheerily, and made herself so agreeable, that her companion really became quite interested, and, loth to part with her, as they drove up before her father's house, he proposed to prolong their ride.

"It is early yet," he said, "and your head is so much better in the open air, would you not like to drive out of the city again for half an hour?"

"O no, I thank you, Mr. Sherman," she said with a gratified smile, "the family are up waiting for me, and I would be happy to have you go in and see papa. He will treat you to a glass of superior domestic wine."

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Edward went in and drank the wine, and spent a pleasant half hour. Shortly after leaving he fell in with some friends, who invited him into another place where choice wines were kept, and he drank again and yet again, and finally went home quite exhilarated under the influence of stimulant. He found that his sister had arrived some time previously, and she and his mother, and the doctor were quietly seated around the center-table, and had been wondering at his non-arrival.

"Give an account of yourself, loiterer," said Louise, playfully, as he joined the circle.

"We had a fine time Lou, did we not?" said he patting her cheek.

"O, if by *we* you mean yourself and Miss Hastings I suppose you did have a good time, but I did not enjoy myself a bit."

"Not a bit, are you quite sure? I thought I saw you smile very benignly on a certain young getleman, who objected to your riding with me."

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"An optical dulusion, brother, entirely so, I would have much preferred to have gone with you."

"Now I'll kiss you for that," said Edward, suiting the action to the word.

"O Ned, what have you been drinking? Your breath smells of *something*."

"O, I went in and took a glass of domestic wine with Judge Hastings," said Edward carelessly.

Mrs. Sherman instantly took the alarm. "I am afraid," she said, that these domestic wines create an appetite for more hurtful drinks. Don't you think so, Edward?"

"Why no, mother. If every family kept a supply of pure domestic wine in the cellar, and were at liberty to drink when they pleased, there would, in my opinion, be much less drunkenness than there is at present. Plenty of pure wine would soon do away with the adulterated liquors so common in public places and social drinking would become much more harmless than it is at present. I would advise you, mother, to keep up a vigorous correspondence with Recta on the subject, about currant time next summer, for it is getting quite fashionable to manufacture your own wines."

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"Mark my words, Edward, the fashion will prove an injury to society; frequent indulgences in any drink that will intoxicate, it is well known, has always proved more or less fatal to the peace and prosperity of communities, as well as individuals. I can well remember the time when social drinking was practised in almost every family, and at all fashionable entertainments, and I well remember the consequences. The ruin it wrought cannot be told. It was wine in the cellar, and on the side board, Edward, as well as stronger drinks that did the mischief. Good men and brave, felt its effects and gave the alarm, and great efforts were made to put a stop to the evil, and thousands were reclaimed from drunkenness, but, of late years, the agitation has in a measure subsided, and the evil is again on the increase, insinuating itself into families in the form of domestic wines, which are generally supposed to be so harmless, but which are, in reality, the foundation of intemperance."

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"You cannot make people believe that mother."

"The time will come when they will be forced to believe it, my son; for the free use of domestic wines in families, is not going to keep husbands, brothers and friends from the lager beer saloons where the feet of the unwary become so easily entangled. On the contrary, past experience proves that the taste for stimulating drinks acquired at home rather has a tendency to lead men to frequent such places."

"But, mother, remember it is not the use of these things, but the abuse, that does the harm."

"True, my son, but the use in nine cases out of ten, leads to the abuse, and it is strange that mothers and sisters will imperil their happiness for fashion's sake. I would rather that Judge Hastings had offered you an adder in the cup, than the drink which he did; for had you seen the poisonous reptile, you would have turned from it, but, hidden in the enticing wine, the serpent's sting fastens itself upon the vitals and its victim knows it not."

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O, mother, you are perfectly beside yourself on the subject. Judge Hastings is a man who, I make no doubt, has drank moderately all his life; and who among us is more vigorous in mind and body? It is all nonsense, the idea that a man must necessarily become a drunkard, because he occasionally indulges in stimulants."

"Ma, ma," broke in Louise, who saw that her mother felt hurt, "you might as well hand Edward over to the persuasion of Miss DeWolf. If anybody can convert him she can. The doctor says she becomes more beautiful and interesting every day. What do you think, Ned? The doctor was there this afternoon while we were out sleigh riding; he confesses it himself."

"I must bid you good night," said Edward abruptly, and, quite to the surprise of the trio he withdrew without another word.

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His mother suspecting something wrong, followed him to his room, and with true motherly solicitude sought out the cause. "Edward," said she, "when you were a boy, you used to confide all your annoyances to your mother. Can it be that anything has been said this evening to wound your feelings?"

"There are none that love like a mother," said Edward, putting his arm tenderly around her neck, "and there is none in whom I can so safely confide as in you, mother, but manhood's griefs are not so easily soothed as boyhood's. It is not now a broken kite to mend, or a bruised finger to bind up, would it were; would that I had not lived to see this day."

"Why, Edward, what do you mean?"

"I mean, mother, that Miss DeWolf has refused to become my wife, and all because I would not consent to pledge myself to total abstinence from all liquors. I would not deceive her and bind

myself to pursue a different course from that which I intend. My habits, I believe, are generally considered good, and if a woman cannot take me as I am, I would not ask her to take me at all." [Pg 291]

"O Edward, Edward," said Mrs. Sherman beseechingly, "do not let wounded pride, and self-will, come between you and the woman you really love, for I do assure you, young ladies like Miss DeWolf are very rare."

"Were she a thousand times more lovely and interesting, beloved more she could not be, but, mother, I shall never yield the point, and admit that I am incapable of controlling my appetite. When it suits me to take a social glass with a friend, I shall do it; and when I choose to decline it shall be of my own free will."

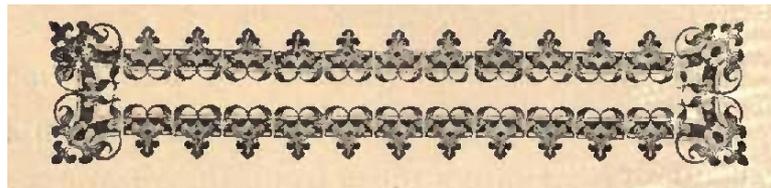
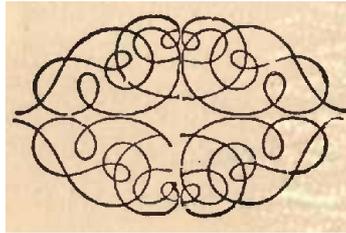
"You are a free agent, certainly, Edward, you may pursue the course you have marked out for yourself, and go through life a moderate drinker, and young men may point to you as you have to Judge Hastings, and make your escape an excuse for venturing in the same dangerous path, and thus go down to a drunkard's grave; or you may yourself venture to near the precipice, and before you are aware take the fatal plunge; for drunkenness, like death, generally takes the victim unawares. In either case your influence must inevitably act upon those with whom you associate, and you cannot escape the fearful responsibility. Then judgment day alone will open the records of those who have been forever ruined through the influence of moderate drinkers, as well as the confirmed drunkard. The preponderating influence, however, lies with the moderate drinker; with such men as Judge Hastings; who, perhaps, have given the subject but little thought, and who having through a long course of years tampered without apparent injury, with the intoxicating cup, deem that others may do as he has done." [Pg 292]

"Yes, and so they may, mother, if they choose. Every man must answer for his own crimes and not for the crimes of others."

"True Edward, and if your neighbor become a drunkard, see to it that the sin lies not at your door." [Pg 293]

Edward made a gesture of impatience. "Mother" he said bitterly, "I am not in a mood to hear much more to-night. I am sorry that we do not think alike, but, as we never shall, perhaps the less said about it the better."

Mrs. Sherman silently kissed her son, and, with a foreboding heart, withdrew to her own room.



CHAPTER XXVI.

LETTER WRITING—DADDY'S NOCTURNAL LABORS AND EARLY WALK.



here were two letters written by lamp light in the old brown house, the day Edward left so unceremoniously. One was by Little Wolf to her confidential friend, Mrs. Tinknor. A few hasty hopeless lines traced upon the dainty sheet; a long glossy curl folded within and her task was done.

The other, Daddy addressed to the sweetheart of his youth, Miss Orrecta Lippincott. He had for some time meditated opening a correspondence with the object of his early affections on the subject of matrimony, but the magnitude of the undertaking had hitherto deterred him; and, at last, he was only brought to the point by the encouragement of his young mistress. [Pg 295]

He had resorted to his regularly organized plan of loitering in her room under pretext of mending the fire, while he marked with admiration the easy movements of her pen.

"Tween you and me, Honey," said he, when she had finished, "I wish I could write like that. I've been wanting fur to write a letter fur sometime."

Little Wolf, without the remotest idea of what the subject of the letter in contemplation was to be, said kindly, "Well, Daddy, you may sit right down here if you like, and use my pen and ink."

Daddy shuffled along hesitatingly towards the vacant seat. "'Tween you and me I'm afeared I shall make a very sorry job on it," said he, "I ain't writ none to speak on this forty year."

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"Shall I write it for you Daddy?"

"O no, Honey. I'll try myself, fust anyhow."

"O well, I'll go down to the parlor and you shall have the room all to yourself."

"I couldn't stand it no-how fur ter hev the Honey laugh at the old man's foolishness," muttered Daddy to himself, as Little Wolf slipped away, glad to be relieved of all responsibility in the matter, and feeling less perhaps like laughing at the old man's eccentricities than ever before in her life; and, indeed, it was a long time afterwards before she felt like laughing at all.

In the hall leading to the parlor, she met Sorrel Top, who blushing begged a private interview, which Little Wolf was too obliging to deny, although she panted to indulge her thoughts alone.

The interview, however, did not detain her long. Sorrel Top had under consideration an offer of marriage and wished to ask advice which Little Wolf gave without a smile, or change of countenance.

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"Well, Sorrel Top, if he is as you say a man of good habits, and loves you and you love him, I see no objection to your getting married as soon as you like."

While Sorrel Top's affair was being thus satisfactorily disposed of, Daddy was anxiously bending over the sheet, upon which he could not get courage to make the first mark. There he sat silent and anxious, looking vacantly first at the ceiling, then at the pen which stood exactly perpendicular between his clumsy fingers. At length in despair he arose and began to walk the floor, and then for the first time he observed Fanny Green quietly playing with her pet kitten.

"Fanny," said he, "do you know how to write?"

"O yes, Daddy, a little; mamma taught me to make all the letters."

"Well, Fanny," said he coaxingly, "come here and make a D for me; won't you? "'Tween you and me I've forgot which side the plaguey quirl goes. Here take this ere piece of paper, you might spile the sheet, and I'm mighty particular about hev'in it in prime order."

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As she took the pen Fanny suddenly began to distrust her memory. "Maybe I've forgot myself, Daddy;" rolling up her blue eyes to the anxious face bending over her. But she succeeded admirably in performing her task, which Daddy duly approved, by declaring that the quirl was almost equal to the Honey's quirls. His effort to copy it was also a success.

"See here, Fanny," said he pausing again, "you spell dear, d-e-r-e, don't you?"

"O no, Daddy, I spell it d-e-e-r. It's spelled so right under the picture of one in my book."

"'Tween you an' me, I don't mean that ere kind of a dear, Fanny, I guess it's d-e-r-e, I mean. Howsoever, I'll spell it so and risk it. Now, Fanny," said he, again dipping his pen in the ink, "you stand right here, fur there may be more letters that I've forgot how tu make, and if you'll show me, and help me fur to spell a letter, I'll mend your sled for you to-morrow."

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Thus encouraged, the child, with visions of coasting in her pretty little head, combined wisdom with Daddy's, who also had his visions, while he wrote as follows:

DERE ORRECTA.

"Mi hart has allers ben yourn, it is old now, but it ain't dride up nun. will yu marry me now iv got tu be a poor old man. if yu wil i wil cum fur yu on the fust bote. iv got a leetle muny lade up fur a wet day. i hev allers ben stidy, and never drunk anything in my hull life. if yu wil hev me let me no as quick as lightnin figerative speekin.

your old flame,

philip Roarer

Chimney Rock.

Minnesota territory."

"'Tween you an' me I reckon that ere is tu the pint, anyhow," said Daddy, proudly folding the letter, upon which he had spent two hours of hard mental labor. "I wonder what keeps the honey away so long; it must be monstrous cold in the parlor. Tom Tinknor wont thank me fur lettin the Honey git cold; bless her heart. That ere sled will git fixed to-morrow, you may depend on't, Fanny, fur I shall feel fust rate;" and Daddy capered out of the room as jolly as a half grown boy, with a plum pudding in anticipation. But, we will do him the justice to say, that there was a depth and earnestness of feeling in this life-long devotion, to which the ebullitions of youth can bear no comparison.

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How to break the matter to Little Wolf was Daddy's next anxiety. He stood in mortal dread of the ridicule of his young mistress, but still felt that he ought to confide in her. After taking several

figdety turns before the parlor door, he finally resolved to make the *denouement*, and boldly face the consequences.

But the condition in which he found Little Wolf changed the course which he had marked out. She had lain down upon the sofa where fearfully pale and cold and still, she rested, utterly prostrated by the events of the day. Daddy had never seen such a ghastly look upon her face before, and the vague fear that life had fled horrified him, as he stood gazing at her in mute astonishment. [Pg 301]

At a movement of the slight little figure Daddy was reassured, and he bent over her in tender solicitude, "O Honey, O Pet, be you sick? you look awful pale?"

A groan escaped Little Wolf, and, with a long drawn sigh, she rose up languidly. "I don't feel quite well to-night, Daddy," she said.

"O, Honey, you ought fur to have somebody to nuss you; old Daddy don't know nothin about gals, and Sorrel Top don't know nothin about nussin neither. Now here's the letter I've jest writ, if you feel able fur to read it, Honey, you will see that I am tryin fur to git somebody here fur to take care of you suitable."

Daddy watched closely the effect upon Little Wolf, while she purused the letter, and as he discovered no symptoms of ridicule, he fairly worshipped her for her forbearance. "Honey," said he, "what du you think on it?" [Pg 302]

"I don't know," replied Little Wolf absently, "I think on the whole it will do very well."

Daddy's face fairly shone. "I know'd you would agree tu it," said he, "you allers had uncommon penetration."

Little Wolf sat shivering and silent, while Daddy pronounced his eulogy, and the old man began again to be alarmed. "O Honey," he broke forth, "what makes you so sick? the doctor said you was doin fust rate this afternoon. I guess I'd better go fur to fetch him right off."

"O no, Daddy, I'm only chilled; you may light me to my room."

"Sartin I will, Honey, and I'll keep a fire fur you all night, fur I shouldn't sleep a wink nohow."

True to his word, Daddy diligently tended the fire, creating in Little Wolf's apartment a general disturbance by his nocturnal labors. Had she been so inclined, sleep would have been impossible, while Daddy's enthusiasm raged, for a series of disasters attended his most careful efforts. The bedroom door creaked, the stove door grated on its hinges, the shovel and tongs would rattle, and there was sure to be an occasional downfall of wood, which echoed through the lonely house like the voice of seven thunders. [Pg 303]

It was therefore quite a relief to Little Wolf when the grey morning hours began to dawn and Daddy consented to seek a little repose, with the promise that he should not be allowed to over-sleep, "fur," said he, "I must start airly fur to post them are letters, and you won't mind a calling of me, Honey, bein you had such a oncommon night's rest, fur I took particular pains not to disturb you."

Little Wolf did not think it worth while to mention that she had lain awake the entire night, for there was then no counting upon the effect such a communication might have upon Daddy's already over-wrought sensibilities. As it was, he left her, flattering himself that he had greatly contributed to her health and comfort, and, with an approving conscience, laid him down and slept. [Pg 304]

At the appointed time he was awakened by Fanny, and rubbing open his eyes, he asked, "Is the Honey up yet?"

"O yes, Daddy and we've all had breakfast, and I've got my sled all ready for you to mend," said Fanny cheerfully.

"Why yes, Fanny, I know I promised fur tu mend it; but, 'tween you and me, I've got fur to go to Pendleton first." Howsoever, I'll fix it afore night."

Fanny looked rather grave.

"'Tween you an' me, I'm sorry fur tu disappoint you, Fanny, but the Honey would be wuss disappointed if I did not post her letter."

"Yours too, Daddy, you musn't forget it," said Fanny thoughtfully.

Notwithstanding Fanny's exhortation Daddy actually forgot both letters, having neglected to take them from his pocket when he changed his coat, Imagine then his consternation, when, having arrived at the post-office and rummaged his pockets in vain he discovered his mistake. [Pg 305]

At this critical juncture young Sherman and Dr. Goodrich, arm in arm, happened to drop in at the office, and Daddy, for reasons of his own, pounced upon the latter and held him fast. "Doctor," said he, "'tween you an' me, was you a going fur tu see the Honey to-day? She was took very poorly last night. I was afeared she was clean gone one spell."

"Did Miss DeWolf send for me, Daddy?" said the doctor uneasily regarding the grip that the old man had fastened upon his coat sleeve.

