Title: Silent Struggles

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Release date: May 3, 2011 [EBook #36027]

Language: English

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SILENT STRUGGLES.

BY MRS. ANN S. STEPHENS.

AUTHOR OF "THE WIFE'S SECRET," "THE REJECTED WIFE," "MARY DERWENT," "FASHION AND FAMINE," "THE HEIRESS," "THE OLD HOMESTEAD," ETC., ETC.

A woman's heart, though delicate, is strong,
Like virgin-gold it takes the furnace heat.
Giving to history and immortal song
A glow of heroism pure and sweet.

Great men have sought the battle in their pride,
Hewing a path to glory as they fell;
But women, braver still, have grandly died
In silent struggles—fame may never tell.

Philadelphia:
T. B. PETERSON & BROTHERS,
306 CHESTNUT STREET.

Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year 1865, by
MRS. ANN S. STEPHENS,
In the Clerk's Office of the District Court of the United States,
in and for the Southern District of New York.

DEDICATION.

TO MRS. GEORGE H. PENFIELD, OF HARTFORD, CONN.

DEAR LADY:—

One of the sweetest privileges connected with the authorship of a book is, that it can be made the landmark of such love and kindly feeling as have united us from the day that we first met till now. Believe me, it shall not prove my fault if this dedication fails to link the future with the past, in one perfect and life-long friendship.

ANN S. STEPHENS.

NEW YORK, APRIL 8, 1865.

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SILENT STRUGGLES.

CHAPTER I.

THE SHIP IN A STORM.

A storm had been lowering all day over the harbor of Boston, heaping the horizon with vast leaden embankments of heavy vapor, and shrouding the hills with dense floating fog that clung around them in waves and masses like draperies sweeping around some old monastic ruin. As the night approached, a sharp wind came up from the east, accompanied by a drifting rain that cut through the fog like a storm of silver shot. The force of the tempest swept this away only to reveal the harbor in wild turmoil, its waters heaving shoreward filled with muttering thunders from the far off ocean, and each hill reverberating hoarsely to their impetuous charge against its foundations.

It was a terrible hour for any unfortunate wayfarer who dared to be abroad. The streets of the town were almost empty, and the wharves utterly deserted save by a half dozen poor fishermen, who struggled to keep their boats from being dashed to pieces against the timbers to which they were chained. But the turbid waves leaped around and over them, tearing the cables from their hold and beating the little crafts to atoms or hurling them away like nutshells in the stormy riot.

As the day wore on, even these poor fishermen retreated in-doors, leaving their little property to the tempest, and both earth and ocean were given up to the storm. But on the heights which look seaward stood two men thrown together even in that tempest into a strange and what seemed an almost unnatural companionship; for in age, character, and appearance each was a direct contrast to the other.

The storm beat heavily on them both, and though one from his age, and the other from an education which had been almost effeminate, seemed unlikely to brave a tempest like that without an important motive, it would have been impossible for either of these men to have told what brought them on the heights that boisterous day.

The old man had reached the hill first, and stood with his face to the storm, looking out upon the turbulent waste of ocean with an anxious, almost wild gaze, as if he were expecting some object long desired and watched for to rise out of that leaden distance, and reward his steady encounter of the elements.

The young man came up the ascent with a quick, struggling step, for the storm was in his face, and he was compelled to fight it inch by inch. He had shaded his eyes from the pelting rain, and cast an earnest gaze into the distance, as if he, too, expected something, when the old man's cloak was seized by the wind, and borne out with a rush and flutter like the wing of a great bird, which made the youth conscious of another presence. He looked around suddenly, and stepped forward, lifting the hat from his head, with grave respect.

"Another man here, so far from town, and in all the tempest? I thought that no one but a harum-scarum youngster like myself would venture forth in a storm like this!"

"And I," answered the person thus addressed, sweeping back the iron gray locks, that fell wet and scattered over his forehead, with a hand like withered parchment, "I, too, believed that nothing but an old wanderer, impelled by the spirit which he can never resist, would dare the wind on these heights. Look, young man, for the rain blinds me: discern you nothing in the distance yonder?"

The young man again sheltered his eyes with one hand, looking earnestly forth towards the ocean.

"Nothing," he said at last. "I have searched that pile of clouds before, and find only deeper blackness now."

"Searched it before! Did you expect something, then?" questioned the old man, turning a pair of bright, gray eyes upon his companion. "Did you expect something?"

As he spoke those eyes grew wild, and the penetrating glance, which he bent upon the youth from under his heavy brows, struck to the young heart, which was open to a new impression every moment.

"Nay, I do not know. It can be nothing but that unaccountable restlessness which never leaves me in peace when a storm is howling over the ocean. I could not stay in-doors—indeed, I never can on such days—and, without knowing why, came up here to look this whirlwind in the face, which, in return, is almost lifting me from my feet!"

The old man did not heed him, but stooped forward, looking towards the ocean, while the rain beat against his face, dripping down in great drops over his gray eye-brows, and deluging the hand with which he strove to clear the blinding moisture away.

"It is coming! the clouds lift—the darkness is cleft—the bosom of the deep heaves with life! Young man, look again! See you not the faint outlines of a ship, spars, hull, and sails, reefed close—there—there, riding in the bosom of the storm?"

He broke off with this exclamation, and drew his tall figure upright, pointing towards the sea with a gesture of almost solemn exultation.

"Is that a ship, I say, or a bleak skeleton of the thing I have been waiting for?"

"Upon my life—upon my soul, ten thousand pardons—but I think it really is a ship, or some evil spirit has pencilled the skeleton of his devil's craft in the clouds."

"Ha!" ejaculated the old man with a start, "see, see!"

The strange being might well cry out with astonishment. As he looked the great embankment of clouds was torn asunder, and a burst of fire kindled up its edges till it hung like streamers and tatters of flame around a vessel of considerable size, which was, for the instant, lifted out of the cloud into full view. The young man, whose sight was clear, could even detect persons grouped upon the deck.

"It is a signal gun. She wants a pilot, or is in distress," he said, eagerly. "Ha! she blazes out once more—they are casting her anchor. Heavens, how she plunges! There—there, the cloud swallows her again!"

The old man had fallen upon his knees, allowing his long, gray cloak to sweep away with the wind. He locked both hands over his face, and seemed to be offering up either thanksgiving or entreaties to heaven; for his voice, sharp and piercing, penetrated the storm too impetuously for the words to be distinguished.

The young man stood a moment, reluctant to disturb him. That thin form was completely exposed to the storm, and he could not refrain from an attempt to rescue the old man's cloak from the wind, and gather it about him. Besides, the grass was completely saturated on which he knelt, and to remain upon it longer might bring a death chill.

"Sir, forgive me, but this is a dangerous place for prayer. The earth is deluged where you kneel."

The old man struggled to his feet, and looked down upon the crushed grass with humiliation and wonder.

"Kneel! did I in truth kneel?" he said, anxiously, like one who excuses himself from a grave crime; "and here, in the open day? I beseech you, remember, my young friend, that it was the surprise of yon ship and the tempest which cast me into that unseemly position. When a servant of God prays, it should be standing upright, face to face with the Being after whose image he was made."

"You were, indeed greatly overcome," answered the youth, arranging the folds of the old man's cloak. "The ship yonder must contain some dear friend, that its appearance should move you so deeply."

"Some dear friend! Samuel Parris has no friends to expect from the mother-land now. It is many years since he and all that is left of his kin took root in the New World."

"And yet you were looking for the ship so anxiously?"

"Aye, young man. I was looking for something which was to come up from the east through yon gate of clouds; but whether it was a weather-worn vessel or an archangel sent on some special mission, was not told me."

"And you come hither expecting nothing?"

"Expecting every thing, for Jehovah is everywhere," answered the old man, solemnly.

The youth was greatly impressed, his eye brightened.

"I only wish it were in my power to have expectations grounded on so much faith," he said. "Now I come forth like a storm-bird, because a strife of wind and water fills me with some grand expectation never realized, but which seems always on the verge of fulfilment. You may perchance smile, but it seems to me as if I had been months and years watching for that very craft yonder, as if my own fate were anchored with it in the storm. Nay, more, the guns, as they boomed over these waves, seemed challenging me to meet some new destiny, and grapple with it to the end, as I will—as I will!"

The young man stretched his arm towards the shadowy vessel, and his slight, almost boyish form swelled with excitement, while the dark brown eyes, usually bright and playful as a child's, darkened and grew larger with the sudden excitement that had come upon him.

The minister grasped his outstretched arm, and fixed a steady gaze on his face.

"And you also have been on the watch. Like me, you have come blindfold through the storm, searching into the future for that ghostly ship, where it spreads its shrouds of dull mist, and rocks upon the moaning sea. Has the spirit of prophecy touched your young life also, that you say these things with a shortened breath and white cheek, like one terrified or inspired?"

"I know not," said the young man; "but, like you, I have expected that visit long. In storm and darkness as it comes now have I seen it."

"How—where?" cried the old man, breathlessly.

"In my dreams or reveries, I know not which, it has floated often, shrouded as it is now, impalpable, a phantom of spars and fog."

"And you have seen this?"

"No, not with my eyes; it comes across my life like a ghost whose presence fills you with awe, but answers to no sense."

"Like a ghost which you would fain flee from and cannot. Is it thus the spirit deals with you also?"

"Nay, I would not flee, it arouses my courage. Even now my heart leaps toward yon vessel as if some precious thing lay in its hold which no one but myself may dare to claim."

"This is strange—marvellously strange," said the minister, forgetting himself in the enthusiasm of the young man.

"What is strange?"

"That we two should meet here for the first time in our lives, haunted by the same dreams, waiting together for the same revelation. Heaven forbid that this should prove a device of the evil one urging us on to perdition. I trust that you have not come forth without fasting and prayer, my young brother, for of a verity there is great need of both in these latter days."

The youth smiled, for solemn thoughts made but brief impressions on him, and the idea of quenching any one of his bright fancies by fasting or prayer amused him exceedingly, notwithstanding the earnestness of the old man's words.

The minister did not notice this gleam of levity, which would have shocked him to the soul, for his eyes were fascinated by the strange vessel, and he could not force them to look steadily on any other object.

While the two men stood together the wind had shifted, carrying off the rain. Through the gray mists left behind came a crimson glow from the sun, which was that moment sinking behind the heights and shooting its golden lances after the storm as it rolled slowly back upon the bosom of the ocean.

"It is gone," said the old man, mournfully, as the heavy clouds settled back upon the vessel; "the vapors have swallowed it up as usual. Let us descend the hill, brother."

"Not yet—not yet!" cried the youth. "See! the storm is breaking away, the sunset has drawn it seaward. Look, look how beautifully the vessel pencils itself against that break of blue in the sky."

The old man turned again, and clasping his hands, murmured, "It is neither phantom nor mist, but a ship of sturdy English oak, with masts and spars standing. Hush!—young man, see you nothing upon the deck?"

"Yes, surely, a group of persons standing together."

"No, not that, nearer the bow!"

"It is the form of a woman alone, with her arms folded and her face turned this way."

"Aye, the form of a woman with an outer garment of crimson, beneath which her arms are crossed as she looks westward, is it not?"

"Truly you have described the woman, for, though I cannot see her features, they are certainly turned this way."

"My sight is dim and will not serve me; tell me, stands the lady there yet?"

"Yes, yes—clearer and clearer the sunset gathers over the vessel, turning the angry waves to gold; the clouds are fringed with light, and grow luminous around her. Sir, I entreat you tell me—who is this woman?"

"Alas, I do not know."

"But the vessel, what is her name, from what port does she come?"

"How should I answer questions like these—I who never saw either the vessel or the woman till now, save as shadows drifting through the night. If yonder ship be, as it seems, of tough oak, and the woman a living soul, then is the revelation complete and I may seek rest, sure that the end will come."

The minister turned away as he spoke, and gathering the cloak around him prepared to descend toward the town, but the young man lingered.

"Stay, stay!" he cried; "the people on board that craft are mad! No boat could live in these waves, and yet they lower one to the water, and men jump in, flinging themselves over the side of the vessel. Come back, old man, she is preparing to descend. Her mantle gleams redly against the black side of the ship; she gathers it around her like the wings of a tropical bird, and settles down in the boat, which plunges and rocks like a wild animal tugging at its chains. They loosen the cable—a wave seizes upon the boat—it quivers upon the topmost crest—plunges—and—oh! heavens! A man poises himself on the bulwarks and leaps into the boiling ocean—the boat rocks heavily—turns to save him—they grasp at his garments and attempt to pull him in—now the boat is hurled onward and the poor man is lost—no! they fling a cable from the vessel—he snatches it and they draw him up the sides again. But the boat—another wave seizes it! Old man, old man, gather up your strength and follow me. It is for this we have been brought together."

The youth ran forward as he spoke, taking the nearest path to the shore. The minister followed after with a degree of energy that belied his years. Now and then they caught a glimpse of the boat, struggling feebly with the waves, and this gave them courage.

It was no slight distance that lay between the crest of that hill and the broken shore at its foot; but space seemed nothing to the impetuous young man. He rushed down the steep, calling out cheerfully for his companion to be careful of the inequalities over which he bounded like a deer, and at length stood panting on a curve of the beach, with his head uncovered and his wild, bright eyes roving over the harbor in search of the boat.

It was struggling up the harbor, beaten to and fro by the wind, which seemed to come from every point at once, and tossed fearfully by the waves that were wrangling together and leaping after it like ravenous wolves.

It was evident that the sailors had lost all control of the little craft, which fairly leaped in the water with a desperate strain, as if mad to escape from its howling enemies. Suddenly the wind took it on the crest of a wave, whirled it sheer about, and drove it on with fury towards the point where Parris and his young companion stood.

A chain of sunken rocks girded the shore in that place, breaking up the waves into innumerable whirlpools, and sending sheets of foam back upon the storm. It scarcely seemed a minute when the boat made a plunge into the midst of this terrible danger, and for an instant lay still, with the angry foam boiling around it, and the white faces of its occupants in full view. One man held the stump of a broken oar in his grasp, and with its splintered end beat against the waves, as if this frantic exertion would do them good. Another had lost his oar, and sat with his arms folded, calmly surveying the land, with his wild eyes sternly measuring the danger before him. Two other men toiled on with the strength of giants, but the oars were no better than rushes in their hands, and all their strength scarcely more than the flutter of dead tree boughs against a wind like that.

All this the two men upon the shore took in at a glance. Then the female, who had fallen forward upon her knees in the stern, absorbed their whole attention. The face was turned that way, white and contracted. Her hands were clasped and flung out with imploring anguish. Her eyes gleamed, her frame quivered and rocked to and fro. The winds had torn the bonnet from her head, and the waters dashing over the boat saturated her crimson mantle till it hung heavily around her, and turned purple under the scattered coils of her hair.

The boat gave a lurch: she started up, her white lips parted as if uttering desperate cries; but if any escaped her they were swallowed by the storm. Still their terrible eloquence broke forth in one wild gesture, as she flung her locked hands upwards, and sunk down again, shuddering and cowering into the bottom of the boat.

"She cannot live! she is lost!" cried the young man upon the beach, frantic almost as the woman in her peril. "Is there no rope, no help, nothing?"

"There is a God above," answered Parris, who stood with his gleaming eyes fixed upon the boat.

The youth dashed out his arms against the wind, maddened by these heavy words. Then, with a sudden cry, he darted forward and seized upon the old man's cloak.

"Give it me—give it me!" he cried, rending it from the minister's shoulders. "God expects his creatures to work when he sends danger—knot these strips together if you would not see all

those souls perish before our eyes. Work, old man! Save that woman, and I, too, will kneel down anywhere and give thanks to God honestly as you. Tie them firmly, and tighten the knots with hand and foot—see—as I do."

While he spoke, the youth tore the old man's cloak into long strips, using his delicate hands and white teeth simultaneously in the work; to these he added his own short cloak, rent into fragments with equal impetuosity.

The old man obeyed him, and began to knot the fragments together, while the youth pressed his foot upon each knot, drew it firmly, and proceeded to the next. A cable of some length was thus produced, which he tied around his waist, while he flung the other end to the minister, who, fired with sudden energy, followed the directions given him in stern silence.

"Now come with me into the surf and hold firm, or you will have another poor wretch to pray over," cried the young man. "Now, while that wave goes out—ah! she strikes!—she falls apart!—there! there!—that red heap in the foam!"

The youth plunged headlong into the waves. The old man stood waist deep, with the end of the cable grasped firmly and wrapped around his right arm. The winds dashed in his face and swept around his feet, striving to uproot them, but he stood firm; the waters might as well have beat against a pillar of iron. He felt the cable tighten with a jerk; for an instant he saw the youth upon the crest of a wave, then all was roar and darkness. A wave had rolled in and out again, straining at the cable till it almost broke the old man's arm. Another rush of water. The cable slackened, it was broken, or—wild hope—the waters which came roaring in might bring the youth in their bosom.

The old man turned and fled up the shore, shouting a thanksgiving as he felt the cable tighten in his hold. Like a monster that bears a child on its bosom, the wave rushed up, and surged back again, leaving two human beings struggling in its spent foam. A mass of dull crimson broke up through the white froth, and tresses of long hair floated on the foam wreaths.

The old man rushed back, seized upon these two lifeless creatures, and dragged them to dry land. His iron energies were all aroused now; other human beings were yet in the waves. He left the strange female and the youth, helpless as they were, and went back in search of other lives.

It took time, for the poor boatmen were struggling hard for life, and the storm fought them inch by inch, sweeping one man into eternity, and washing over the others every moment.

While feelings of humanity transformed this dreamer into an activity that would have astonished any one that knew him, the two persons he had already saved lay senseless on the bank of ferns where he had cast them down. It was not yet dark, and a black shadow from the hills rolled over them, making their white faces ghastly as death. The woman was the first to move; she struggled a little, clasping and unclasping her hands with quick spasms of pain. Then the violet tinge grew to a faint flush on her eyelids, and they quivered open, allowing two large gray eyes yet filled with dull affright to look upward with vague wonder upon the sky.

Directly other senses awoke from their lethargy. The boom of the ocean struck a shudder through all her frame; she began to tremble beneath the cold sweep of the winds, and felt vaguely about with her hand for something to fold about her.

Instead of the garment she sought, her hand fell across the pale face of the young man, and struck a fresh chill to her heart. She began to remember where she was, and what had happened. Her first thought was that one of the dead seamen had been cast to her side, but, for a time, she had no strength to rise up and look at the cold horror.

CHAPTER II.

THE OLD STONE HOUSE.

It must have been a death-chill, indeed, that could long restrain the warm heart of Barbara Stafford. Her first real impulse was to arise, and see if the poor man at her side was indeed dead.

The effort was a painful one, but, to her, will was strength. She lifted her two hands, parted the wet locks from her face, struggled up to a rest on one elbow, till her eyes fell on the pale, beautiful face of the young man. Slowly her lips parted, and her large, wild eyes filled with holy wonder. She was like a spirit just landed on the shores of eternity, doubting if her companion were in truth an angel.

She held the dripping hair back from her cheek with one hand, for the sight of that young face had arrested it there, and slowly over her singular features dawned a pale, soft light, that illuminated her countenance without leaving a tint of color there.

After a little, Barbara Stafford drew a deep, tremulous breath, that was long in coming, for the holy depths of her heart could not be broken up at once. She arose to a sitting posture, and lifted the head of the young man to her lap.

That moment Samuel Parris came up followed by the three sailors his courage had rescued.

"Ah, me!" said the old man, clasping his hands sorrowfully over the body. "The youth has gone to his last account; there is no life here."

The woman looked quickly around; a spasm of pain contracted her features when she saw the ocean, the dripping sailors, and that singular old man, stricken with sorrow, and moaning over the cold form in her arms. She was still of earth; this conviction left her gazing wistfully in the old man's face; she was trying to comprehend the connection of his words. At last, understanding them, she dropped her eyes sorrowfully downward again.

"He is gone of a verity," said Parris, dropping the hand of the youth from his fingers, which had been tremulously searching for the beat of a pulse. "He has gone, and those that have seen him shall see him no more."

Again Barbara Stafford lifted a gaze full of mournful intensity upon the old man's face.

"Dead," she echoed, in a voice that thrilled even that rough atmosphere with pathetic sweetness. "Dead! what, does he belong to that shore and I to this? Oh, would to God I had died also!"

Her head bent slowly downward as she spoke. With her two hands she began smoothing the wet hair back from that pale forehead. Then, as if overcome with unaccountable tenderness, she bent down her mouth and kissed it slowly, lingeringly, as the first sigh of returning life had left her bosom.

Up to that moment the young man had lain frozen lifeless, without a beat of the pulse or a flutter of the breath. As that woman's lips touched his forehead, a shudder ran visibly through what seemed marble a moment before, and a low cry broke from his lips. Life had come back to him with a pang either of pain or pleasure; no one could tell which.

"Behold," said Samuel Parris with enthusiasm, "truly our Lord has worked a miracle in behalf of this youth; for of a verity there was no life in him when his hand rested in mine a moment since."

Barbara Stafford had withdrawn her lips from his forehead; but, as his quivering eyelids opened, the look of strange tenderness with which she bent over him penetrated to every fibre of his heart. The same holy expression that had crept over her features a little time before, came to his also, bringing warmth and color, almost a smile with it.

"At last!" he murmured, like one just aroused from a dream, "at last you have come."

The words were uttered in a low murmur, but Barbara Stafford gathered them into her heart unshared by the men about her; they heard a faint moan, which spoke of returning life, nothing more.

By this time the whole group began to feel the cold insupportably. The old man, without cloak or coat, shook in all his limbs, while the sailors could hardly stand, so fierce had been their struggle with the waves.

"Tell me," said Samuel Parris, addressing one of the sailors, "to whom were you conveying this lady?—for such I take her to be."

"We do not know," answered the man; "she gave us a guinea a-piece to set her upon one of the wharves yonder before sunset; that is all we can tell you of the matter."

"Lady," said Parris, addressing Barbara directly, "we must find speedy shelter or this new-born life will go out again."

The lady lifted her face; it was cramped and so cold that a violet tinge shadowed the mouth and lay underneath the eyes.

"Yes, he is very cold," she said, gathering her wet mantle over the youth; "have you nothing else?"

"Arouse yourself, lady," said the old man after a moment's perplexed thought; "to remain here would be death to us all. It is impossible for you or this youth to reach the town to-night. Around this curve of the hill is a farm-house, where you can have rest. It is but a brief walk."

"Let us go before this ice touches his heart!" she said, earnestly. "I can walk; carry him among you. Which way lies the house?"

Her teeth chattered as she spoke; but even this chill gave way to her resolution.

Two of the sailors lifted the young man between them, and moved slowly forward, following the lady, who leaned on the minister's arm. After the first few steps the youth planted his feet more firmly on the earth, and, though staggering from exhaustion, insisted on supporting the lady, walking on one side while she kept the arm of the minister on the other.

At last a farm-house of stone, low-roofed and sheltered in a hollow of the hills, presented itself. Samuel Parris knocked upon the door with his knuckles two or three times, when a voice bade him "come in." He pulled a thong which lifted a wooden latch inside, and entered a low room in which a woman sat alone spinning on one of those small flax-wheels with which our mothers in the olden time used to fill up the leisure hours obtained from the general housework.

She was a spare, not to say gaunt woman, a little on the sunny side of mid age; not exactly austere of countenance, but with a certain gravity which was in that epoch considered an outward sign of experimental religion.

The woman arose in evident surprise when her strange guests entered. Pushing back the spinning-wheel with her foot, she stood bolt upright, waiting to know what had brought them under her roof. Mr. Parris stepped forward, and told his story in a few terse words, during which the good wife was unbanding her wheel and removing the checked apron which had protected her dress while at work.

"Walk in and make yourself to home, ma'am," said the housewife, opening the door of an inner room and revealing a fire-place filled with pine branches which looked drearily cold that heavy day. "The hired man is out, but if one of these sailor men will bring in some wood from the yard, I'll get some pitch pine knots and have a fire in no time." Without more ceremony, the woman went to work, and in less than half an hour Barbara Stafford was in a warm bed, with a bowl of herb tea smoking on a little round table by her pillow, while her young preserver lay in a smaller room equally well provided for.

For Samuel Parris and the sailors the good wife insisted on providing a comfortable supper; and gave up her own bed to the minister, while she found room for the unfortunate seamen in a loft of the house. In order to accomplish this, she was sadly put about for blue and white yarn coverlets with which to restore them to warmth, but stripped every bed in the house, and, when that resource was exhausted, brought out all her linsey-woolsey skirts and aprons as a substitute.

Early in the morning Norman Lovel was aroused from a deep slumber by the hand of Samuel Parris laid gently on his shoulder. The youth started up, shook back his hair which the dampness had left crisp and curling over his forehead, and cast an astonished look around, which ended in a long, half-angry gaze at his visitor.

"Oh!" he said, sweeping a hand once or twice across his eyes, then turning his face toward the old man, with a smile.

"This is no dream, I suppose—though you are here with the roar of waters too—a minute since I was fighting them like a tiger; but this is a feather bed, and you stand upon a good oak floor. Is it not so?"

"Yes, thanks to the Holy of holies, we are safe!"

"But that ship—the boat—the lady—tell me what is real and what was dreaming."

"We have had a strange meeting, my young friend, and have struggled together in behalf of human life, peradventure with success."

The youth again swept a hand over his face. "Yes, yes. I remember a ship in the distance—a boat full of people rocking in the foam—a madman jumping overboard—I—you in the waves. Tell me, old man, was this real?"

"Truly it was."

"And the lady—this house—the woman at her spinning-wheel, who brought herb tea to my bed. That lady—me, good friend, for I remember all—how fares the lady?"

"She is safe—thanks to a merciful Providence—and sleeping profoundly in the next room, at least such was the report of Goody Brown, in the kitchen yonder, ten minutes ago. She must not be disturbed. I had not broken in upon your sleep, either, but the sun is up, and perchance there is some one in town who may be grieved at your absence. You must have friends, and I would cheerfully bear them tidings of your safety."