"Why no, doctor; she sent me fur to mail some important letters, and I actually left 'em at home in my tother coat. One of 'em was fur to go tu Miss Tinknor; 'tween you an me the Honey is mighty fond of Miss Tinknor. I'm kinder calculatin the old lady will be the Honey's mother-in-law some day."

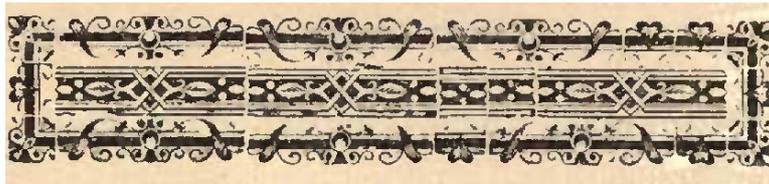
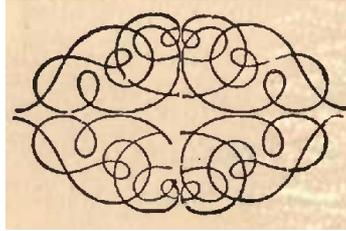
[Pg 306]

The start which Edward gave at this announcement was perceptible to both Daddy and the doctor. The former, not relishing such a demonstration of interest from so questionable a source, inwardly resolved to put to flight the false hopes by which he imagined the young man was agitated. Casting a side long glance at his intended victim he added, "Mr. Tom is a very uncommon fine young man; he is stidy; he never drinks nothin. The Honey has know'd him allers; they played together when they was children and has allers been uncommon attached. Tom particularly requested me fur tu take good care of her while he was gone, and I ain't no doubt if the good Lord was fur tu take her away it would nigh about break his heart."

The doctor, conscious that Edward did not relish the subject, and anxious himself to terminate the interview, waved the matter, simply saying, "I shall be going that way by-and-by, Daddy, and will call upon Miss DeWolf if I have time."

On this assurance Daddy's grasp readily relaxed, and his prisoner, taking advantage of this favorable symptom, made his escape.

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CHAPTER XXVII.

DOING AND GETTING GOOD—WYCOFF'S REFORM.



he day was mild and spring-like, and Daddy had not been long gone, when the snow began to yield to the soft touches of the sun's bright rays.

Fanny stood by the window and sighed, and wished audibly that the sun would "put on a veil."

The wish and manner so entirely foreign to the child's naturally cheerful and contented disposition attracted Little Wolf's attention.

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"Why Fanny, do you complain of this lovely day?" she said, in surprise.

"O no, Miss DeWolf, but I was afraid the snow would all melt away before my sled was mended, and I love so much to be out of doors coasting."

"How would you like to take a walk with me?" said Little Wolf, willing to amuse the child, for whom she had already conceived a warm affection.

"O I would like it ever so much," said Fanny, joyfully.

"Now where shall we go, Fanny?" said Little Wolf, as they started out.

"Why, I don't know," said Fanny hesitatingly; "when mamma used to take me out, she said we must go somewhere where we could do good. Sometimes we went over to old Mrs. Peters'; she is sick all the time, and has no one to help her except her grandson, Charley. Mamma used to make her bed, and read the bible and pray with her, and comfort her all she could. Poor mamma often wished she could carry her something nice to eat, but we hadn't hardly anything to eat ourselves. May be you wouldn't like to go there, though?" said Fanny, doubtfully.

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Little Wolf hesitated.

"She used to know your mamma," said Fanny, "and she said that Mrs. DeWolf was one of the kindest friends she ever had."

"We will go there, Fanny," said Little Wolf decidedly

Their way lay over the very hill where occurred their disastrous collision with Mr. Wycoff; about

half a mile from the foot of which, on a cross road, lived Mrs. Peters. Fanny ran joyously on before, occasionally turning back to call Little Wolf's attention to a squirrel, or a bird, never dreaming that her companion was less interested than herself. In this way they reached the top of the hill, and began the descent, when suddenly Fanny began to look grave and loiter beside Little Wolf. At length she spoke in a subdued whisper, "There lies poor Fleet Foot, Miss DeWolf; he will never breathe again."

Little Wolf sank upon a rock by the wayside, and hid her face in her hands. She thought and said aloud, "O, why was I spared to be so wretched?" [Pg 311]

Fanny burst into a flood of tears. "What would have become of me if you had been killed?" she sobbed.

Surprised at this demonstration of affection, Little Wolf looked up and drew Fanny towards her. The child's words, she knew not why, had consoled and strengthened her. "Fanny," said she, "everybody must have something to live for, and I have you"

"O yes, mamma used to say we must all live to do good," said Fanny, brightening.

Little Wolf rose and struggled bravely to choke down her rising feelings, for just then she was comparing the bright voyage of life, which she had so lately pictured for herself, with the dark and stormy reality. At that moment, when she would have scorned to indulge in pusillanimous grief, her noble spirit recognized and bowed in willing obedience to the sublime principle involved in Fanny's life-inspiring words. [Pg 312]

"Well, Fanny," she replied, "if I do live, I hope it will not be in vain. I'm afraid I've been very wicked and selfish all my life."

"O, Miss DeWolf I'm sure you are the *bestest, precious*est woman next to my mother, that I ever saw in all my life."

Fanny made this declaration with the air and assurance of one whose years had embraced a century; but at that moment, an object met her eye, which reminded her that she was but a helpless child. "O, there is Mr. Wycoff!" she exclaimed suddenly, as the rough farmer was seen coming up the hill.

Fanny trembled violently, for she feared this man. But Little Wolf, constitutionally brave, in her present state of mind feared nothing, composedly seated herself again upon the rock.

The farmer advanced slowly, and recognized Little Wolf with a bow, and reassured Fanny with a cordial "How are you, Fanny?" Then, as he observed traces of tears on Fanny's cheek, and Little Wolf's sad look and mourning dress, he stopped short. "Now Miss DeWolf," said he, bluntly, "I may as well say it first as last, I did not mean to run over you that day, but I had been drinking, and did not know what I was about. Whatever you say is right, I will pay you, for I have felt mean about it ever since; 'specially as you haven't made any fuss about it." [Pg 313]

Little Wolf appeared noble indeed, as she feelingly replied, "Mr. Wycoff, I would cheerfully make the same sacrifice again, if by that means I could persuade you never to taste another drop of intoxicating drink."

"O, I cannot agree to that," said Wycoff, "but I shall do the fair thing by you, for you have acted like a lady."

Then Little Wolf, with a sudden impulse, arose and stepped forward, and began to plead earnestly and eloquently with the man to give up the use of the intoxicating cup. Nor did she plead in vain. The strong man at length yielded to her persuasions; persuasions around which hung the fragrance of the bruised heart, from which they emanated; touching, irresistible. [Pg 314]

Inspirational hours are often the fruit of anguish unutterable. The suffering soul begins unconsciously to feel upward, and, at the propitious moment, heaven appoints its work. Thus Little Wolf received her mission, which, with characteristic energy she delayed not to fulfil.

His word having been pledged to total abstinence, Wycoff turned back towards home.

"I was only going to the brewery to meet a few friends," he said, "and if I don't drink with them I may as well keep away."

He walked along with Little Wolf and Fanny as far as the cross road, and when they parted, again renewed his vow right heartily. "Never fear, Miss DeWolf," he said, "I shall never taste another drop of liquor, so help me Almighty God."

"There, now we are *certain*, ain't we, Miss DeWolf? for he asked God to help him. O, I'm so glad, I'm so glad you have lived to do good," said Fanny, as the farmer passed on. [Pg 315]

Fanny was exuberant. Her little heart overflowed, and, at intervals during the remainder of their walk, "I'm so glad, I'm so glad," rang out on the still air in sweet, childish accents, mingling with the songs of spring birds, and echoing through the lonely woods.

Arrived at the cottage, they met a warm welcome from Mrs. Peters. For many years, widowed and bed ridden, she had lingered in pain and poverty. Her grandson Charley, a bright, active youth, orphaned at an early age, had, since the death of his mother, been her constant companion and faithful nurse.

He was her pride and her delight, and she in turn shared his warmest affections. It was beautiful indeed to see the noble-hearted boy yielding all his young strength in providing for her wants. His small earnings at wood cutting, combined with the charity of a few kind hearted neighbors, had during the winter, kept them from absolute want. No wonder, then, that the ambitious youth, anxious to escape the pinches of poverty, was eager to accept a situation in Hank Glutter's saloon, that morning liberally offered by the proprietor in person. No wonder that, grieved and disheartened by the opposition of his grandmother, he met Little Wolf and Fanny, (who had interrupted their discussion of the matter), with a downcast countenance.

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Conscious that his manner had been observed, the old lady hastened to apologize, "My Charley is feeling quite badly just now," she said. "Mr. Glutter called here this morning on the way to one of our neighbors, and offered him a clerkship. He will call soon for his answer, and I was just telling Charley that I was unwilling to have him go where he would be exposed to so many temptations."

"Grandmother needs the money," said Charley, "and it is for her sake I want to go. She needn't be afraid of my getting bad habits."

"Well, Charley, we will talk about it again bye and bye," said the old lady, soothingly.

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"But there's Mr. Glutter, now, grandma," said the boy springing to the door, "do let me tell him that I will go, *do* grandma," he begged with painful earnestness.

"Do as your grandma think's best, and you will not be sorry," said Little Wolf in an undertone as Hank approached the door.

"Well, my man," said Hank with great assurance.

"I must do as grandma says," and Charley threw the door wide open.

At sight of Mrs. Peters' visitors, Hank gave a start of surprise, but quickly recovering himself, he bestowed upon each a gentlemanly greeting, and without futher ceremony, plunged into the business upon which he had come.

"Well, Mrs. Peters, have you decided to accept my offer?"

"You are very kind and generous, Mr. Glutter, and I thank you," said the old lady, anxious to soften her refusal; but too honest to give any except the true reason, she continued, "the truth is, I do not like to have Charley go where the influence will be so unfavorable to his becoming a good, sober man."

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Had she studied to make it so, Mrs. Peters' guileless reply could not have been more inflammatory to Hank's temper, for, like others of his class, he was peculiarly sensitive to any reflection cast upon his business. His eyes flashed, and his lip curled scornfully, but having in mind Little Wolf's presence, he responded smoothly enough, "Very well, Mrs. Peters. Good morning; good morning, ladies," and bowed himself out of the room.

Mrs. Peters drew a sigh of relief, but poor Charley, after struggling a moment for composure, left the apartment with quivering lip, and Little Wolf soon caught a view of him through the window, wiping his eyes with his coat sleeve.

"Poor dear Charley," said his grandmother, "it comes hard on him now, but, God willing, I hope he will live to thank me for it."

Little Wolf rose hastily. "I must go out and have a little talk with Charley," she said.

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"She is just like her father," said Mrs. Peters, as Little Wolf flitted from the room, "when he first came to Chimney Rock he was a princely looking man.

"O, she is the beautifulest lady I ever saw," was Fanny's enthusiastic rejoinder.

"I have understood that she is very gay and fashionable since she came from boarding school."

Fanny was at first rather doubtful as to what construction to put upon the reports which had reached the ears of the old lady, and she hesitated to endorse anything of the nature of which she was not quite clear; but she finally compromised the matter by saying, "if it is very good to be gay and fashionable, then she is, for she is nothing else but good."

"Well, if she is only a humble, devoted Christian like her mother, I shall be satisfied," sighed Mrs. Peters.

Fanny had by this time come to the conclusion that gay and fashionable was only another name for superior goodness, and she answered accordingly. "Why, Mrs. Peters, she is really a very gay, humble, fashionable, devoted Christian. She is gooder than her mother, for she never took me away from bad people as she did."

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Not deeming it worth while to enter into any troublesome explanations, Mrs. Peters determined to suit her language to the child's comprehension, said simply, "Well, I hope she loves God, and will teach you to love him too."

"O, she does love God, Mrs. Peters. I heard her speak to him ever so many times last night, and I was teached to love him before she had me," said Fanny very seriously.

At this instant the object of their conversation made her appearance followed by Charley, whose

countenance exhibited quite a different aspect from that which it had worn a short time previously.

Little Wolf had successfully held the cup of consolation to him in the form of a present and a promise, and she was now about to take her leave, but Mrs. Peters detained her. Never came one into her presence that she allowed to depart without first satisfying herself as to whether, as she expressed it, they had "got religion."

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Now, it was her belief that pure and undefiled religion before God is this: "To visit the widow and fatherless in their affliction, and to keep ourselves unspotted from the world." An intimate acquaintance with the book in which these sentiments are to be found, had quickened her perceptions as to their true meaning, and, as by that standard she gave judgment, it was not easy to deceive her.

Highly as Little Wolf had risen in her esteem, and highly as Fanny had eulogized the piety of her young benefactress, there yet remained a doubt in the old lady's mind as to the entire soundness of her religious principles. A straightforward question while she still held Little Wolf's hand in her parting grasp, "Dear child, I know you visit the widow and fatherless in their affliction, but do you keep yourself unspotted from the world?"

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The innocent rejoinder, "I do not quite know what that means, 'to keep yourself unspotted from the world,'" resolved her doubts.

"Well, dear child, read your Bible carefully and you will find out all about it," exhorted Mrs. Peters, "I might give you my opinion, but it is better to get your ideas fresh from the fountain head. You will find that those spotless robes hang very high, but not beyond the reach of the arms of faith."

Our heroine went away deeply pondering the words of her newly found friend.



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CHAPTER XXVIII.

DADDY'S SOLILOQUY—A BEER-SOAKER—A KNOCK DOWN ARGUMENT—A PRESENT FOR LITTLE WOLF.



I guess that ere Sherman won't be a hanging round the Honey no great deal after this; if he does I'll put another flea in his ear fur I ain't a going fur tu see her throwd away on no beer-soaker."

Thus soliloquized Daddy, as he watched with evident satisfaction, the hurried departure of the young gentleman, whom, when we last left him he had just released from his inevitable trap.

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A horrible oath sounded in Daddy's ear, and he lay sprawling on the pavement. "Call me a beer-soaker again will you," and out rolled another oath, but Daddy did not hear it. The fall had stunned him, and he was taken up insensible.

Absorbed in the subject which was agitating his mind at the time he received the blow Daddy had raised his voice to a high pitch, and, "beer-soaker," rang out loud and clear, reaching the ear of a passer-by, who, being pretty well soaked in the beverage mentioned, or in something stronger, resented the imagined insult after the manner described.

Proud of his achievement, which he had just sense enough to see was not generally approved by the crowd that had gathered round, Daddy's assailant proceeded defiantly to defend his cruel deed. "He'd better never say beer-soaker to me again, the cursed scoundrel, nor look it either, curse him. Let any man in this crowd say that he didn't deserve what he got, and I'll—"

"You'll come right along with me, my friend," and the foolish boaster was marched off by the city authorities, whom from past experience, he well knew it was useless to resist.

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This same man, now led away amid the exertions of Daddy's friends, had gone out from his humble home that beautiful sunny morning with the solemn promise on his lips to keep sober for that one day at least. His hopeful long-suffering wife had watched lovingly his receding footsteps, as in days, when a fond husband and father, he always returned sober. All day long she went trustingly about her work with kind glad words to her little children, whose pleased surprise to receive, as of old, their father's fond caress, she delighted to imagine.

But alas! it was the old story. The man's will was too weak to withstand the persuasions of drinking companions, and the temptations of the liquor seller. He yielded, and, when once he had got the taste, wife and children and all were forgotten. At a late hour that night the little ones were put sadly away to bed; the supper table, spread in joy, was cleared away in sorrow, and the wife and mother was again doomed to wait, and watch, and weep.

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But let us return to Daddy. Stretched on a couch of suffering he lies; impatient, vociferous and generally unmanageable.

"Hurry up that ere doctor afore I die," he exclaims; "hurry him up I say. Lord, that ere pain in my shoulder; now its in my long ribs; now its in my short ribs; I ken feel it clare down to my heel cord and toe cord. Take away that ere infernal brandy," he cried, raising his voice to its highest pitch, "ye don't spose I want fur to drink pison, do ye, when I'm most dead already?"

"But it will strengthen you, Daddy," said the attendant soothingly.

"It won't nuther. It will set me all on fire and I'll mortify afore the doctor gits here."

When Dr. Goodrich at length made his appearance, there was then enacted a scene, if possible, still more uproarious. Poor Daddy winced and groaned at every touch, and oftimes, commanded his physician to desist in his examinations of the injured parts. "Don't! Hold on there doctor, you'll yank me all to bits. There; stop that yanking; for the lord's sake, doctor, hold on there."

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"I am holding on, Daddy," said the doctor very firmly, as he mended the dislocated shoulder.

The necessary surgical operation performed, and an opiate administered, with the assurance that no serious results were to be apprehended, and Daddy's mind and body were soon at rest.

Meantime, in happy ignorance of Daddy's accident, Little Wolf and Fanny plodded homeward; the former deeply absorbed in thought, the latter blithe and airy, singing with the birds, and tripping and slipping in the dissolving snow.