"Friends!" cried the youth, starting up. "Indeed, there is one who will have wept her eyes out by this time. I pray you, sir, hand me such garments as the storm has left. We must start together for the town."

"Willingly," answered the minister, bringing the desired garments in from the kitchen fire. "But put on your garments in haste, for the morning wears; meanwhile I will speak a word with our host."

Half an hour after, the minister and his young friend quitted the farm-house, leaving the woman they had saved in the deep slumber of exhaustion.

CHAPTER III.

THE MINISTER.

Norman Lovel and the old minister walked on toward the town in company. The earth was still wet and heavy after the storm, and a sullen moan came up from the depths of the far-off ocean, which filled the bright morning as with a wail of sorrow.

But the old man was strong, and the youth full of that elasticity which springs more from the soul

than the body. If either of them felt any evil effect from the storm, the vigorous speed at which they walked bore no evidence of it.

For some time they moved on in silence. The minister seemed lost in a reverie; the youth was thinking, with strange interest, on the lady he had left behind.

They came down upon the shore where the accident of the previous night had happened. A fragment of the boat lay where it had ploughed in upon the sand, burying itself so firmly that the waves had failed to draw it back again, and so had lost their plaything.

The two men paused a moment, looking at the broken timbers. The youth shuddered.

"To think," he said, looking wistfully at his companion,—"to think that these treacherous bits of wood alone kept her from the deep, and I—you—it seems all like a dream."

"It seems like the great mercy it was," said the minister, lifting his eyes to heaven; "for of a verity we were but as two rushes in the midst of the waves, frail like the timbers at our feet, and as easily broken. Believe me, young man, God has protected this poor lady with his especial providence."

"Indeed I believe it," replied the youth, lifting his cap, for a momentary feeling of devotion came over him; "I most devoutly believe it; as a token, see how the beautiful morning smiles upon the waters. The harbor seems scattered with rose leaves. The very sands at our feet are turning to gold."

"Truly, God smiles upon us," said the minister, looking abroad with an enthusiasm deep as that which flashed in the eyes of the youth, and far more concentrated. "But we linger here unadvisedly; the glory of a morning like this rests not in one place. Let us move on; the chimneys over yonder are beginning to vomit forth smoke, soon the town will be astir."

The youth did not hear him, but darted down to the edge of the water, where a strip of ribbon tinted a spent foam wreath with its blue. He seized upon the ribbon, shook it, scattering the foam like snow-flakes with the motion, and came back to where the minister stood.

"It must be hers," he said, revealing a locket of chased gold, with a broad lock of hair white as snow, knotted with pearls upon the back. "It must be hers."

Parris reached forth his hand, as if to take the trinket, but the youth gathered the ribbon hastily in his palm, and clasped his fingers over it.

"We have no right to examine it, knowing, as we do, the owner," he said, hastily. "The spring is closed. It is evidently some portrait."

"But the water may have penetrated to the painting and will destroy it."

"True, true!" The youth, still reluctant to give up the locket, touched the spring, and with difficulty opened it.

The water had indeed penetrated the clasp, but a crystal underneath protected the portrait, which was that of a middle-aged man, evidently of the highest rank, for his dress was of the most costly material, and enriched with several jewelled orders which were easily distinguished as belonging to the English court.

"It is a strange face," said Parris, bending his head to examine the portrait, "hard as iron and full of worldly pride. Young man, I have seen this face before; but where—when?"

"How can I tell?" answered the youth, who was gazing wistfully at the face.

"Yes," he said, after a moment; "it is hard as iron, but a grand countenance, nevertheless. That man would have died for an idea."

"Died for an idea!" repeated the minister; "how many have done that, yet the idea a false one? But where have I seen that face?"

The youth covered the portrait with its gold again, and the two walked on more rapidly for the time they had lost. All at once young Lovel stopped as if some important idea had flashed upon him.

"Sir," he said, eagerly, "did I not hear your name yesterday, or have I dreamed it over night—Samuel Parris—was it in truth from your own lips I heard the name?"

"Even so, young man."

"Samuel Parris, minister of the gospel in Salem?"

"Even to that honored post the Lord and his people have appointed me."

"One question more—only one—then forgive me if I am too bold. There is a young lady at our house—that is, at the house of Governor Phipps—her name is Parris also, and her father is minister of a congregation in Salem—tell me if this fair maiden is your child."

"My child!" cried the old man, lifting up his face to heaven with a look of exultant thanksgiving; "yes, Elizabeth is my child, the first-born of that beautiful one who is a leader among God's angels. Ask me if the heart which lies in my bosom—the brain that thinks—the blood that beats in

these veins are mine, and I will answer, Yea. But not so closely do these things encompass me as does my love for Elizabeth, the babe that my young wife left in my embrace as a blessing and a comfort, before she was enrolled among the just made perfect."

The young man drew a quick breath; the enthusiasm and energy of the minister's speech, so uncalled for by the simple question he had put, startled him not a little. Besides this, other anxieties sprang up in his mind, and knowing the man with whom he had been cast so strangely by his true name, he was struck dumb with the rush of emotions which this knowledge aroused.

"Her father," he said inly; "her father—and is this our first meeting?"

"My child, my child!" cried the old man, forgetting his companion, while his eager eyes were turned towards the town. "Have I not fasted, watched, prayed, nay, sent her forth from beneath my roof that this great love may not be as a snare, and stand between me and my God—between me and the angel that has gone before! Now, when I have been two whole days within sight of the roof that covers her, holding down my heart, and fasting with a soul-fast—the very mention of her name, even by a stranger, sends the breath in quick gushes to my lips, and I tremble like a little child."

The old man stood still upon the shore, and the youth paused with him, gazing up into his face with a look of strange sympathy.

"I am grieved, I am very sorry!" he said, scarcely knowing that he had spoken at all.

"God forgive you, young man, but you have unsealed this heart to its depths. The weakness is still here; instead of singing, 'Hosannah to the Lord,' it cries out, 'My child, my child!' Pray as I will—fast as I will—her name always comes first, and thus I droop before the Lord full of terror and self-reproach, an unfaithful servant, still keeping back a portion of my master's treasures."

"Forgive me!" pleaded the youth, struck with sudden remorse for the sorrows he had evidently excited.

"Forgive *you*," answered the old Christian, for such he undoubtedly was. "What have you done that I should claim the power to forgive? It is my own heart, which, strive as I may, will cling to its idol."

"But I have given you pain."

The old man bent his eyes on that ingenuous face, and before he lifted them again they were full of tears; those cold watery tears that come up like melted ice from the heart.

"Ah!" exclaimed the youth, "now I see a resemblance, vague, hardened, but still I should know that Elizabeth Parris was your daughter."

The minister's face brightened like a lamp suddenly illuminated. He reached forth his hand, grasped that of the young man, and his features quivered all over with the gush of feeling that swelled within him.

"Is she—is the dear child indeed so like her father? And you know her—you have seen her, perhaps; tell me is she well—does she grieve at the thoughts of home—does she pine for a sight of her father?"

He waited for no answer, but heaped question upon question with breathless eagerness.

The youth looked at him with amazement. The intense affection which transfigured those stern features exhibited itself so unexpectedly, that for the moment he was speechless.

The old man noticed this with a deprecating movement.

"She was the daughter of my old age!" he said, with ineffable humility, while his shoulders drooped, and his face bent towards his breast, "she looks so like her young mother."

"She is beautiful as an angel!" exclaimed Lovel with enthusiasm.

"She is like her mother!" murmured the minister, clasping his hands and looking wistfully out into the distance. "Ah, so like her mother!"

"No wonder you loved her mother, then!" said the youth, drawing close to the old man with prompt sympathy.

"Loved her—oh, God forgive me—how I did love her, young man! The very daisies upon her grave are like the stars of heaven to me, and she has been dead since Elizabeth was a babe."

"Oh, no wonder you look so old and care-worn; it must be like burying one's own soul, to see the mother of one's child die."

The old man did not answer, but his hands interlocked more firmly. The feelings swelling in his bosom were too painful for utterance. How far the intense affection, which death could not diminish, had approached insanity, it would be impossible to say; but all unconsciously, the young man had made the minister quiver in every nerve by the genuine sympathy he had given.

They walked on together, and entered the streets of Boston in company. When they reached the heart of the town, the old man stopped reluctantly, reaching forth his hand with a piteous smile.

"Farewell, young man," he said, "we may never meet again, but—"

"Nay, nay," cried the youth, blushing scarlet, "not meet again—God forbid that you speak sooth in this. Indeed, indeed—"

But the minister wrung his hand, turned suddenly down a cross street, and disappeared before the sentence was finished.

Young Lovel looked after him for a moment, made a step to follow the course he had taken, then returning slowly, walked on.

CHAPTER IV.

EARLY IN THE MORNING.

The town of Boston had little of its present compactness in those days. True, there existed streets and lanes, and wharves which served as barriers to the harbor, but green turf lay richly where slabs of granite form the sidewalk now, the streets wound in and out as they had been trodden broader and broader from the forest paths, and around the houses were yards and pleasant gardens, with carpets of green turf in which the wild flowers still lingered. The dwellings were mostly of wood; low, broad, and heavy, with cumbrous adornments; coats of arms surmounted the doors, cut out with the broad-axe and chisel, and heavy wooden cornices loomed over the front, betraying a surplus of timber and a lamentable scarcity of architectural art. Among these more imposing buildings, houses of hewn logs, and even ruder cabins were scattered, but the trees, the grass, and many a clinging vine, gave to the infant city a picturesque beauty which can never belong to the brick, granite, and mortar which have taken so many imposing forms since. But even then Boston had its fashionable street, and its aristocratic neighborhood.

To this portion of the town young Lovel bent his steps, and soon came out upon the green lanes of North Boston, which was in fact a wide area, where the palaces of the New World loomed proudly among the grand old forest trees, which softened their stateliness with touches of natural beauty.

The most imposing of these mansions, conspicuous for its three stories, and a certain attempt at architectural beauty, was the residence of Sir William Phipps, Captain-General and Governor-in-chief of New England. Those who knew the sheep-tender of Kennebec, the younger brother of twenty-six children, who even in his boyhood turned haughtily from the occupation of his father when proposed to him, and predicted of himself *that he was born to greater matters*, might have wondered as they stood before that stately dwelling, and saw in its vastness and its ornaments a fulfilment of the sheep-boy's prophecy. In all New England there was not a dwelling like that, or a man so powerful as its owner. Yet Sir William Phipps, titled, wealthy, and almost a sovereign, had not yet passed his prime of life; while he was comparatively a young man, all this great fortune had been wrought out by his own stern energies.

The youth stood for a moment in front of the mansion, gazing wistfully at one of the second story windows. It was very early in the morning; too early for any one in the gubernatorial mansion to be stirring, but he was disappointed to find the curtains drawn and the shutters partially closed. Evidently, the youth had expected some one to be watching for him, rendered miserable by his strange absence over night.

But every thing was still, even to the great elm-tree that swept its branches over one end of the house, and the rose bushes that clustered along the terraces. The youth did not like to claim admittance till some of the servants were astir, so walked up and down the green lane, always advancing toward the house, till you would have fancied him studying its architecture; but his eyes always wandered to one window, and that had nothing but a stone coping and an arched top to command his admiration. Still the gubernatorial mansion was well worth examining, if it were only to see how rudely the arts crept first into the New World from the mother land. Massive stone pilasters separated the windows to the second story; two long rows of windows ran between that and the roof, all set in stone, and slightly arched. The central window, with elaborate blinds and lateral sashes, carried up the outline of that ponderous wooden portico to the still more ponderous cornices on the roof. This elaborate attempt at architecture made the governor's house the show place of all New England. The very children of Boston held their breath with awe of its grandeur, and were half afraid to pluck dandelions in the green lane after it was built.

But young Lovel had seen the mansion too often for any feeling of this kind. The window still remained shrouded in its muslin curtains, though the birds in the elm branches had burst forth into gushes of music that might have charmed an angel from the brightest nook in paradise, and the rising sun came smiling over the terraces, turning each dew-drop, trembling on its blade of grass, into a diamond, rendering every thing so beautiful that slumber seemed an absolute sin.

"They take it coolly enough," muttered the youth impatiently, turning his steps to the broad gravel walk which crossed the terraces and reached the long, sloping steps that led to the portico. "I might crunch this white gravel under my feet forever, and she'd sleep on. No matter, I may as well take it easily as they do; I might be in the bottom of the harbor for any thing they

know, or care either."

As he muttered these words, Lovel crossed the terrace, and stood between the fluted pillars of the porticoes which rose proudly over him, crowned with Corinthian leaves, and garlanded with rudely carved flowers, that ran up over the massy cornices, supplying the deficiency of family armorial bearings. But in his waywardness he had lost sight of the window, and so walked back upon the terrace again, pretending, even to himself, that he wished to gather a handful of blush roses while the leaves were wet with that diamond light. But his heart beat unsteadily, and he looked upward every moment as he broke the blossoms impetuously from their bushes. This impatience at the stillness broke at last upon the gentle flowers. He dashed them to the turf, shaking all the dew from their hearts. Then he rushed back to the portico, raised the ponderous knocker, and prepared to swing it against the great brass head which seemed to smile defiance beneath the blows ready to be rained upon it. But his hand was arrested by a sound within the house, and, softly relinquishing the knocker, he threw himself upon one of the long seats that ran down each side of the portico, eagerly watching the door.

There was a sound of bolts cautiously drawn, as if a person within were careful of making a noise. Then a leaf of the great oaken door opened, and with its glittering knocker wheeled inward; while the head and shoulders of a young girl appeared bending over the other half, with a wistful, eager look that filled the young man with repentance at a single glance.

"Elizabeth!"

She heard and saw him—struggled eagerly with the lower bolts, flung the last leaf of the door open, and sprang toward him. Then recollecting herself, she retreated a step, and covering her face with both hands, burst into a passion of tears that shook her slender form from head to foot.

Then the young man's heart smote him afresh, for he saw by the withered roses in her hair, the fine yellow lace that shaded her arms, and her dress of flowered silk, that the poor girl had not been in bed that night. She had been waiting, watching, praying no doubt for him.

"Elizabeth, dear Elizabeth! will you not look on me? Are you not glad that I am safe?"

She could not speak, but trembled all over like the leaves of a vine when the wind shakes it.

"Elizabeth!"

She took down her hands and turned her eyes on his face—those large deer-like eyes full of tenderness and shame.

"Elizabeth! is this for me—I am safe, and very, very happy, for this terror, these blushes. You would not look this way if you cared nothing about a poor fellow!"

She began to tremble again, and shrunk back with a red glow burning over her neck, and up to her temples beneath the dusky shadows of her hair.

"Elizabeth, darling, speak to me," said the youth, trembling himself beneath the sweet joy of the moment, and approaching her with his face all a-glow.

"Don't, don't! I am sick with shame. I did not know—I did not hope—they told us you had gone down to the water, out in a fishing-boat in the midst of the storm last night, that—that—"

"And you believed it—you grieved a little?"

"I feared every thing!"

"No—not altogether, for you see I am alive. But you have suffered; your eyes are heavy, your cheek white again. Oh, tell me, was it trouble, was it anxiety on my account? Do not fear to say yes—I will not presume—I will not half believe it—only let me have the happiness of thinking so, for one little moment."

She lifted her face, and the dusky shame which blushes usually carry to the eyes, died out, leaving them soft and clear as a mountain spring.

"Was it for you, Norman, for you that I have wept, and prayed, and suffered? Ah me, what agonies of fear! Why ask? you know it," here the little graceful coquetries of her sex would break in, for she began to get ashamed again—"for are you not a fellow-creature out of the church, unregenerated and worshipping——"

"You, and every thing you worship," cried the youth, seizing her hand, which he devoured with his eyes, but dared not touch with his lips. "Never mind whether I am fit to be drowned or not; give me something worth living for; tell me that one day when I am wiser and you a little older, not much, because a good deal can be done in that way after the ceremony; but tell me that you will be my wife."

His face was all a flush of crimson now, but hers grew pale as death; the last word—that holy, beautiful word—made her shiver from heart to limb. He had been too impetuous; Elizabeth Parris had never dared to think of the mystery he brought so broadly before her. Her pure maidenly thoughts had hovered round it timidly, as a shadow haunts a white lily, but she was content with the perfume, without daring to touch the flower.

"Your wife, your wife!" she murmured, and the words fell from her lips with silvery slowness, like

drops from a fountain. "Your wife, and I not yet fifteen!"

"But you will think of it. I am a sad fellow to frighten you so; a sad, wicked fellow, but you will forgive it, Elizabeth; you know, out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh."

He saw her sweet lips quivering into a smile, and forgave himself at once.

"There now, you see I can quote Scripture a little, so forgive me this once. I love you till my heart aches with the joy of it. Think of this—promise me that you will."

Promise to think of it! alas, poor child, when would she think of any thing else!

CHAPTER V.

SIR WILLIAM AND HIS WIFE.

Probably Elizabeth Parris would not have sat down in the portico, but the night's watching had made her faint. When Norman Lovel darted off to gather up the roses he had plucked, and so rudely scattered, she sank down, watching him dreamily as he cast them away a second time, and gathered fresh ones, unmindful, poor child, that this might be a type of his character, and those poor flowers of her own fate.

He came back, bringing a rich harvest of blush roses—he never gave any other to Elizabeth—with both hands wet with the dew which rained out of their hearts.

"Come," he said, heaping them on the seat by her side, "let us gather up a bouquet for the breakfast-table. Lady Phipps loves flowers fresh from the thicket."

Elizabeth Parris started up with a look of sudden dismay.

"Lady Phipps! and I have known that you are safe all this time without telling her—how selfish, how cruel! It was almost morning before she went to her room. I am sure she has not slept."

As she spoke, Elizabeth pushed open the door, and in an instant Norman saw her gliding up the broad staircase which led to the second story. He followed her into the vestibule, and began pacing up and down, turning his eyes now on the floor, tessellated with lozenges of black oak and red cedar, now upon the staircase, hoping to see the young girl descend again.

But, instead of this, an imperious knock sounded from the door which he had but partially closed; at the same instant it was pushed open, and a gentleman strode through with a dull, weary step, and walked heavily up-stairs.

Norman was in the lower end of the vestibule, and the surprise of this sudden entrance kept him motionless. Recovering himself, he came forward, but only in time to catch another glimpse of the governor as he entered his wife's chamber.

Elizabeth had found Lady Phipps asleep, and, not daring to wake her, stole off to her own room; but the heavy step of Sir William possessed more power than her fairy tread, and the moment it sounded on the floor Lady Phipps started up and inquired wildly if the young secretary was found.

The governor shook his head. Saddened by his gesture Lady Phipps fell back upon her pillow, and, turning her face to the wall, fell into a leaden silence.

A knock, and a sweet, pleading voice asking entrance.

"It is Elizabeth Parris. Poor child, she has spent a terrible night," said Lady Phipps. "Have you no comfort to give her?"

"None!" said the stern man, with a quiver of the voice. "He was seen going to the shore with another person, directly after a boat was engulfed in the breakers—nothing could have lived."

"And who was that other one?" cried the lady, struck by the hesitation in her husband's voice.

Sir William arose, and came close to the bed, afraid to speak aloud with that young creature at the door.

"It was Samuel Parris."

The lady uttered a low cry, and buried her face in the pillow. Her noble heart was shaken as if it had been her own father who was lost.

Again that knock at the door, and now a low, almost harsh voice, bade the girl come in.

Sir William was hardening himself into composure, that he might tell the young girl of her bereavement, with the firmness that became his manhood.

Elizabeth entered timidly, as she always did, but her face beamed with happiness.

Lady Phipps looked up shocked to the heart.

"Elizabeth!" The lady sat up in her bed and held forth her arms tenderly as if the girl had been her own child.

"He is here—he is safe—he—"

The young girl fell down upon her knees by the bed, pressing soft kisses on the lady's hand.

Sir William Phipps arose and went out. It was seldom that his face betrayed any of the deep feelings of his nature, but as he went forth, that firm mouth quivered, and he turned from one object to another, searching eagerly for something.

"Sir William."

The governor gave an imperceptible start, controlled himself, and reaching forth his hand—the large, firm hand, which had known much toil in its day—buried that of the young man in its grasp.

"I hope that Lady Phipps was not alarmed by my absence," said Norman, a little chilled by this composure.

"I cannot quite say that with truth, young man," replied the governor; "but you will explain all at breakfast. From the state of your garments I should judge that you had at least been in the water."

"Yes; but you see I came out safe—and that brave old minister, also, Samuel Parris. I wish you could have seen him, Sir William: he was a perfect Neptune."

"Nay," answered the governor, with a smile that transfigured his face from its usual grave expression into something that made the heart leap towards him, "that is a heathenish name for one of God's ministers; but if your danger, whatever it prove, was shared by Samuel Parris, it must have been in a good cause. I am glad, boy, that your night has been spent with this devout man."

With these words Sir William passed on, and entered his closet, apparently casting all thought of the youth from his mind. But no sooner was he alone and the door closed, than he fell upon his knees by the great oaken chair, which had belonged to his old father on the Kennebec. There, with bent head, he poured forth the thanksgiving that filled his soul, so earnestly that his frame shook, and his clasped hands unwove themselves, covering his face, while the tears that sprang to his eyes stole softly down the palms.

It was only when alone with his God that the strong man became like a little child—alone, with the bolts drawn, and his face bowed over the oaken seat where his father had prayed with the mother and her score of children by his side.

Governor Phipps joined his family at breakfast, sedate, calm, and with that dignity of manner which may well accompany a sense of high power. Lady Phipps could not so well conceal the traces of an anxious and sleepless night. Her eyes were heavy, her cheeks pale, and the usual exquisite arrangement of her morning toilet was a good deal disturbed. The robe of dark chintz was looped back, a little unevenly, from the full dimity underskirt, and the crimson ribbon that bound the snowy little cap to her head was knotted in a bow, slightly verging towards the left temple, instead of lying flat upon the glossy black hair over the forehead as it should have done.

Besides these little indications of unrest, the lady would draw a deep breath, now and then, like one who had just recovered from a fright, and she glanced towards the young secretary from time to time, with a look of devout thankfulness.

Dear lady, her life had been so full of happiness, so rich in prosperity, that the danger of one she loved as if he had been her own son clung around her yet. She grew paler as he told over his strange adventure on the shore, and seemed greatly interested in the old man who had been his companion.

He did not mention the name of this person, and passed over the conversation on the beach entirely, dwelling only on that which marked their encounter on the heights, when the storm was raging. Some intuition told him that the young girl, whose eyes dwelt so wistfully on his, would be pained to know that her father had been for two days within sight of the roof that covered her without attempting to enter beneath it.

Governor Phipps seemed unusually interested in the events he described, and though the youth talked on gayly, a superstitious feeling crept over the party as he gave a vivid picture of the spectral appearance of the ship. But when he came to speak of Barbara Stafford, his speech faltered, a husky feeling clove to his tongue, and it was only by questions that they gained a knowledge of the strange woman.

"I will ride over to the farm-house to-morrow," said Lady Phipps, with prompt hospitality; "if she is a gentlewoman, as you say, Norman, we can be of service. She must have letters of introduction that will warrant us in asking her here."

Governor Phipps looked suddenly up as his wife spoke and his countenance changed. It was so unusual to see him in the least disturbed that his lady remarked it with some anxiety.

"Are you ill, Sir William?"

"I do not know. A strange feeling seized upon me for the moment; a faintness—a sort of shock—it is nothing."

Lady Phipps looked around for some cause.

"It may be this plateau of flowers, they are unusually fragrant this morning," she said, looking around for a servant to carry away the roses, which Norman had gathered, from the table.

"Let me—let me!" cried Elizabeth Parris, seizing upon the flowers, and carrying them off to her room. She would not have had a leaf touched by one of the servants for the universe.

Norman followed her with his eyes, smiled with quiet satisfaction, when he saw her stoop fondly and inhale the breath of the roses as she went up-stairs, then, leaning towards Lady Phipps, he said, in a low voice,

"The old man was her father!"

"What! Samuel Parris? and pass by this house?" exclaimed the lady in astonishment. "This is a strange thing, Sir William."

"It is strange—very strange," answered the governor, rising. "I will seek our old friend and reason with him."

"And I," said his wife, "will seek out the stranger. Goody Brown is a kind woman, but the poor lady may not obtain all she needs in the farm-house. Did you hear her name, Lovel?"

"No," answered the youth, with unaccountable hesitation; "but you will find it embroidered on this handkerchief, which I picked up on the beach in coming along. The cambric is wet and drenched with sand, but you can perhaps make it out."

Lady Phipps took the handkerchief and examined the embroidery. "A coronet," she muttered: "this looks well. But the name—B—Barbara—Barbara Stafford. Stafford—that is a good old English name. Sir William, I will surely go and see her."

CHAPTER VI.

A GUIDE TO THE FARM-HOUSE.

The next day after her spectral shrouds were first seen in the harbor, the good ship came up to her wharf. Among the first passengers that landed was a dark, foreign-looking man, apparently somewhat under thirty years of age. He stood upon the wharf with a small leathern bag in his hand, as if uncertain where to go; but his eyes, black as midnight and splendid as diamonds, turned excitedly from object to object, as if he took a vivid interest in every thing that surrounded him. At last they fell on one of the sailors who had helped Barbara Stafford down the side of the ship that stormy afternoon. With an eager step he approached the man.

"Have you heard? did the boatmen bring her safe through the storm?" he questioned. "The lady—the lady I am speaking of. Did she suffer?—is she safe and well?"

The man laughed. "She is safe enough in Goody Brown's farm-house," he said, "and well, too, if the souse she got in the water didn't give her a cold. But it was an awful tough piece of work, I tell you. If it hadn't been for that old man, who didn't seem to have so much in him, for he was thin as a shad, they would all have gone to Davie's locker, sure as a gun. You never in your born days saw such a tussel as they had with the breakers the boatmen say."

"Then she is safe and well; for that God be thanked," said the stranger, turning away. "What more have I to ask or do?"

He spoke sadly, and his fine eyes filled with mist. Then he turned, and giving the man a piece of money, asked him to show the way to Goody Brown's farm-house.