The exuberance of Fanny's delight, however, began perceptibly to wane as they were about repassing the spot, where, a few hours before, they had paused to mourn and lament. Again she loitered by her companion's side, again she sighed, "Poor Fleet Foot;" but not again did Little Wolf yield to her feelings. Her tearless eyes looked straight forward, and she hurried by the frightful gorge, where lay the remains of her high-mettled and much loved pet.

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On the brow of the hill she paused in surprise, for again she saw Wycoff with his face turned towards the brewery. On the present occasion he was mounted upon his favorite horse Black Hawk, and, having overtaken Hank Glutter, the two men were engaged in a conversation which we will here transcribe.

"How are you, Wycoff? Bound for the brewery this fine day?"

"Why no, Mr. Glutter, I have about made up my mind that you have got your share of my hard earnings this year, I guess I'll pay up my debts and keep clear of the brewery, and see how I'll come out about this time next spring."

"Why, I thought you were doing well enough, Wycoff," said Hank, uneasily.

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"I'm sure your bill at the brewery is not large, considering."

"O, I don't complain of the charges, Mr. Glutter. As Miss DeWolf says, money is not the only thing you part with at a drinking saloon."

"O, you're being nosed about by Miss DeWolf, are you," said Hank contemptuously.

"I had as leif be nosed by a fine lady, as by a saloon keeper," said Wycoff, drawing himself up in his saddle.

"D—m the fine lady," said Hank between his closed teeth, "I'll attend to her case."

"Shame on the man that will threaten a lady," said Wycoff hotly.

"When women stoop to interfere with men's business, they must take the consequences, Wycoff. Shall I tell you what was done to a woman who went whining around trying to raise a prejudice against a respectable liquor dealer in the place where I once lived? One dark night her house was pretty well pelted with stones and brickbats. The windows and doors were broken in, and I do not know what the enraged crowd would have done had she not made good her escape."

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"A low cowardly set, to attack a defenceless woman," said Wycoff, "but I've drank enough myself to know that under the influence of liquor, men will do almighty mean things. Every time I've passed the place where Fleet Foot lays, I have tried to make up my mind to give up drinking, and pay Miss De Wolf for the horse, like a man; and to-day I've come to the sticking point; I have promised to give up liquor, and in a few minutes I shall present Black Hawk to Miss DeWolf."

"Well, she had better mind her own business after this," said Hank with a sneer. "She has cheated me out of getting a first-rate clerk this morning. I will not brook her interference in my affairs. Let her beware, or I'll make this place too hot for her."

Wycoff's eyes flashed, and he extended his clenched fist towards Hank. "You will, will you?" said he defiantly; "now listen, you Glutter. If ever you attempt to harm that lady, I swear to you that

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this fist of mine shall batter your brains, and on Black Hawk she shall ride over your lifeless body."

Black Hawk pawed and snorted and turned his firey black eyes very wickedly upon Hank, as if to enforce his master's threat. He was a most magnificent animal; coal black, his silken coat, now curried with special care, shone resplendent in the noon-day sun.

As Wycoff rode off, Hank muttered to himself, "She shall never ride that horse."

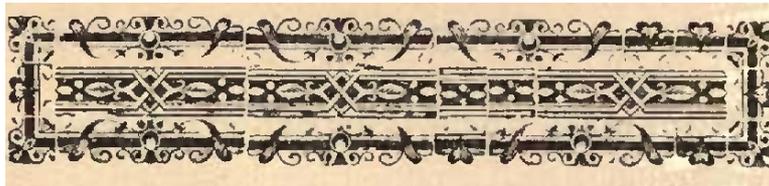
Half an hour later, Hank had the mortification of beholding Little Wolf flying past his door seated, like a little queen, upon Black Hawk's back.

"She shall never ride that horse again," said the enraged saloon keeper, with an oath.

Wycoff had great difficulty in persuading Little Wolf to except his present. Indeed she only consented when she became convinced that he would be seriously displeased by her refusal. Further to gratify the giver, she took her first ride under his immediate supervision; and, at his request, she had followed the road by the brewery, making a circle of about a quarter of a mile.

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"Now that's what I call neatly done," said Wycoff, as Little Wolf drew up, and leaped from the saddle. "You are the first lady that ever backed Black Hawk," he said, patting the animal's neck. "The fact is, I had my doubts about your being able to ride him at all. I was afraid I would have to sell him and get a gentler beast, and I hated to do that, for I have raised him from a colt. As a general thing, he won't allow a stranger to come nigh him. I had to ride him myself at the races last September, for everybody was afraid of him. I won five hundred dollars on him though. I guess I had better stable him now; hadn't I? I'll be up here early to-morrow morning to see how Daddy gets along with him. I reckon the old man won't dare to go nigh him till he gets used to him."



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CHAPTER XXIX.

A CHAPTER OF ACCIDENTS AND DELIVERANCES.



Little Wolf was glad to see Black Hawk led away, for she was now thoroughly weary. The events of the last twenty-four hours had worn upon her; and the cozy fire and warm dinner, which awaited her within, were duly appreciated.

An hour later, nestled upon the parlor sofa she was burried in profound slumber. Fanny moved softly about the room, tiptoeing occasionally to the window to watch for Daddy.

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Towards night he was brought home on a stretcher, comfortably arranged in a large sleigh, Dr. Goodrich accompanying him. The first intimation that Little Wolf had of their arrival was a loud ring at the door, which suddenly roused her from dreams, in which she was living over again the happiest moments of her life.

It was some little time before she could collect her scattered thoughts; but Daddy's roarings and vociferations at length brought her to a realizing sense of her responsibilities.

Although assured by his physician that his hurts would in a few weeks at furthest all be healed, the old man was not content. He had a lurking infidelity in regard to the opinions of the medical profession generally, and, as soon as Dr. Goodrich had departed, he confided to Little Wolf his fears.

"'Tween you and me, Honey," said he, "them ere doctors hev been knowd to tell a pussen that he was a goin fur tu git well, and just as that pussen had made all his calculations fur tu live, (and may be git married), the fust thing he knew, he would be a dead man. Now 'tween you and me, its my opinion, I shan't live twenty-four hours, fur I feel awful gone like."

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"O, its the opiate that makes you feel so, Daddy. I shall nurse you up and you'll get well and marry, what's her name?"

"Recta," said Daddy brightening. "Recta, Miss Orrecta Lippincott. May be, Honey, with good nussing I shall make out fur tu stand it. 'Tween you and me, there's nuthin like good nussin, after the bones is all set proper."

His wise young nurse did not think it worth while to remind the invalid that not one of his bones had been broken, but she assiduously set herself to work to meet his accumulating wants. With liniments and bandages, and cooling drinks, and consoling words, she stood patiently over him,

until near the midnight hour, he fell asleep.

Shading the lamp, so that scarcely a ray of light was visible, Little Wolf curled in behind the window curtain, where she could peep through the crevices of the blinds out on the distant stars and ever shifting clouds, which in the solitude of the night, speak so eloquently to the human heart.

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Calm and cold was the still hour. The warm, thawing winds had ceased to blow, the eaves had ceased their droppings and were beautifully fringed with icicles. The snow had become crusted over, but so slightly, indeed, that the lightest footfall would crush the treacherous coating, and the cracking of the icy fragments betray the presence of prowlers.

By such sounds as we have described, Little Wolf's meditations were at length disturbed. Indistinctly at first, but soon with unmistakable clearness, she recognized approaching footsteps.

Daddy's room overlooked the stable, and in that quarter, a human figure was just visible. Slowly and stealthily it drew near; and now with dilated eyes and quickly beating heart, the watcher peered eagerly into the darkness. Nearer, and still nearer the form approached, until close against the house, just where she could conveniently note every motion, it paused. A moment of suspense, and a small flame shot up revealing Hank Glutter in the act of firing the house.

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Quick as thought Little Wolf sprang for her pistol, which to gratify Daddy she had stored in his room; and hiding it in the folds of her dress she flew to meet the incendiary.

During the few seconds consumed in reaching the spot, Hank had disappeared, and having strong suspicions that he meditated mischief to Black Hawk, Little Wolf scattered the pile of slowly burning faggots, (the fire not having yet communicated itself to the building), and made a dash for the stable.

Hank was there just in the act of lighting a match. He had completely surrounded Black Hawk with hay and straw, and, in an instant more, the helpless animal would have been enveloped in flames.

"Mr. Glutter, the brewery is on fire!" shouted Little Wolf breathlessly.

The match fell from Hank's nerveless hand, for he saw through the wide open door that the announcement was but too true. To spring past Little Wolf and rush to secure his property, was his first thought.

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But he was too late. Neither he, nor all the crowd that quickly gathered there, could stay the consuming element. The old brewery burned to the ground, and, for miles around the country was illuminated by what to many a poor broken-hearted woman, was a grand and festive bonfire.

Among the first who discovered the conflagration was Wycoff, and he was much relieved, on ascertaining the precise location of the fire; for he had started out filled with apprehensions for Little Wolf. To his great satisfaction, the old brown house stood out in full relief, unharmed.

A critical survey of the premises, however, discovered to him the stable door standing open, and, by the brilliant blaze, he could distinctly see Black Hawk, pawing and floundering in the midst of the hay which Hank had arranged for his funeral pile.

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Quite as distinctly from the upper window could Little Wolf see the former, and she hastened to make him acquainted with her narrow escape and claim his protection.

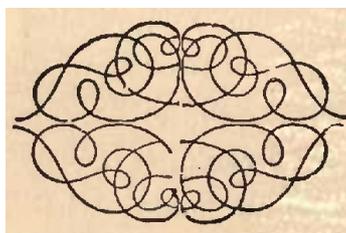
While he listened, the man's worst passions were aroused. There was murder in his heart, and, but for the entreaties of Little Wolf, another day would never have dawned upon Hank Glutter.

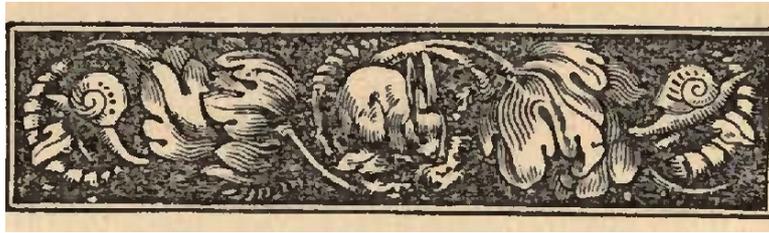
As for Hank; having the bitter consciousness that he had brought the calamity upon himself, he raved and swore like a mad man. To all questions as to the cause of the fire he had but one answer, "I suppose I must have left the confounded lamp too near the bed." This admission was invariably followed by oaths and curses, as he passed up and down before the burning building.

How different were Daddy's emotions! It was amusing to behold him bolstered up in bed, exultant to the highest degree. His old wrinkled face fairly shone with delight, and he frequently ejaculated as he watched the progress of the flames, "Thank the Lord God Almighty, for that dispensation!"

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As the light began to die away, he turned to Little Wolf and whispered confidentially. "'Tween you and me, Honey, if I should happen fur tu hev any children, Recta wont feel any consarn about the boys gittin to drinking, now that ere old brewery is out of the way. Some folks say if a man is tu be a drunkard, he'll be one any how; but if there's no liquor, I'd like fur to know how he is going fur tu git it? I guess nobody ever got burnt that never see a fire."





CHAPTER XXX.

ANOTHER SALOON SCENE—THE BRIDAL TROUSSEAU—THE LOVELY NURSE.



s Hank Glutter's was unfortunately not the only saloon in the world, we will now open the scene on another place of the same sort, not many miles away from the smoking ruins; a place, where, for various reasons, men did congregate; some to gratify a vitiated appetite, others simply to indulge in a social glass, and still others because they had no where else to go; some because they were glad, and some because they were sad; each and all forgetting the words of the wise man, "Look not upon the wine." [Pg 342]

The door had just opened to admit a small party of young men. Among the number is Edward Sherman. There he stands, a little apart from the rest, just under the chandelier. Directly opposite, the shelves glitter in Bohemian and cut glass, and all the attractive features of the bar. Mark his proud and lofty bearing, as he steps forward and lifts the goblet to his lips.

Again, and yet again, the cup goes round, until no longer he stands firmly among his companions. See him now, reeling, tottering, staggering, as he is borne away for the first time in his life, helplessly intoxicated, borne to his loving mother, whose grey hairs blanched whiter in that night of sorrow.

In a desperate mood young Sherman had permitted himself to be thus overcome, and, when the effects of the stimulant had worn off, he strove by the most affectionate attentions to make amends for the pain he had occasioned his mother. [Pg 343]

He even went so far as to bend his proud spirit to offer something like an apology.

"Mother," said he, as he placed his morning kiss upon her care worn face, before going to his office, "do not worry; I shall not again forget myself. It was foolish, I know, but I cared not at the time what became of me. Now don't worry. There is no danger of me."

Mrs. Sherman sighed as the door closed on her darling. "So like his father," she murmured.

Could she have seen him an hour later, the resemblance to his father might have struck her still more forcibly, for the social glass was again at his lips.

Fortunately for the dear old lady, there were other claims upon her attention, and, from a sense of duty, she strove very hard to bury her anxiety for her son in the folds of silk and laces which were to constitute the wedding paraphernalia of her daughter.

Lacking independence of thought, that young lady relied almost entirely upon the opinion of others, and the consequence was that not a ribbon, or a flower met her approval until she had first consulted half a dozen young friends, who, being apt to differ, kept her mind in a perpetual tumult. [Pg 344]

The mooted question on the morning before mentioned, was the exact length required for the bridal veil. Her confidants all differed in opinion, and, in despair, she appealed to her mother. "Mamma, Isabel thinks the veil is two inches too long, and Clara says it is only half an inch, and Caroline says it is just right. Now what do you think?"

"Why, it seems to be entirely a matter of taste, my dear; perhaps you had better put it on and ask the doctor's advice."

"O, mamma, the doctor knows nothing at all about the fashions, and if he did, he would not follow them I know," said she rather petishly. "He won't do anything anybody else does."

"Why, Louise!" said her mother in surprise. [Pg 345]

"I can't help it, mamma; Ned and I had set our hearts upon having wine at the wedding, for it is quite fashionable now, and we were very sure that we could coax you to let us, and when I confided in the doctor, and asked him to use his influence in our favor, he declared flatly that he would never give his consent, if it was ever so fashionable. I declare, it made me almost wish I was going to marry Charley Horton. You know he and Isabel Merton are engaged, and the other day when we were all together, Isabel told me that she had never asked but one favor of Charley which he was not willing to grant, and that was, that he would promise not to use wine in his

family nor offer it to his friends. She said she felt uncomfortable whenever she thought of the matter, but she hoped to be able to influence him to give it up after they were married. Caroline Wyndam was there, and she said she would not *dare* to say a word to her lover on the subject, although she would give the world to have him leave off social drinking. But Clara Hastings and the other girls said they did not think a little wine or beer would hurt anybody, and they would not give a fig for a man that could not control his appetite. Clara Hastings said if she ever got married, she would have wine at the wedding. When I told Ned about it he said Clara was the girl for him. I wonder what Miss DeWolf would say to that.

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Mrs. Sherman tried to choke down her feelings, but the bitter, burning tears would come and one by one they coursed down her withered cheek.

There was silence for a few minutes, and Louise would have left the room, but her mother gently detained her. "Edward wished me to say to you that his intimacy with Miss DeWolf was broken off, and he further requested that you would never mention the subject to him."

Great consternation was depicted on Louise's countenance. Oh! it is too bad," she exclaimed; "and just as she had promised to show me how that beautiful trimming was made which Miss Marsdon sent her from New York. I wonder what it means. Do you know, mamma?"

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"Why yes, my dear; it means that Miss DeWolf is possessed of a sensible, well-balanced mind, and that your brother has acted very foolishly."

Just at that moment the conversation was interrupted by the appearance of one of Louise's friends and advisers, and the two girls were soon absorbed in discussing the merits of some article of dress belonging to the trousseau.

Thus the hours slipped away, until about one o'clock, Edward came for dinner. He knew as soon as his eye rested upon his demonstrative sister that she had been made acquainted with his disappointment, and, as he naturally shrank from receiving sympathy, either by word or look, he exerted himself to appear much more cheerful than he really felt.

Louise inwardly resolved that she would be very watchful, and not cloud her brother's spirits by any allusion whatever to Chimney Rock, and the next moment she suddenly remembered having seen at the midnight hour a very bright light from her chamber window in that direction. Without second thought, she related the circumstance, and caught herself making the inquiry, "Did you see it, Ned?"

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Edward's face flushed scarlet, as he answered evasively, "O, that was the brewery on fire. I met Mr. Glutter in the city this morning. He came to make arrangements to open another saloon here. I never saw a man of more indomitable will and perseverance. Although he lost an immense amount he is not in the least disheartened."

"Brave fellow," said Louise, cordially embracing her brother's estimate of the man's character. "I wonder what occasioned the fire."