After dropping the crown piece into his pocket, the man turned up the wharf, and walked on side by side with the stranger.

"Seems to me you're a stranger in these parts; never was to Boston afore, I reckon?" he said, dropping into an old habit of asking questions with unconscious impertinence.

"You are mistaken. I have been here before," answered the stranger, and a wild fire lighted up his face. "Years ago I left that wharf a—a—but I have come back. The world shall know that I have come back."

The sailor looked at him with open astonishment.

"Why what on earth are you so mad about I should like to know?" he said. "I hain't done nothing to set you off in a tantrum, have I now?"

The stranger smiled.

"You have done nothing," he said, in a voice so gentle that the man stared again, bewildered by

the sudden change. "I was talking to myself rather than you."

"That's a queer idea, but I've hearn people do sich things afore; it was in foreign parts, though. We talk like folks in Boston now I tell you, straight out and up to the mark. But forriners will be forriners, there's no helping it. Now what is it you want up to Goody Brown's, if I may be so bold? Is the lady up there any relation of yourn?"

Again the stranger smiled.

"My friend, you are rather bold."

"Ain't I," answered the man with great self-complacency. "That's the way we Bosting folks come to know more than other people. Ain't afeared to ask questions. Every man comes right up to his duty on that pint without flinching. But you hain't told me yet if the lady is a relation or not?"

"No, she is not related to me."

"Only come over in the same ship? I reckoned so, seeing as she was a cabin passenger and you al'es kept so snug in the steerage. Never saw you on deck in my life till long after dark. Don't think she ever sot eyes on you the hull vi'age?"

"No, she never did."

"Now that's something like; can answer a fair question when you want to, can't you? But what do you go and see her now for? Couldn't you a got acquainted on ship board if you had wanted ter?"

"Who told you that I did wish to see her?" answered the stranger, a little impatiently. "Not I, that is certain."

"Then it ain't her you're going to see?" answered the man, in an injured tone, as if his time had been cruelly trifled with. "Well, maybe it's Goody Brown you're related to, arter all. Don't look like it, though, but stranger things than that has happened. She has a sight of cousins in the old country."

The stranger grew impatient. He turned upon the man almost fiercely, his eyes flashing fire, his teeth gleaming through the lips lifted from them in a haughty curve.

"Be quiet, man, you offend me."

"Wheu!" ejaculated the sailor, picking up a bit of shingle from the ground, and searching for a jackknife which jingled against the silver crown in his pocket, "getting riley, now, ain't you?"

The fellow's imperturbability was so comical that no resentment could withstand it. The stranger's face cleared up, and he watched his companion with disdainful curiosity, who began whittling his shingle as he walked along.

"Goody Brown isn't your nigh relation, then," he persisted, whittling on with infinite composure; "cousin to your par or mar, mebby?"

"Goody Brown is nothing to me, understand that!" cried the stranger, at last harrassed into submission; "but I am weary of salt food, and want a draught of fresh milk. This is the nearest farm-house, you tell me; so I ask you to lead me there."

"And you don't want to see the lady?"

"No!"

"And she ain't nothing particular to you?"

"Nothing in any way."

"Well, now, I never did! Why couldn't you say so, to once?" cried the man, in a tone of plaintive reproach. "What is the use of taking so many bites of a cherry I want ter know?"

"Is that the farm-house?" inquired the stranger, pointing to the low stone dwelling sheltered in noble trees that overlooked the harbor.

"Yes, that's Goody Brown's, I reckon."

The stranger stopped short.

"You may return now. I can make my way alone."

The sailor seemed a little disappointed, but he kept on whittling, and only answered:

"Wal, jest as you're a mind ter; but I kinder reckon you'll miss it in the long run."

"Miss it, how?"

"Oh, I don't mean nothing particular, only the streets of Boston are rather sarpentine for strangers, and I kinder feel as if I hadn't more 'en half arned my money yet."

The stranger fell into thought a moment and then answered cheerfully:

"You are right, my good fellow, I shall want a guide. Stay here and take charge of my bag till I come back; then we will return to the town together."

The sailor sat down on a rock, and placing the leathern bag at his feet kept on whittling with an energy that would have seemed spiteful but for his unmoved features. The traveller left him and walked forward toward the farm-house. Goody Brown was in her hand-loom weaving a piece of linen from the yarn she had spun a year before. Her rather trim feet, cased in calf-skin shoes and yarn stockings, even as her daily toil could make them, were rising and falling on the treadles with monotonous jerks. She leaned over from her seat in front of the huge loom, throwing her shuttle through the web with such earnest industry that every ten minutes the sharp click of the turning cloth-beam proclaimed her progress. Directly the headles—or harness, as she called it—would groan and struggle from the renewed tread of her feet, while the flight of the shuttle, the bang of the laith, and the thud of the treadles made such household music as the women of New England gloried in. She was busy fitting a quill into her shuttle when a strange form darkened the open door. But her heart was in her work, and she drew the thread through the eye of her shuttle with a quick breath and a motion of the tongue before she looked directly that way. Then she saw a remarkably handsome young man standing upon the threshold, holding his cap in one hand as if she had been an empress on her throne.

"Madam."

"Did you mean me?" said Dame Brown, laying down her shuttles, and tightening the strings of her linsey-woolsey apron. "Did you mean me, sir?"

"Yes, if you are the mistress of this house."

"For want of a better," answered the dame, drawing herself up primly.

"I—I am a stranger. Have just come over in the ship which landed to-day."

"What, another!" said Goody Brown, coming slowly out of her loom. "I had the hull house full last night."

"I do not wish to incommode you, my good lady, only to inquire about those who set out so rashly in the boat before we came up to the wharf. They were all brought here, I am told."

"Well, yes, I had a houseful of 'em overnight, but this morning they were well enough to go away."

"What, all?"

"All but the lady; she's completely tuckered out, and won't get out of her bed to-day, I reckon."

"But she is not seriously hurt?" cried the man, almost gasping for breath.

"No, I guess not; only kinder worn out. The yarb tea has done her a sight of good."

The stranger looked at her eagerly as she spoke. A dozen questions seemed trembling on his lips; but he restrained them, only saying, in a voice that would tremble in spite of his efforts,

"Then you are certain that she is out of danger?"

"Sartin, of course. She'll be chirk as a bird to-morrow."

The stranger sat down in the chair which the dame offered while she was speaking. A bowl of warm bread and milk stood on the kitchen hearth, close by the fire. Goody Brown took it up.

"I've got to take this in, for she's getting hungry, but I won't be gone more'n a minute."

With this half apology, the good woman opened a side door and went into Barbara Stafford's room. The man looked after her with eyes full of impatient yearning. He rose from his chair and stole softly toward the door, listening; but no sound answered his expectations, and he had scarcely returned to his seat when Goody Brown came back with the bowl of bread and milk in her hand. She sat it down in the hearth, and turning to her visitor, said, in a half whisper,

"She's sound asleep."

"Madam," said the traveller, "will you give me a cup of milk? I have been so long at sea—"

"Well, now, I shouldn't wonder!" cried the dame, interrupting him. "I'll go right down to the spring-house and get it."

She took a pitcher from the table and went out. The moment her shadow left the threshold stone the young man started up and softly opened the door of Barbara Stafford's room. He paused a moment, with the latch in his hand, hesitating and breathless, for the lady lay before him in a profound sleep. The face was turned toward him; one hand rested under her cheek, the other fell upon the blue and white counterpane. Her thick golden hair rolled in coils and waves over the pillow.

The young man's eyes grew misty, the breath broke almost in a sob on his lips. He crept softly toward the bed, fell upon his knees, and gazed upon the lady with passionate sorrow that might have disturbed an angel in its first heavenly rest. But she did not move. The deep slumber of exhaustion held her faculties locked. A coil of hair, loosened by its own weight, rolled downward and swept across her arm. Still she did not move. He gathered the tresses gently between his hands, laid them against his cheek, and pressed wild kisses upon them. Then he heard a sound. It was Goody Brown's footsteps coming up from the spring-house. With rash desperation he took

that white hand in his, covered it with kisses soft as the fall of thistledown, dropped it and glided from the room.

Goody Brown found her guest sitting in his old place near the fire, looking grieved and sad, but with a warm flush on his cheeks. He took the milk that she offered; drank a little, it seemed with difficulty, and, laying a piece of money on the table, turned to go.

"If you'd jest as lieves wait a minit," said the housewife, blushing like a girl. "I hain't had a chance to ask a single question. They all went off so sudden; but my old man was aboard the vessel."

"What, your husband?"

"Jes so, Jason Brown; mebby you know something about him?"

The stranger gave a glance at the person he had left whittling in the far distance and smiled uneasily.

"Yes, I know him," he said. "He came safely ashore with the ship."

"Then she's got to the wharf?" questioned the woman.

"Yes."

"Then he'll be along by-and-by," said the wife, ashamed of taking so much interest in the subject. "Much obleeged to you for telling me."

Thus dismissed the stranger left the house and went back to the place where he had left Jason Brown.

"Wal," said that composed personage, "I hope you got a drink of milk worth having."

"Yes; but why did you not tell me that the woman was your wife?" answered the stranger.

"Cause you didn't ask me. But how is the old woman?"

"She seems well and was very kind."

"Wimmen are kind by natur," said the sailor, shutting his jackknife with a jerk, the only sign of impatience yet visible. "But I reckon I'll jest step in and see how she gets along, if you don't want me tu go about Boston streets with you right away."

"No, no. I shall not remain in Boston, and can find plenty of guides where I am going."

"Don't want me to carry this ere bag for you, nor nothin'?" asked the man a little anxiously, as he gave up the traveller's bag.

"No, no; I prefer to carry it myself. But you are master of that house?"

"Yes, generally; when my wife ain't to home."

"In that case I have some boxes on board the ship, and should like to place them under your care for a few weeks, could they be moved to your house."

"Jes so," answered Brown.

"Then take charge of them. I will leave an order on board the ship."

"Jes so."

"And pay you well for the trouble now in advance."

"Jes so," answered Brown, holding out his hand for the money. "Now, if you've no objections, I'll go up to the house, for I'm afeared the old woman will be kinder expecting me."

The stranger took his leathern bag from the ground and walked one way, while Jason Brown went to the farm-house; not rapidly, for he, too, was ashamed of being in a hurry to see his wife; but with a step that would grow quick and impatient spite of his philosophy.

"Jason, is that you?" cried Goody Brown, getting out of her loom and meeting her husband half way to the door. "How have you been?"

"Tough and hearty; but where's the children? I don't see no cradle nor trundle bed."

The wife did not speak, but began twisting the strings of her apron over her finger. Jason looked at her earnestly. He saw a single tear drop to her bosom and sink into the cotton kerchief folded over it.

"Jason, they're both gone. The trundle bed is took down and the cradle is up in the garret."

"Gone, Prudence, gone! Where?"

"Dead, Jason. They both died of fever in one week."

Another tear came rolling down that still face and fell upon a great horny hand which was held out to take that of the woman. Those two hard-working hands shook in each other's clasp a moment, then Jason Brown drew his gently away and left the house. He wandered down to the shore, seated himself upon the turf of a broken bank, and took from his pocket the jackknife and

piece of wood that he had stowed away there. He opened his knife with dismal slowness and gave a whistle which at once resolved itself into a low wail inexpressibly sad. Then the knife and the wood dropped from his hands, and he sat still, looking at them helplessly, while great tears rolled down his cheeks.

CHAPTER VII.

THE UNEXPECTED VISITOR.

For two whole days Barbara Stafford did not leave her bed. She was exhausted by a long sea-voyage, and saddened by many an anxious day and night, which had made her passage a wretched one. So she lay still and tried to rest, that she might gather strength to meet the destiny that lay before her, whatever that destiny might be.

Meantime the ship was being unloaded. Trunks and packages, marked by the stranger's name, somewhat ostentatiously it would seem, were conveyed from its cabin to the farm-house. With this luggage came half a dozen great boxes, clamped with iron and securely fastened, which astonished Jason Brown by their heaviness.

These boxes, according to his promise given the dark-browed stranger, whom he had guided to his own house, Jason Brown stowed away in his barn, covering them carefully with hay; for there was a mystery in their weight which made him anxious, and he concealed them conscientiously, marvelling what they contained and who their owner could be.

At last the strange lady grew restive in the close confinement of that little room. She arose on the third morning and prepared to dress herself. She was seized with a desire to go out into the new world, to learn what it had of good or evil in store for her. Still she dreaded to look forth and see that great monster ocean which had hurled her to and fro upon the fearful heave of its waves that terrible night. She had been here received on that shore with a tempest that had almost swallowed her up in its angry whirlpools. No wonder that she was filled with vague dread, and hesitated to look out of the window, which, curtained with morning-glory vines, framed in a splendid view of the ocean.

For a time she stood trembling on the floor, half from weakness, half from an uncontrollable dread of leaving the quiet pillow on which supreme fatigue had made her slumber sweet. She glanced at the open sash, through which the sunshine of a lovely summer morning trembled. She saw the purple bells of the morning-glory vines swaying to and fro in the soft wind that came sighing up from the water, while drops of dew fell in glittering rain from the heart-shaped leaves. Alone and beyond all this came the gushing song of birds, as it were hailing her with sweet welcomes.

Every thing out of doors seemed so bright that Barbara Stafford grew strong and almost cheerful. She was now eager to go forth and breathe the fresh air.

Out of the baggage brought from the vessel she drew forth a dark brocaded silk, adorned at the neck and sleeves with delicate lace. In this she proceeded to dress herself, quite unconscious that its richness was out of keeping with either the scene or her present habitation. It was the costume of a highly bred gentlewoman of her own country, and from mere habit she put it on.

The exertion brought a beautiful color to her cheeks. She leaned from the window and looked out fearlessly on the great ocean which had so lately threatened her life. It lay before her now like a vast field of azure, turning the sunshine into opals. Spite of herself she turned from its treacherous loveliness with a shudder.

Blessed or cursed—I know not which to call it—with that exquisite delicacy of sense which makes the most brilliant mind at times almost a slave of the material, she detected among all the perfumes of neighboring woods the faint fragrance of a sweetbriar that had tangled itself with the morning-glories, and blossomed with them. She recognized the perfume. Her quick mind seized upon this as an omen.

Strangely arrayed, it must be confessed, for that simple old homestead, Barbara Stafford went through the kitchen, which was, for the moment, empty, and wandered around an angle of the house where the morning sunshine lay warmly upon an old stone bench half buried in the grass.

Here she sat down, for the exertion of dressing had wearied her. The air was sweet and balmy, just brightened with a breeze from the distant sea, and a pretty little opening of cultivated fields, separated from her by a rail fence, lay dreamily at her left.

Barbara longed to go forth into the shade of those mammoth trees, which filled the distance with their green leafiness, and under their shelter look out upon the New World; but a gentle lassitude lay upon her, and, while she desired exertion, her limbs remained passive—they had not yet shaken off the numbing effects of the storm.

She sat dreamily looking forth with the sunshine playing among the waves of her golden hair, and revealing every line and shadow, on a singularly delicate face, which had carried the complexion of infancy almost into middle age. The rich scarf, which she had flung over her in coming forth,

fell softly downward, and swept the grass with its gorgeous folds. She was conscious of nothing but a sensation of pleasure at seeing the beautiful earth again after a dreary, dreary voyage across the ocean.

As she sat there, the noise of hoofs on the broken road, leading from town, had no power to arrest more than a passing thought. This was followed by a slight rustle of silks, and directly a lady, dressed somewhat after her own fashion, came through an opening in the fence, and walked gracefully forward to where Barbara Stafford was sitting.

"I beg ten thousand pardons, madam, but Goody Brown is nowhere to be seen, and I am compelled to introduce myself," she said, with a charming little laugh. "I know at a glance that you are the lady I am in search of; and I—really it is awkward—but I am Lady Phipps."

Barbara Stafford gave a sudden start. Her large, gray eyes grew wild and black; slowly and steadily her features shrunk together; and making a faint movement with one hand, as if to catch at something, she struggled to arise, but fell senseless at her visitor's feet.

When Barbara Stafford arose from the stone bench against which she had fallen, there was pallor on her cheek, and bewilderment in her eyes, deeper and more painful to behold than is usual after a mere fainting-fit. Lady Phipps observed the pallor increase, and that she shrunk back with a shudder from the arm which was striving to support her.

"My dear madam, you are not well; you suffer," said the kind matron, coloring slightly as she felt the thrill of repulsion. "Let me help you into the house."

"No," answered Barbara, sweeping one hand across her forehead three or four times, while her eyes were fastened on Lady Phipps with a troubled, wistful look, as if she had not really seen her features before. "I think—"

She paused, turned her eyes away from the face she had been searching, and a spasm of pain swept over her forehead, drawing the brows together with an unmistakable sign of acute sensibility. She looked up again, striving to smile.

"Ah, now I remember. Yes, I am sometimes subject to these turns—it is very girlish and weak, no doubt, but the long sea-voyage, the storm—do not mind me, lady, I am well now; quite well and strong. Forgive me, but"—again she broke off, pressed one hand hard against her side, and said, with a quick catch of the breath, "Lady Phipps—did you say that Lady Phipps had done me this honor?"

"Yes; I was about to give my name, when you were seized with this terrible fainting-fit. The governor is so much occupied just now that he could not come himself, though he was deeply interested in your condition. I assure you I really could hardly keep from embracing that dear young Lovel for his bravery in rescuing you from the foundered boat."

"Young Lovel!" repeated Barbara, quickly; "young Lovel! Is that his name?"

"Of course you could not be expected to know any thing about names; but you will remember the young man who nearly lost his own life in dragging you from the water?"

"Remember him! oh, yes."

"And the dear old minister, brother Parris, with his mild, quiet ways—to think that he should have been in Boston for the first time in years, just to help save you; it seems quite like a miracle, or a bit of the witchcraft that is so fashionable just now."

"Parris—Parris!" repeated Barbara, with a laboring breath.

"That," said Lady Phipps, "was the name of the tall gentleman; an old friend of Sir William's; indeed, the very man whose benediction made me his wife."

The hand which Barbara had again lifted to her forehead dropped slowly down; her lips looked cold and blue, but she stood up firmly, and excepting one wild glance over her shoulder, as if impelled to flee, kept her ground, though for an instant she seemed turning into a statue. After a little, she looked up with one of those gentle smiles, with which the most refined anguish seeks to clothe itself before the world, and said:

"You are very kind, my lady, and I am not ungrateful. But since I came to this land every thing seems like a dream. Indeed, my voyage itself is more like a vision than reality; in a little time I can better express myself. Will you be seated here, in the morning sunshine?—it is very pleasant, or seemed pleasant a little while ago—or would you prefer to sit in-doors? My good friends here have given me a tolerably pretty room, and will make Lady—Lady Phipps very welcome."

She spoke the lady's title with the same quick gasp that had marked her utterance before, and again the shudder ran through her form.

"Yes, yes; let us go in-doors; then you can lie down quietly, or sit in an easy-chair, while I do my little errand more ceremoniously, for to speak the truth you look very pale yet. Take my arm; indeed you can hardly walk."

Barbara only bowed; she could not force herself to touch the lady's arm, but, with a will that was like strength, walked into the house. Lady Phipps followed her, lifting the skirt of her dress daintily from the grass, and smiling with a sort of puzzled air, as if she did not quite understand

the scene she was acting in.

Barbara entered her own room, which was the best apartment in the house, and according to the usages of the time, furnished with a high bed, covered with a blue and white yarn coverlet, and pillows like little snow-drifts. A bureau of cherry-tree wood, with two or three stiff wooden chairs, an oaken arm-chair with a broad, splint bottom, stood by the window, with its curtain of sweetbrier and morning-glory vines. This, Barbara offered to her visitor. But Lady Phipps, with that genial grace which made every action of hers like a sunbeam, wheeled the chair around, and motioned that Barbara should occupy it. Then she seated herself on the bed, burying one elbow in the snow of the pillow, and drooping her round cheek into the palm of her hand.

"Now," she said, with a charming smile, "that we are both comfortable, let me give my invitation in proper form. First, young Lovel, who is my husband's secretary, you know, or are now informed, has set the whole gubernatorial mansion wild about you. He will have it—but no matter about his young fancies—he of course is very anxious that you should not suffer inconvenience, or remain a stranger in the New World, where Englishmen and Englishwomen should meet as brothers and sisters. He could not come himself."

"I trust—I hope—that the young gentleman has suffered no injury?" said Barbara, half starting from the chair; while for the first time Lady Phipps saw the color rush to her face. "I should be grieved."

"No harm in the world," said Lady Phipps, laughingly interrupting her; "but to tell you the truth, he was so pleasantly employed, that I had no heart to bring him away."

Barbara looked up with a questioning glance; a grave smile stole over her lips, and she said very quietly—

"Indeed! You must all have been very anxious about him."

"Anxious! You never saw such a night! None of us thought of rest. The governor, whose self-control is the admiration of everybody, wandered about the town all night long, while I and poor little Elizabeth Parris—the pretty young creature I hinted at, you know—really fretted ourselves almost into hysterics. Let me assure you, upon my honor, I almost knew how people feel when they are unhappy."

"Almost!" murmured Barbara Stafford, lifting her eyes with a gleam of mournful astonishment. But Lady Phipps was full of her subject, and went on.

"So, after we had welcomed Norman back again, and petted him into believing himself of the greatest possible consequence, I came off here to beg that you will leave this lonesome old place, and honor Sir William's roof, while it shall suit your convenience."

"But I am a stranger—even a nameless one."

"I beg your pardon—not altogether. Sir William has, as you know, lived a good deal in England, and the Staffords, of Lincolnshire, are among his most powerful friends."

"The Staffords, of Lincolnshire?"

"Oh, I forget, you have no idea how we found out the name. It was on the handkerchief you lost in the sand. 'Barbara Stafford,' a fine old name that my husband loves well."

A faint smile stole over the strange lady's face, but she only bent her head in acknowledgment of Lady Phipps's kindness.

"Your name alone is sufficient introduction, but Sir William is curious to know to what branch of the family it belongs—the earl?"

"I am in no way connected with the Earl of Stafford," said Barbara, quickly; "in fact, have no claim upon the hospitality of your—of Sir William Phipps. My object in coming to America is perhaps already accomplished. With many thanks for this kindness, I must, for the present at least, decline your invitation."

Lady Phipps looked a little disappointed. She was so accustomed to having her own way, and seeing her very caprices regarded as a law, that this refusal of the stranger to become her guest brought the color to her brow.

"The governor will be greatly disappointed," she said, displacing her elbow from the pillow with a movement of graceful impatience. "I really shan't know what to say. Norman, too, will be quite beside himself. They will think me a miserable ambassadress—in fact, if any thing makes me ill-natured and awkward, it is a refusal."

Barbara almost smiled. Notwithstanding her summertime of life, there was something very attracting in Lady Phipps's sparkling manner, which, beneath the frank playfulness of a child, betrayed all the dignity of a proud woman.

"It is not a refusal," said Barbara, gently; "perhaps only a delay; but just now I am too—too weary for society, and need time for rest."

"Then we shall yet have the pleasure?" exclaimed Lady Phipps, brightening, and holding out her hand; but she became grave in an instant, for the palm that met hers was cold as snow.

"You are, indeed, quite unfit for exertion," she said.

Barbara drew the cold hand from Lady Phipps's clasp, and, standing up, looked at her with a strained gaze as she left the room. The moment she was quite alone, wrapped up in the stillness of an empty house, the pale woman walked forward to the bed, fell upon it without a breath or a sob, and lay motionless with her face to the pillow.

That night, after all the family were asleep, except Goody Brown, she was surprised by the rustle of a silk dress at her elbow, just as she was raking up the kitchen fire for the night. She turned quickly, and saw her guest, who stood shivering on the hearth as if it had been the depth of winter.

"Goodness me!" exclaimed the housewife, planting her iron shovel with a plunge into the ashes; "I thought you'd gone to bed long ago. Any thing the matter?"

"Nothing—nothing!" answered the lady, sinking into one of the straight-backed chairs that stood near the hearth; "I heard you stirring, and so came out. Sit down a little while; I would like to ask a few questions about this new country—about Boston and its people."

Goody Brown seated herself on the dye-tub, which occupied a corner of the chimney, and smoothing down her checked apron prepared to listen. She was no great talker at any time, and though the questions asked by her guest were low-toned, and uttered at long intervals, she heard them patiently and answered each in its place, without betraying any of that curiosity said to be characteristic of the New England matron of later days.

During the whole conversation, Barbara sat back in her chair, quite still, gazing upon the half-smothered embers with a dull, heavy look. The tallow candle, with its long tow wick, that occupied a little round stand in a corner, left her face in the shadow, and the good woman remained quite unconscious how pale it was till her guest arose to say good-night; then she remembered how husky her voice had been, and how she seemed to shiver with cold.

"Do let me rake open the embers and give you a bowl of yarb tea, and put another coverlet on the bed," she urged, in her stiff, motherly way; "the teeth e'en a'most chatter in your head; you'll sartinly be took down agin."

"No, no! I shall be quieter now that I know—that I know all about the country, thank you."

And with a soft, gliding step, noiseless as when she entered, Barbara went into her room again.

"That's strange," muttered Goody Brown, as she sat before the buried fire with a foot planted on each andiron, meditating on the conversation she had just held. "Now can she be any relative to the governor or his wife, or the Salem minister, I wonder? She's mighty curious about them. Well, thank goodness, I'd as lief tell her all I know about 'em as not. There ain't no witchcraft in the truth."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE MINISTER AND HIS PUPIL.

Governor Phipps and Samuel Parris had been neighbors for many years. They had known each other when Parris was first settled over the church in Salem—a man in his prime—and the governor was the apprentice of a ship-builder near by. More than this; when Phipps was an apprentice and a dreamer, as all men of great capacities are at some period of their lives, thirsting for knowledge and restive as a wild animal, because all its sources were closed to him, Samuel Parris received the lad every night beneath his roof, and spent hours and hours in teaching him those rudiments of learning which are the key to all knowledge.

Parris had been an enthusiast, and a visionary man from his youth up. He was simple, pious, with a vein of rich poetry in his nature which could never be worked out fully in the pulpit, but was concentrated in his affections, and sometimes threatened the very foundations of his understanding.

The predominance of a vivid imagination over faculties of no ordinary stamp kept the minister's mind out of balance, and made his life an unfinished poem. Had all the other faculties of his mind been equal, Samuel Parris must have been a great poet or powerful statesman. Lacking so much and possessing so much, he was always good, affectionate, and most kind. A love of the pure and beautiful possessed him so entirely that it broke forth in veins of exquisite poetry in his sermons, and at times gave to his conversation an eloquence which seemed like absolute inspiration.

Like the minister, Phipps had much rough poetic ore in his composition; but underneath it all was a foundation of hard, practical good sense: he reasoned, while the minister dreamed. The poetry in his nature was enough to give fire and energy to his actions: it broke out through all his great after-schemes like veins of gold in a rock.

But in this man all the faculties came up and mated themselves with this high mental element, forming a most vigorous mind, and a will which nothing could conquer when set upon a right

object.

Let no one smile when I speak of imagination as essential to real greatness. It were better to question fairly if absolute greatness ever existed without it. This high element of the mind is as necessary to a superior character as observation. It gives force and coloring to the other faculties. But with Phipps all the soul traits that make up a great character rose to a commanding level, urging the imagination to useful purposes, as machinery turns the beautiful waterfall into a mighty power.

Parris was a hoarder of books, rare manuscripts, and even old newspapers, which, coming from over sea, were not very plentiful in the colonies in those days, and thus were rendered worthy of preservation. It was in this store of ancient literature that the lad Phipps took his first course of reading. In these researches—for the acute lad, in his thirst for information, devoured every scrap of print that came in his way—it chanced that the two fell upon an old paper, which gave an account of some Spanish galley, wrecked years before on the coast of La Plata. Laden with fabulous wealth, in silver, and jewels, and gold, this galley still lay in the depths of the ocean. They had talked the matter over, Parris as he would have dwelt upon a fairy tale, had such things been permitted to his creed; Phipps with reflection and purposes, for the first burning thoughts of great enterprise rose in his mind that night.

After studying the old newspaper diligently in every word and syllable, Phipps left Salem and took up his abode in Boston, then went a voyage to sea, studying navigation with a zeal that equalled his first efforts at reading.

He returned to the colonies in the first strength of his youth, taller in person, and with a dignity of carriage that distinguished him all his days. But his best friends knew little of his purposes now. The knowledge which he had acquired with the habit of concentrated thought had lifted him out of his old life. The very acquirements obtained at so much cost, while they exalted him in the estimation of his old friends, only isolated him from their sympathies. Other feelings besides ambition may have stirred in the young man's heart at this time; if so, but one human being ever became his confidant.

Shortly after his return from sea, William Phipps came one night fifteen miles through the wilderness, which separated Boston from Salem, and asked an interview with his old friend.

They went into a little room, the scene of their first studies, and conversed long and earnestly together. The subject of this conversation no one knew. The Indian woman in the kitchen heard her master's voice more than once, rising from entreaty to expostulation, but she took little heed of the matter, as arguments between the youth and his teacher often arose over some old book or worn-out manuscript, which they chanced to be studying together.

But one thing is certain; the great metaphysical law of life prevailed here. The strong intellect conquered the weaker; and when William Phipps rode away in the darkness, it was with a certainty that his iron will had prevailed over the gentle reasoning, aye, and the conscience, too, of his kind old friend.

No human being but the Indian woman knew a word of this mystery, if mystery there was; but on the very next night she heard the sound of hoofs coming rapidly through the woods, and knew by the sudden pause that more than one person had dismounted before her master's house. But as she left her work to open the door, Mr. Parris, pale and excited, met her in the passage, and ordered her back to the kitchen in a voice that she dared not disobey.

After this she heard the continuous movement of feet in the adjoining room, the low muttering of voices; then her master came hurriedly out, asking for the camphor bottle which she found in a corner cupboard, wondering greatly what he could want of it; but he took the flask from her hand without a word and went into the room again.

In less than half an hour she heard the door close, and the softened tread of horses returning towards the woods along the forest turf. She looked out of the kitchen window. Two persons on horseback, a man and a woman, were riding by. The moonlight lay full upon their faces. That of the man she did not regard, for the loveliness of the young girl, around whom the moonbeams fell in luminous clearness, absorbed all her faculties. That was a face to be remembered forever, as we think of angel forms seen in dreams—a haunting face, never recognized clearly if seen again perhaps, but always disturbing the memory. Old Tituba was a woman to ponder over that face when she thought of the great Hunting Grounds of her people.

After this she heard her master walking all night long in the little room, back and forth, back and forth, till daybreak.

But for the beautiful face Tituba might never have remembered these things again, though any event became important in that quiet dwelling; but on the very next night, just at the hour when she had first heard the sound of hoofs upon the highway, there came from the walnut tree that overshadowed the minister's dwelling, a low wailing shout that rang through the house like the scoff of a demon. Tituba went out, for she had not thought much of the matter and had no reason to be afraid, and searched among the walnut tree boughs for some owl, or other wild bird with a hoarse cry, like that she had heard.

The moon was up, a round harvest moon, with a multitude of bright stars that looked down into the bosom of the walnut tree; scattering the dense shadows everywhere behind the branches. But

the Indian woman could discover no living thing—nothing but the soft quiver of leaves and the starlight kissing away their dew.

She went in, satisfied that the noise had come from a passing bird, but the minute the wooden latch fell from her hand closing the door, the cry, hoarser and louder, ran through the house again. Then Tituba began to be afraid. She had heard of witchcraft, and believed in it, like her master, and all the wise men of the colony. From that hour she never heard a hoof upon the turf, though it were only that of a young fawn, or the hoot of an owl in the woods, that she did not remember what she solemnly believed to be the witch-gathering in her master's study, and tremble in her chimney corner till it had passed away.

After this time, William Phipps went forth to work out his ambitious purposes, and Samuel Parris fell back into the quiet of his home, a little troubled at times, and feeling the need of extra fasting and prayer, but the same thoughtful, studious Christian that he had always been.

But all at once, when he was on the very verge of old age, when the most intense affections of common men soften into pleasant habits, this man, of mature years, awoke from the lethargy of a life-time, and took to his bosom a fair young girl of his church, an orphan, who had been cast upon its charity, and, as it were, led by heaven into his household. It was a sudden act, prompted by the buried romance which had so long slept within him, sure to find utterance at some period of his life, either through the intellect or the affections.

For a time he was very happy and forgot every thing, even heaven itself, in the company of his beautiful young wife, who loved him with that deep, unselfish love, which partook somewhat of veneration, but more of child-like gratitude.

But soon the old man grew afraid of himself, afraid of the love which centred entirely around that young creature, bringing her like an unbidden angel between his very prayers and the throne of grace. Thus his life was spent between fits of wild devotion and paroxysms of remorse, lest he had become an idolater.

Time passed; it was more than twice twelve months before the man of dreams and the man of action met again.

The one was absorbed by his ambition, the other had become selfish in his love: save on that one subject he had no sympathy to give.

But as time glided away, leaving the hair on his temples whiter and whiter, the old man was seized with an unaccountable dread. When his young wife in all the bloom of her goodness and beauty had made him the father of a daughter, her living shadow, vague, dark apprehension seized upon him, and weeks before that young mother sickened and died, the blackness of a great sorrow overshadowed his soul. He stood by her grave and saw the fresh earth heaped upon it, and, shaking his venerable white head, when his friends would have consoled him, went away into the desolation of his old age, a broken-hearted man, weary of life, and yet afraid to die.

He believed that the Divine Father had cast him off for bestowing the love which should have been his on the beautiful creature who was gone, and that for this sin he must wander on through life a mark of divine displeasure. So he withdrew himself even from his best friends, for they only reminded him of his meek, beautiful wife and his own idolatrous sin.

The very song of the birds, and the sight of the green woods added to his grief, for she was buried in springtime, when all the trees were in blossom, and the wild birds had sung sweetly over her grave while they were filling in the earth upon her coffin.

Samuel Parris retreated into the dreary solitude of his home, and gave up his life to his daughter, the child of his old age. But for this child his grief would have been utter despair, for every breath was drawn in the desolation of a widowed heart. If he went to the fireside, or the table, or awoke in the dead of night, it was to find the solitude of the grave about him. His chamber, dark and heavy with the atmosphere of death, his home, his very heart, which had been occupied with so blessed and holy a love but a few days before, desolated forever.

About this time William Phipps sailed for England, became captain of a royal ship, then, following the great idea of his life, sailed for La Plata, and returned home years after, rich from the gold and silver fished up from the wreck which he had discovered almost by a miracle—with a title of honor, no inconsiderable thing at any time even in America—and more important still, accredited by King William as Governor of New England.

A few months after his old pupil became governor of the province, Samuel Parris was summoned from his hearth, now the most desolate spot on earth to him. His presence was required in Boston.

He set forth with many misgivings, for the letter came from his friend and pupil, William Phipps.

The house, to which the letter directed him, had been the residence of a rich merchant, and was now occupied by his young widow; one of the wealthiest and most beautiful gentlewomen of the province.

Sir William Phipps met his friend at the door of this mansion. The minister observed, with surprise, that the house was thronged with company, and that his young friend was dressed richly; like a bridegroom about to appear at the altar. They sat down together, both pale, and the

minister betraying great anxiety both in his look and manner. Their conversation was brief and earnest, but they spoke in undertones; and the lady who sat below, in her bridal garments, wondered, in her happiness, what the two could find to talk about so long; for that short interview seemed an age to her.

They came down at last: the bridegroom pale, but composed; the minister tremulous, like a man about to undertake some painful duty.

The marriage ceremony was performed which made the lady we have seen William Phipps's wife.

Samuel Parris returned home more thoughtful than ever. Indeed, time had no balm for this old man, and but for his lovely child he must have withered away in unceasing sorrow for his wife; in remorse for the sin, as he deemed it, of loving her too well.

When Sir William Phipps heard of this, his heart was touched with compassion for the old man, who had unlocked the golden gates of knowledge to him, and, at the suggestion of his gentle wife, he sent an urgent request that Elizabeth, the daughter whose education had been the business and solace of the old man's life, should spend a portion of her seventeenth year with Lady Phipps, who, childless herself, would become a second mother to her.

It was like a new death for the old man to part with his child, but he saw by the wistful pleading of her eyes, that she longed to see something of the bright world, and surrendered her to the servant whom Sir William Phipps had sent to escort her to Boston, with a pang almost as great as that with which he had consigned her mother to the grave.

Through all the blossom season of the year, and into midsummer, Elizabeth remained with her new friends. She was very happy; and while his heart yearned for her presence, the old minister forbore to press her return, or to inform her how dreary her absence had rendered his home. But at last, urged on by some impulse which left him without the power of resistance, though he prayed and struggled against it for many days, the old man took his staff and went all the way on foot from Salem to Boston, perhaps to see his child, certainly to look upon the roof that covered her, and to breathe the same air that brought bloom and beauty to her young face.

But the very joy that filled his being as he came nearer and nearer to the town, admonished him how completely his love had gone forth, once more, to a being perishable as the wife he mourned. What if the displeasure of God for this creature-worship should fall upon the child also? The old man's soul trembled within him at these thoughts. He dared not even approach the house where his child lived; yet he wandered with irresistible fascination on the outskirts of the neighborhood, longing to ask the passers-by if they had seen her, but never venturing to unclose his lips.

Thus the old man, striving against the best feelings of his nature as a sin had roamed forth into the storm of that terrible day, and he now wandered about in the sunshine afraid of himself, afraid of the very sight of his own child, yet hovering around the house where she dwelt, like a wounded bird that cannot forsake the tree where its young are nested.

As he was thus upon the outskirts of the grounds, Elizabeth looked forth from the window of her room, and, uttering a cry of thrilling joy, that had so often made the old man tremble, as he thought, with forbidden happiness—"My father! Oh, my father!"

CHAPTER IX.

THE FORCED SACRAMENT.

It was the Sabbath—that solemn day in the colonies when the voices of men were hushed, or only uplifted in prayer—when the very children held their breath with awe, and the good wife scarcely ventured to smooth the bed she had slept in, or dress the food for her household, lest the holy time given to the Lord should be encroached upon.

The very smoke, as it curled up from the chimneys of Boston, seemed to float off more dreamily than on other days. There was no sound of life abroad, for men who went forth left the beaten track and walked softly along the turf on each side of the highway, as if the noise of their own footsteps was a sacrilege.

But on this particular Sabbath there was, at least within doors, signs of unusual commotion. The mother in each household brought forth her best apparel, as if to grace some great occasion; while the good father, in his Sabbath-day raiment, read an extra chapter in the Bible before going forth, and drilled his offspring into deeper seriousness. On that day the most mischievous urchin would have looked upon a single smile as among the unforgivable sins of which he had heard so much, but could never understand.

But of all the houses in the town, the gubernatorial mansion was the most silent; and yet important preparations were going on in its stately rooms. The servants spoke in whispers as they moved up and down the broad staircase; and even Norman Lovel, whose gay spirits were not easily tamed, looked grave as he seated himself by the window to wait.

At last, an open carriage, drawn by four gray horses, swept slowly around the gravelled path, and

drew up on one side of the steps.

Then the front door swung open, both heavy leaves at once, and Governor Phipps appeared, followed by four attendants, bearing halberts.

It is hardly possible to imagine a more imposing presence than this extraordinary man presented. His self-made greatness seemed like an inheritance, so completely did his air and sumptuous habiliments harmonize with each other. The broad, firm forehead, the deep-set eyes, proud and steady in their glances, the firm mouth, grave without severity, the thick hair, so slightly powdered that a few gray threads were still to be detected in the wavy masses, the upright figure, tall and robust, all possessed the power of command, had no other signs of state been lidded to them. But no outward effect was wanting.

The slight gold embroidery on his undervest of snowy satin, gleamed in faint ripples through the delicate Flanders lace that edged his linen, and shed its misty richness over the white facings of a purple velvet coat, which fell back from his chest, and, with broad gold buttons gleaming down the front, descended within an inch or two of his knees. The garters, which united his small clothes and white silk stockings, were buckled up with diamonds, and the crimson straps of his Spanish leather shoes were fastened in like manner. From the plush hat, turned up at the sides, which crowned that lofty head, to the yellow lace that fell over his doeskin gloves, every thing bespoke the man of strength and refinement.

Sir William Phipps descended the steps of his mansion with a grave, almost sad, countenance, and, followed by his attendants, walked away, bending his steps towards North Boston.

As he turned into the open street, a faint hum, like the slow swarming of innumerable bees, came up from the town; and directly the streets were alive with neatly dressed people, all tending in the same direction, with their governor.

Sir William had hardly gone out of sight when the carriage took its station before the entrance of his dwelling, and Lady Phipps, accompanied by Elizabeth Parris and Norman Lovel, descended the steps and entered it.

Lady Phipps had evidently been weeping, for there was a flush around her eyes; and Elizabeth Parris seemed even more solemnly impressed than her friend. Young Norman, too, looked serious; and, as if each had been possessed with an inward prayer, they remained silent, like persons about to join a funeral train.

They were seated. Two attendants, bearing halberts, mounted behind; and the equipage swept slowly away, following the governor at a given distance, till it drew up before the North Boston meeting-house.

A crowd was before the entrance—a silent, reverential crowd—composed of devout men, who spoke in whispers if they addressed each other; and scarcely allowed the excitement natural to the occasion to appear even in their eyes. This crowd parted to the right and left, first that the minister, with Samuel Parris at his side, might pass through; and again to make a passage for the governor and his train.

Sir William passed on, without recognizing a friend among many that gazed upon him from the throng, for such worldly courtesies were not for the holy Sabbath day in those times.

Before the crowd closed in, Lady Phipps drove slowly up. The party descended at a respectful distance from the door, to which the ladies moved with downcast eyes, and disappeared in the meeting-house.

Right and left, through the broad aisles that crossed each other in the centre of the building, the congregation poured in, till that heavy, wooden edifice was full.

The two ministers mounted one of the curving staircases leading to the broad box pulpit, which lifted them to a level with the heavy galleries. The deacons ranged themselves in a long pew, which ran across the front, far below. On a narrow platform stood a table of cherry-wood, on which was a silver trencher of unleaven bread, cut in small fragments; a tankard and a goblet, over which a snowy napkin had been reverently cast: and, a little apart from these, stood a large china bowl filled with pure water.

These preparations, simple as they were, seemed to strike that primitive congregation with unusual awe. Each member cast a solemn glance at the table before he seated himself, and the funereal silence that reigned through the house before the service commenced became almost painful.

That was a long, labored sermon, full of quaint wisdom and ponderous theology. But the congregation listened to its innumerable divisions with intense interest, while the governor sat wrapped in thought, much paler than usual, and with a holy sadness creeping over his face.

The gentle lady by his side raised her eyes now and then to his, with a look of wistful sympathy.

The sermon was over; the long prayer said; then Samuel Parris arose from a back seat in the pulpit, and came down the steps; his gray hair streaming over his temples, his eyes full of strange light, and his hand pressed hard on the banisters to help his descent.

The old man stood up on the platform in front of the deacons, and turned his gaze upon the

governor's seat.

Sir William Phipps arose, followed by a faint sob from that crimson-lined pew, and with a firm, slow tread, advanced in front of the communion-table. Perhaps in his whole life that strong man had never been more intensely agitated. Danger he had endured without flinching—sorrow, deep, deep sorrow, he had suffered in profound silence, seeking neither counsel nor sympathy; but to the very depths of his soul Sir William was a proud man, and it was with a great struggle that he stepped down from his high estate, and consented to become as a little child in the presence of so many people, mentally inferior to himself, and who could never comprehend the sublime strength which possessed his soul.

He stood up before the people, and in a firm but very gentle voice addressed them. He touched briefly on the salient points of a most eventful life; spoke with great humility of his own shortcomings, and with solemn and touching dignity laid his heart in genuine faith on the altar of God.

It was an eloquent address, full of sincerity and earnestness. In his whole life, perhaps, Sir William Phipps had never appeared so great before his people, or had so completely taken possession of their respect.

As he commenced speaking, there glided through the door, which had been left open for a free circulation of air, a strange lady, dressed more richly than was common in those days, except in the very highest classes. She stood for a moment looking around, bewildered to find herself among so many people; and then, as if arrested and held in thrall by the deep-toned voice which filled the edifice, she stood perfectly motionless, pale and still as marble.

The general attention was so completely absorbed by the speaker, that no one observed this singular entrance, and the lady stood alone among all that human life unconscious of its presence as if she had been in the depths of a forest.

Sir William Phipps ceased speaking, and, turning to his old friend, who stood by the table with tears in his eyes, bent his stately head for the baptismal rites.

Then the lady came slowly forward, moving like a ghost up the broad aisle, not as it were by her own volition, but impelled by some all-absorbing power of which she was herself unconscious. The congregation, occupied by the ceremony, saw nothing of this till she came up almost to the pulpit, and turning aside, stood mute and still as before, with her woeful eyes turning first upon the governor, then on Samuel Parris.

It did not seem that either of these men saw the intruder, for they looked each upon the other with glances of solemn affection, such as men of kindred sympathies alone can understand. But as if that singular presence would make itself felt in spite of any preoccupation, a shadow fell upon the face of the governor, and those who looked closely saw the thin hand of Samuel Parris tremble as he laved up the crystal drops that were to purify his brother's soul. His voice, too, faltered as he spoke the few words necessary to the baptismal ceremony, and yet he had not turned his face or raised his eyes from the bowed head before him.

Then, with the holy water drops still trembling on his forehead, Sir William lifted his face, and encountered the gaze of that strange woman. What were those intensely mournful eyes to him, that he should feel their glance trembling through his soul? Why did that wild sight come into the calm depths of his eyes? With a great effort he turned away, and bethought himself of the still more sacred rites which were to complete his acceptance among the people of God. But the fervor of devotion had passed; he could no longer concentrate every thought upon the God whom he had promised to serve. The sacred bread touched his lips, and the sacramental wine laved them, but, even as he returned the goblet to the trembling hold of his friend, the fascination of those eyes drew his soul away. He turned from the communion-table, and went to the pew where his wife and her young friends were sitting; there, bowing his face between his hands, he strove to pray, but could only shrink and shudder as if some terrible calamity were upon him.

There was a brief benediction, and the congregation, held motionless till the governor and his family passed out, broke up and departed through the various doors, leaving the meeting-house empty. No, not quite; for Samuel Parris still lingered behind, and busied himself in covering the consecrated wine and bread; for he could not endure that other hands should touch the symbols our Lord has made holy. He was reverently placing the napkin over them when Barbara Stafford came from her station in the shadow of the pulpit, and, kneeling at his feet, besought him that she too might partake of the holy bread and wine.

Parris was an old man, and his eyes were dim with tears, for to his gentle heart there had been something peculiarly touching in the rites he had just administered to his friend. Besides, the lady was so changed by her toilet, that he had no suspicion that she was the person whose life he had saved a few days before. Thus he stood for a moment lost in astonishment at the strangeness of the request.

"Sister," he said very kindly—for with thoughts of the Saviour's suffering so close to his heart, how could he do otherwise?—"this is a singular request. Know you not that the sacrament of to-day was special to one purpose? The congregation was not expected to join in it."

"I know that it may seem out of place to ask so much, even of a servant of God, and in a house given up to his worship. But if there is a holy virtue in this bread and wine, give it to me that I

may be strong; for I declare to you, old man, there is not a soul on the broad earth that needs it as mine does now."

How mournfully those eyes implored him, how deep and pathetic were the pleadings of that sweet voice!

Imperceptibly the old minister began to tremble as he had done a few minutes before, with his hand in the baptismal water.

She laid one hand on her heart: "Old man, if you are a true servant of God, listen; I am afraid of myself, for humanity is very frail—here with that voice still ringing through my brain, with—but no matter, I am a woman, and weak—alone, and oh how desolate! While the power is strong upon me, I would breathe a vow which no one but the Holy of holies shall hear; I would seal that vow with the bread and wine he has tasted."

"But sister!"

"Do not refuse me: it is a little thing for you, all the future to me. Give me to taste of the cup while I have strength; for I say unto you, old man, the spirit that impels me will not suffice to struggle against a great temptation, without help from heaven."

The face of that woman was eloquent with noble resolves, the pathos of her voice would have touched a heart of ice.

The old man slowly removed the napkin, and laid his hand upon the wine cup. Barbara's eyes turned wistfully upon it.

"Remember," said the minister, taking a morsel of the bread between his fingers—"remember, he that eateth of this bread or drinketh of this cup unworthily—"

"I know, I know—I do remember," she urged, interrupting him; then bowing herself and placing the bread between her lips, she continued solemnly, "before the most Holy, I do not eat or drink unworthily." Then, with a spirit of self-abnegation in her soul which amounted almost to martyrdom, Barbara Stafford put her lips to the goblet which another mouth had just touched, and drank of the sacred wine.

After that covenant with her God, a calm, sweet peace composed her features, and settled on her whole being. For a moment she seemed to have no sorrow, but rising from her knees took the minister's hand, pressed her lips upon it, and went away.

It was not till she had gone, and he found himself in the empty building, that Samuel Parris fully realized what he had done. By the rules of his church no person, not an admitted member, had the privilege of sacrament. How did he know if this woman was spiritually qualified? By what right had he, standing at the foot of another man's pulpit, to break bread and wine, perhaps to an unbeliever? Who was this woman who had exercised an influence so potent upon him, and, as it were, wrested the holy bread and wine from his hand? Surely the evil one could not have tempted him in a form like that.

These thoughts troubled the minister greatly, and he left the meeting-house saddened by the waywardness of his own heart, which would be constantly following its kind impulses, in spite of the strict rules laid down by his creed.

CHAPTER X.

HUNTED DOWN.

Samuel Parris had gone up from Salem to Boston impelled only by an unconquerable wish to breathe the same air with his only child; but when Governor Phipps found that he was in the same place with himself, wandering about the streets, and crucifying his heart, because of his great love for the daughter of his old age, he went in search of him; and, after much persuasion and reasoning, induced a more wholesome frame of mind, and, for a little time, the minister was able to receive the glad welcome of his child without self-reproach.

The healthy good sense of his friend had a wonderful effect on the old man, who had become morbid from constant loneliness and much sorrow. The tone of his fine mind grew stronger under a roof where the affections had full scope, and where a fresh, breezy atmosphere always prevailed. At times, the good old man was seen almost to smile, this little sojourn from home gave such zest to his life.

He had provided for his pulpit in Salem before leaving home, and therefore, without undue persuasion, consented to remain and take a share in the baptism of his friend, a thing which the governor, and his whole family, had much at heart.

But all this time his own home was left in loneliness, or what was almost the same thing, under the charge of a young girl, the niece of his wife, who had been adopted in her infancy, and brought up side by side with his own child.

This girl was a little older than Elizabeth Parris, and had shared the same love, the same bed, and the same table with her from childhood up. She was an orphan and the child of an orphan.

It was said in whispers, by the old gossips of the place, that her mother came from some remote Indian settlement, where she and her little sister—afterwards the wife of Samuel Parris—had been left like wild animals, to live or die, probably by some unfortunate or unnatural parent. But these two helpless creatures had escaped the wilderness and sought shelter among the inhabitants of Salem. The elder girl gave no account of herself save that she had escaped great danger, and fled from the woods where her mother had perished. The little one only clung to her sister with fond love in her deep blue eyes, and a timid struggle if any one attempted to draw her from that singular protection. She was quite too young for any knowledge of her own history.

For a time this brave girl and her sister were received and kindly treated by the inhabitants, but after a year or two it came out that, even in the wilderness, she had imbibed, no one could tell how, those Quaker heresies so obnoxious to the prevailing religionists. Becoming more and more bold in declaring them, she had been driven forth into the wilderness again, cruelly scourged by the law, and hunted down by her fellow-men like a she-wolf caught at her prey.