"Why, he placed the lamp too near his bed, while he went out to learn if there was any trouble at Miss DeWolf's. It seems that he had always had a friendly care for her, and, hearing noises in that direction, he was so kind as to run over. Finding it all quiet about the house, he followed the sounds to the stable, and discovered that it was only a horse, which Mr. Wycoff had, a few hours before presented to Miss DeWolf, that had occasioned the disturbance. The horse had broken loose, and just as Mr. Glutter was fastening him in the stall, he saw the flames bursting from the saloon; and so his benevolent trip cost him his brewery."

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While Louise was listening with interest to the recital, Mrs. Sherman and Dr. Goodrich entered the room. The latter was evidently disgusted with the expression, "poor fellow," that fell once or twice from the lips of the young lady, and his annoyance reached the climax when, a moment's pause, she ventured to assert with one eye on her brother, that "the poor fellow" would never get any thanks, "for," said she, "Miss DeWolf detests him, I know she does."

There was a short, awkward silence, which Mrs. Sherman broke, by saying, deprecatingly she was sure she could not blame Miss DeWolf for feeling bitterly towards the saloon keeper.

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"Blame her!" exclaimed Dr. Goodrich, who could no longer keep silence. "Blame Miss DeWolf! I would as soon think of blaming an angel in heaven. What has she to thank Hank Glutter for, I should like to know? He whose hands are red in the blood of her father. He who has made orphans and widows at her very door. He who has more than once endangered her very life by selling those cursed drinks which so infuriate men. He who would, I doubt not, take her life this day, if by so doing he could escape punishment, and add another penny to his cursed store."

"With your sentiments you are hardly prepared to do the man justice," said Edward forestalling a reply upon his sister's pouting lips.

"Had a man by his nefarious business, blasted every hope in my Louise's life save one, and were I that one, think you I could speak favorably of the wretch? No." said the doctor, impetuously.

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Louise, partially restored to good humor, had managed to slip behind her brother, where she stood making all sorts of admonitory gestures to her lover, who had not as yet, been let into the secret of the change in his friends's relation to Little Wolf.

But the doctor could not; or would not take Louise's hints, and he went on hotly. "Curse the

business! I say. Curse the man, who, with his eyes open to the consequences, engages in it. The law could, and should, make him responsible. Hank Glutter is the man who ought to have been compelled to indemnify Miss DeWolf for the losses she sustained on that dreadful day when Wycoff came so near dashing her over the precipice. It was he who tempted the man to drink, until he became drunk, and did the mischief, to repair which he sacrificed his favorite horse. Thank God it was by Hank's own confession, the animal's noise that brought about the burning of the brewery. It is some comfort that God now and then legislates on the traffic, when men will not."

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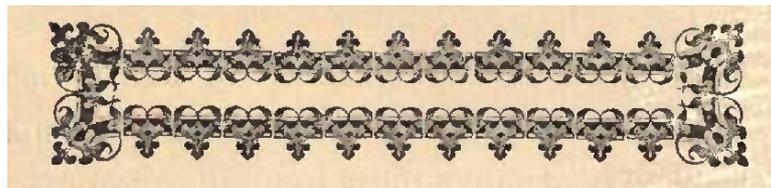
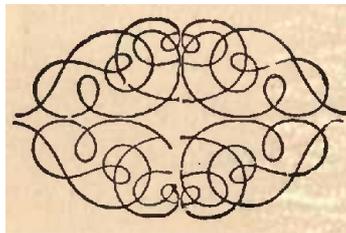
The doctor paused, and, as no one seemed inclined to make any comments, he began to speak more calmly, and on a subject which he flattered himself would be more agreeable.

"I have just been down to bind up Daddy's bruises," he said, "but his lovely nurse had done all that was necessary. Then turning to Edward with a meaning smile, "Ned, she is a right regal nurse. I almost wished myself in Daddy's place this morning. It must be very consoling in hours of pain to have a little angel smoothing your pillow, and hovering over you with sweet words and gentle touches."

The doctor suddenly stopped short. There was an expression of sharp agony on Edward's face that could not be mistaken. Louise had never looked on him so before. Added to her sympathy for her brother, was an indefinable pang occasioned by her lover's warm praises of another. Mrs. Sherman, the picture of distress, looked helplessly from one to the other.

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The dinner bell was at that moment a welcome sound.



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CHAPTER XXXI.

THREATS—LITTLE WOLF AND BLACK HAWK—TRAGIC DEATH OF HANK GLUTTER.



is business arrangements satisfactorily completed, towards night, Hank Glutter was seen setting out for Chimney Rock.

To say the truth, he appeared secretly uneasy, glancing furtively behind at every sound as he hurried forward like one pursued. By, and by, out on the solitary highway he walked on with more confidence, and finally, after assuring himself that he was quite alone, began to let fall some very energetic expressions in which were mingled the names of Miss DeWolf, of Black Hawk and of Wycoff.

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"She shall never ride Black Hawk again," he muttered, "Miss DeWolf can't circumvent me. If she has dared to betray me, she will never tell the story again. I guess my word is as good as hers—I defy Wycoff." Then followed such expletives as the speaker deemed suitable to the occasion: but which were suddenly interrupted by the appearance of Mr. Wycoff mounted upon Black Hawk and apparently in good humor with himself and all the world.

He evidently did not wish to remember the unpleasant scene of the previous day, for he partly halted as he came up to Hank, and said pleasantly, "What luck to-day, Mr. Glutter?"

Hank seeing in him a future victim to his wiles, spread his net right warily: "Well, Wycoff," he replied, "I have had the good luck to secure the most desirable corner in the city for my business, and I intend to keep on hand first class liquors, just such as you like best; and I consider you a judge of the article."

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"How unfortunate that I have given up drinking," said Wycoff with great gravity.

The corners of Hank's mouth drew down a little, but he replied in the most persuasive manner, "O well, its never best to drink to excess, but I hope to have the pleasure, Mr. Wycoff, of treating you to many a harmless glass."

"I must be going back," said Wycoff, abruptly wheeling round, "I just rode out a little way to get some of the spirit out of the horse before Miss DeWolf takes her evening ride."

Hank shook his fist after him, "I'll take the spirit out of the horse, and out of the girl too," he threatened. "Lucky she hasn't told Wycoff, I can tell my own story all the better."

Hank had just entered the "pass" when he again caught a view of Black Hawk in the distance; but this time Little Wolf was the rider. He drew his breath hard, and in an instant his hand was upon his dirk. "Now is my time," came from between his closed teeth and he threw himself behind the trunk of a tree, and in the twilight not a shadow of him was visible. [Pg 357]

On came Little Wolf, sitting her splendid steed right regally. Her proud, fearless little face was slightly shaded by the waving plumes in her velvet cap, and her long black robes floated on the evening breeze.

By constant petting from the hour that he became hers, Black Hawk had been won, and the intractable, fiery creature, who had hitherto spurned all control but Wycoff's, readily yielded to Little Wolf's guiding hand. The sagacious creature had exhibited no little pride in bearing off his precious burden under the eye of his old master. His new mistress glorying in her power over him bade him forward and without a suspicion of danger, entered the fatal pass.

In a moment they were opposite Hank's hiding place, who concentrating all his energies, made a cat-like spring and caught at Black Hawk's bridle. [Pg 358]

To sheer off, rear high in the air, and plant his fore foot right into the would-be-murderer's brain, was a feat performed without a sign from Little Wolf, who sat like one paralyzed, while Black Hawk in a fury trampled their assailant under his feet. She saw Hank's ghastly face and flaxen ringlets go down, and she saw his life blood spurting far over the pure white snow, and the next instant she was borne swiftly away from the terrible scene.

For some little time Black Hawk had it all his own way, and they were far out on the main traveled road to Pendleton before Little Wolf made an effort to check his speed. But suddenly she drew the rein with no gentle hand.

They had overtaken a lady and gentleman, who were riding leisurely, evidently quite absorbed in each other's society. One quick, searching glance revealed the parties to Little Wolf; and she curled her lip in scorn, as she saw those attentions which Edward had so lately lavished upon herself, now given to Clara Hastings. [Pg 359]

Well might Edward start and strain his eyes after the retreating figure to which the loud clatter of hoofs had called his attention, for fleeing fast away was one in whose true heart, he had planted still another arrow, which would there rankle long, spite of the vow of eternal forgetfulness even then upon her proud lips.

In order to avoid "The Pass," and its horrors, Little Wolf took a circuitous route home. She emerged from the wild, unbroken path through the forest just as Wycoff was beginning to feel seriously uneasy at her prolonged absence.

He eagerly caught at the bridle, "I was afraid Black Hawk had been playing pranks," he said, patting the animal's neck: "Why, here's blood upon the beast; I guess he's got rubbed agin a tree. It wan't exactly safe to come that way, anyhow, but girls will be girls, there's a natural tendency in 'em to go into crooked ways," and Wycoff laughed, as he thought that he had perpetrated a good joke, and looked at Little Wolf as if he expected her too appreciate it. [Pg 360]

"It is Mr. Glutter's blood," gasped Little Wolf, "he attempted to stop us in the Pass, and Black Hawk trampled upon him."

"Oh! that's it, eh?" said Wycoff. "A knowing critter, that. He's got the instincts of a woman, and I ain't sure but he knows as much as a man. Well, I hope Hank is dead, anyhow."

"Oh, don't say so, Mr. Wycoff," said Little Wolf, every particle of color forsaking her face.

"Well, now if I ain't beat," said the rough man, "I thought you would be tickled to dance on Hank's grave."

Little Wolf turned silently away and went into the house.

"Well, well," and Wycoff bent a look of inquiry upon Sorrel Top, who had been out sharing his solicitude for her mistress. [Pg 361]

"I guess she feels kinder horrible like, about seeing him mashed," was Sorrel Top's explanatory reply.

"Well, I'll jest go round and see what his condition is, anyhow."

While Wycoff was on his mission and Little Wolf shut up in her room, Sorrel Top hastened to communicate the news to Daddy.

"'Tween you and me I'm glad on't," said Daddy, exultingly. "I hope he's dead."

"Well, now, that's heathenish, Daddy, to wish a feller critter dead."

"He wan't no feller critter," said Daddy, indignantly, "he was nothin' but a liquor-seller: the wust

kind tu, fur he knowed just what mischief he wus a doing to the human race. Yes, and to the brute race tu, fur I've seen men whallop their hosses nigh about tu death when they was in liquor."

"I've seen 'em wallop 'em when they want in liquor," said Sorrel Top, determined as usual to combat Daddy at all hazards.

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"'Tween you and me, sich men ain't feller critters, nuther, I reckon they'll live next door to liquor sellers, by and by," said Daddy, with self righteous-assurance.

"I'd like to know where you expect to go when you die?" said Sorrel Top, with a toss of the head."

"Why, I'll go tu that ere place where folks go that du the best they know."

"Well, you're lucky if you can say you have always done the best you could," said the other in a tone which clearly indicated a doubt of Daddy's entire veracity.

"'Tween you and me, I've been thinking that I might hev been more active in the temperance cause. I guess afore long I'll git up a temperance lectur and go round deliverin' of it."

"O, pshaw, you wouldn't git no *ordiance*. Would he Fanny?" said Sorrel Top, appealing to Fanny Green, who had been a silent but not uninterested listener to the conversation.

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"I guess he would," said Fanny, hopefully, "I would attend."

"Of course you would," said Daddy, excitedly, "and the Honey would too."

"Well, you couldn't tell me nothing more than I know on that pint," said Sorrel Top, flinging herself out of the room with an air of unqualified contempt.

Left alone with Daddy, Fanny ventured to say softly, "Daddy have you ever prayed about it?"

"About what, Fanny?"

"Why, about people's drinking and selling liquor and those things that you talk about?"

"Pray about it? why no. What should I pray about it fur? I never pray about nothing."

Fanny looked shocked. "Don't you know the Bible tells us to pray, Daddy?"

"Well, I spose it does," Daddy admitted, "but somehow I hev never said my prayers, since I was a little shaver; I reckon it don't do no good fur tu pray, no how. My religion is tu do the best I ken."

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"But, Daddy, if God tells you to ask for what you want, and you don't do it, is that doing the best you can?"

"I ruther guess you've got the best of old Daddy, this ere time," said the old man, stroking the child's sunny locks. "'Tween you and me, Fanny, I don't know nothin' at all about the Bible. My father and mother died afore I was old enough fur tu read, and I was bound tu a man that didn't gin me a big edication, I never seen a Bible in his house,"

"Then you don't know about Jesus Christ?" said Fanny, quite pitifully

"Laws yes, I've heern ministers preach a leetle about him once in a while when I went to church fur tu go hum with Recta; but, somehow, I want much took up with him."

"O, but Daddy, you would have been if you had understood that he was the best friend you ever had. My mamma used to tell me how he came to die for us, and how we could not get to Heaven without him. I will tell you all about it, Daddy, shall I? I told Miss DeWolf, yesterday, and she looked real glad."

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"Laws, Fanny, the Honey is high edicated and knows a heap more than we do."

"O, yes, of course, Daddy, but then she had never heard it just as mamma used to tell it; for you know mamma talked just as if she had lived in the same house with Him, and He had told her Himself all about the beautiful place for all those that He can take there."

"Well, He may take me," said Daddy.

"O, but you will have to ask him to take you, Daddy," said his little instructress, opening wide her eyes.

"'Tween you and me, there's the stick, Fanny, I really don't know how fur tu ask him."

"Why, Daddy, how would you ask him for bread if you were starving?"

"I calculate I'd beg mighty hard if I was in sich a tight place."

Fanny's eyes filled, and Daddy feeling rather uncomfortable, patted her cheek tenderly.

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"You're a fust rate leetle gal, Fanny," he said, "and I'm kinder thinking I'll look into this ere matter by and by, when I get my lectur writ."

"May be, if you should ask Him, God would make you think what is the best thing to say in your lecture," persisted the child.

"Laws, Fanny, I ken think of them ere things myself. All the help I want is a leetle mite from you about the spellin."

"Wycoff now appeared looking very grave and reported Hank, "stone dead."



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CHAPTER XXXII.

THE MAY DAY WEDDINGS—MISS ORRECTA LIPPINCOTT'S SURPRISE—HOW OLD LOVERS BEHAVE.



pring opened slowly. It is true, at the first fierce glance of the sun, the sensitive snow dissolved in tears; but he was forced to call to his aid the strong winds to blow long upon the ice-bound river, ere it yielded and permitted the beautiful steamers again to ride upon its throbbing bosom.

There were those who eagerly counted the weeks that brought about these changes, for each hour drew them nearer to their bridal morning, and one fair May day, when the earth was decked in her garments of green, Louise Sherman, arrayed in her bridal robes, was led by Dr. Goodrich to the marriage altar.

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Edward Sherman also was there, to celebrate the same rite, for, in a few short weeks he had wooed and won Miss Clara Hastings. It was with no small degree of pride, that he looked upon that tall, elegant woman and called her wife.

Clara was equally proud of her husband. Talented, handsome, and, as she supposed, on the road to wealth, she asked no more. Thus they set out in life together.

The ceremony over, the wedding parties, including Mrs. Sherman, started on a tour to the old homestead, where it was their intention to pass a few weeks, and finally to change it for a permanent home in Minnesota.

They had given Recta timely notice of their coming, and, had she had no interruption, the housekeeper's preparations would indeed have been elaborate. She had received and answered Daddy's letter favorably, and was in daily expectation of a second communication from the same source. The plan which she had arranged in her own mind was to remain until after the arrival of the family, and then to spend a few weeks with a married sister, whose assistance she would require in the preparation of her bridal outfit. As a general thing Recta's head was pretty clear, but in this case, she did not count upon the proverbial impetuosity of a widower, and, consequently, signally failed.

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One bright morning, when all the bed and table linen, and every bleachable thing to be found in the house, were spread upon the grass; when feather beds and blankets, and carpets, were hung out to air; when soap-suds and white-wash stood side by side; when the china closet had disgorged its treasures, and the silver was spread out for extra polishing; when all the ingredients for a mammoth fruit cake were marshalled on the kitchen table; when chairs and other furniture were gathered in clusters, as if discussing the general uproar; when poor old Lilly Foot had been driven forth with a sharp reproof and a cold breakfast, and forlorn kitty, hid away in a dark corner, where only her green eyes were visible, mewed disconsolate, a loud knock was heard at the door.

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"I do wonder who is going to hinder me now?" fretted Recta, as lifting her dripping hands from her scrubbing suds, and drying them upon her apron she obeyed the summons.

At the first glance at the intruder she recognized Daddy, and turning pale and then red by turns, she sank speedily into a chair.

How changed were both since they last met. She was then a blooming, brown haired, rather coquettishly dressed country girl, and he black haired, dapper and gay. Now he beheld her in faded calico, sallow, wrinkled and grey; and she looked upon a white haired, shrivelled up, little old man.

Both were for the moment, silent and disappointed, but Daddy was the first to recover his presence of mind. "'Tween you and me, don't you know me, Recta?"

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"Well, I reckon I do, Philip," said Recta instinctively covered her face with her apron.

A smile of delight broke over Daddy's features, and his first disappointment was forgotten.