The younger child, to whom all religious creeds remained a blessed mystery, was forcibly torn from the arms of her sister, whose very touch was considered contagious by the regenerated, and adopted into the church. She was too young at the time of her sister's martyrdom, for such in spirit it was, to resist either this cruelty or kindness, and the very people who had hunted her sister out of civilized life were the most eager for her welfare, and strove most diligently to render her happy and comfortable. Indeed, she was in reality the ewe lamb of the church, and, being of a peaceful, gentle nature, soon learned to look upon the troubles of her first childhood as a dream, and think of the brave sister, who had been ready to perish for her, as one of the characters that she loved to read about in the Bible.

Thus she surrounded the past with a sort of religious mystery, which threw a shade of sadness over her whole life, but never, till the very last, embittered it as a knowledge of the whole truth would have done.

This young girl became to the church a lamb of atonement for her sister's heresy. She grew up beautiful as an angel, both in soul and body; became the wife of Samuel Parris, the mother of his child, and then, in truth, an angel.

But a thing happened on the very day before her death, which no human being ever understood save the young wife, whose death-blow came with the knowledge it brought.

She was sitting alone, this young wife, in the spare room of her log house, singing a quiet, sweet psalm-tune to herself, as she sewed on a little garment which was to clothe her first-born child. The minister had gone forth to hold a prayer-meeting, and she was thus pleasantly whiling the time of his absence away, thinking of him with a gentle satisfaction that more passionate love might not have known, between the pauses of her work and the breaks in her sweet music.

It was in the spring; the little window of her room was curtained with wild honeysuckles and sweetbriar brought down from the woods, and rooted by the house. The sash was up, and the wind, as it sighed through the leaves, gave a melodious accompaniment to her voice. But all at once, there was a quick rustling of the branches, as if they were torn apart by force, and, looking up suddenly, the young wife saw a thin brown hand clutching the thorny foliage, and a ghastly face, fired by two burning eyes, looking in upon her.

Mrs. Parris started up in great terror, for in her whole nature she was timid, and would have fled to the kitchen; but while she stood trembling and doubtful, the face disappeared, the outer door flew open, and a woman leading a child by the hand came hastily into the room.

Mrs. Parris gazed at the intruder with renewed affright. Though clad as a savage, with moccasins on her feet, leggins of crimson cloth, and a dress of deer skin, gorgeous with embroidery in beads, porcupine quills, and stained grasses, she had nothing of the Indian in her countenance or complexion. The hair that fell down from a broken coronet of feathers, which had once been gorgeous, was of a rich golden tint, and curled in heavy masses, though the woman had reached mid-age in fact, and was much older in appearance.

The eyes which she fixed on the young wife, though wild with the fires of death, had once been blue as a summer sky.

She could not speak—this strange wild woman—but gazed at the innocent wife standing there in her sweet motherly hopes, till great tears fell down her cheeks, and sobs rose and swelled in her throat, almost choking her.

"Who are you—what can I do for you?" said Mrs. Parris, gathering up all her courage to speak. "The minister is away; I am all alone; if more of your tribe are here, and wish me harm, I am helpless enough."

The woman put her hand up, and strove to force back the sobs that held her speechless, then she drew close to the young wife, and her voice broke forth in a gush of tender anguish, that thrilled her listener through and through.

"Rachael!"

That had been the orphan's name, forgotten long ago, for when they baptized her in the church she was called Elizabeth. But the anguish, the pathos with which it was uttered, made her pulses swell and her heart beat.

"*Rachael!*" The sound grew familiar, the voice came to her from the depths of the past, as a ghost glides out from the darkness that surrounds it. The knowledge that she had once known a sister came back.

"Rachael, my sister Rachael!"

Her soul gave up its past at the cry. She stretched forth her arms as she had done a thousand times in her helpless infancy, and fell into the embrace that gathered her up to the very heart of that dying woman.

"Rachael!"

"Sister!"

Language was mute then, and silence became eloquent; the blood in those two hearts throbbed with kindred fire, those arms clung together like vines rooted in the same soil.

At last the woman began to stagger.

"Let me sit down, Rachael." She fell into the easy-chair, gasping for breath.

"Lay thy head here close—close, sister—sister!"

"You are ill—dying!"

"Not yet—there—there—it is well; thee will try and remember how dear the little Rachael was to her sister, thee will know how true this heart is by its beating—its last beat, for I am about to die."

"Yes, I remember, as in a dream; but still I know who you are, spite of this dress, spite of time."

"And now, sister, dear sister, I have come to ask, for my little one, the care which thee received at my hands; for as our mother took thee from her bosom when she came to her death in the wilderness, I charge thee, sister Rachael, with my only daughter, Abigail Williams, for thus thee must call my child. She has another name, but that would bring fierce enemies upon her."

"God so deal with me as I deal with this little one!" was the reply, and reaching forth her arm, Mrs. Parris drew the child from the feet of her mother, kissing her softly amid her tears.

"Rachael!"

"Sister!"

"When thee was a little child like her, I suffered them to drive me away like a sinner and a slave; I suffered them to tear thee from my bosom, and went into the wilderness alone, never attempting to come back lest thee too might suffer, and perchance perish of want. It was like tearing my life away when thee was given up."

"Alas, alas! that I should have known so little of this!"

"It was a merciful forgetfulness; thy pure life has been all the happier for it, but I was not unmindful; many a week's journey have I taken through the woods to hear of thy welfare."

"But yourself?"

"I have been even as God wills it. Look up, Rachael: do not weep or droop thine eyes to the earth: thee has no cause. Even as thee, I have been the wife of one husband."

"I did not think otherwise; it is for myself that I am troubled. Surely this heart should have told me that you lived."

"Once more, my sister, it was a merciful forgetfulness; not till I knew by sure signs that my last moment was at hand, would I claim even this hour of thy life. Now I have come a long way alone and on foot, to give up my child, that she may dwell with the people of her mother."

"But her father?"

"He was a brave man—my benefactor and lord. His son, the first-born, was torn from me as I fled from the white fiends that murdered his father. They will make him a slave—he a king's son! The chief of his tribe a slave! a slave!"

The woman reeled on her feet as she stood, and fell into the chair again, panting for breath. With an effort she spoke on.

"Thee shall be mother to this little one, sister Rachael."

"Even as my husband shall be its father," said Mrs. Parris, laying her hand upon the child's head.

"That husband—presently—when I have more breath, thee shall tell me about him, for I know nothing. It is long, very long, since I have been able to gain tidings from the settlements. Even now I came upon this house at the last moment, and feeling about to fall to the earth, looked in,

seeking for help, and saw thee."

"Thank God that it was my house. Alas, how haggard and worn you look, my sister! I read years of suffering in your face, and I so happy, so unconscious all the time. But no one ever talked of my childhood."

"They would not thus accuse themselves; they who lashed thy sister with stripes, and drove her into the woods like a dog. How could such men look into thy pure face, and tell this unholy truth?"

"But my husband; surely he must have heard of this cruelty, for he was minister here before I was born. Yet when I question him of my childhood, he always puts the subject aside."

A wild light came into the woman's eye. She sat upright in the chair, and looked down into the face of her sister.

"A minister, Rachael! what is thy husband's name?"

The name faltered on the young wife's lips, not as usual from reverence, but fear.

"Parris—his name is Parris."

The woman gathered herself slowly up.

"Samuel Parris?"

"Yes," replied the wife, in a timid whisper.

"An old man now?"

"Yes."

The woman stood upright, struggling to walk, but without the power to move. Her chest heaved, her throat swelled, she groped about blindly with her hand, searching for her child.

"Sister, sister, what troubles you?" cried Mrs. Parris, trembling violently.

"*Rachael, that man was one of my judges!*"

The words came out hoarsely, rattling in her throat. She fell back, struggled with awful force for a moment, and then a cold, gray corpse settled down in the chair, terribly in contrast with the savage dress. The child, who had been growing paler and paler, went softly up to the chair, and burying its face in the gorgeous vestments that clung about the corpse, remained motionless and mute as the dead. She neither wept nor moaned like an ordinary child, but a dull pallor stole over her neck and her little hands, which proved how terrible that still grief was. Ah, who shall tell how much of the iron that rusted through her after-life, entered that human soul during those moments of silent agony!

Mrs. Parris stood looking at them both, then, struck with a pang of terrible anguish, she crept out of the room, moaning as she went.

CHAPTER XI.

DOOMED TO SLAVERY.

While Mrs. Parris was in her chamber, faint with pain and driven wild by the fearful developments just made to her, the dead woman lay in the great easy-chair, wrapped in her gorgeous forest-dress and with the bright hair falling in masses down her cheek, concealing the death shadows that lay upon it.

All was still as midnight in the house. Save for a faint sob that came once or twice from the chamber above, the pretty cabin might have been taken for a tomb. Old Tituba had been very busy at the great stone oven, back of the house, baking bread, and that fearful scene had passed in the parlor without her knowledge. Though a soul had gone into eternity, and a heart had been broken, in those few minutes, the poor old savage was ignorant of it all. With her long iron shovel she was launching great loaves of rye bread into the depths of an enormous oven, and at last blocked up its yawning mouth with an earthen milk-pan full of beans, crested with a crisp mass of pork cut in square blocks across the rind. She had put the great wooden door up, and was stuffing tufts of grass about the edges to keep the air out, when a lad rushed wildly by her, leaping over the ground like a deer, and, turning a corner of the house, disappeared. The lad was dressed in a deer-skin tunic, trimmed so richly with wampum that it rattled like a hail storm as he fled. She caught one glimpse of a mass of glossy hair floating on the wind, and scarlet leggins hanging in shreds around those flying feet.

"It is an Indian child. It is one of our people," cried Tituba, casting her heavy iron fire-shovel to the ground. "The white men are on his track; they swarm like snakes in the forest."

But, quickly as the old woman moved, that wild Indian boy entered the house before she came up. He halted one moment on the threshold, hesitating and wild. A glance at the great easy-chair,

a cry that rang through and through the house, a leap that seemed rather that of some wild animal than a human being, and the boy lay prostrate at the dead woman's feet, with both hands pulling at her dress, while he cried out, in a voice that made the very air tremble with its pathos,

"Mother! mother! I am here! I am here! They could not hold me! I tore their bonds asunder like tow. I shot one through the heart, outran the others. All night long have I been on your trail. Look at me, mother. Wake up or the enemy will be upon us again."

A stir in the woman's garments that shook all its wampum fringes, deceived the boy, or he would have known that she was dead.

"Mother! mother! there is no time for rest. They were crowding in the outskirts of the woods when I came through. Come with me. I know of a cave in the rocks where you can be safe with my little sister. Did you know they will sell us for slaves—these white men that talk of a God higher than Mineto? Mother! mother! I hear a step. They are on us! They—" he paused suddenly, his hands, clasped and uplifted, seemed freezing together. He did not breathe. His wild eyes had caught the deadly pallor of that face, scattered as it were with ashes beneath the shadowy hair. He shuddered fearfully as the dead woman's garments rustled around her. A little form, half concealed by the chair, half buried in the garments, crept to his feet. A tiny hand, cold as snow, grasped at his dress.

"Brother!"

The little girl spoke in the Indian tongue, and looked into his face with those dark, piteous eyes.

"Brother!"

The boy snatched her up, and folding her close in his arms, looked in terrible woe on the dead face resting against the high back of the chair.

"Oh, mother! mother! have they killed you as well as my father?" he cried, drooping toward her. "Will you never speak again? Oh, Mineto! Mineto! what has your people done, that they are chased to death like wolves and foxes? What had she done that they could not spare her?"

Tituba stood motionless in the doorway. The wail of grief in that young voice held her there dumb and sorrowful. She understood the Indian tongue, and knew that this boy was the dead woman's son. A death-chant rose to her lips; she began to rock to and fro on the threshold. But a sound on the edge of the wood frightened the impulse away. She turned and saw a body of armed men coming around the meeting-house. The danger was close upon them. Tituba darted into the room, snatched the little girl from her brother's arms, and cried out in the Indian tongue: "Go! go! leap through the back window. There is a hollow floor under the oven: creep in. They will not look for you there." She ran into the kitchen as she spoke, mounted a ladder, and hid the child in a corner of the garret, heaping strings of dried apples and bunches of herbs upon her. The little girl lay in her concealment, passive and mute, holding her breath. Poor thing, she had become used to scenes of peril like that.

But the lad, that brave Indian boy, scorned to flee for his own safety alone. There he stood, close to his dead mother, pale as death, but with a terrible fire in his eyes. He had not distinctly understood old Tituba, and only knew that danger was near.

The heavy tramp of feet on the gravel path drew his eyes from that cold form to the window. It was blocked up with iron faces crowned with tall sugar-loaf hats, which shut out the very sight of heaven.

The savage instincts of a warlike race impelled the boy to resistance. Tituba had spoken of a back window. He glanced that way, knowing well that the forest stretched darkly beyond. But there a terrible sight met him. A dozen or more young warriors, the bravest of those who had followed King Philip on his last war-path, lay upon the sod, bound hand and foot with strong withes, shorn of their forest splendor, and with the eagle feathers, which had been to them a crown of glory, broken in the tangled hair from which they could not be altogether wrested. There they lay, those brave, grand savages, like a flock of sheep bound and ready for the butcher. They had fought valiantly for the land that was undoubtedly their own, and for that crime were deemed unworthy of Christian mercy.

The brave boy saw that all avenues of escape were closed to him. Instinctively, he felt for his bow. It was gone. When first taken a prisoner, those iron-faced men now glaring at him through the window had broken it under their feet. But bristling up from behind his mother's shoulder was a bow and quiver, in which were a half dozen arrows, the last love-gift of King Philip. Quick as lightning he snatched the bow, and an arrow flashed through the window.

A howl of pain followed, and a rush at the door, but the lad wheeled half round, and arrow after arrow leaped from his bow, till the quiver on that marble woman's back was empty. Then a band of soldiers pressed in upon him with levelled halberts. Hands that seemed cased in iron gauntlets seized him by the shoulders, and he was dragged farther over the threshold stone, struggling against them to the last. There he was hurled to the earth and bound limb to limb with tough withes. Then two of the soldiers carried him around a corner of the house and cast him down as if he had been a dog, among the young warriors, destined to be sold into slavery.

The lad struggled to a sitting posture, and looked out on the ocean. A ship, old and weather beaten, lay within the harbor, with her anchor up, ready for sea. That ship was bound for

Bermuda with a cargo of slaves, all gathered from the glorious forests of New England.

The men destined to fill her hold were chiefs and warriors of as brave a nation as ever baptized a free soil with blood—men taken in valiant fight, while contesting for their native woods, and the wigwams which were to them sacred homes. These unfortunate men were prisoners of war, helpless, and at the mercy of a victorious foe. The Puritan fathers being Christians and God-fearing men, would not put their captives to death: that would have been to sink themselves to a level with savages; so, after grave deliberation, some fasting, and much prayer, they resolved to stow away these brave men into the hold of a sea-going vessel, and let the winds of a benign heaven waft them into perpetual slavery. The returning ship would bring back heaps of glittering gold in exchange for this cargo of war prisoners; for the men who fought under King Philip were powerful and capable of severe toil. They had not yielded readily to the rifle, but peradventure the lash might prove a more effective instrument of civilization.

On this ship the son of King Philip looked with burning eyes, while the bonds with which they had lashed his limbs together cut purple hollows into his flesh. He knew that the sails which were now unfurling would bear him far away from the forest where his father had perished, and where hundreds of his tribe were now sheltering themselves from the white man's wrath.

There the lad sat, or rather knelt; every nerve in his body strained—every drop of his savage blood burning—every thought a denunciation. But no one of those iron-faced men heeded him.

The two soldiers who had cast the boy down amid his father's warriors, turned toward the sea.

"Lo," said one, extending his hand, "the wind is fresh from the east. Yonder, half-way to the shore, comes a boat. Take these sinful creatures to the beach, brethren, while I go in and bring forth the woman and her pappoose."

The boy uttered a sharp cry, and turned his glance on the man, who strode toward the house. He went rudely up to the great chair, and laid his hand on the woman's shoulder, giving it a slight shake. The fringes on her dress rattled like hail upon crusted snow. The man took his hand suddenly away, hesitated an instant, and then swept back the hair from that still face. The certain presence of death touched even his granite heart. He bent down, and was folding the deer-skin robe more composedly about the form, when a little creature came gliding through the door, and stole close up to the chair before he saw that it was the child he sought. She was a fearless little thing at all times; now, some vague idea that the man was about to harm her mother made her eyes wildly luminous, as she lifted them to his face.

"Go away," she said, in broken English, pushing him with all her tiny strength. "Go!" The fire in those beautiful eyes enkindled the stern cruelty of the man. He snatched her up in his arms and bore her forth with a grim smile on his bearded lip.

Then old Tituba saw what had happened and followed him, uttering wild cries of distress. The man took no heed, but carried his captive around the house in sight of her brother.

A yell of mingled rage and despair broke from that young heart. The lad tore and strained at his bonds like a trapped panther—fiery tears leaped to his eyes, specks of foam flew from his mouth.

"Not her, not her!" he shrieked, in English. "She is only a little baby. Let them whip me, sell me, kill me. I will work and suffer for both."

The anguish in that young voice reached Mrs. Parris, where she lay with her face buried in the pillows of her bed. Like a beautiful white nun she came out of her chamber, down the stairs, and into the midst of those Puritan soldiers. Terrible suffering had cast its ashes over her; but there was resolution in her eyes, pain on her forehead.

She went up to the man, who still held the little savage and took her gently from his arms.

"She is mine. The minister will care for her. Little children are not our enemies. Christians do not make slaves of them."

There was something in the very gentleness of her words that almost conquered the man, who muttered a gloomy protest. The little creature clung to her with thrilling tenacity.

"Leave the child with me. I will answer for its safety to your leader. I, the wife of Samuel Parris, whom you all know."

There was something in the face of this gentle young matron that enforced respect even from the men who had so rudely invaded her dwelling—a depth and intensity of suffering that prevailed more surely than command.

"Nay, if you will take charge of the little heathen we have nothing to say. In the minister's house she may find a gate of salvation open."

A spasm of pain swept the fair face of the matron; but her soul was strong enough for the moment to put this physical anguish aside. She took the infant in her arms, folded it close to her aching bosom, and went with it into the house. Old Tituba stood in the door.

"Take her, take her! and God have mercy on us all!" cried Elizabeth, tottering forward and giving up the child. Then she went feebly up the stairs and entered her chamber again.

The princely Indian boy, true to the reticent instincts of his father's race, became silent as marble

when he saw that his little sister would not be harmed. Even the cry of joy that rose to his lips when the child was given up he bravely suppressed. He would not, by one action, let his persecutors know how dear the little wanderer was to him. Had he spoken a word, or challenged attention by a gesture, the minister's wife would have learned that her sister's son was in peril, and might perhaps have saved him also. But he was too brave for complaint, and she went on, ignorant of his danger to the hour of her death.

The tide rose, the winds blew favorably, that old ship unfurled its canvas and sent out signals that its human crew was waited for. Down to the beach those brave young savages were forced, into the boats and away forever more.

Before night-fall that craft was far off on her horrible errand, plunging along that vast desert of waters, with oh! what terrible agony shut down under her closed hatches.

There in her hold, dark as the bottomless pit, with every breath of the stifled air foul with the scent of bilge water, lay those children of the great forest; which, broad, and green, and noble as it was, had hardly afforded scope for their heroic energies a month before. Down in impenetrable blackness, beneath the roaring waters that beat against that creaking hull, like wild animals, riotous with hunger, they had been cast in heaps, with less mercy than would have been yielded to mad dogs or trapped tigers. Not one glimpse of the glorious old woods from which they had been torn—not even a fragment of the blue sky was given to those bloodshot eyes; but, lashed onward by the waves, stifled, hungry, and broken-hearted, they were swept into slavery.

When Samuel Parris reached home that night, he found in place of the gentle wife whom he had left singing at her work, the dead woman of the forest, lying in her gorgeous habiliments, and the little child, whose stillness was more appalling than that of the corpse, crouching at her feet.

Shocked at the sight, but thinking first of his wife, the minister, after a vain attempt to question the child, followed the sound of broken voices that came faintly to his ear, and entered his own chamber. A moment after he went hurriedly from the house, returned with another person, and stood all night long holding his breath by the chamber door. At last he came away, moving like a ghost through the dim morning, and entered the little sitting-room where his angel had been seated so tranquilly when he went out, not yet twenty-four hours agone. The little girl, who had stayed by her mother all night, arose, and stood looking him in the eyes with a steady gaze that might have made any man shrink, for it was unearthly in its earnestness.

While that weird glance was upon him, a low cry rang through the house, a cry that made every drop in the old man's veins leap, and every nerve tremble.

"Thank God! Oh, my God, my God, how *can* I thank thee enough!" and the old man wept tenderly.

As if mocking the ecstasy of his tears, the little girl smiled in his face—but oh, such a wintry smile —and went back to her mother. The old man shuddered.

After a time, he went up to the chamber of his wife. She lay upon the bed with the babe he was to look upon for the first time, not folded to her bosom, but lying apart, while she gazed wistfully at its little features, with a weary look full of dull anguish, that never would change to the lovelight which should brighten a mother's face.

The minister, with tears in his eyes, leaned over her, and would have pressed his lips upon her forehead, but she shrunk down in the bed with a low moan, as a wounded fawn shudders at the touch of its captor, and when he sought to comfort her, and speak out the exquisite joy that filled his whole being, she looked up with those piteous eyes, and muttered:

"She was my sister—my sister!"

These were all the words she ever uttered. The shock of his sudden presence had exhausted the last remnants of her strength. She only breathed fainter and fainter, till her child, like the little one below, was motherless.

The two sisters were buried side by side, the same tree overshadowed them, and in the course of time the flowers that blossomed on one grave crept over the other. Many tears were shed over the minister's wife as they lowered her into the earth, but not one—not one—over the grand-hearted forest-woman. For her Samuel Parris could not weep. He looked upon her very coffin with terror. The Nemesis of his life was there, and would haunt him forever and ever. He stood by the open grave, bowed down with something more awful than grief. In the happiness of his married life he had grown vigorous and upright; but now his shoulders stooped, and his limbs shook like the branches of a dead tree. Poor old man! who can wonder that Samuel Parris never held up his head again!

As for the child, Abigail Williams, she came of a race to whom revenge stands in the place of religion—a race even to whose women and children tears are a reproach. At her mother's grave she did not forget the proud lessons of the kingly savage who taught even his women to suffer bravely.

They had taken off her Indian dress, it is true, but what power could quench the fire in that young heart! She did not comprehend the meaning of those black garments, only that she was alone, utterly alone, among all those people, who had been cruel enough to let her mother die.

From that double grave the young savage went back to old Tituba, the Indian woman, never in

her whole life to know one hour of careless childhood.

Thus it was that Abigail Williams became the adopted child of Samuel Parris, and this was the girl who, far advanced towards womanhood now, was left in charge of the minister's house when he made his eventful visit to Boston.

CHAPTER XII.

ELIZABETH AND HER COUSIN.

From the cradle up, Elizabeth Parris and Abigail Williams had been as sisters—nay, more, for while the same blood flowed in their veins and the same household words had been breathed into their ears, there existed that strong bond of contrast which is sure to give some degree of excitement to the quietest life. Abigail was the elder by about three years. She had come to a rapid growth, and her beauty possessed all the roundness and depth of tint which belongs to a full-statured woman. Her mind was like her person, and both were remarkable. Apt, bright, full of intelligence, yet gentle, and troubled with a shy bashfulness at times, which sprang from pride rather than timidity, she was a wonder to everybody that saw her. She was so unlike other children, her manner of doing things was so firm and gentle, that few even of the gravest church-members ever thought of rebuking her as they did other offenders, or of petting her in the same way.

She was greatly given to study, but sometimes would sit with her book in one hand, or her slate in her lap, gazing wistfully into the distance through the window of the log school-house, as if her life like her thoughts lay afar off, and having escaped her lesson, could not be brought back again.

The school-house commanded a broad, beautiful approach to the sea, and behind it was a dense forest of hemlocks, oaks, and beech, which kept the earth forever in shadow, and covered the old sodden logs and decayed stumps with thick fleeces of moss that gleamed out like velvet and gold when a sunbeam chanced to strike downward and touch the earth. Vast as the ocean itself stretched the shadows of that forest, and Abigail's face took a deeper and more earnest expression when she looked that way, deeper and more earnest even than when she gazed upon the far-off waters and saw the distant sky bend down and cover their retreat with silvery mists. You would have thought the child was searching for something that was very, very long in coming, as she fell into these long musing fits. Sometimes she would remain motionless, leaning both elbows on her little pine-desk, and dropping her chin between her hands, for half an hour together without turning her eyes from the shadows that darkened the forest, and seeming to hold her breath lest it should frighten some one back that she had been waiting and hoping for. She seemed to be conscious herself that there was someone weird and strange about these fits of concentrated thought, for at every sound of your voice, at every step that drew near, she would catch her breath, start and look up, as if she expected something dreadful to happen.

Speak softly to Abigail Williams at such times, or look at her with a glance of love, and her quiet eyes would fill and her childish heart would heave, it was impossible to say why. But if you spoke sharply to her when her head was at the little window and her thoughts far away, no one knew where, the poor thing would grow pale, and turn upon you with such a sorrowful look, then go away and do as she was bidden with a gravity that touched you to the heart. Sometimes it would require a whole day after a rebuke like this to restore the dye of her sweet lips or to persuade her that you were not half so angry as you might have appeared. But with all this, the quickness of her intellect, and the alacrity with which she took to study, was remarkable as her thoughtfulness.

But Elizabeth Parris was in every respect a very different child. If you chided her even to the lifting of a finger, ten to one, she laughed in your face, and made you laugh with her, in spite of yourself. Scold her, and you got an answer back that made you love the creature for her very sauciness. She would mimic your step with her little naked feet, or the motion of your head, or the curve of your mouth, while you were expecting to terrify her. Everybody was tired of her in half an hour, and yet everybody was glad to see her again, for, with all her mischief, she crossed your threshold like a sunbeam.

She was a careless little romp, too. Loved above all things to run barefoot, and was forever losing her shoes in the long grass.

She had a hundred different ways of combing her bright hair; and, in the winter time, if there was an ice-pond or a snow-drift within a mile of the village, she was sure to be sliding on the one or wading knee-deep in the other. Still Elizabeth grew very fond of her book, and had fits of hard study that kept her ahead of her class in spite of her wild ways.

Out of school, the two girls were always together; they required no other playmates. Mornings, evenings, and Saturdays, especially, they were always creeping about under the great beech trees, with their story books, which Abby would pore over, and Elizabeth would listen to, with fun on her lips or water in her eyes as the case might be—though she was always ready for a tumble in the wet grass, a plunge in the surf, or a slide from the very top of the hay mow, at a moment's

warning.

Sometimes they would spend a whole day hunting for early apples in the thick grass, picking hazel-nuts, or feeding the fish in the clear sea. Then they would ramble about in the great solemn woods together, holding their breath, and ready to say their prayers with very awe, not of the wild beasts whose track they were on, but from the vast shadows that fell over them from the trees that were spread out, over the sky, and the expanse of shrubbery, that seemed to cover the whole earth.

The sublimity of all these things hushed them into silence, and if they heard a noise in the forest, a howl or a war-whoop, they would creep in among the flowers of some solitary thicket, and were safe.

Directly the danger had passed they might be found where the scarlet barberries glittered among the sharp green leaves, like threaded bunches of coral; where the glowing purple plums, or clustered bunch berries rustled among the foliage and rolled about their feet in over ripeness.

Into these wild places they delighted to go, even while they were afraid to speak above a whisper, and kept close hold of each other's hands every step of the way, till a sort of fascination crept over them, and they grew strangely in love with the vast solitude of the woods.

Such was the love, and such the companionship of these two girls. In school or out, all day and all night, sleeping, waking, talking or dreaming, they were always together—never apart for a single day, up to the time of our story.

The two sisters who had been carried together out of the minister's dwelling, and laid side by side behind that old meeting-house, whose slender wooden spire could be seen from the school-house window, with the figure of Death on the top for a weathercock, were scarcely more inseparable than these children had been, since their hands were linked in sisterhood by those new-made graves.

And now Abigail Williams was approaching her nineteenth birthday; but she looked at least five years older than the sweet, blue-eyed Elizabeth.

She was stately beyond her age, and altogether her beauty was so remarkable that the people of the town could not choose but turn and look upon it as she passed by on her way to school or meeting.

But she had left off school now and took to reading every thing she could lay her hands on, even to the pamphlets and old newspapers hoarded away in the minister's garret; indeed her attainments were something wonderful—she was almost as learned as the minister himself.

Such was Abby Williams, at the period when our story commenced. For the first time in her life, she was separated from Elizabeth Parris; then, while the loneliness was upon her, she was left in solitude, with no human creature in the house but the old Indian servant Tituba.

The day after the minister left his home, Abby was sitting in the room where her aunt Parris had sung at her work that night when the forest woman found her sewing so quietly. The young girl sat by the open window, in the very chair where her mother died. She was busy knitting on one of those long seamed stockings, which were an important portion of the male dress in those times. Two balls of yarn lay in her lap, gray and white, with which she striped the stocking, seaming it every three stitches. She was expert with her needles, and did not look at them, but sat gazing out into the calm summer day, peacefully as her aunt had done, but with a touch of sadness in her face; for, as her aunt had thought of her unborn babe years before, she was thinking of Elizabeth now.

In those tender thoughts, and in the monotony of her work alone, Abby Williams resembled her aunt. The tropical bird and the wood pigeon had as much likeness in every thing else. The young girl was singular and picturesque. In her person was blended all the beauty of two distinct races, but in every thing the grace of civilization predominated. The delicacy and lustre of her mother's beauty were all present, moulding the features into exquisite grace, lending a soft, purplish blue to those bright eyes, and scattering gloss and bloom among the folds of those heavy tresses. The contrast of her eyes with the black brows and lashes gave a beauty to the face even more attractive than the rich tint of her complexion or the peachy richness of her cheek. The refinement of civilization and the lithe grace of the panther were blended in her person. Her very repose was eloquent of deep tenderness, and of fierce, slumbering passion. When these antagonisms came in contact, that young girl's character would break forth in all its powers of good and evil; at present, she was only an humble maiden at her work, lonely and a little sad, but at peace with all mankind.

As she worked, Tituba, the Indian woman, came in and out from the kitchen, making vague pretences, as it seemed, only to look on the young girl at her work. She did not speak once, for Abby was gazing afar off into the shadows of the forest as if her fate lay there, and she was striving to unravel it with her glances.

At last the sun went down, and old Tituba came into the room again, chanting an Indian death-song inexpressibly mournful and sweet, which mingled so sorrowfully with the girl's thoughts that she dropped her knitting and leaned back in the great-chair, sighing heavily.

Tituba kept on with her chant; it was the lament of a child over the grave of its mother, given in

the Indian tongue, every word of which went to the young girl's heart, like a reproach. The meeting-house, which stood upon the edge of the forest, lent force to the old woman's voice, as it died away on her slow retreat to the kitchen. The full moon threw its pale, ghastly light on the figure of Death which surmounted its spire, and she knew that its shadow was that moment creeping over her mother's grave.

Unconscious of the influence that sent her forth, Abby arose, and, throwing a shawl over her head, went quietly out into the moonlight, taking a straight line for the meeting-house.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE BROTHER AND SISTER.

In the night-time Abigail had never before visited her mother's grave. Indeed, she had seldom been there alone, in her whole life. Now the grave-yard was very dim and shadowy, for it lay on the verge of the forest, and a few stray moonbeams only pierced through the pine boughs that drooped over it. She was almost afraid to advance close, for the periwinkles that crept over the two graves had grown luxuriantly thick, spreading over them like a torn pall. Even their flowers, so exquisitely blue in the day-time, seemed black among the darkness of their leaves. Beyond the two graves—now linked into one by those dusky creepers—the forest was black as midnight. Here and there a fire-fly shone out in the depths of the wood; here and there a branch caught the moonlight, that fringed the edges of its dewy leaves with silver; but this only made the darkness beyond more complete. She crept towards the graves, holding her breath, afraid of the solitude and darkness, afraid and yet fascinated. All at once she stretched forth her hand, and seized hold of a pine branch which shivered in all its slender leaves, and gave forth those low, melancholy sighs, which sound so like human grief.

The young girl held on to the branch and, stooping forward with gleaming eyes and parted lips, peered into the gloom of the forest, looking straight over her mother's grave.

All at once she drew a sharp breath and let go of the pine bough, that fell back to its place with a rustle that shook all the neighboring branches, and covered the grave below with a storm of dew. Then, with her head turned back and her eyes bright with new terror, she attempted to flee. A crash—a rush amid the forest boughs, and a voice coming out of the darkness!

Her lifted foot fell like lead upon the grass, a cry broke from her lips, and, still maintaining the first attitude of flight, she seemed frozen into stone.

"Mahaska!"

Out from the dim forest stole that name. When she had heard it the young girl could not think, nor why it fell with such sweet mournfulness on her ear. But she knew that the name had been hers; in some previous existence perhaps, for she never remembered hearing it before with mortal ears. It thrilled through and through her.

"Mahaska!"

"Who speaks?"

"Mahaska!"

As the name was uttered a third time, a figure came out from the blackness, rustling through the foliage as it passed, and stood in the moonlight.

Abigail was no longer afraid, but, dropping into her old position, stood with one hand leaning on the gray stone at the head of her mother's grave.

It was a savage, and yet a white man, who stood before her—a savage, in all the pomp of his war garments, with hostile weapons at his girdle, and a rifle in his right hand. The crest of feathers, with which his hair was knotted, fluttered in the night wind proudly as if it had surmounted a helmet. The warm crimson, that lined his robe of dressed deer-skin, and the many colored wampum that bordered and fringed it, glowed richly in the moonlight. It was a noble figure, and the young girl's face kindled as she measured him with her eyes.

"Whom do you seek, with a tomahawk at your girdle, and a scalping-knife within reach of your hand? I am alone, and there is only an old woman at the house—no help within reach of my voice—but you see I stand still—I am not afraid."

"No—not afraid," answered the savage, with a proud motion of the hand. "Even the women of your race should be brave. Mahaska, step forth, that the moon may look upon your face."

Fearlessly, as if she had obeyed that voice all her life, Abigail stepped out of the pine shadow, and stood face to face with the savage.

"Your hand does not shake—you look into my face—your lip keeps its red—the blood starts to your cheek like sunset upon the snow mountains—you are not afraid of the Indian?"

"No, not afraid."

"The grasp of my hand does not make you tremble?"

"No, it sends the fire back to my heart."

"What brought you to the forest—to this grave?"

"I do not know—stay, the old woman Tituba was muttering a death-chant. It must have been that."

"A death-chant in the Indian tongue—a chant of the Wampanoags?"

"A chant in the Indian tongue—but I cannot tell of what tribe."

"And you understand it?"

"Yes!"

"How—who taught you the meaning of our death-chants?"

Abigail was astonished. She had never thought of this before. How, indeed, had she learned the meaning of these words? Not from the minister, nor at school; nor, so far as she could remember, from the old Indian woman. How then had that strange language become so familiar to her ear and her tongue? This thought, so suddenly aroused, bewildered her. She had no answer to give.

The young savage grasped her hand in his, and she felt that his limbs quivered; slowly, very slowly, he drew her to the grave, and, pointing downward, said—

"It was of her you learned the tongue of the Wampanoags!"

"My mother," said Abigail, mournfully, "my poor mother, who lies here so still—how could she teach me a savage language? She, the sister of my uncle's wife?"

"How did she know—how could she teach you the language of our tribe? Ask how deep the wrongs must be which made her forswear her own tongue as if it had been a curse?"

"Hold, hold!" cried Abigail, shaking off his clasp and gazing wildly into his face. "Your speech is like my own—English is native to you, rather than the savage tongue—your cheek is without paint—your forehead too white—your air proud like an Indian, but gentle withal. Who are you? Why is it that you lay wait for me in this holy place, talking of my mother as if you knew her?"

"Knew her, Mahaska? The Great Spirit knows how well! Knew her?"

"My mother—you—"

The young man fell on his knees, and, leaning his head upon the grave stone, remained silent a while, subduing the emotion that seemed to sweep away his strength. At last he looked up; the fire had left his eyes; deep, solemn resolution filled its place.

Abigail could not speak. Bewilderment and awe kept her dumb. For a moment the young Indian gazed upon her, then his voice broke forth in a gush of tenderness.

"Mahaska!"

"Why do you call me by that name?" cried the young girl.

"Because your mother—your beautiful, unhappy mother—whispered it faintly as a dying wind in the pine branches, when her lord and your father bent thankfully over her couch of fern leaves, in the deep forest, to look upon his last-born child. Because his brave kiss pressed your forehead in baptism, as that name left her pale lips. Because the word has a terrible significance."

"What significance?" asked Abigail, beginning to tremble beneath those burning glances.

"Mahaska, the Avenger."

"The avenger! Alas! alas! it is a fearful name; but what signifies that? The consecrated waters of baptism have washed it away."

The young Indian sprang to his feet.

"Washed it away? Washed the name of our fathers from your forehead? I tell you, girl, it is burning there in the red blood of a kingly sire—in the flames which devoured the old men and little children of our tribe—rusted in by the iron that held a king's son in bondage under the hot sky of the tropics. Look, maiden, look where the ocean heaves and rolls beneath the moon: there is not enough water in all that to wash the name from your brow. Look upward, where the Great Spirit hath kindled his camp-fires in the sky: you will not find flame enough to burn it out. Look yonder, where the thick forest covers the earth—roll all its shadows together, and through their blackness all the world would read that name!"

Abigail covered her affrighted face with both hands. Her brain was confused—the heart quaked in her bosom—all the traditions of her life were uprooted in a moment. Who was she? Who was the man, garbed like a savage, but who spoke the English tongue as if it were his own? Was the grave at her feet really that of her mother? What did the young savage mean by that haughty air—those proud words?

The Indian came closer to her, withdrew the hands from her face very gently, and held them with

a tender clasp.

"Mahaska!"

Abigail looked at him steadily, till the tears rose to her wild eyes; then, as his hand grasped hers faster and tighter, she made an effort to wrench herself away.

His hands dropped, his face bent downward.

"Mahaska!"

"I listen."

"Surely as the Great Spirit looks down upon us through his stars, the woman who sleeps beneath these dark leaves commands you to listen when I speak, and believe what I shall say!"

"But you are an enemy—a savage from the woods; what could you know of my mother?"

"Every thing; it is she who charges you to believe this."

"But if she had a knowledge of you or your people, why did my uncle never mention it?"

"Why did he never mention it?" rejoined the Indian—and now the tenderness left his eyes, and the words came hissing through his shut teeth—"because he was the enemy of your race. Father and mother alike, suffered at his hands."

"What, my uncle, my good, pious uncle, the father of Elizabeth! I do not believe it!" cried Abigail indignantly, "he was never the enemy of any human being."

"Silence!" whispered the savage, "your words trouble the ashes in that grave!"

That instant a gust of wind came sobbing through the pine leaves, and the dusky creepers on the two graves shivered audibly.

Abigail drew close to the savage, and laid her hand on his arm. They bent their heads, and listened till the wind swept by.

"Is it my mother's voice?" whispered the young girl.

"Have you never heard it before, sobbing and wailing among the trees, or whispering softly when the leaves talk to the night?"

"Yes! oh, yes!"

"Have you never felt it in the night, or here at mid-day in the forest—felt it all around you, till the heart quaked in your bosom, and your limbs refused to move?"

"Ah, me! this also—this also!"

"And yet you ask, is it the voice of my mother?"

"Alas, how should I know? I who never, till this moment, dreamed that she who rests there had wrongs to complain of."

"*Rests* there—*rests*! why, girl, it is because she cannot rest that the wind brings her sobs to your ear—cannot rest while her youngest-born finds shelter with the most cruel of her enemies."

"The most cruel of her enemies!"

"He who sat in judgment upon a weak, helpless woman, when she came out from the wilderness with her baby sister strapped to her back, beseeching shelter among the people of her mother's race—the very people who had driven that mother forth to die among her enemies, because she was of a different faith, and believed in a God more merciful than the one they worshipped—this man was Samuel Parris."

"And the woman, who was she?" cried Abigail, wringing her hands; for so many painful thoughts rushing together almost drove her mad.

"That woman was Anna Hutchinson, the martyr, who was driven from settlement to settlement, with her children—like a mad dog fleeing with her young. Here chained to a cart, and lashed till her white shoulders ran blood, while the strange man's God was piously called on to sanctify the deed—there driven onward with taunts and jeers, starved, beaten, trampled upon everywhere. At last she fled with her husband and her young children into the wilderness, trusting rather to enemies embittered against her race by wrongs deeper than hers, than to the men who hunted her down like a beast of prey."

"But they killed her—they killed her—the Indians whom she would have trusted—her and her little ones," cried Abigail, interrupting him. "I have heard the story again and again. Her children were all murdered—she left nothing but a dread curse, a curse that makes the old men whom it was levelled against tremble even yet."

"A curse, yes, the terrible curse of a human being tortured to death—a curse that wails through the woods and stalks around your houses forever unappeased, unfulfilled, but which grows deeper and louder every year."

Abigail shuddered.

"But the judges, who sentenced this unhappy woman, were wise and God-fearing men. Among them was old Mr. Parris, the father of Samuel Parris, my uncle; the old man died blessing God, and at peace with all his creatures."

"He persecuted Anna Hutchinson unto death. She was a beautiful, brave woman, whose courage and truth won the hearts of liberal men to her cause. This was her fault; her smiles, her prayers, her powerful reasoning, overwhelmed their sermons, and shook the foundation of their strength. She had disciples—followers—believers—was a woman of great mind; her thoughts were like maple blossoms in spring, bright and pleasant, giving out sunshine; but those of her persecutors always crept along in shadows. This woman was driven upon the knife that stabbed her, by her own brethren. The curse which she uttered in her desperation calls louder and louder upon her children."

"But her children were all slain; she left no human soul to mourn or avenge her—I have heard the story too often; it is written on my memory as with fire; why bring it up here—what has that to do with me, or her?"

Abigail pointed to the grave with her trembling finger—for now she was shivering from head to foot. The story of Anna Hutchinson always affected her thus; from her infancy she had never heard the name without a cold chill.

CHAPTER XIV.

ANNA HUTCHINSON'S CURSE.

The savage lifted Abigail from the earth where she had fallen, and went on with kindling excitement.

"No, her children were not all slain. Two escaped—one, a young girl pale as the first cherry blossoms, with hair like the sunshine in August. The other was a babe, four weeks old, which this brave woman took from her bosom just before the tomahawk cleft her brain. These children were carried into the forest, passed from tribe to tribe, till the eldest grew to womanhood. But she remembered her mother, and the horrible scene of her murder, while she knew nothing of the persecutions that drove that mother among the Indians, when the chiefs were on the war-path. So she never took kindly to the tribe, but always pined for a sight of her own people. At last she fled, carrying the child with her, and came here to the village of Salem."

"Here, here—great heavens, can this be!"

"But they would not let the child of Anna Hutchinson rest; she also dared to think for herself. She was also arraigned before the magnates of the church. Like Anna Hutchinson, her fair shoulders were reddened with stripes. The little child, whom she loved better than her own life, was torn from her arms. Like a wounded deer, they sent her into the wilderness, alone, alone—bleeding at every step, uttering moans with every breath."

"Oh, this is terrible!" cried Abigail, pressing both hands to her heart.

The Indian took no heed of her anguish, but went on:

"All day and all night long she wandered through the tangled undergrowth, feeding upon the honeysuckle, apples, and wild plums, that grew in her path, calling in despair on the name of her little sister, and praying to her God that she might be so happy as to die. For days and nights she toiled on with only one object—to get farther and farther from the people of her race. As a wounded deer pants for spring-water, she longed for the wigwams and the savage love from which she had fled less than a year before.

"But she was in the deep wilderness now, with no track to guide her way—no hope, nothing but her despair. She could not even cry aloud to the Great Spirit, for his face was hidden. Pale and hungry, with the shoes dropping from her feet, her poor hands torn with the thorns that sought her out as human hate had done, this poor girl wandered on and on, growing fainter and paler each moment. At last she sank down, breathless and exhausted, with great tears rolling slowly from beneath her closed lashes, and the blue of hunger settling around her mouth."

Here Abigail's sobs broke in upon the narrative. The Indian waved his hand with a gesture that silenced this outbreak, and went on:

"The place where she fell was a deep ravine; mountains towered on either side, and rocks, covered with thick mosses, choked it up.

"Upon a shelf of these rocks, where the buck-horn moss crackled and broke beneath her, she lay panting for life. Hemlock and pine branches stooped together and shut out the sun—not a glimpse of the blue sky, not a gleam of the golden light that deluged the tree-tops, came to that dark ravine.

"There the young girl laid herself down to die—hopeless, speechless, alone! A wolf, half-way up

the ravine, gave out a howl. She did not move or open her eyes. It might have torn at her garments and found no resistance. A glittering snake lay coiled on the flat of a rock close by, with its tail erect and its crest in the air, but, more merciful than the men who had driven her forth, it shook the rattles of ten years in gentle warning, uncoiled itself lazily, and, gliding over the moss within half a yard of her feet, crept into its hole. She saw the serpent through her half-shut eyes, without a wish to stir. Why not death in that shape as well as another?

"Then the thoughts died in her brain, and the breath sank to a quiver on her blue lips. A stillness like the grave crept over her. She did not hear it, but a footstep sounded on the side of the ravine. A leap from rock to rock—and an Indian in his war garments stood twenty feet above the young girl, looking down upon her. He turned aside, seized a sapling which bent to his weight like a bow, and swung himself downward upon the rock.

"She did not stir. The lashes lay motionless on her cold cheeks. There was no breath on those lips. The young Indian gathered the pale creature in his arms, and strove to warm her against his own brave heart. But it was of no avail. Then he thought of the flask of fire-water in his bosom, and forced a few drops through those pale lips—a shiver and a deep sigh—the lashes unclose, and the deathly eyes look into his.

"The chief laid her softly down, took a corn-cake from the pouch at his side, and fed her with the crumbs, as if she had been a bird. After the first morsel she grew eager and craving, but the chief was no common savage. He knew that enough would be death, and kept the food in his own grasp, pacifying her with gentle words.

"The daughter of Anna Hutchinson understood his language; her great mournful eyes had opened upon him like those of a wounded doe; now they brightened with gratitude, and tears came stealing up, one by one, till they overflowed.

"That day the maiden rested in the ravine, for the spot seemed like heaven to her then. The chief gathered green moss fleeces from the other rocks and heaped a couch, softer than velvet, upon which she slept sweetly, beneath the shelter of his blanket. All night long the chief sat guarding her slumbers. To him she was a gift from the Great Spirit, who had wrought the sunlight in her golden hair.

"When the morning broke, he took his rifle and shot a bird for her breakfast; for the danger was over, and she might fare sumptuously now. Striking sparks from his flint, he built a fire in the ravine, and roasted the game, serving it up daintily on the last corn-cake left in his pouch. Then he found a spring gushing from under a rock, and brought her a draught of sparkling water, in a cup formed of leaves which he made with a single twist of the hand. The maiden smiled upon him in her sweet thankfulness, and, though a brave chief, he forgot the war-path which his tribe was pursuing without a leader. It was a pleasant exchange for the maiden, from the cart wheel and the white man's lash."

"Oh, it was paradise!" murmured Abigail, with tears in her eyes.

"Yes, it was paradise. But a true brave turns resolutely from the wigwam to the council. The young chief could not remain forever in the ravine, for he was the head of a great nation, and the warriors waited for him on the war-path. The next moon, Philip, the young king of the Pomperoags, had given the maiden a name that he loved well—which signified wounded bird, and, with this name, he led her to the royal lodge, with her embroidered robes sweeping the earth, and crowned like a princess."

"And he loved her always, this savage king?" said Abigail, smiling through her tears.

"Yes, he loved her, and her only, all the days of his life. It was a regal marriage, royally fulfilled. For a time Anna Hutchinson's curse slept."

"Oh, me! I grow cold again—that curse!" cried Abigail.

CHAPTER XV.

GIVEN UP TO REVENGE.

"Anna Hutchinson had charged her daughter, that golden-haired young girl, with the consummation of her curse. But where love is, vengeance sleeps. Her husband's tribe was at peace with the whites, and the 'wounded bird' had a child in her lodge; so she put the wrongs of her mother on one side, and lived contentedly in her forest kingdom. Why should she urge her husband's warriors to the red path while they could plant corn and hunt venison unmolested? She did not yet fully understand the persecutions which had driven her mother to death. The tribe that massacred her family had been long ago chastised and driven from their hunting-grounds by the valor of her husband—was not this enough?

"No, no; the wail of that curse still troubled the air around her lodge, and its spirit worked slowly but surely in the white settlements. Years wore on; another little child laughed and clapped its hands in the doorway of King Philip; and now, when the kingly husband and wife were in their prime, the whites, who had grown powerful, began to cast rapacious eyes on the hunting-grounds

of the Pomperoags. It was the old story of the wolf and the lamb—causes of offence were soon found. The colonies arose and armed themselves. King Philip of Mount Hope was a formidable enemy. It took brave men to cope with him. He was a statesman as well as a warrior, wise as a serpent and brave as steel. The most powerful tribes flocked to his alliance, some won to his aid by the eloquence of his wife, others by sympathy and common danger. You have read in your school books how the war against King Philip was conducted. You have heard old men and women call him a fiend, and speak of him as the companion of fiends."

"Yes, yes, the old women tell us stories of his cruelty."

"And of his wrongs, of his courage, his wonderful magnanimity, his noble statesmanship—do they tell you nothing of this?"

"No; only of his cruelties."

"And your heart, how does that receive the lie? calmly, or bursting with indignation?"

"My heart aches within me when I hear these legends—aches and burns as if a wound at its core were rudely touched."

"Ah! and there is a wound, a cruel wound, deep in your life. It shall spread and burn through your whole being. Listen: These Englishmen voted themselves munitions of war, raised regiments, linked colony to colony, and made each settlement the rivet of a chain which swept the coast. Their bravest men took the field—the whole country was astir. These very preparations were a tribute to the heroism they were intended to crush—all this force was brought against the kingly savage. He met it bravely where courage was most likely to prevail; cautiously where prudence promised to husband human life. He seized upon their own tactics, and turned them in his favor; marched, countermarched, and manœuvred as no general of Europe has ever done. This queen went side by side with him upon the war-path. She was his council, the companion of his danger. There was not a warrior in the tribe who would have refused to lay down his life for her. But why tell you this history? You know how the strong man was betrayed by a traitor, murdered in cold blood, hacked limb from limb. Oh, Great Spirit, hear me, and kindle in her breast the rage that consumes mine! Listen, girl: His wife and son were taken prisoners; the wife of King Philip was dragged out of the forest with her son at her side and the last-born in her arms!

"Again the magnates of the church sat in judgment upon her. A ship lay on the coast, a battered old vessel bound for Bermuda. This brave woman could not be trusted in the country—the ship would bear her and her children into slavery. The wife and children of a king were taken from the broad forest, with its fresh winds and sumptuous leafiness, and condemned to herd with negroes and slaves under a tropic sun. That night, no one could ever tell how, the wife of Philip escaped from her captors, and fled with her youngest child, a little girl scarcely yet three years old. That child inherited its mother's beauty, its father's lofty pride, and the solemn obligations of Anna Hutchinson's curse."

Again Abigail felt the cold chills creeping over her.

"Ah me!" she muttered, "that terrible inheritance—better that the child had died."

"Better that the child had died than avenge such wrongs—a grandmother's butchery, a father's murder, stripes and slavery for the mother, chains, hard labor, brutal blows for the young boy—better that she had died! Wretched girl, unsay these words!"

The anger in his face was terrible, his hand sprung upwards as if to smite her. She shrunk away into the shadow of the pine, thinking thus to escape his fiery glances.

"Step into the light again, that your face may unsay the cowardly words of your tongue!"