"That's jest as you used to sarve me, Recta; now I'm agoin fur tu sarve you one of my old tricks," and, by an adroit movement to which he encountered a very slight resistance, Recta's features were again visible.

There was a deep red spot on either cheek, and she looked rather foolish, but it was not long before the old lovers were living over again their youthful hours.

Oblivious of the flight of time, the mid-day sun shone in upon them, still absorbed in each other. It would be impossible to say how long this state of things might have continued had not Daddy inadvertently called Recta's attention to her household duties.

"'Tween you and me, I want fur tu git married afore night," he was saying, when Recta suddenly sprang to her feet in dire dismay. [Pg 372]

"Why Philip," she exclaimed, "how can I get married and all this work on hand?"

"I'm kinder thinkin we ken hev the job did, and then I ken help you fur to do the work."

Recta, demurred, but overwhelmed with persuasions, she finally consented to confer with her sister, living near by, and the result was, they were married before night, which fully accorded with Daddy's desires.

The next morning the atmosphere of the house had materially changed: but the aspect not. Lilly Foot luxuriated on a warm breakfast, and strutted about the house complacently wagging his tail, and green-eyed pussy purred contentedly behind the kitchen stove.

But still confronting Recta was the untouched white-wash, unwashed china, unpolished silver, unmade cake, and the undone condition of things generally.

"'Tween you and me, I wouldn't go fur tu du no work to-day," advised Daddy, as Recta made a movement towards setting the house in order. [Pg 373]

"I reckon, Philip, Miss Sherman will be here in a few days, and I wouldn't get ketched in this plight for nothing.

"You ain't a mite like mammy was," said Daddy, holding affectionately on to Recta's dress. "Laws, she would jerk herself away from me, and afore I knowd it be a flying around the house like a whirl-wind, orderin me round 'till I didn' know what fur tu du fust."

"O, well, you must let me go now, Philip," said Recta, good-naturedly, "or I won't git nothing done to-day. Now don't tech me again until I git them dishes washed and sot up."

"Laws, Recta, don't ask me fur tu wait that long; I'd like fur tu help you, so you'd get through quicker. Now set me tu work, du,"

"Well, Philip, them things on the line ought to be brought in. I forgot 'em last night." [Pg 374]

"'Tween you an' me, what made ye forgit 'em?" said Daddy, mischievously.

"I reckon when anybody is tagged to me every minute, I can't remember nothing, Philip."

At this mild rebuke Daddy laughed immoderately, but he was none the less at her heels. Turn whichever way she would, he was always there, and consequently her work progressed slowly; so slowly, indeed, that the bridal party arrived, and found her illy prepared to meet them.

But when the circumstances became known, she was at once absolved from all blame, and loaded with congratulations and presents made wondrously happy.

As their services were indispensable, it was decided that the useful old couple should remain through the breaking up and moving season.

While the younger portion of the household gave themselves up to a succession of pleasure parties given in their honor, Daddy and Recta spent their evenings in social chat by the kitchen fire. At such times Daddy was the chief speaker, and Recta never wearied of listening to his wonderful stories. [Pg 375]

Especially was she interested in Little Wolf's career. Her wonderful escape from Bloody Jim, her triumphal ride over Hank Glutter, her astonishing beauty, talents, and virtues were subjects upon which he descanted with great fluency.

"'Tween you an' me, Recta," said he, being in an uncommonly confidential frame on one of these occasions, "I used fur tu think that are Edward Sherman was a hanging around the Honey, and I sot myself tu put a stop to it, and that are day I was knocked down, and had my shoulder put out of jint, I jest gin him a hint that a nice young man was a goin fur tu git her."

"Why, Philip, I thought Edward was about the nicest young man in the world," Recta ventured to assert.

Daddy elevated his eyebrows, and hitching up very close to his companion, whispered, "'Tween you an' me, didn't you know he drunk nothin?" [Pg 376]

"You don't say so, Philip!" exclaimed Recta, in tones in which were blended surprise and grief.

"I've seed him," declared Daddy, decidedly.

"Dear me, how I wish he had always staid to home. Dear me, I can't bear to have it so; he was such a sweet little feller, when I nussed and tended on him. He don't drink hard, does he, Philip?"

"I guess about middlin. I never seed him dead drunk, but I've ketched him a few times about as full as he could hold. He cum hum pretty tight from the party last night."

"You don't say! I guess that's what's made his mother so low-spirited all day."

"I kinder think that are wife of hisen don't feel nun tu nice over it nuther, fur she 'pears ruther down in the mouth. I happened fur tu hear her a tellin him this morning, that fur tu drink moderate was genteel, but tu over drink was vulgar. It's my opinion he ain't got a fur-seein woman, or she wouldn't hev preached no sech doctrine as that are. You wouldn't have ketched the Honey a doin of it; she thinks it's all vulgar and wicked tu."

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"I think it's a sin to pass it around at them parties, Philip."

"Sartin, Recta; young fellers will get a liking for it, and get ruined in that are way."

"I don't see what makes folks do it when they know it's such dangerous practice."

"'Tween you and me, it's the devil," said Daddy bluntly. "He has allers tempted good folks as well as bad with his pison. He manages somehow fur tu make 'em believe there ain't no harm in it. I should think nobody could help a knowin of it. I heered some women talkin on the steamer, and one of 'em said she knowed a lady what was in the habit of treating gentlemen friends to all sorts of fancy drinks, and she was a real nice lady, tu, and got lots of 'em to attend her church jest by them means. They said it was so popular to drink wine now-a-days, that the best of folks didn't think there was no harm in it."

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"That was the common way of thinking when I was young. I remember very clear when the minister used to come here with the judge, and the judge was very apt to go off and have a spree after it. Miss Sherman mourned herself most to death, but when the minister came out strong on the side of temperance and preached and practised, and the judge had signed the pledge, we had different times, I tell you. Them decanters have stood empty on the side board ever since."

"I wish, they were smashed," said Daddy, emphatically.

"So do I," echoed Recta. "I'd like to sarve 'em as the heathen do their idols when they git converted to Christianity."

"Be you a Christian, Recta."

Recta looked down confusedly, twirled her thumbs, and finally answered in a constrained tone, "I belong to the church."

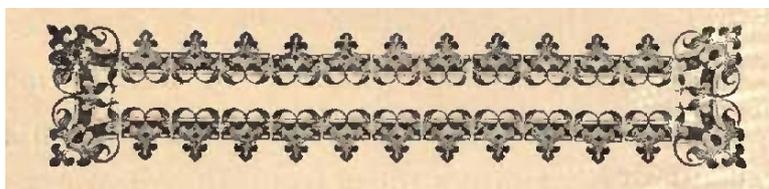
[Pg 379]

"Du ye? well, may be I'll jine it tu. I promised Fanny fur tu tend tu that are matter when I got my lectur done, but I hed fur to tend tu gittin married fust."

"Your what done, Philip?"

"My lectur, I writ one on temperance when I was sick. I calculate fur tu go round deliverin of it next winter when we git settled. 'Tween you and me, I may clare a little money on it. Lecturers are apt tu, I've heern say."

"You had better lectur on cabbages if you want tu make money on it," was the wise response.



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CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE OLD BROWN HOUSE DESERTED—THE PEARL AND DIAMOND RING—MR. AND MRS. MARSDEN'S CONJECTURES.



he old brown house was desolate; the doors bolted, the shutters closed, and not a sound to be heard within its walls. The stable too, was deserted, for now Black Hawk freely roamed in the pastures of his former master.

But in more ways than one had he done our heroine good service. Day after day, during that unhappy Spring she had, while striving to banish thought, ridden him through the wildest of wild forest paths, reckless alike of her own safety and his. The noble animal forded swollen streams, floundered through treacherous sloughs, leaped over fallen trees and climbed rocky precipices, and had not heaven ordained it otherwise, both horse and rider must have fallen a prey to the dangers of the way.

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Although indulging in this abandonment of feeling, Little Wolf neglected none of her duties. Indeed, she seemed determined never to let a moment escape unoccupied. While Daddy was confined to his room, and Mrs. Peters lived, she faithfully supplied their wants, but after the former became convalescent, and started for his wife, and the latter went to her last rest, blessing her benefactress with her latest breath, she had no one but Fanny on whom to bestow her care, except, indeed, Mrs. Peters' grandson Charley, for whom she soon obtained a desirable situation.

About this time, she received repeated and pressing invitations from her much loved school friend, Miss Marsden, to accompany herself and brother on a tour to California, upon which they expected to set out sometime in June. The marriage of Sorrel Top, with whom she had made arrangements for Fanny Green to remain, until such times as Daddy and his wife should return and take possession of the old homestead, and the charge of the child was most opportune: for she was now at liberty to avail herself of the change so affectionately urged upon her. [Pg 382]

In addition to the allusions before made to Alfred and Annie Marsden, we will here simply state, that the brother and sister were orphans, and heirs of considerable property, a part of which consisted in an elegant city residence. Here they had lived since the death of their parents, which occurred a short time previous to the period when Little Wolf and their daughter left school together.

The son, a bachelor of about thirty, had, a number of years before, visited Minnesota in quest of health. His proclivity for hunting and fishing led him to the vicinity of Chimney Rock, and he it was, who, when she was a small child, rescued Little Wolf from the hands of Bloody Jim. [Pg 383]

But this was his own secret most carefully guarded from our heroine, who, during her former visit had learned to regard him in the light of an elder brother; but, as will be seen hereafter his feelings towards her were of a warmer character.

Having, therefore, paid a flying visit to St. Paul, and wept her adieus upon the bosom of her sympathizing friend, Mrs. Tinknor, having pouted at Tom, and made her financial arrangements with the Squire, we now behold Little Wolf in the embrace of one, who had so long stretched forth her arms to receive her.

The first raptures over, we hear Miss Marsden saying, "we will never part with our Little Wolf again, will we, brother?"

The response is, "Not if I can help it."

We know not why, it may have been that these words of affection, brought suddenly to her mind all that she had loved and lost, or she might have intuitively divined young Marsden's sentiments towards her, we only know that her lip quivered, and she trembled and grew pale and sank helpless upon the sofa. [Pg 384]

Her extreme agitation created in her friends no little alarm, but it soon passed off, and as they could not but observe that any further allusion to the matter was annoying to her, the brother and sister exchanged expressive glances which, being interpreted, signified, "resolved that the subject be indefinitely postponed." But it was again mooted on the first occasion of the absence of their guest; Miss Marsden being the first to bring it under consideration.

"O, it was only fatigue," said her brother, in reply to her various surmises.

"No, it was not fatigue," she insisted with an arch smile. "It is my opinion she was laboring under some powerful emotion. I once saw her almost as much agitated in one of our school exhibitions, in which she was to act a prominent part; but she went through it splendidly, the determined little thing." [Pg 385]

"O well, it might have been excess of joy at meeting you."

"At meeting *me*, do you say, sir? Now brother, don't try to crawl out of it, for I have determined to extort the truth from you. Was she not overjoyed at meeting *you*?"

"Well, then, my dear sister, the truth is, I think not. You must have noticed she takes special pains to address me as brother, and always to treat me as such, and you young ladies rarely faint at the sight of a brother."

"O, but you are only an adopted brother,"—slyly.

"That's all," sighed the young man.

"I think her father's death has changed her a little. She appears more thoughtful and womanly: don't she brother?"

"I wouldn't be surprised if she were in love," suggested the other.

"O fie, brother, she's not in love, unless it be with you; or she would have confided it to me. Moreover," she continued, seeing an incredulous smile playing upon her brother's lips, "you must yourself admit that it would be a very strange freak for a young lady in love to voluntarily put the ocean between herself and the object of her affections. I verily believe our Little Wolf is more anxious if possible, to start on the tour than we are." [Pg 386]

"Yes, so do I," admitted her brother, "and I can't account for it."

"O, it is simply to run away from Mr. Alfred Marsden," was the ironic reply.

"I do assure you, sister, that you greatly mistake our mutual sentiments."

"Not yours, certainly, brother, and I think not hers; but I'll find out."

"For Heaven's sake, don't broach the matter to her, sister," said young Marsden in alarm, "It would spoil all the pleasure of our trip. Indeed, I know she would not go at all."

"Nonsense, brother, do you think me a goose? I would not be so indelicate; no indeed. There are more ways than you have dreamed of, for ferreting out a love secret."

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"O yes, I know such secrets develop themselves in a thousand forms, and if there is anything of that nature in her breast it will transpire in due time."

"It was not long before the young man's prediction came near proving true, and thus it happened.

"The two young ladies, Annie and Little Wolf were out shopping, and becoming wearied, they stepped into a fashionable place of resort for rest and refreshment. While waiting, a small party, two ladies and a gentleman, came in and were seated at a table not far removed from their own. Little Wolf's back was to the party, but Annie, being opposite her friend, faced them.

At the first sound of their voices, Little Wolf turned partly round, and behold there was Edward Sherman with his wife and sister. Her movement not having been observed, she was unrecognized by the trio. But so violently did she tremble and so deathly was her countenance, that Annie would have betrayed her by an exclamation of alarm, had not a warning gesture from Little Wolf stayed the word upon her lips.

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In a moment Little Wolf recovered herself sufficiently to write upon her tablets, "Do not speak to me, Annie, I do not wish to be known by the party opposite."

"Annie read the request, and returned the answer, "You will faint, let me order wine."

"No, I shall not faint," wrote Little Wolf's trembling fingers, and her erect little figure involuntarily drew itself up.

"Poor things, they are mutes;" said Louise, compassionately regarding the means of communication between the silent young ladies.

Mrs. Sherman assented, and the lively young bride's acting on this supposition, imposed no restraint upon their conversation. They talked about the past, and unveiled their future plans; sipped their fancy drinks and ate cake while Little Wolf and Miss Marsden vigorously plied their pencils.

Edward alone remained unoccupied except indeed, the use he was making of his eyes, and they were riveted upon Little Wolf. He was watching those busy little hands, and there came over him a strange feeling of heart sickness, as he saw on one dimpled finger a well remembered ring, a golden hoop with diamonds uniquely set in pearls. It was a relic of the past, having been presented to Little Wolf's mother on her wedding day. He knew well it's history, for the present owner had told it to him, and blushed when he said to her, "My Little Wolf will wear another on her wedding day."

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Then, in the thought there was bliss, now, naught but anguish.

The longer he gazed, the more he became convinced that it was none other than Little Wolf whom he saw, and anxious to conceal the fact from his wife and sister, he made a hasty movement to leave.

"Why, Edward, what possesses you?" exclaimed his wife, "going already, and your wine untasted. I believe you are crazy. Sit still a moment, I'm not ready. The stimulant hasn't got into my feet, but I feel it going down. Come, do drink a little, you look as pale as a ghost."

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"Do, brother," chimed in Louise, "I feel a great deal brighter; but don't tell the doctor I have been taking anything strong."

"Strong," repeated Clara, "I hope you don't call a little light claret, strong."

"O no, I don't, but the doctor does, and I may as well keep his mind easy," replied Louise.

Edward had risen to his feet, and waited silently but evidently impatiently.

"Can't I persuade you to take a little before we go? Do; you look so pale this morning," persisted Mrs. Sherman, herself lifting the goblet towards her husband.

Determined not to have any more words, Edward hastily drank the proffered beverage, and immediately left the place.

When they had fairly disappeared, Little Wolf sank back in her chair, and breathed hard as if awaking from a terrible night mare.

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"O, I was so afraid they would discover me," she gasped. "They were once good friends of mine," she continued with an effort at composure, "but you won't care will you, dear good Annie, if I don't tell you how it came to be otherwise?"

Annie looked a little disappointed, but she magnanimously put Little Wolf at her ease by saying, "No indeed, for I'm sure it was no fault of yours."

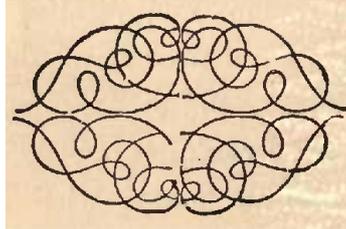
In absence of evidence, Annie of course, put her own construction on what had occurred, and mentally voted Edward a villain, and his wife and sister his accomplices. This opinion she expressed to her brother, when in an hour of confidence, she glowingly pictured the scene.

"I think the young man must be at the bottom of the mischief," she said, "for he was even more agitated than Little Wolf. He had recognized her from the first, although I cannot devine how, for she sat with her back to them."

"I would have known her among a thousand," cried young Marsden, enthusiastically.

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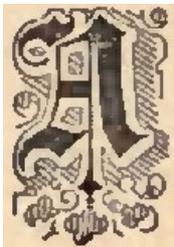
"O, then, I suppose he must have been an old lover," said his sister mischievously.



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CHAPTER XXXIV.

A TRIP TO CALIFORNIA—JUMPING OVERBOARD—THE GRAND SUPPER AND WHAT CAME OF IT—THE CAPTAIN'S LITTLE DAUGHTER.



s the most agreeable method of conveying to the reader a correct account of Little Wolf's adventures, and personal feelings during her journeying, we will quote largely from letters addressed from time to time to her friend, Mrs. Tinknor.