"I dare not—you terrify me. Why tell this horrible story here? I am young, helpless, afraid sometimes, and talk like this takes away my strength. I cannot think of this dying woman's curse without dread. The judgment of God must follow it, and the helpless child, with whom its power was left—but perhaps she died."

"And if she had, was not the son left, the Bermuda slave, with King Philip's blood burning beneath the lash, to remind him of the legacy of hate left against her people by his martyred ancestress?"

"It was an evil inheritance from a woman who wrought much trouble in the church, though the atonement was enough to wring one's heart. This Anna Hutchinson, who died under the tomahawk, was a heretic—a free thinker, who would not forgive her enemies as Christ did, but died hurling curses back upon the people who perhaps only sought to win her once more to the true faith."

"Hold!" shouted the chief, seizing her by the arm and dragging her into the moonlight; "hold, before the word withers your tongue—Anna Hutchinson was your *grandmother*."

Abigail Williams cried out like a doe when the arrow pierces it.

"The woman who sleeps there is her eldest daughter, the wife of King Philip!"

"And I—I," whispered the poor creature—writhing as if in pain.

"You are the child."

"The child to whom the power of her curse descends! oh, my God, have mercy—have mercy!"

"Mahaska."

"I hear, oh heavens, I feel that the name was mine!"

"Mahaska, listen: The blood of that brave woman—of that most kingly of kings—both betrayed, both murdered—beats in our veins."

Abigail was cowering upon the ground at his feet; she had no strength to stand, but as he spoke she lifted her face with a dull, hopeless look, which contracted her features into ice.

"Who is it that speaks? who is it that hurls this terrible birthright at me?"

"It is the son of King Philip, the runaway slave, the man whose boyhood has been crucified beneath the driver's lash, while his people were scattered abroad—sold, shot, plundered like mad dogs and wolves. Mahaska, it is your brother!"

Up to this time the girl had been palsied; now a flash of fire kindled through and through her, an intolerable weight seemed flung from her brain, she stood up and held forth her arms.

The young savage took her hands with a grasp of iron, but he did not embrace her.

"Is it the hand of a king's daughter that I hold?" he questioned, with a sort of stern tenderness, but keeping her at arm's length.

"It is King Philip's daughter—try me, brother: lead the way into the wilderness: I will follow: see if I cannot trample down all love for my mother's enemies!"

The chief opened his arms, and drew the young girl to his bosom, as he had done years before, when his mother, striving to introduce some of the amenities of life into the Indian lodge, had given the infant sister up to his caresses.

Then the blood spoke out, her air was proud and firm as his own, she began to realize that she was indeed the daughter of martyrs and kings, that their wrongs were her wrongs—their people her people.

"Take me with you to our people, before my heart softens, or memory comes back. Here I fling away the love of a life-time—uncle, cousin, home."

She spoke wildly, her eye burned, her cheek was like flame; she left her brother's arms, and fell upon her knees between the two graves.

"Mother," she whispered—"mother, hear me; check those sobs on the wind, they break my heart. I am giving myself up to you body and soul; mother, teach me the vow that will content you; I will take it here, while the last of our race looks on!"

The wind swept over her, sighing like a soul relieved from pain—swept over her in sweet, warm gushes, as if it had been asleep in the blossoming trees. Abigail covered her face and wept; when she looked up again the young chief had gone.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE ACCEPTED INVITATION.

Barbara Stafford became the guest of Governor Phipps. It was a singular arrangement on both sides, for the strange lady had from the first retreated from the idea with evident repulsion, and Sir William was the last man in the world to receive a person under his roof about whose history the slightest doubt existed.

Barbara offered no credentials of respectability—she submitted no letters—made no explanation; yet on the bare recommendation of unmistakable refinement, and a charm of manner that had all the power of fascination, she became more than a welcome inmate of the proud man's mansion.

The governor was absent when Barbara first arrived at his house. Perhaps it was for this reason she came so readily.

Norman Lovel took the second invitation. He had seen Barbara in the church on the day of the baptism, and strove in vain to get near enough to address her. The rigid etiquette of the place forbade that, and all night long he was haunted with regrets for this seeming neglect of a person who had all the claims upon his courtesy which great hearts always concede to the receiver of an important favor.

It was a beautiful, bright day, when Norman reached the farm-house; pleasant sounds filled the air—pleasant light fell on the old stone house, the clustering trees, and the far-off waters—light broken up with those transparent shadows which float along with the soft clouds, that sleep so quietly in the summer sky.

Goody Brown was busy with her spinning-wheel, treading it vigorously with one foot, and

drawing out the finest and evenest thread from a hank of flax that formed her distaff, into a tall, gray cone. A pleasant bee-like hum came from the active flyers, and there was something kindly and good in the prim woman, which was better than a welcome to one who understood her.

Barbara Stafford sat near the door, watching the old woman draw out her thread, with a calm, steady look, inexpressibly mournful. Her thoughts were far away; she was following back the thread of her own life, which seemed interminable as that which glided through the old woman's fingers. So Barbara thought, and the old woman's wheel droned on. They were both very quiet, and one was—oh, how sad!

Norman Lovel appeared in the door like a sunbeam; his cheek was red with walking; the wind, which came moist and cool from the ocean, had left its freshness on his face. His fine eyes were bright as diamonds. When he caught Barbara's look, and saw that a gleam of pleasure stole through its sadness, he smiled, and two dimples fluttered about the corners of his mouth. Barbara received him kindly; her heart warmed to the youth, he was so like a child in the cheerfulness of his presence.

A throb of strange satisfaction beat in her bosom at the sight of that young face. He, too, was conscious of a swell of contentment as he stood before the woman he had saved. It seemed as if he had known her from childhood up. The atmosphere of her presence was natural to him as the breath of roses. He sat down on the threshold of the door, with his feet upon the stepping stone, and, while the calm, beautiful day glowed all around him, began to talk.

Barbara spoke of the danger from which she had been rescued, very simply and without effort, but her face beamed with gratitude, and her lips quivered as she smiled upon him. Norman had scarcely counted his efforts that day as an act of heroism, but now he began to value the deed. Surely it was something to have saved a woman like that. He watched the changes of her countenance as she spoke with singular interest, and began to wish in the depths of his heart that she might be in danger again—not such terrible peril of course as he had witnessed in the boat, but enough to justify some grand action in her behalf.

He did not say these things; indeed there was little real conversation between them, yet there was no absolute constraint such as might naturally fall upon the first meeting of persons so far removed from each other in years, and in the scenes of their lives. On the contrary, the broken sentences and pauses of silence were filled up with a world of pleasant sensations; the youth wondered at his own happiness, and the lady forgot her sorrow. Within the last half-hour she seemed no longer alone in the world. All this time the wheel went droning on, and the thread lengthened; a human hand was spinning at one end of the room, and destiny at the other.

At last, Norman remembered his errand, and repeated Lady Phipps's invitation; coupled with a message from the governor, who, on leaving home for a few days, had delegated to the young secretary the pleasant task of urging his hospitality upon the lady who had interested them all so much.

Norman thought that the lady grew more reserved and pale as he delivered the first portion of this message; but when he mentioned the absence of the governor, she brightened up and accepted the invitation with something like excitement.

Lady Phipps had sent a carriage for her guest, but Barbara refused the accommodation. She would walk along the beach: the day was so bright, the sea breeze so invigorating, and the distance by no means too great for a well-educated Englishwoman. The carriage might take such portions of her wardrobe as were necessary, but she preferred to walk. So the two went away together, depressed a little, no one could tell why; but Barbara's first excitement had something restive in it, and the sadness that followed made her thoughtful, and kept the youth silent.

They came upon the shore, opposite the breakers in which she had been so nearly wrecked. Some fragments of the broken boat were visible, ploughed deeply in the sand. By these alone she recognized the spot again. The harbor was serene as a mountain lake, one sheet of glittering silver swelling gently to the rising tide. She looked wistfully seaward a while, and turned away, sighing heavily, and murmured, with downcast eyes, "Oh, if they had not been so kind!"

"Indeed," said Norman, "I shall never forget your looks that day, as the boat made the fatal plunge; were I to live a thousand years, those eyes would haunt me: they seemed black as night; yet are so blue now."

"Yes, I was afraid," said Barbara. "To die was to lose a great hope. It would not be so now."

She said this very quietly, but with a depth of sorrow in her voice that touched the young man.

"The shock has made you nervous, dear lady. I have often heard it said that terror does its most cruel work on the system after the occasion that called it forth is passed. You are a stranger in the country, too, and that counts for something."

"Yes, I am indeed a stranger."

"Not when you have known Lady Phipps."

Barbara stooped down and gathered a pebble from the strand; her voice was husky when she spoke again:

"Then you admire, you like Lady Phipps?"

"Admire her—oh, lady, that is a faint word. Lady Phipps is almost worshipped; so beautiful, so generous and kind hearted."

"Yes—yes. I saw that she was beautiful; I believe the rest," answered Barbara, speaking quickly and out of breath, though she was walking at a slow pace.

"And she thinks so highly of the governor—she loves him so devotedly!"

"And he?"

Barbara scarcely spoke above a whisper; and her eyes grew bright, almost fierce, as she waited for his answer.

"And he," repeated Norman, hesitating a little, as if to reflect upon a subject which had presented itself clearly before him for the first time. "Indeed I never thought of that. Of course, he loves the lady very much—who could help it! But the governor is not a demonstrative man; most people think him cold—a man of iron."

"Cold, undemonstrative, a man of iron!"

The words fell from Barbara Stafford's lips like drops of lead. She seemed to examine every syllable that she might ascertain its exact meaning. A strange expression, half doubt, half satisfaction, stole over her features at last, and she walked on in silence.

The youth spoke again.

"You must not let my words give you a false opinion of Sir William. He is one of the bravest, wisest and most generous men on earth."

Barbara looked up and a glorious smile broke upon the youth.

"You speak warmly, sir."

"Indeed I feel warmly. Sir William has been a benefactor, almost a father, to me. His own son could not—"

"His own son? has—has Sir William Phipps a—I thought he had no son."

"Nor has he, lady," answered Norman, surprised by the sudden energy of her manner. "I was about to say that his own son, had he possessed one, could not have been treated more kindly than I have been."

Barbara Stafford drew a quick breath, and walked on rapidly, making this an excuse for the long silence that followed.

"You have lived with—with the governor some time I believe," she said, at last.

"Yes."

"But you are not a native of this new land?"

"No; I was born in England."

"And your parents?"

Norman blushed crimson. "I never knew my parents," he said.

Barbara Stafford blushed also: she had given pain, yet that very fact deepened her interest in the youth.

"Forgive me, but you have not been reared without care; some one must have taken great interest in you."

"It may be so, but I never have been able to find that person out; my education went on as a matter of course; a lawyer of London paid the bills, gave me lots of advice, but refused me the least information regarding myself. When I had gone through the different grades of study thought requisite for a gentleman, the old barrister deposited a couple of thousand pounds in the hands of Sir William Phipps, which he told me was my entire patrimony, and sent me out here as secretary to the governor. In Sir William Phipps's house, I have known for the first time in my life what the word home meant."

Barbara looked earnestly at the youth as he gave this brief account of himself, but she made no further observation, for they had reached the streets of Boston, and from the novelty of the scene, or some deeper cause, she grew silent and walked forward with a reluctant, heavy step, apparently forgetful of the questions she had been asking.

CHAPTER XVII.

A LOVERS' QUARREL.

Lady Phipps met her guest in the hall bright, cheerful, and full of hospitable gladness. Elizabeth

Parris followed her, but hung back a little, shy of the strange lady, who moved like a princess, and smiled so strangely as she uttered the common-places expected of a courteous guest. Lady Phipps went chatting and smiling up the staircase a little in advance of her visitor, for she would not allow a servant to attend her to the spacious guest chamber. Lovel and Elizabeth stayed below, watching the two ladies as they mounted the stairs together. When Elizabeth turned her eyes on Lovel, there was something in his face that troubled her.

"Isn't she a noble-looking woman?" he asked, in an eager undertone.

"Perhaps—no, indeed I don't think her in the least beautiful," answered the spoiled child, with a pout of the red lips and a pretty toss of the head; "besides—"

"Why, Elizabeth, you are in a pet about something—I don't like that way of speaking about my friends."

"You never saw her but once in your life!" said Elizabeth, with a flush of the whole face, "still you look, you—I declare one would think there was not another person in the wide world, from the way you look after her."

"Ah, do I—you see it, I really cannot keep my eyes from her face."

"At any rate it is not a handsome face!" cried Elizabeth, flushing more and more redly.

"You have never seen her when she was talking, when she was really pleased—then her face changes so brightly—so—so—"

"I don't want to hear her talk—I don't care whether she is pleased or not—I only know this—she is not in the least beautiful, and is old enough to be your mother—there!"

"Old enough to be my mother, my mother!" A sudden thrill shot through the youth at the word mother. It sounded so strangely sweet. Had Elizabeth searched the language through, she could not have found two syllables so likely to form a golden link between him and the woman they were talking of.

"Yes, I say it again, she is not pretty, and she's old enough to be your mother—yet you must let the carriage come home with nothing but a trunk in it, while you and the lady take a long, long walk together on the shore, after you had promised to ride with me, too."

"Did I promise? forgive me, Bessie; I quite forgot it."

"Forgot it—while I was waiting and watching with my habit on, and the horses stamping down the gravel in front of the house," cried the aggrieved maiden, and a few spirited tears flashed up to her eyes, and trembled there like dew in a periwinkle. "You may believe it, I was quite ashamed to let the groom see how often I ran out into the porch to look up and down the road. I declare I've almost worn my riding-skirt threadbare with my whip, trying to make the fellows think I only came out to dust my habit."

"Indeed, I'm very sorry!"

"And you all the time promenading along the beach with a strange lady, talking, smiling—oh, I wish I were at home again. It was very cruel of you teasing the governor to consent to our marriage one of these days, if you intended to neglect me in this way."

The youth, whose endowment of patience was by no means marvellous, began to be a little restive under all these reproaches; they disturbed the pleasurable emotions which had predominated with him all the morning. Worse, they impaired the angelic perfection with which his imagination had invested the young girl; the contrast between her childish petulance and the sweet dignity of the woman forced itself upon him. To be lectured and reproached by a mere child so directly after the companionship and sympathy of that lady, struck him with a sense of humiliation. He looked at the young girl gravely till the tears swelled in her eyes, then turned away, angry and hurt.

Lovers' quarrels are mere April showers, giving life to a thousand wild blossoms of the affection when both are in fault, and both angry; but when they end in silence and constraint, the November rain has not a more chilling influence.

While these impulsive young creatures were so busy planting their first thorns, Barbara Stafford had entered her chamber—a large, airy room, with four windows, all draped with filmy muslin, and a large tent-bedstead, shrouded in white till it looked like a snow-drift.

When the carriage first started to bring Barbara Stafford, Elizabeth had been, like the whole household, eager to honor a guest whom the governor had invited. She had gathered up all the unoccupied vases, and filled them with flowers; they blushed upon the toilet and the chest of drawers, and took the wind as it swept over the broad window-seats, filling the room with brightness and fragrance.

In order to indulge her own wild caprices, she had gathered all the blush-roses in bloom, and looped them among the snow of the curtains. It was strange; but while she stood, angry and flushed, at the foot of the stairs, longing to run up and destroy her own beautiful work, Barbara grew faint as death upon the threshold of the chamber. She turned an imploring look on Lady Phipps, and said—"Oh, take me away—I entreat you, take me to some other room."

"What, the flowers—the roses?" said Lady Phipps, surprised; "I will have them removed. How pale you are! how your hands quiver! I would not have believed that the scent of a few flowers could make one so ill."

Barbara was not a woman to give way to caprices of the nerves; she sat down in the great easy-chair, draped with white dimity, to which Lady Phipps led her, swept a hand across her forehead once or twice, and lifting her pale face, looked upward at a portrait of Governor Phipps, which hung in a massive frame upon the wall. This was the first object that had met her eyes on entering the room. The portrait had been taken years before, and was that of a young man, spirited and full of power. There was a smile upon the mouth, a consciousness of strength in the glance, that bespoke innate greatness.

When Barbara lifted her face to the picture, it was hard and pale; the rigidity of a stern resolution locked it like a vice; but as she gazed, the snow melted from her features. The lips began to tremble, the white lids drooped quivering over the eyes, and she shivered all over.

"No, no! do not remove the flowers," she said gently to Lady Phipps, who had taken a vase from the toilet. "I am better now. The walk was too much for me. Indeed, I have been subject to these turns ever since that terrible day. Do not blame the roses for my weakness; you see how much better I am."

She sat up in the easy-chair and looked around, evidently with great effort, but striving to smile and to subdue her weakness in every way.

"I am glad you are better," said Lady Phipps, kindly bending over the chair, at which Barbara shrunk back like one who fears some hurt, "and glad also that the poor flowers can remain as Elizabeth left them; she took such pains to gather and arrange them, dear child."

Barbara lifted her head suddenly, and grasped the arm of her chair.

"Dear child—your daughter, madam?"

"No. I am childless—we have always been childless."

Barbara sunk back into the chair again.

"I spoke," continued Lady Phipps, smiling, "of Elizabeth Parris, the daughter of a very dear friend. She was in the hall as you entered. A charming bit of mischief, who has turned the head of our young secretary. We shall have some ado to persuade Samuel Parris into a consent to the engagement. But he must give way at last—dear old soul: he is sure to yield when Sir William takes a thing earnestly in hand. I remember, he made all sorts of objections to officiating when we were married."

"Then this old man—this Samuel Parris performed that ceremony?"

"Yes. Sir William would have no other minister. They were old friends. Indeed, Mr. Parris was a sort of benefactor to my husband when he was a poor boy."

"And they have no secrets from each other—these two men?"

Lady Phipps exhibited a little astonishment at this abrupt question, but after a moment she answered, with a smile:

"Nay, that I cannot tell. My husband loves the old man. Indeed, with the exception perhaps of Norman Lovel, I know hardly any one to whom he is so much attached; but as for secrets, I fancy Sir William shares them with no one."

"Then he is greatly attached to this youth?"

"Indeed he is, or nothing would have induced him to interfere about this engagement. Elizabeth is like our own daughter, and as for Lovel—but you have seen him."

"Yes: I can readily understand your affection for him," answered Barbara, with a little weariness in her manner.

Lady Phipps, who seldom dwelt on any subject long, arranged the toilet ornaments over again, and left the room, advising her visitor to lie down and rest a little after her long walk.

Did Barbara Stafford rest? Could she rest? Why had she come to that house? Not by her own wish; a sort of fatality had dragged her there. The evident desire of young Lovel might have influenced her somewhat, little as the thing seemed possible. She went there as a bird flutters into the open jaws of a serpent, and remained, restless, unhappy, and watchful, without the wish or power to change.

The kindness of Lady Phipps oppressed her terribly; she rather preferred the reserve, and almost evident dislike of Elizabeth Parris. Like most persons who cannot be entirely frank, she shrunk as much from affection as curiosity.

Lady Phipps, with all her warm-heartedness, was a proud woman, and felt the hidden repulsion with which her hospitality was met, without really understanding it. Yet, strange to say, this only increased her desire to win the confidence of her guest.

From the very moment she first saw the foreign lady sitting in the sunshine by the old stone farm-

house, this desire had risen in her heart, and grew upon her like a fascination.

She would have given any thing for one down-right, cordial beam of affection from those downcast eyes, which seemed forever to look beyond, or glance aside from her face in the most friendly moments.

Yet a third party would have seen nothing strange in this visit. The etiquette of life went on quietly and with high-bred elegance. Nothing but soft words and gentle courtesies passed from morning till night, yet there was not a happy, or even contented, heart in the house.

But the most remarkable change fell upon young Lovel. He became dreamy, almost sad, the brilliancy of his youth seemed to have withered up suddenly. Instead of the dashing gayety, for which he was so remarkable, a pleasant sadness crept over him; he smiled now where he had laughed before. He forgot to perpetuate or renew the little quarrel which had sprung up between himself and Elizabeth on the first day of Barbara Stafford's visit, and though the poor girl went about the house with heavy eyes and flushed cheeks all that day, he did not seem conscious of it. Alas for the woman who is doomed to bring such discord into a household where love has been almost perfect before!

Elizabeth was a bright, single-hearted young creature, proud, impulsive, and full of generous qualities. Before night-fall that evening she had repented of her petulance, and pined for a reconciliation with her young lover; still he did not seek her, did not even seem to know that she was suffering, but went away into the garden by himself, and walked moodily up and down the gravel walks.

Elizabeth had grown very humble by this time. Quarrels may be pleasant in flirtations, but where real love is, they trouble a good heart as sin would torment an angel. After a little struggle, in which pride leaped in fire to her cheeks, while regret filled her eyes with tears, and set her sweet lips trembling like rosebuds in a fall of summer rain, she went down the walk, holding out her pretty hand, like a naughty child, seized with sudden awkwardness, anxious to confess herself in the wrong, but not knowing how to begin.

"Norman," she said, and the little hand fell softly upon his arm, "Norman, I am so sorry!"

The young man started and looked up, as if he had been half asleep till then.

"Sorry, Elizabeth; and for what?"

He spoke naturally, and looked surprised. Anger, even rage, would have been far less cruel than this forgetfulness of words that had wrung her heart to the core. She could not speak, but drew her hand back, looking at him with those large blue eyes slowly filling with anguish.

That look must have aroused him had it really fixed his glance; but on the instant, Barbara Stafford came into the garden alone. A white scarf was wound over her head, in double folds, and there was a look in her face, as she turned it with a bend towards the sunset, which reminded the youth of the features of Beatrice Cenci, which he had once seen and almost wept before, in Rome. He forgot the young girl who hovered like a wounded bird in his path, and went towards the woman.

Elizabeth followed him with her eyes; she saw the smile—that luminous, eloquent smile, with which Barbara greeted the youth: a smile that no human being ever saw to question the woman's beauty afterwards. The tears trembling in her eyes, fired up like diamonds. She dashed them upon the air with a sweep of her hand, and turned away humbled, haughty, and almost heart-broken.

It will be a long time, Norman Lovel, before that girl asks pardon of you again; she is almost ready to scoff at herself for loving you; her foot presses the tessellated floor of that hall with the tread of a queen.

She looked forth from the window of her chamber, and saw them walking together; Norman, her lover, and the strange lady. He was evidently listening to her as she conversed, for his face was turned upon her with a look of absorbing attention, and it brightened eloquently, though he did not smile—the talk seemed too earnest and serious for that. She could not remember the time when he had looked at *her* with such devotion. Poor child! her heart was sick with jealousy—and of whom?

They walked together till the new moon rose, and hung like a golden sickle over the trees; then they moved quietly towards the house, and Elizabeth heard the lady retreat to her own room, while Lovel wandered off into the grounds, without once glancing up at the window where she stood. How bitterly she began to hate the woman who, without youth or a tithe of her own rare beauty, had taken possession of a heart which had been so completely hers.

CHAPTER XVIII.

GATHERING ROSES AND THORNS.

Thus it went on day after day. Barbara lost something of her gloom; a new feeling, strange and inexpressibly sweet, brought back freshness to the life that had become almost a burden. Strong concentration was a vital portion of her nature; her thoughts fixed on one object, clung to it like ivy to a ruin; force itself could not tear them away. She asked herself again and again, what it was that centred the best portion of her nature around that youth—love! the blush of a haughty shame heated her cheek as the word presented itself, disturbing the august repose of her womanhood; besides, was not that heart closed and locked over one image? In all those years had she kept it sacred to turn the golden key at last, that a mere youth might jostle her idol in its sanctuary? Barbara laughed at the thought, she dashed it aside with a strong will, and contented herself with the remembrance that Norman had saved her life, and that gratitude with her was stronger than the love of most women. As for Norman, he never thought deeply in those years; he did not even attempt to understand his own feelings; he had saved the life of a woman whose presence and character filled him with the most profound admiration; her society had opened a new phase of existence to him; he did not quite know whether he had ceased to love Elizabeth or not; there was no room in his thoughts for the question. In his passionate nature the last sensation was sure to overwhelm all others, at least for the time.

Elizabeth was young, and had not learned that most important lesson of life, *how to wait*. To her this interest in another seemed an infatuation that must last forever. The bitterness and grief of this thought developed her character as a storm beats the flowers open. She was no longer the childish creature who unlocked the door that eventful morning for Norman Lovel; pride, resentment, a haughty power of self-torture, had rendered her womanly like the rest.

At first Barbara made some effort to win the confidence of this young girl, but the reserve with which her advances were met, soon chilled the wish into indifference. Thus the two fell wider and wider apart, stretching the thread of destiny which was sure to connect them at last, till it grew small as the film of a spider's web, but never broke.

One day Elizabeth went into the chamber where Lady Phipps sat alone, busy with some fine needle-work. She drew a stool, and seating herself upon it, laid her head in the lady's lap, and looked up in her face with a long, mournful gaze, that made that kind heart swell beneath its lace-kerchief.

"Why, Bessy child, what is it troubles you? these heavy, heavy eyes frighten me; is any thing the matter?"

"Oh, mother!" A warm color rushed into Lady Phipps's cheek at the word mother; it was the first time that most sacred term had ever been addressed to her.

"Well, my child—my child!" the kind woman repeated the word twice, with a sort of bashful pleasure, for they sprung to her lips like honey-dew.

"Oh, I wish so much that you were indeed my mother, for then I could tell you how—how very unhappy I am."

Lady Phipps bent down, removed the bright hair from the young girl's forehead, and kissed it tenderly.

"I *am* your mother, darling; she who is dead could scarcely have loved you more; now tell me what this trouble is."

Elizabeth turned her face, and buried it in the lady's robe.

"This lady—this strange woman—this Barbara Stafford—oh, send her away!"

"Why, what of her, my child?—remember she is our invited guest, a stranger, and—"

"I know—I know all that, but she is killing me—she drinks up my life like a vampire."

"Like a vampire—that pleasant, noble woman! Why Bessy child, you must be ill!"

"There, there! she has fascinated you like the rest; I have nobody left to care about or pity me; she has dried up every little spring of love that I used to drink at, and nobody sees it."

Elizabeth rose to her feet, flinging back the curls from her face with both hands, and casting glances of reproach upon the lady.