"From the first we take the following:

"While I write, the Captain's little daughter sits beside me. We have met several times on the hurricane deck—Flora and I—and are on quite intimate terms, considering the shortness of our acquaintance. The first twenty four hours she was seasick, 'wery, wery sick,' she informed me, and her pale face bore traces of

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the ordeal through which she had passed; and, indeed, the countenances of most of the passengers are suggestive of Tompsonian doctors. To such, our three days at sea must have been uncommonly disagreeable, the weather having been rough the entire period. Yesterday, we were favored with a storm. The commencement was most sublime, but all having been unwillingly ordered below I was borne resisting into the cabin and the splendid exhibition of nature shut from my view, of course I could not keep on my feet, but I managed to climb upon a stand, and holding on with all my might, I could see the waves through the port hole run mountains high, and what silly thing do you think I did? I actually cried with vexation, shut up in that miserable place.

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"It was as if Black Hawk had been bearing me exultant on a wild gallop in the face of winds that shook the very foundations of the earth, and, the loftiest enthusiasm having been enkindled, I was suddenly plunged into a sickening, stifling, dismal cavern, and shut out from light and liberty.

"I made frantic assaults upon the porthole, and the remonstrances of the ship carpenter, who chanced to spy me, would have availed him nothing had he not forcibly lifted me down, and seated me upon the floor of my state-room.

"The miserable creature imagined me frightened out of my senses. 'No immediate danger Miss,' said he, 'compose yourself; the ship will right up directly—throwing all the light trash overboard—chicken coops just gone over.'

"'Man,' moaned a woman on whose face was blended an expression of benevolence and nausea, 'did you open those coops, and let out those fowls, that they may not drift about and starve?'

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"The sea, madam,' said the builder of ships, grandly, 'the sea has swallowed them coops and all.'

"Miss Flora has just asked me if my letter is not most finished, 'for,' said the cunning little elf 'you might put in that papa called you a stubborn little wretch yesterday, when you wouldn't go down to the cabin.'

"I wonder if he dared to say it, I suppose I looked incredulous, for the little mischief continues to reiterate the assertion, but she consolingly adds, 'He was wery, wery angry then, and he knew you wouldn't hear him. You don't care, do you?'

"I have almost told a fib, and said, 'no indeed.'

Two days later.

"I have had my revenge on the captain by jumping overboard.

"Yesterday Flora and myself were lounging upon the stationary seat, attached to the railing of the hurricane deck. Both of us had been silent for some time. I had been gazing dreamily down into the deep, blue waters thinking of, I hardly know what, but, I remember that a strange impulse occasionally seized me to plunge beneath those snow-capped waves and rest my poor head upon the ocean's bed, for it is not as easy to hold it up now as it once was, when mammy lived, and took me in her arms and bade the 'Honey hold up her blessed little head, and never let that droop whatever might come.' Precious old creature, she too bore a life long sorrow, and bravely bore it. Daddy never suspected, that his bustling, little grey wife had a tender secret burried beneath the tumult of activity, which continually bubbled up within her generous breast.

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"But I am digressing from the subject of my sea bath, of which Miss Flora was the immediate occasion. She had incautiously leaned too far over the railing, and, losing her balance, fell. I was startled from my reverie by a slight scream, and in an instant more, she was beneath the waves. I knew that I could swim, and had I not, I would have plunged after her all the same.

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"I discovered, however, that the waves in a quiet cove of the Mississippi, were but ripples compared with the surging waters of the ocean, and my childhood paddle in the former but a poor preparation for battle. I sank deep and rose breathless, and almost helpless, but fortunately, Flora was dashed within my reach, and I clutched her dress, and we were both saved.

"The captain had witnessed the accident from the deck and was the first to come to our rescue. Spars were thrown out, and several hardy sailors leaped in and helped to bear us up until the life boat was lowered, and we were all once more transported on board of our staunch ship.

"I have been flattered and feted ever since. A grand supper was given in my honor last evening, and, as I was in such high favor, I made bold to accept my invitation on condition that the table should be innocent of wine. The Captain cordially complied with the condition, although Flora had previously volunteered the information, that 'papa was wery fond of wine, but mamma did not like him to drink it.'

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"The dear child has much to say about her mama, who, 'died, a wery, wery long time ago.' One little year has she been motherless, and what sweet graphic pictures does she draw of the lost one. 'Mama had wery soft curls, papa called 'em golden; mama had wery blue eyes, papa called 'em wiolet, and she had wery pink cheeks, and papa called 'em sea shells, and he called her wery little mouth, a rose bud and her wery soft hands, welvet, and what do you think he named her wery, wery, cunning little feets?—mices.—He read all about 'em in a book one evening, how they stoled in and out like little mices,—now wasn't that wery, wery nice?'

"She is more devoted to me than ever, since her narrow escape from the sea, and she is sure that I will not be sent into the cabin when the next storm comes on. Indeed I exacted a promise from the Captain, while at the feast to that effect. He said I might be lashed to the rigging and blown to pieces if I wished, and I do wish—O how I long for another storm,"

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Three days later.

"The sky is clear, the sea smooth, and the passengers are mostly upon deck, enjoying the fine weather.

"Mr. and Miss Marsden have appeared for the first time, and we have had a general rejoicing. The Captain is an old friend of theirs and we were invited into his room and treated to wine on the occasion. All drank socially except myself and Flora, who, when she saw that I had taken none, set her glass down untasted.

"The influence of good example,' said the Captain smiling approvingly on Flora.

"Do you really think the example good?" I asked eagerly.

"Most certainly, my dear Miss DeWolf, my wife would have acted precisely the same. She did not approve social drinking, but one in my position acquires the habit almost from necessity. My associations are mostly with a class that expect it of me. I do not care for it myself, but I do not like to appear unsocial.'

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"Nor do I,' chimed in Miss Marsden, sipping her glass.

"We tempt and are tempted on every hand,' said Mr. Marsden thoughtfully. 'Society demands the social glass and we yield to its demands, and why? Because we have not the moral courage to do

otherwise.'

"We have! I exclaimed, we have! you have, your sister has, the Captain has. You have never tried. You have never fully realized whither it tended—I have. Shall I tell you?"

"At any ordinary time I would not have drawn the heart rending picture of the consequences of social drinking which I was then inspired to do. It was as if a frightful panorama of ruined fortunes, and ruined families was passing before me and I described all I saw and when the view became too painful, too revolting for words, I bowed my head and wept.

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"For heavens sake, say no more,' cried out the Captain.

"Flora flung her arms around my neck, and mingled her tears with mine. 'What shall we do?' she asked plaintively.

"We might draw up a total abstinence pledge and all put our names to it,' said Sir. Marsden quite cheerfully.

"After some pleasant discussion, his suggestion obtained favor, and was carried out without delay, and in half an hour's time we were all pledged to total abstinence from intoxicating drinks. The matter was duly explained to Flora, and she added her mark with an air of consequence quite amusing.

"Nor was that all; the enthusiastic little missionary stated that she knew of several wery nice sailors who would like to put their names on the paper, for she had seen them drink something out of bottles. She was accordingly permitted to present this pledge to her particular friends, who, it transpired, included the whole crew.

"I was much affected by a little scene which I witnessed in connection with her labors. A weather-beaten old sailor, whose only fault was his uncontrollable appetite for rum, read the pledge carefully, and, shaking his head quite hopelessly, handed it back. 'I can't agree to that, little pet,' said he, 'I can't abstain, I'd give the world if I could, but I can't. I lay in bed the morning we set sail and thought it all over. I thought of my little boy and gal sleeping in their trundle bed. I thought of the pleadings of my patient wife, and I resolved to let liquor alone, but I can't do it—I was the worse for it yesterday. No, I can't abstain,' and his voice quivered.

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"May be, if you'd try again, wery, wery hard,' persisted Flora, who did not comprehend how uncontrollable the appetite becomes.

"No, my little pet—no—none but God Almighty can save me now—I'm in the breakers.'

"His look of despair moved me to step forward and interpose. Would not Flora have perished in the deep water, had there been no effort made to save her? I questioned.

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"You're a brave gal,' said he. 'I saw you go after her; you would have saved her if you could, and you would save me but you can't.'

"That's true, I replied, but God can. Jesus Christ will bring you safely out of the breakers, if you will cling to him. You are in great peril but it is not too late. Never give up the ship.

"Thus I talked until hope began to reanimate him, and he said 'when I get back to New York I'll try again to give up my dram and be a Christian.'

"Now—now, there's no time like now, I persisted, and finally he yielded, and said, 'Now it shall be. I'll put my name to the paper, and may God Almighty help me.'

"His name, John Hopkins, stands in full upon the pledge; the large crooked letters bearing traces of the struggle by which he was shaken.

"I am so glad that I ever read the Bible to dear old Mrs. Peters, for it was there that I learned the lesson, which I so lately taught the despairing seamen, and nothing can now wrest the sweet knowledge of a Saviour's love from me. My heart has found refuge in it.

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"Do you remember the day that Tom dressed in your blue apron, with a bunch of keys at his belt and pretended to personate me at the head of an orphan asylum, how we all laughed? Well, I secretly wished myself capable of doing good in that way, and you may tell Tom that if I should ever attempt anything of the kind, I will give him a lucrative situation as general overseer of the establishment."

Two days later.

"Last evening we arrived at Aspinwall having made the trip from New York in ten days. This morning we bade adieu to our kind friends of the steamship, 'Northern Star' and crossed the Isthmus of Panama, a distance of about twenty miles, by railroad. A fine large steamer lay upon the waters of the Pacific awaiting our arrival.

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"Having embarked, I found a little vacant nook, under the awning, where I am now writing, while the scenes of to-day are still fresh in my mind.

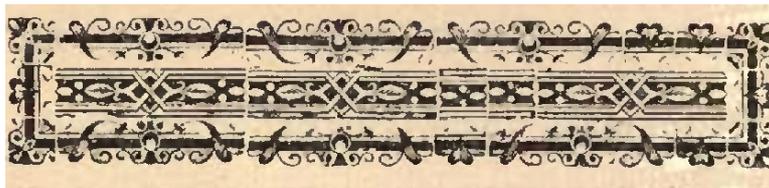
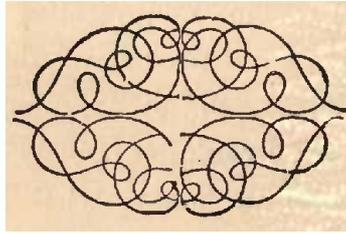
"I was enchanted as we passed swiftly over the narrow neck of land dividing the two oceans. The dense, vine-clad forests, alive with birds of every brilliant hue, and bordered with gorgeous flowers; the low thatched huts of the natives, and the natives themselves in holiday dress of thin white, all conspired to awaken the most pleasing emotions.

"The villages at both ends of the route were swarming with natives, the women with baskets of cake and fruit and beautiful birds for sale, the men eager to carry our luggage for 'two bits.'

"A small proportion of the women were bright and pretty; one really beautiful, with liquid eyes and smooth jet braids, upon which were fantastically perched a pair of green, trained birds, was very popular with the passengers, and soon emptied her basket.

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"I purchased her pet paroquets and sent them to console Flora, whom I left sobbing quite piteously in the Captain's arms. We promised her papa to make our arrangements to return on his steamer and his promise to lash me to the rigging in the event of a storm still holds good."



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CHAPTER XXXV.

A VISIT TO MRS. SHERMAN'S ROOM—DADDY AND HIS NEW SPOUSE—OMINOUS SIGNS.



efore opening another letter, let us pay a flying visit to the Sherman family, and also to Daddy and his spouse.

The former are to be found in their old quarters at Pendleton, the latter installed in the brown house at Chimney Rock.

It is near midnight, rather an unseasonable hour to intrude upon our friends, but no matter; at the house we shall first enter; regular habits do not prevail.

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We will now imagine ourselves in the broad hall, on the second floor of the finest hotel in Pendleton.

Open softly the door at your right. There the eldest Mrs. Sherman lies sleeping. Her grey hair is parted smoothly under her white frilled cap, her hands are folded resignedly upon her breast, and the angel of her dreams has imprinted upon her features the chastened smile so often seen upon the face of age.

We would fain prolong her slumbers, for, alas, we cannot stay the swiftly drifting cloud, that is coming to darken her waking hours: the silver lining of which she will not see, until, a spirit winged for glory, she soars above it.

A confusion of sounds from below reaches us. Footsteps are upon the stairs, uncertain, shuffling, as if grouping in darkness. Low, persuasive voices are heard, a sharp retort follows. "No, Clara is fiendish when I have been drinking, I will not meet her."

A woman has just brushed past us. She stands at the head of the stairs, pale and determined.

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"Bring him not here," she hisses between her closed teeth, to the men who are assisting her husband to mount. "Take him to your own homes—listen to his ravings. Bear his insults; blows if need be. Perform the most disagreeable services for him. Yes, even imperil your lives in his service, you who are his disinterested friends. You, who have enjoyed your bacchanalian revels with him, take the consequences. Bring him not to me. I despise, I hate the man who cannot control his appetite—I tell you away with him!" she shrieked, as his friends continued to urge him upward.

"Clara." A hand is laid gently on her arm. Her mother-in-law stands trembling beside her; the noise has awakened her, and she has come out in her night dress. "I will take Edward to my room and quiet him; he shall not disturb you, my daughter."

"I am not your daughter. I will no longer be his wife. I will leave the house this moment never to return. He has disgraced me long enough. I will not bear it. I will not be the wife of a drunkard. I have told him so times without number. You may soothe him if you like—pet him—give him peppermint—I will not live with a man who cannot control his appetite."

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Tears and entreaties, are of no avail; the determination of the high-spirited wife remains unaltered, and she has gone forth to her father's house, leaving her mother-in-law not quite alone with the invalid, for Louise and the doctor have been summoned.

Meanwhile, how thrives Daddy?

We shall see by the morning sun. It has just risen, and so has Daddy. He peeps out and the sun peeps in, blinding his old eyes and cheering his old heart. He and Recta are happy now. Hear him whistle like a boy as he dresses. Recta helps him put his rheumatic arm into his coat sleeve, and he kisses Recta.

Both leave the room, and as they pass a door standing ajar, push it open; Here is little Fanny Green standing with bare feet before the open window, brushing out her flaxen hair. [Pg 412]

"O, Daddy," she exclaims, "a bird flew in here awhile ago, a real live bird flew right in at the window, and throbbed his wings so hard against the glass that he woke me. Why, before I could catch him, he flew out. Do you think it would have been wicked to have caught him, Daddy?"

"Laws, no, Fanny. 'Tween you and me, the Honey would have ketched him in a second. She was uncommon spry when she was a leetle gal."

"O, Daddy, may—"

"You musn't hinder me now; I must go fur tu milk the cows."

"O, well, you won't feed the chickens 'till I come, will you, Daddy? I'll dress, O, ever so quick, and say a very little prayer, and come right out. I want to feed the speckled hen and the little yellow chicks; please Daddy don't forget me, will you?"

Recta looks very much disturbed as they pass on together. "That bird," she mutters very mysteriously, "it's a very bad sign." [Pg 413]

"What's a bad sign, Recta?"

"Why, don't you know, Phillip, when a bird comes into the house it's a sure sign of death in the family? I have never known it to fail. There was Squire Billings died in less than a year after a bird flew in at the winder. Sally told me they was a watching for some one to die and it turned out to be the Squire."

"'Tween you and me, Recta, that was singular; now I think on't I've noticed lately that Fanny has looked ruther pimpin. We must not cross her in nuthin. I shan't tech the chicken feed 'til she comes; 'tween you and me, hadn't we better write to the Honey?"

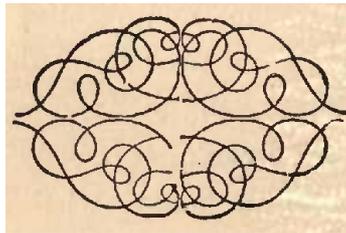
"May be she don't believe in signs, some don't," said Recta, reflectively.

"'Tween you and me, we might tell her about Squire Billings."

"That wouldn't make any difference, Phillip, you can't convince some people. We may as well not write until Fanny is really taken sick. I wonder if she had ever had the measles: Neighbor Wycoff is awful sick with them." [Pg 414]

"'Tween you and me, I guess we had better write," persists Daddy, struck with a new terror.

There is a sudden hush, and Fanny trips in bright as a May morning.



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CHAPTER XXXVI.

MORE NEWS FROM LITTLE WOLF—TOM TINKNOR'S TESTIMONY.

ere again is news from Little Wolf. The postmark is San Francisco; a few hurried lines running



thus:

"We arrived here last evening. Mr. Marsden has the Panama fever. His sister and myself watch over him day and night. His physician is hopeful, but says the disease is exceedingly tedious. We shall probably be detained here for a long time.

Please write as soon as you receive this. I am anxious to hear from Daddy and Fanny.

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Your affectionate

LITTLE WOLF."

From Mrs. Tinknor's answer we extract the following:

"As we had not heard from Daddy for some time, I persuaded Tom to go down and see how they were getting along. He has just returned and stands ready to relieve your anxiety. I will leave him to give an account of affairs in his own language."

"I am requested to give my testimony which is this: The house was in apple-pie order. Not a fly had the temerity to approach the parlor. Miss Fanny had learned to knit, and had constructed a pair of stockings. Mrs. Recta says if she *lives* she will make a good housekeeper. I shall marry her when she is old enough. The old folks are sure she will die 'afore the year is out, 'cause a bird flew in at her winder.' I told them the bird was after Daddy, and the superstitious old man was instantly seized with a violent pain in his big toe. I am afraid he will feel it is his duty to die. He and Recta bill and coo like two old fools.

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I am ready to swear to the above testimony.

T. T.

P. S. Daddy saw six ghosts last evening in the pasture where half a dozen sheep were grazing.

TOM."

"I am afraid, my dear, that Tom's nonsense has illy prepared your mind for the sad news I have to communicate concerning your friends the Shermans. The elder and the younger Mrs. Sherman are both dead. The elder died last week; it is said of a broken heart. The other accidentally put an end to her own life several weeks ago. She had parted from her husband, he having returned home several times intoxicated. Being in a very unhappy frame of mind in her father's house, she resorted to morphine to induce sleep, and, unaccustomed to its effects, swallowed an over dose. The mistake was discovered when too late to save her. It is said that Edward's remorse is fearful, and he has solemnly sworn never to taste another drop of intoxicating drink. His home is now with Dr. Goodrich and his sister, who have commenced house-keeping in a nice little cottage."

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Extract from Little Wolf's reply.

"Many thanks to Tom for his share of the letter. I hope he will frequently repeat his visits to Chimney Rock, and acquaint me with the results. It will discipline him for the work I shall assign him in my orphan asylum, and moreover I feel concerned about the pain in Daddy's big toe.

"All jesting aside, so many unforeseen events have crowded into the months of my absense that I feel prepared for almost any change. It is well that I know that you will be a mother to Fanny in the event of any change in Daddy's family. According to Tom's account, he is to be her husband. I will draw a picture of their courtship for him.

"A slender, fair haired girl and a gallant youth seated—let me think—*three feet apart* in the grape arbor at the old brown house. Their eyes meet and speak a language quite familiar to gallant youths and fair haired girls in general, and to those two in particular. How prettily the white throat of the beautiful blonde swells, and how the frill of lace around it trembles, as if fanned by the passing breeze.

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"They do not see the white haired old man who is silently gathering grapes without the arbor, occasionally peering cautiously through the vines and lattice work at them.

"He is a loquacious old fellow, (that Daddy) and he will doubtless complete the picture for us by and by.

"Mr. Marsden's fever has left him broken in health and spirits. His lungs have never been strong, having been subject to occasional hemorrhages. He complains of constant pain in his chest, and I fear it will be a long time before he recovers. His physician thinks it will not be safe for him to return home this fall, and we shall probably spend the winter in this mild climate.

"We have formed quite a pleasant circle of acquaintances, and our evenings are musical, conversational or *gamical*, as best suits the invalid, who lies upon the sofa and dictates the programme. Last evening we did nothing but talk. An editor of one of our city journals was present, having just returned from an extensive tour through the wine growing districts of the State. He says that wine making is fraught with dire evils to the producer and to the country. That it has become almost as cheap as milk, and as freely drank, till many once sober men are now habitually intoxicated. He was told that in one neighborhood, young girls seventeen years of age, reeled in the streets under the intoxication of pure California wine. Men whom he once knew to be of worth he found lost to society, and becoming a fear and disgrace to their families. One leading man whom he met, enumerated five of his acquaintances, who, once noble men, are now to be called drunkards through wine. He thinks that the production of the article, now fearfully on the increase, must become a curse to the whole land if persevered in.

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"In going through the wine growing regions he found it expected, as an act of politeness, that wine must everywhere be presented and drank, and if he consented at all to drink, he would be compelled to drink many times a day, and would become a wine toper with others. He declared that touch not, taste not, handle not the accursed thing, was the only rule of safety.

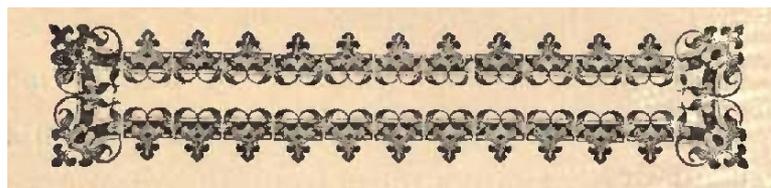
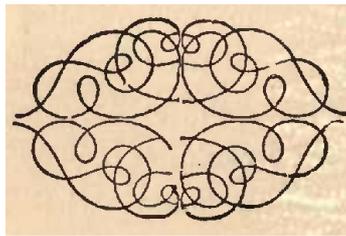
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"He said if each grape grower would grow only the raisin grape for sale, there would be no end to the profitable disposal of all which he could ever produce without sin or danger to any one.

"I remarked that European travellers told us that very few drank to intoxication in those places where wine was made from the pure juice of the grape, and it was generally supposed that the manufacture of pure domestic wine in this country would do away almost entirely with intemperance.

"In answer, he read us a letter which he had just received from his friend, a well known resident of this city now in France. It contained a flat contradiction of the statements to which I had alluded, and drew a dark picture of the intemperance in the wine producing districts of France and Germany. In fact, it was a radical plea—as Daddy would say—'agin the hull infarnel stuff.'"

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CHAPTER XXXVII.

ANOTHER DEATH IN THE OLD BROWN HOUSE.



It was late in the month of December when Little Wolf received from Mrs. Tinknor the following sad account of the Death Angel's visit to the old brown house:

"My dear child:

What I am about to write will give you great pain, for I know how dearly you loved poor old Daddy, and how it will grieve you to hear that you will never see him again in this world. He died on the morning of the fifteenth, after a short illness of ten days.

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"Tom had been down on a visit and returned saying that Daddy was complaining of rheumatic pains, and he was much worse the day he left, and his wife was much concerned about him. As Tom urged it, I went down hoping to cheer up the old couple.

"When I arrived I found Daddy confined to his bed, and groaning with pain, while his wife and Fanny and several of the neighbors, were flying about, applying hot fomentations, and a variety of liniments. (It is astonishing how many busy feet one

sick man can keep in motion.)

"I immediately sent for Dr. Goodrich, although Daddy's wife mentioned to me in confidence, that a 'parcel of old women were worth a dozen doctors who killed more than they cured; and Daddy himself managed to gasp out, "'Tween you an' me, Miss Tinknor a leetle good nussin is the most I need. Doctors can't cure rheumatiz.'

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"However, he looked forward very anxiously to the Doctor's arrival. When he did come and prescribed the free use of brandy, all of Daddy's prejudices were at once aroused, and no persuasions could induce him to use 'the devil's pison outside or in.'

"I believe had he been stretched upon the rack he would have died rather than yield the point; for to the last, he adhered firmly to his total abstinence principles, and at the eleventh hour he entered his master's vineyard.

"It was beautiful indeed to witness the ministrations of little Fanny. From the first of his illness she wept over and prayed for him, and taught him, who had gone all his life long a hungry prodigal, the way to his Father's house. I never shall forget those lessons, which so sweetly fell from her childish lips and the joy that beamed in her speaking face, when Daddy at length appeared to have a clear understanding of her teachings.

" "'Tween you and me, Fanny, you've pinte straight this time,' said he one day, after having listened a while to her conversation. 'It's all plain now—I see my Father, I see my elder brother, the Lord Jusus interceding for me—I see the table spread, and I ain't had no hand in the spreadin of it. He'll hev to reach down and take me jest as I am, and he'll du it—I'm sartin of it, cause Fanny, you know it is said *whosoever*. That are *whosoever* is the *comprehendest* word in the hull Bible. Miss Peters pinte it out to the Honey, and the Honey told me about it jest afore I started fur Recta, and some how it went into one ear and out 'tother. Howsoever, I could see the Honey was a heap changed by it, though it don't take away nun of her pretty.—She was more tenderer like, and when she spoke tu me about it, the tears cum into her bright eyes, jest like the pearls sot around the diamonds in her ring. I'm kinder thinkin we shall talk that are matter over when she comes back.'

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"Up to the last day he was hopeful of getting well, and none of us felt specially concerned about him. The doctor came and went with words of cheer, and I was making preparations to go home, when the unexpected summons came. His pain seemed suddenly to change to the region of his heart, and I heard him say to Fanny, "'Tween you an me, Fanny, the pain is in my heart. I believe I'm called fur, and I ain't done no good in the world yet. My temperance lectur didn't amount to nothin. I'm glad I never delivered it, fur it ain't got none of Jesus's love in it, and men du need the Almighty's lovin hand in that are thing. Fur it's the devil's pison and mighty hard to fight agin. Wouldn't the Honey be glad though, if she knew what a fine man that are Sherman is since he give up drinkin. Tell her that poor old Daddy blessed her with his dyin breath. Call Recta, Fanny.'

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"I sprang to his bedside, and in a moment Recta was there also. The dying man took my hand and thanked me for all my attentions to him, and then his eyes rested tenderly upon his wife. He tried to speak, but a spasm of pain checked him, and Recta bent low to catch the words. He pointed upwards, threw his arms around her neck, and was gone.

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"We buried him at the left of your parents beside mammy, and when I left a mantle of soft, white snow was flung over all.

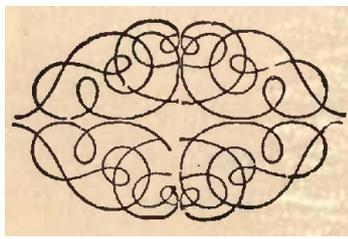
"I brought Fanny home with me, and Recta is living with Dr. Goodrich's family. Having previously been so many years their servant, she is much attached to the doctor's wife and Edward Sherman.

"Edward Sherman was very attentive to Daddy during his illness, frequently riding down with the doctor and remaining until his next morning's visit. There is certainly a striking change in his appearance. I honor him for the straight-forward, high-minded course he has of late taken. Having learned his weakness before it was too late, it has become to him an element of strength, and his influence over his associates speaks well for his future usefulness.

"We all long to see you again, Fanny in particular wishes for your return every day, although she seems quite content with us, and is a great favorite with Tom, who amuses himself by plying her with difficult questions, which she patiently puzzles her ingenious little brain to answer.

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P.S. I obtained permission of Recta to send you Daddy's temperance lecture, with the request that you carefully preserve and return it to her."



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CHAPTER XXXVIII.

DADDY'S TEMPERANCE LECTURE.



aving slightly modified the spelling in Daddy's lecture, in order to make it the more easily read, and at the same time to render it in his own diction, we now place it, with the preliminary arrangements, "fur tu be read silent," before the reader.

"Fust, haul out my specks.

Second, haul out my yellor silk hankercher.

Third, wipe them air specks.

Fourth, put them air specks on my nose.

Fifth, put that air yellor silk handkercher in my pocket.

Sixth, clar my throat.

Seventh, go at it loud.

I don't expect fur to say nothin new on the subject of temperance, but it wont du fur tu say nothin cause you can't get up no new ideas. Now supposen a neat housekeeper shouldn't hev nothin fur to say, tu a parcel of careless heedless boys and gals, cause she must say the same old thing over every day. Hezekiah clean yer feet. Matilda, hang up yer shawl. Susan Maria put away yer gloves, what kind of a house du ye think that air would be, all topsy turvey and kivered with dirt? If them air children don't mind at fust, she keeps up that air kind of talk from one year's end tu 'tother, and ginerally speaking they grow up tu be orderly men and women.

Just so we've got to hammer and ding away at the temperance cause from generation to generation, if we want our children tu be nice temperate men. Never mind gitten up no new ideas: tech not, taste not, handle not, is good enough for any age. Then agin, ken ye expect yer boys fur tu be tidy when yer own feet are dirty and yer things out of place over the hull house? Them are little shavers think it's big tu du what daddy does and they are pretty nigh sartin fur to drink that air nasty lager beer if daddy does. Hev a mat at yer door and keep yer own feet clean, and hev Hezekiah and Matilda and Susan Maria put theirn there, tu. That's the way fur tu du.

Some say, a little wine won't hurt a pussen; some say, lager beer won't hurt a pussen; some say, cider won't hurt nobody: but I say, the infarnel stuff which makes men drunk, no matter what name it goes by, is the stuff fur to let alone. It's the infarnel stuff, that makes holes in yer wallets and holes in yer breeches, and holes in yer winders, and holes in yer wife's heart, and kivers yer children all over with holes; and last of all opens a big hole in the ground fur ye tu slide through inter the infarnel regions.

I hev had it thrown inter my face that Jesus Christ hisself, made wine out of water, fur weddins, and the govenor of the feast said it was the best they hed hed. I ain't no doubt of it nuther, jest fur two reasons, fust, it was made of water, second, Jesus Christ hisself made it, and ye may bet all yer new clothes, *He* wouldn't hev done nothin to hurt nobody, I wouldn't have been afeared myself, fur tu drink wine made of water, by Jesus Christ. I reckon we don't get no such now days. Like enough, one reason for his makin it was fur tu hender 'em from gittin any more of the miserable intoxicating stuff. One thing is sartin, if he was God, he wouldn't dispute hisself, and the Bible expressly says, 'Look not upon the wine—fur in the end it biteth like a sarpent and stingeth like an adder.'

I don't profess fur tu know much about scriptur, but a nice leetle gal pinted that air varse out to me, and she pinted out another which said, 'No drunkard ken enter the kingdom of heaven.' Howsoever, I ain't no preacher, and like enough tham air black coats hev got up some big idee

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that clars up the hull subject. My religion is tu do the best we kin, and we needn't be shaky about the futur. I've been a advocating that air doctrine this sixty years and folks ginerally sarve me as two leetle boys did not long ago. They was a making a puny leetle dog draw a heavy loaded sled, and I said to them are leetle shavers, 'you'd better turn in and push the sled and help that air tired weakly dog of yourn;' and when I looked back a few minutes after, them air leetle rascals was both riding on top of the load, and had their fingers at their noses a pintin at me.

What people want is fur to have their hearts teched deep, and I don't know how fur tu du it. I could tell stories about what liquor has done, that orter set every one of ye a snivellin powerful, but I reckon you'd ruther hear something funny. Temperance lecturers is generally expected fur tu tell funny stories jest as a farmer is expected fur tu feed out his husks tu them air animals that loves fur tu chaw husks. The grain goes futher when he fodders in that air way.

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But I don't know nothin funny connected with the subject of drinking. It is all kivered over with groans and sighs and tears and blood, and ye'd shudder fur tu hear about it, and yer feelins may be would get tu tossin and bilin like mad, but yer wouldn't *du* nothin. My be in a few minutes you'd treat me as them air boys did, and take a glass of beer with yer neighbors, cause all that biling and tossin is on the surface. It don't go deep enough fur tu make ye act.

T'other night a neighbor of mine was a walkin hum with me and we went past the house of an old Scotchman, who gits drunk every time he ken git trusted, or treated or ken git change enough fur tu buy the whiskey, and his wife ain't no better than he is. They hev two nice leetle children, a boy and a gal, and them air unfeeling wretches, hed, in a fit of drunken madness, actually shet their leetle boy and gal out of doors that cold freezing night. The poor babies was half naked, and they had curled powerful close together on the door step, where the winds blowed around and gnawed away at their half froze bodies, until the stout hearted boy cried with pain as he tuck off his Scotch bonnet and put his sister's poor, little, red, frostbit feet inter it. His own feet was bare, and their heads was bare, and in a little while they might hev froze to death, hed we not passed that air way. Wall, we stopped and tried fur tu make them air critters inside open the door, but they hed locked up, and settled down inter a drunken sleep, and the children begged us not fur tu disturb 'em for them are children was afeared of being mauled tu death. They'd ruther freeze than ventur in. So one of 'em I tuck and my neighbor tuck t'other hum. He was a swearing away all the time at them air folks making such beasts of themselves.

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Now, what du yer think he did hissself the next day? He got so tight he couldn't walk straight. I met him a going hum smellin like a whiskey barrel and raising his feet powerful high. Says I, 'Neighbor G., I wouldn't hev thought you would ever hev teched another mite of liquor after what we see last night.' Says he, 'Mr. Roarer, I ken control my appetite. I know jest when fur tu stop. I shall go hum and kiss my wife and children and not drive 'em out of doors as Scotch Billy did.'

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Says I, 'Thats just the way Scotch Billy talked five years ago.' 'Wall, wall,' says he, 'I ain't one of yer Scotch Billys; I know when fur tu stop.'

But ye won't du it; ye'll cave under by and by. Them air kind that brag that they know jest when fur tu stop is generally the very ones that go under afore they know it, I thinked tu myself as he staggered off.

If there is an old toper present, or a young toper, let 'em take the warning of an old man who has been awatching the gradual down fall of moderate drinkers for threescore years. I've seen 'em live, and I've seen 'em die. *Die* ain't no name fur the last struggle I've seen 'em go through with. Jest picture tu yourself a grapery, stretchin miles away, and in that air grapery is walkin men of every age and condition, and all are a pluckin them are big purple grapes. Some eat many, some, few; some grow red and portly, some grow pale and thin, (them air pale ones take the longest strides and get to the end fust.) They hev all been warned that that air fruit hes been pisened, and some of them git a leetle frightened at seein the strange way it effects companions, and they turn back, but the most on 'em go on, plucking and eating, heedless of the cries of them without. O, they know jest how many fur tu eat and not die. Their friends needn't worry: they ken take care of theirselves.

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'Mother,' says a youth, lookin through the lattices, with a glow upon his cheek, 'I'm all right, don't bother about me. See Mr. Moderate Drinker ahead there,—see how hale he looks—he'll live longer than any of ye outside.' But afore long that air smart youth goes reeling past Mr. Moderate Drinker, toward the end.—It is too late now—let his mother cry to heaven and wring her hands and lie in the ashes upon the hearth. It is all in vain.—'My boy, oh, my boy!' rings unheeded in his ear. A mother's voice, a mother's tears, a mother's anguish, what are they compared with the fruit, which he has lost the power to resist, and which his companions are constantly urging upon him? But look! He suddenly starts back pale and fearful. He has seen the precipice and the black gulfs with open jaws jest afore him? No, ah no, the heavy clusters and the interlaced vines hide that. But he heard the despairing shriek of a feller traveller as he plunged in; and for a moment he tremblingly questions, what is there?

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Ah, there is no clusters, no leaves, no vines, between that spot and his devoted mother's eye. She has long looked fearfully towards it, and, just upon the verge, she sees him falter.

A faint hope springs up within her, and, with the courage of desperation, she cries out in a voice that might pierce the skies, 'Turn, oh, my boy, turn, flee fur yer life—one step forward and ye are lost!' Her last words are drowned in the jeers of his companions, and his senses are deadened by the odors of the purple cluster just ahead, and to reach it he takes the fatal step. Fur a moment

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he hangs suspended over the abyss, clutchin the vines whose roots take hold on hell, and as with bloodshot eyes and fearful shrieks, he tugs and strains to regain his footin, a foul serpent winds its way among the leaves, and stealthily strikes his fangs inter the branch to which he clings, and gnaws his last refuge.

That air is the way they die.

Now, can't nothin be done fur to keep folks out of that air grapery? If the law would only put a door tu it, and shet it tight, I reckon there wouldn't be many that would git in thar. Some old topers that hev got a strong hankerin after that pisen fruit, might crawl through the lattices to get it. When the place is wide open and everything looks temptin, and they see a crowd a going that air way, it is easy fur tu foller, but when it's all shet up they turn away tu somethin better, fur almost any thin is better than sech a place as I hev described.

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I know that a passel of big lawyers and judges say that we can't make a effectual door cause there ain't no timber in the constitution fur tu make it of and so some is fur putting up a rickety kind of a barricade fur tu keep folks on Sundays and lection days, and some is fur hevin a gate that them air serpents inside will hev fur tu pay a big pile of money fur tu get the privilege of openin. But I don't see why on airth, if they ken git timber fur them air half way consarns, they can't git it fur a hull door. If they can't, they hed better graft, some law agin liquor sellin branches inter that air constitutional tree, and hev them air infarnel roads to the infarnel regions blocked up entirely.

Howsoever, while its open a single crack we must du the best we ken fur tu keep the people out of the wrong track. Them air temperance societies, and temperance pledges is mighty good, but there ain't enough of 'em and they ain't active enough. Now, a nice, smart, rosy-cheeked gal instead of passin round wine tu her little party of friends, might pass a temperance pledge, and coax them air beaux of hern inter puttin their names tu it, and give 'em a nice cup of coffee fur tu top off with. There might be lots of them air kind of things did, if folks only set themselves to work in earnest. Instead of telling yer friends that it won't hurt'em, as I've heerd of some infatuated pussons doin, tell 'em total abstinence won't hurt 'em, and I'll ventur fur tu say they'll thank ye fur it, instead of cussin of ye tu all eternity fur puttin the glass to their lips. That air reminds me of another scriptur that that air little gal pinted out to me, 'Woe tu him that putteth the glass to his neighbor's lips.' That air is all the scriptur I ken quote correct 'tween Genesis and Revelation. I larned it fur tu throw in the face of one of them black coats, that hes invited me fur tu tend his church. Sez I tu him, 'If ye'll preach from that air text I'll go.' Sez he, 'I preach the gospel. I can't be givin my valooble time to politics and temperance lecturs, but I'll read that air chapter to my congregation if ye'll come.' Sez I, 'no-siree! I don't believe in no half way business.' Ye see I had an inkling that he was afeered of that air rich hullsale liquor dealer that tended his church. Them that retail the stuff is generally looked down upon, but them air that is rich enough to shovel it out by the hullsale is looked up tu on the principle, turn yer back tu a poor devil, take off yer hat to a rich devil.

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I never could think of anythin bad enough fur tu say about the mischief them air liquor dealers du, and rather guess on that account I'll hev fur tu leave 'em to the cuss which God Almighty hisself has passed upon 'em. I hev no doubt but that air cuss has been echoed and rechoed by millions upon millions of their victims. I would hate to have all the cusses of the widows and orphans, and the wus than widows and orphans that them air ginerations of vipers hev made, and bit.

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But there is another pint which consarns every one of us. Hev we a right to stand by silent and see these things did?

That air is a big question that some folks would like fur to dodge, cause maybe if they took a active part agin drunkard makin, it might interfere with their dollars, or with their friends or with their interests in other ways. But ye can't dodge the question; its afore ye, and there it shall stand until Gabriel blows his big horn, and you'll hev fur tu answer it, tu the Almighty, hisself.

Don't the Bible say that every tub shall stand on its own bottom? I've heerd it did, and I'm a thinkin that all of them air useless tubs that stand out a sunning theirselves, will fall down and not hev any bottom fur tu stand on when they are fur, and will only be fit fur firewood. Fur my part I don't blame God Almighty fur pitchin folks inter the infarnel regions when they won't du nothin fur tu keep things right in this ere world, and some actually hender others from doing anything.

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Now, supposen there was a big hole in the end of our street and a passel of citizens should du all they could to keep that air hole open fur people to fall inter, and you'd hear 'em hollerin out tu folks that was a tryin to stop it up; 'Let that air hole alone, everybody knows its there, if they don't want fur tu git inter it let em go another way; there is plenty of streets;' wouldn't yer think them air rascals ought to be singed to all etarnity? Well, what's the mighty difference 'tween them air, and a passel of citizens that'll set by and see their feller citizens go straight inter that air hole and say nothin? I believe in men's minding their own business, and I hold its a man's business to save a drownding feller critter if he ken.

I hev now come to my last pint. It is this. Shall we hev laws that will save our nation from becoming a nation of drunkards, or shall we not? Just picture to yourself a drunken president. We hev hed him. Then picture a passel of drunken senators. We hev hed them, tu. Seems zif the more big men ken circulate the devil's pisen, the better they like it, and that air in my opinion is one

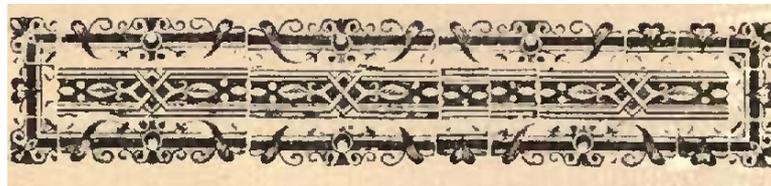
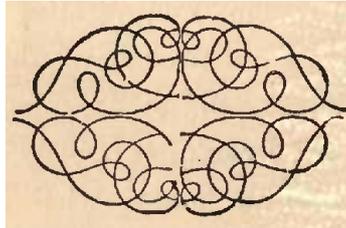
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reason why we can't get laws tu shet down the making and selling of the infarnel stuff. Why, keep that air kind of men in office, and figuratively speakin, the fust we know, a pair of the president's breeches will be stuffed inter a broken winder of that air White House. Fur if we keep a sendin men tu Washington, that is friendly tu that air sarpent with many heads, it will git so big that it will sartin bust every thing to flinters. It's leetle young ones are a crawlin everywhere now. They lay coiled on the hearth of the rich man and the poor man, and woe to the infatuated pussen who gits inter their slimy folds. O, what wretched slaves they do make of their victims. What tears, what anguish, what poverty, what degradation du they bring them tu!

Shall we, the free born sons of America, consent fur tu be made slaves, and lay among the pots? Shall we walk in rags and stagger in fetters with the blood of the innercent on our hands? I say, shall this big proud nation be made fur tu totter and tu reel like a helpless baby a learnin fur tu walk? Shall that air many headed sarpent rule us, or shall we rule it?

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Haul out yer temperance pledges! Float the banner of total abstinence! Wave high the flag of freedom; and fight long and fight well fur freedom; from the intoxicatin cup!"



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CHAPTER XXXIX.

DEATH IN MID OCEAN—LOVE MAKING AND A DOUBLE WEDDING.



he birds are mating, and the spring will soon open, and when the little songsters come to you, I am coming with them," wrote Little Wolf to Mrs. Tinknor in the month of February.

So now, dear reader, let us skip the intervening months, and go half way to meet her. Her friends having planned to carry out their promise to Captain Green, whose acquaintance and that of his little daughter Flora, it will be remembered, she formed on her outward trip; all we have to do is to take passage on the steamship "Northern Star," Captain Green, commander, and we will soon have the

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pleasure of greeting our heroine.

Little Flora, who has once more been permitted to accompany her papa, is all impatience, and almost every hour of the day she may be heard singing, "O dear, I am so wery, wery, anxious to see dear Miss DeWolf," and "papa, ain't you wery, wery, anxious to see Miss DeWolf?"

The Captain assures his daughter that he is "wery anxious," and, indeed, when he says so, his dark eyes kindle, and his fine, sunburnt countenance glows and warms expressively under his broad brimmed hat.

The day has come at last, and Little Wolf's party are aboard, but oh, how changed are they all!

Consumption has fastened itself upon poor Alfred Marsden. His days are numbered, and for earth he seems to have but one desire, to see again his childhood home, and die there. His faithful nurses, Annie and Little Wolf, have grown pale and thin, His sister's eyes are tear stained, and Little Wolf's also grief shaded, for together they have watched over and tended him, striving to drive away that unseen something, which makes his cheeks and lips so white, and takes fast hold upon his vitals, determined to wrench him away from those he loves.

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It will not even grant his last wish; for here, in mid ocean, he grapples with death. All day long those fair young faces have bent over him, and his friend, the Captain, has been there with them, and little Flora has hovered near with trembling lips, whispering softly, "I am so wery, wery, sorry."

As the evening draws on, the sick man revives a little, and in a low, rapid tone, says something to his sister, which we do not hear, but with a few hurried words to Little Wolf, she moves away with the Captain and Flora, and Little Wolf is left alone with the dying. All that he is breathing

into her ear we shall never know; but her cheek changes, and her lip quivers, and she bends over and kisses him tenderly. [Pg 451]

That hungry look in his eyes is gone. He is satisfied, and now, surrounded by those he loves, he dies with a smile upon his lips.

His body will not rest in the place prepared for him in Greenwood, beside his parents, but will sink into the ocean's Greenwood, where the sea shall ever kiss his lips, where flowers bloom, and things of beauty are perpetual, and coral monuments are raised, out-rivalling those of the cemeteries of art.

The fair moon shines out upon the waves and the winding sheet, and the burial is over.

Three days more, and we shall be on shore again," says Little Wolf, half regretfully.

The Captain is by her side, and he bends over and says something which we do not hear.

Little Wolf shakes her head, and her ingenuous little face says no, as plainly as words could.

A shade of disappointment manifests itself in the Captain's manner, and again he speaks. [Pg 452]

His companion still replies in the negative.

"Then he was but a deer friend, and I may be the same," says the Captain, now loud enough to be heard.

Now Little Wolf says distinctly, "yes, you may be the same, Captain Green. You rescued me in perils by sea, and he in perils by land. He told me with his latest breath how he had saved me from certain destruction when I was a little child, and—"

"And how he loved you in after years, and how he longed to kiss you," said the Captain, seeing her hesitate.

"Yes, Captain," said Little Wolf solemnly, he told me that, and more which you must not hear."

"I know how he felt," says the Captain, folding his arms across his breast, "for I would be willing to die, if you would but kiss me."

"Captain," Little Wolf's cheek grows scarlet, and she pauses to choke down a strong emotion, "there is a man *living* whom I have kissed, and I shall never kiss another." [Pg 453]

The Captain's voice sinks very low in reply, but Little Wolf warmly takes his proffered hand, and it is easily to be seen that more than a common friendship has sprung up between them.

Now the Captain, Little Wolf, Miss Marsden, and little Flora, have become almost inseparable. A permanent parting is not once spoken of between them. Their last day at sea is spent in planning to be together for the summer.

It has transpired that Little Wolf's protege, Fanny Green, is a niece of the Captain's. His elder brother, Fanny's father, having formed bad habits, ran away from home, and it was supposed, went to sea, and had not been heard of by his family up to the time of the Captain's acquaintance with Little Wolf.

In the course of a few weeks, the Captain and Flora, are to accompany Little Wolf and Miss Marsden to Minnesota, where they expect to greet their newly discovered little relative. [Pg 454]

A few weeks later, and everything was in company order at Squire Tinknor's, and Fanny Green's demure little face looked out of the window, almost the entire day that Little Wolf and her friends were to arrive, and when, just at twilight, a carriage brought them to the gate, she shrank away in the folds of the curtain, and Little Wolf found her there sobbing for joy.

Her cousin Flora greeted her with the remark, "Why, dear me, how wery, wery large you are, cousin Fanny; I thought you would be smaller than me."

Little Wolf found letters awaiting her from the Hanfords, and Antoinette Le Clare, urging her to come with her friends and spend a few weeks at Fairy Knoll.

It was decided that they should accept the invitation, and accordingly, on a warm summer morning, a requisition was made on Squire Tinknor's horses and carriage, and Tom was installed as driver. [Pg 455]

Fanny and Flora were to be left with Mrs. Tinknor, and, as Tom tenderly kissed the former, his charge to her was, "Take care of yourself, Fanny dear, for you know you have promised to be my little wife," and Flora said that was "wery, wery nice."

The Captain occupied a seat beside Miss Marsden, and Little Wolf sat by Tom, whom, having ceased to be a lover, she found to be quite entertaining, and they amused themselves by building air castles and earth castles, such as balloons and orphan asylums; and indeed, by the time Fairy Knoll loomed up before them in the moonlight, they had become warmer friends than they had ever been.

As they neared the cottage, Little Wolf could not repress a sigh, for too well did she remember her emotions on that wintry morning, when she and Edward Sherman left that spot together, so light of heart, so full of hope and joy.

Out sprang the watchers from within, to welcome their guests, and into the arms of Edward Sherman sprang Little Wolf. She had instantly recognized him, and a glad cry escaped her, as he caught her to his breast. [Pg 456]

The Captain saw all at a glance, and he then knew whom Little Wolf had kissed, and who was kissing her. Light also seemed to have suddenly dawned on Tom's benighted vision.

Without ceremony or apology, Edward bore our heroine away to a retired spot in the grove surrounding the cottage. Their interview was not interrupted, until Tom, in the course of half an hour had the temerity to venture out, and suggest the propriety of Little Wolf's partaking of a cup of tea.

"Did we not manage it nicely?" said Antoinette Le Clare to Little Wolf when they were alone. "Mr. Sherman came out for a little recreation, and did not think of seeing you. We made him think that it was his sister we were expecting, and when he rushed to meet her and saw who it was you ought to have seen his face."

On the subject of lovemaking, which was witnessed by the trees in the grove at Fairy Knoll, we will be silent. But the double wedding which followed was public and grand, and took place at St. Paul, under Mrs. Tinknor's supervision. [Pg 457]

Miss Marsden returned to New York as Mrs. Captain Green, and little Flora declared herself "wery, wery fond of her new mama."

Mr. and Mrs. Sherman accompanied them as far as the city of Pendleton, where Edward proposes to make his future home.

At parting Tom wickedly mentioned to Little Wolf that he was concerned for the prosperity of that much talked of orphan asylum. Whereupon the dignified Mrs. Sherman assured him that having proved himself so capable of preparing an asylum for the orphan in which they were mutually interested, she thought him better adapted to carry out her benevolent projects than she was, and consequently would leave the matter in his hands for the present.

Not long after their marriage Edward Sherman discovered in his wife's secretary a total abstinence pledge, to which was appended a long list of names. It was the same which Mr. Marsden had drawn up on shipboard, and "Alfred Marsden," headed the list. [Pg 458]

Edward took it from its place, and he was in the act of signing his own name at the bottom, when a bright curly head came between him and the paper, and rosy lips whispered, "Thank you, Edward love, for this free will offering."

THE END.

TRANSCRIBER'S NOTE: Spelling and punctuation left as found in the original text.

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