"*You* against me—*you* her friend—I hope you will never live to repent of it!"

"My dear child!"

"Don't call me that; I won't be the child of *her* friend! You have seen it all: how she came with her smiles and her bright words to steal the heart that belonged to me—you have seen them together half the time in the garden—in the portico—wherever the place was shady, and no one likely to intrude. Then you ask me with that kind voice, just as ever, 'Elizabeth, what is it troubles you?'"

Lady Phipps could not help smiling a little, for, occupied with her own pleasant duties, she had scarcely noticed the things of which Elizabeth complained, and this outbreak of jealousy amused, while it distressed her.

"Bessie, this is childish—it is absurd—of course Norman would do every thing in his power to amuse our guest—it is his duty; besides, you know he saved her life, and that counts for a great

deal. We always like those we have served; nothing is more natural!"

"But we do not forget our old friends—we do not abandon all the world for them!"

"Nor has Lovel. Be patient till the novelty of this visit is worn away."

Lady Phipps held out her hand with a pleading tenderness that brought the wayward girl to her feet again.

"Foolish child!" she said, taking the fair young face between both hands and kissing it. "Foolish, foolish child!"

"You would not think it foolish if she had snared Sir William, and shut his heart against you!"

Lady Phipps dropped her hands slowly, and a strange look came to her eyes.

"You talk wildly, Elizabeth," she said, in a faltering voice.

"She came between him and heaven when he stood by the altar to be baptized. You did not see her; no one saw her, I think, except myself; but the cup of wine trembled in his hand, he grew pale as death. It was her shadow touching him as she passed up the aisle."

"I remember this. He did grow pale; I never saw my husband tremble before. But it was a solemn occasion, and Sir William felt it deeply. If this lady was present, I am sure he did not know it."

Lady Phipps spoke half to her own thoughts, half to the young girl, who lay sobbing in her lap; seized with regret for the words she had spoken the moment their effect became visible in the features and voice of her benefactress.

"I think no one saw her but myself and Norman," sobbed the girl. "She stood back from the altar, and did not come out with the rest. It seemed to me as if the house grew darker when she entered it. Oh, Lady Phipps—Lady Phipps, she is a terrible woman!"

The lady was too just and generous for these wild denunciations to influence her; but she grew watchful of her guest, and the distrust floating in her mind after this conversation deepened almost to dislike before her husband returned.

Keenly, almost as Elizabeth herself, she watched the intimacy which had sprung up between Barbara and the young secretary—an intimacy that seemed to have shut her out from the young man's regard almost as completely as it had separated him from Elizabeth.

Barbara Stafford was unconscious of the bitter feelings which her presence in that house had brought to life. Preoccupied by many painful thoughts, she gave herself no opportunities for observation. She did not remark that every hour threw her more and more into the society of the youth; and that her intercourse with the ladies contracted itself almost to the commonest courtesies of life.

One evening Barbara and Norman came up from the garden as usual, when the dusk had closed in upon them, and seated themselves in the front portico. Elizabeth was alone on one of the side seats when they came up. She had become used to this kind of solitude now, and rather sought it than otherwise. The young are always ready to convert sorrow into martyrdom.

She arose as they mounted the steps, and prepared to retreat into the house; but Barbara, whose old nature came out of its sadness whenever she had been long with Norman, spoke to her with that gentle empressement which few persons could resist.

"Do not leave us, Miss Parris," she said; "the evening is so lovely."

It was not the words; they were nothing; but there was a spell in Barbara Stafford's voice that even hatred could not resist. Elizabeth sat down, holding her breath.

Barbara carried a quantity of red roses in her hand, which Norman had gathered from a plant in the garden. Some memory was aroused by the flowers, which caused her to receive them with reluctance. She had held the roses for a moment, as if doubtful whether to place them on her bosom or dash them to the earth; but seeing that her hesitation annoyed the youth, carried them in her hand.

"You are young," she said, laying the roses in Elizabeth's lap; "flowers should whisper only cheerful things. To you they will speak of the present, and that should be gladsome. When they bring back the past to any one, it is always a pain. Young gentleman, hereafter you shall gather roses only for ladies who have hopes, like yourself!"

Elizabeth's first impulse was to take up the flowers from her lap, and throw them over the railing behind the seat; but the very sound of Barbara's voice drove this bitter pride from her heart. She allowed them to remain in her lap—thought of the blush roses he had given to her so little time before in that very place, and bent her head lower and lower that Norman might not see the tears which gathered in her eyes.

Barbara did not observe these tears, for Elizabeth sat so much in the shadow that the drooping outline of her figure alone was visible; but this was enough to enlist the quick sympathy of a woman who never looked unmoved on human sorrow. She sat down at once, and with a movement of tender interest took the little hand which had fallen among the flowers. Elizabeth started as if a serpent had crept out from among the roses and stung her palm. But scarcely had

Barbara's fingers closed on hers, when she was seized with an irresistible impulse to return their clasp; and, in her sorrow, she leaned towards the woman, whom she had hated so bitterly a few moments before, as a sun-flower bends towards the sun.

Barbara felt the change, without understanding it. This gift of winning affection with a look, and of turning hate into love, was the great power of her character. She did not herself comprehend it, but the very magnetism of her presence was a prerogative richer than that of royalty, and as dangerous. Something kindred to this power existed in the youth; it was perhaps this subtle feeling that drew these persons into their present companionship.

When her heart was full of either joy or sadness, Barbara Stafford conversed beautifully. Her voice, as I have said, was full of tenderness and pathos; it came from the heart like a gush of spring water. She was depressed that evening; a little thing suffices to draw out the low tones of a nature like hers. Some angel had come out from the past, and troubled the waters of her soul; no matter upon what her conversation turned, the melody of these waters was certain to ripple through.

She dropped into conversation as they all sat together, pursuing no particular subject, but wandering from thought to thought, as a forest-bird touches this branch and then another, in its flight upward. Elizabeth leaned towards her, and listened; she saw the eyes of her young lover kindle under the influence of those words, till their brightness was visible in the gathering mist. She felt no resentment then. With her hand clasped in those caressing fingers, to love that woman seemed the most natural thing in life. She began even to join in the conversation, to call Lovel by his given name, and, for the time, turn back pleasantly to her old friendly ways. After a little, Norman came over from his place opposite the two ladies, and sat down on the other side of Elizabeth. His hand stole in among the roses, and Barbara left that of Elizabeth in its clasp. The heart of the young girl began to swell: she leaned her head upon Norman's shoulder, and wept silently.

A little time more, and those two young souls would have been reconciled again. A human heart-throb must sometimes unweave that chain of passing events which men call destiny; but here it was not to be.

The sound of horses' feet came along the road, slowly and heavily, as if the tired animals were returning from a long journey. The little group in front of Governor Phipps's house ceased speaking, and listened.

"It is—it is my father," cried Elizabeth, starting up; "see, they turn this way! It is the governor, and my father!"

Barbara Stafford gathered the shawl around her, shivering, till the teeth chattered in her head; but she sat still, with her features lost in the shadow of the porch; she seemed chilled through by the night air.

Norman Lovel descended the steps, and stood waiting for the horses to come up. A week before, Elizabeth would have sprung to his side; now, she stood alone a moment, then ran into the house to inform Lady Phipps of her husband's coming.

Barbara Stafford arose, looked through the gathering darkness, and saw three horsemen moving towards the house; they dismounted; one paused on the terrace, struggling against his own eager wishes. The other came hurriedly up the steps. The third, who was a servant, wheeled around, and rode towards the stables, leading the two weary horses by their bridles.

Barbara Stafford turned from the terrace as the man came up; the twilight clung around her like a veil; there she stood motionless—she had been searching in vain for the door latch. He came up the steps, saw a female figure in the gloom, and held out his arms.

"My wife!"

Barbara Stafford had no power to move; she felt his arms around her, she felt herself strained to his bosom, and his lips pressed upon hers. That instant the door opened, and Lady Phipps stood upon the threshold in a river of light, which flowed out from the hall.

CHAPTER XIX.

CONVERSATION ON THE PORCH.

As the opening door revealed that unexpected scene, Lady Phipps started forward with a smothered exclamation, half surprise, half horror. Then she as suddenly drew back, leaned against the wall for support, and looked full in her husband's face, outwardly still and calm from the very agitation of her feelings.

Sir William raised his eyes and met the fixed gaze of his wife. His perplexed glance wandered to the bending form clasped to his bosom, the white hands folded upon his shoulder, and the head, with its weight of dimly revealed hair, lying against his heart. With a quick motion of his hand he pushed Barbara Stafford away, and stood upright, though a tremor, for which he could not

account, ran through his whole frame. He was, in truth, strangely agitated, and the sudden pallor which changed his face, so little accustomed to any exhibition of emotion, would have sent a thrill of doubt to the most faithful and trusting heart.

Norman Lovel was standing by Elizabeth, and both gazed from one to the other with a sort of chilled astonishment, which left them no power to break the painful spell of the moment as observers of mature years and worldly experience would have been able to do.

Barbara Stafford sank slowly back as Sir William repulsed her in his astonishment; shrinking into herself like a flower drooping upon its stalk, her arms falling idly to her side, and her eyes fastened upon his face with a magnetic power which forced him to return her glance, in spite of his strong will.

That instant of bewilderment had seemed like an eternity to the little group. Lady Phipps was first to break the spell. Mastering the tremor which took away her strength, she stepped towards her husband, and said, in a courteous, but somewhat constrained manner—

"I believe we have all been making confusion in this darkness; Sir William has claimed a privilege scarcely his own, and my eyes were so blinded by the gloom that I supposed him a stranger."

Those jesting words in a measure dispelled the painful embarrassment of the moment.

Sir William moved towards his wife with the grave dignity which characterized him, and pressed his lips to her forehead.

"At least I must not lose my greeting now," he said, "and our fair guest, I trust, will pardon my unintentional rudeness."

Barbara Stafford did not reply, and, without looking again at that pale face, the governor passed into the house, holding his wife's hand in his own. When they had disappeared from view, and before either of the young persons, who were looking at her in wonder, could move, the wretched lady sank back without a sound, or even a motion of her arms to break her fall, and lay prostrate upon the porch, her loosened hair sweeping the garments of Elizabeth Parris as she fell. The girl shrunk away, as if those shining tresses had been viper coils, and made no movement to assist her.

"She is dead!" exclaimed Norman, springing forward to raise the motionless form; "call help, Elizabeth."

"Don't touch her!" expostulated the girl, seizing his arm; "I would rather see you pick up a snake—I will call the domestics."

"For shame, Bess!" returned Norman, with indignation; "how can you be so cruel?"

"You shall not touch her, I say you shall not!" she repeated, with unwonted vehemence; "I cannot bear it, indeed I cannot."

"Get me some water, and be silent!" he said, sternly, shaking off her hand and raising the prostrate form.

Elizabeth Parris looked on for a moment in silence, while he swept back the hair from that white face, and threw off the scarf which covered her head; then, before he could repeat his request, she rushed into the house, and closed the door violently behind her.

Norman uttered an exclamation of passionate reproach, and raised Barbara in his arms. He placed her on a bench at the end of the porch, where the roses and honeysuckles hung down in luxuriant profusion. He tore off the blossoms with reckless haste, and scattered the dew over her forehead, raising her head upon his shoulder again with the fondness of a brother, while the touch of those rich masses of hair sent a thrill to his heart almost painful from its intensity.

Many moments elapsed ere Barbara Stafford revived. She opened her eyes at length, and looked around in the starlit gloom.

"Am I dreaming?" she whispered; "what has happened?—where am I now?"

"You fainted, Madam," said Norman, soothingly; "you have not been well since your shipwreck, I think."

"Fainted—did I—and wherefore? Who was here? I feel as if I had been in a dream—that man—surely I was in his arms—he kissed my forehead—my lips—"

"Sir William mistook you in the darkness for Lady Phipps," said Norman, in explanation.

"I remember, and they looked so strangely at me—all of them—that young girl—"

"You must excuse Elizabeth, Madam; she is a mere child—capricious and spoiled."

"Where are they all? Why did they leave me here alone with you? Could they not deign me even a moment's pity and assistance?"

"Sir William and Lady Phipps knew nothing of your illness—they had gone into the house—are you well enough now to follow them?"

"Not yet—not yet. I will not intrude upon them—I am better here."

"I will bring you some water—"

"Nothing—only let me be quiet for a few moments, and I shall be well. These flowers are oppressive—help me away."

He supported her to a seat at a little distance, and resumed his position by her side. Barbara sat leaning her forehead upon her hand, lost in thought, and shivering slightly, as if with cold.

"The night air is chill," said Norman; "I will get your cloak."

He took up the rich mantle and folded it about her; she offered no resistance, looking down at him as he bent forward, and smiling with her patient, resigned smile, in sign of thankfulness for his care.

"Are you better now?" he asked, inexpressibly moved by the beautiful resignation of her look.

"Much better. You are very kind to me—very, I have always something new to thank you for."

"I wish it were indeed in my power to render you any service."

"Ah, you are young, and it is great happiness for the young to feel that they can be of service to those around them! But I have no claim upon your kindness. I am a stranger to you and all about you."

"A stranger—oh, lady, how can you say this? I could never feel that you were indeed a stranger—there are persons with whom one, at the first sight, seems to have been acquainted for years—for a whole life-time."

"Have you felt that, too?" said Barbara, mournfully. "Poor boy! that feeling comes with a rare and peculiar organization, which causes the possessor much suffering."

"And am I to know much suffering, do you think?" the youth questioned eagerly, with a half-defiant look, as if ready to dare the worst that fate could heap upon him. "Shall I suffer, do you think?"

"Is it not the fate of humanity? Endurance is the great lesson of life! But it is very hard to learn how to suffer with patience—the pain is not so much as the struggle for resignation. Oh, that is hard to bear!"

Barbara's head drooped forward again, and a mist stole over her eyes, till they shone like the reflection of star-beams through dark waters.

"Endurance—I don't like the word! I should never learn to be patient, never!" exclaimed Lovel, with his quick impetuosity. "I could bear any suffering that came to me, but I would not be resigned. I would battle with adversity as if it were an enemy who had assailed me unawares."

"Poor boy—poor fleeting spring of life!" murmured Barbara. "No, no—you think this now, while the elasticity of your spirits is unimpaired, but that will not outlast a great sorrow, one which crushes out all hope! You must learn to accept life as it is—press the crown of thorns courageously down upon your heart, and pray to God for comfort and strength—in His good time and method they would come to you."

"I could not pray if I were wretched," returned Lovel; "I should not believe that God heard while it pleased Him to chastise me."

"That is not the language of this Puritan land," said Barbara, with sorrowful severity; "the teachings of your boyhood should have prevented the birth of such thoughts. Whence come they?"

"I do not know—they torment me much. Often in church they haunt me, drowning the voice of prayer and thanksgiving."

"Pray to God!" said Barbara; "He alone can aid you."

"But he seems so far off—I cannot feel that I am heard! The religion that our ministers teach is so hard and stern—so unforgiving and unpitying. Surely, if God be a just and perfect being, He cannot so harshly regard our errors!"

"Ah, child, He judges not as man does—He sees the motive, and oftentimes pardons that which poor, weak mortals, in their short-sightedness, condemn with relentless severity."

"But what right have they to judge others thus, those cold, iron preachers? Piety does not consist in smothering all the natural and beautiful impulses of the heart—"

"These impulses are the soul's best religion," interrupted Barbara, gently.

"These men have frozen every feeling in their natures, and if they do no wrong it is only because their hearts are so icy that they have few weaknesses left. There is little merit in passive goodness when no temptation to error exists."

"Are you not falling into the same fault for which you blame them?" said Barbara, smiling more cheerfully.

"It may be," replied Lovel; "but I lose all patience with their superstitious observances. My heart

has turned almost with loathing from their creed since this nightmare of witchcraft has desolated so many happy hearths, and murdered so many innocent creatures."

"It is horrible, indeed," said Barbara, with a shudder; "I have read strange accounts, but they seemed too terrible for reality."

"Lady, they were true—terribly true! The barbarity of these persecutions is beyond the power of words to describe."

"Can human beings thus be led astray by superstitious fears?" said Barbara, shuddering anew beneath the horror of the thought.

"I saw an execution once," continued Lovel, growing pale at the recollection, "and it has haunted me ever since, sleeping and waking. Two women were the victims—one a withered old crone, and the other a girl, as young and fair as Elizabeth Parris. They brought them out of the jail, where they had lain for weeks—out before that hooting mob, which hailed them with shouts and curses. The old woman, bent and wrinkled, cowered and shrieked, but she might as well have pleaded for mercy from a herd of wild beasts. She struggled and writhed when they bound her hands, but what was her feeble strength in the clutch of those infuriated men? The girl walked out alone—very pale, but calm as a bride on her way to the altar. A Bible was in her hand. Her eyes were raised, and her smiling lips parted in fervent prayer, as if the angels, whom she was so soon to join, were giving her strength in that terrible hour. They cursed her, they reviled her—but she did not heed. They caught hold of her arm to drag her on, but she waved them aside and walked forward to the gallows. It was her own sister who had accused her from jealousy. The fiend stood by and watched the consummation of her work! They tied her hands—the noose was adjusted—the word given; with a shriek the old woman rushed into eternity. Then the pure spirit of that girl followed, her lips moving in prayer to the last."

Lovel broke off, and passed his hands before his eyes to drive away the fearful images which his description had aroused. Barbara had fallen back upon her seat, hiding her face in her hands, shivering with horror and pain.

"Terrible! terrible! God pardon them!" she gasped, "for they know not what they do!"

"I tell you he will curse them for it—oh yes, I do believe there is an eternity of suffering, and it is men like those who must endure it. There stood the ministers and the judges in solemn array looking on—the selectmen of the church and town—and enormities like these they call religion—"

"No more, say no more!" pleaded Barbara. "I feel it all—I cannot breathe—I seem to have the hangman's cord on my throat—his rough grasp on my arm—do not speak of it again."

She was writhing with strange anguish—it seemed to her as if his words had been a premonition of doom!

"I must go and walk in the garden," she said, arising; "this has driven me wild."

She passed down the steps, and the young man turned to follow; but at that moment, through the oaken door, came an imperious summons, twice repeated—

"Norman Lovel! Norman Lovel!"

It was the governor's voice, in a tone of command that he never used unless greatly excited. Norman uttered an apology, which Barbara did not heed, and rushed into the hall.

CHAPTER XX.

WILD JEALOUSY.

When she entered the house so abruptly, Elizabeth Parris went to her chamber, and sitting down upon her bed, remained there in the gloom, brooding over the passion and sorrow to which the scene below had given rise. She wept bitterly with mingled anger and grief, striking her hands down upon the counterpane, and sobbing aloud in unwonted excitement.

She believed that Barbara Stafford had lured her young lover from his allegiance, and that she was left to stand quietly by and see this stranger woman usurp and claim the affection which, almost up to that hour, she had deemed wholly her own.

There she sat while the moments crept on, seeming to her like hours. At intervals, through the open casements, came the murmur of voices from the porch, mingling at times with the deeper tones of Sir William Phipps, from where he sat in earnest conversation with his wife in the apartment below.

At length Elizabeth rose and approached the window, flung back the muslin draperies with an impatient movement, and looked out into the night. Those two forms were dimly perceptible, seated side by side on the carved seat, and a pang of jealousy, more acute than she had yet felt, wrung her girlish heart. She leaned over the sill, striving to catch those low tones, then, startled by the meanness of which she had not believed herself capable, drew back, and began to walk up

and down the room, weeping with quick, convulsive sobs, which seemed suffocating her.

Still the murmur of those voices was borne up to her tortured ear, rising and falling unequally as if the subject of conversation were of deep interest. This was only an added pain to the poor girl, who kept that gloomy vigil with such unquiet thoughts for her companions.

At last the suspense and wretchedness became too great for her young heart to bear. With it all, there started up in her mind the wilful pride and determination of a petted child accustomed to being treated as the idol of all about her.

"She has stolen him from me—bad, designing woman!" she exclaimed. "But this shall not last—she shall not stay here—I will not be braved by her and set aside that she may be worshipped! She shall see, and Norman Lovel, too; they are laughing at me, I dare say, at this very moment—but they shall not laugh long."

She approached the window once more and looked out. Barbara and Norman Lovel stood side by side, as before; her hand rested on his arm, he was looking into her face. Elizabeth could not clearly distinguish his features, but her jealous fancy required no aid to help her paint that glance. Her own eyes had drooped so often beneath its passionate fervor, her girlish heart, ever tremulous, had responded so fully to the tones of that thrilling voice—yes, she could imagine it all!

She flung down the draperies again, and, forcing back the tears which had fairly pained her cheeks as they poured over them, she left the chamber and hurried down-stairs to put in force a resolve formed during her unquiet vigil.

When Sir William Phipps conducted his wife into the house, at the conclusion of that embarrassing scene, they passed through the long passage and entered an apartment which the governor occupied as his study.

"I was hardly expecting your arrival to-night," Lady Phipps said, as he placed a chair and sat down near her.

"I made all haste, for I was anxious to return—"

"Be careful how you arrive again in the dark," she said, interrupting him in a playful tone, through which some faint annoyance that her husband's mistake had occasioned might have been detected.

"I regret that," replied Sir William, gravely; "but supposing the lady could be no other than my own fair wife, I did not hesitate to greet her."

"Let us say no more about it—we will leave the lady to herself for a little, when she will have recovered from her agitation."

"Is she your friend from the farm house?"

"Yes—it is Mistress Barbara Stafford; you remember the name, and the shipwreck."

"I remember; and you have persuaded her to become our guest at last?"

"I have. You do not disapprove? I thought you desired it."

"Whatever you do, fair lady, must be well done—any arrangement that affords you pleasure always meets with my approval."

Lady Phipps made some laughing remark concerning his habitual courtesy, but Sir William scarcely heard her words. He had fallen into deep thought, so vague and singular that he was himself at a loss to trace its source. He remembered how the presence of that woman had affected him during the holy services of the church, causing his hand to tremble when he raised the sacramental wine to his lips, and rousing emotions which carried his mind far from the solemn interest of the occasion. Then again that very night—the touch of that head seemed yet upon his heart—the trace of the kiss he had pressed upon her mouth lingered still upon his lips, even the pure embrace of his wife had failed to obliterate it—the entrancing magic of those eyes followed him and burned into his very soul, starting up like some Circean enchantment even between himself and the faithful woman by his side.

With a strong effort he banished those wild reflections, and roused himself to return an answer to the idle question his wife had asked, appearing calm and unconcerned.

"And you are pleased with the lady?" he said, quietly.

"She is charming," returned Lady Phipps; "her manner is perfect, she is a woman of great natural gifts, heightened by cultivation. There is an irresistible grace in her slightest word and movement, an inexplicable charm in every smile and glance, yet—"

"Well," said Sir William, as she paused, "go on, and yet?"

"I cannot tell! I feel drawn toward her by some unaccountable spell; it is as if she attracted me at will, biased my thoughts by her judgment, and held me, during our conversations, completely under her sway."

"She might easily be a very dangerous companion, were this not a mere fancy."

"It is no fancy, Sir William—you will yourself remark it. There is little Bessie, who dislikes her extremely, and yet, at Mistress Stafford's bidding, she will sit down at her feet and listen for hours to her conversation, like one entranced."

"Is not this hypocrisy in our little Bess?"

"No—oh, no. The child is truth and sincerity itself! I have seen her strive to resist the spell, hovering restlessly about like a half-charmed bird; but Mistress Stafford would follow her continually with those wonderful eyes, and in the end, by her power, whatever it may be, she is certain to conquer."

"But why does Elizabeth Parris dislike her?"

"The girl is jealous; Norman Lovel, she tells me, has neglected her of late; she complains that this stranger lures him away, and fears that she will in the end wholly alienate his affection."

"And is this true, or but the suspicion of a foolish girl?"

"I cannot tell; certain it is that since Mistress Stafford's arrival here Norman has been thrown much in her society, but I cannot believe that she would exercise any undue influence over him, or seek to create a coldness between those two young hearts whose mutual affection has been so beautiful to look upon."

Sir William was silent again for a moment; his wife's description of the influence which the stranger exerted over them all accorded so entirely with the impression she had created upon his own feelings, that he was startled and perplexed.

"And what account does she give of herself—who is she, and what has brought her here to this new world, alone and unprotected?"

"She speaks vaguely of her past or of her future plans. She told me that she might perhaps soon return to England; then, as we were talking, she fainted suddenly away, and fell senseless in my arms, just as she had done during my visit to her at Goody Brown's."

"It is very strange," said Sir William. "These are wayward times in which we live, and it behoves us all to be well upon our guard; we know not in what way the great adversary of souls may weave his snares for us."

"It grieves me to think ill of her, my husband, and yet, when out of her sight, evil forebodings rise in my mind, which the first glance of her eyes is sure to dispel. To-night her manner was so wayward—another would have explained—would have called out—no word, no sign. She neither moved nor seemed to note the presence of any human being."

"I must converse with this stranger; after receiving her as our friend and guest, it is meet that we should know somewhat more concerning her."

"She will set every doubt at rest in your mind, of that I am certain. I know not what to advise, but I am glad that you are returned, for I was sorely puzzled how to act."

"Where are our friends? I fear we left them somewhat unceremoniously."

"Let us go back to them," returned Lady Phipps. "I believe, in truth, we should offer some apology for our abrupt departure."

CHAPTER XXI.

PASSIONATE DENUNCIATIONS.

When Governor Phipps and his wife entered the library they found Samuel Parris standing in the midst of the room, waiting, with suppressed impatience, for the appearance of his daughter. He strode forward a pace or two, with eager fire in his eyes, when Lady Phipps crossed the threshold; but seeing that the form he so longed for did not follow, drew back with nervous shyness, shrinking within himself as if the impulsive affection warming his heart were a sin to hide away and be ashamed of.

"Mr. Parris, welcome back again," said Lady Phipps, holding out her plump little hand. "We have been rude to keep you in solitude so long."

"Nay, my lady, it matters not. But the child—my Elizabeth—surely nothing is amiss that she delays coming to greet her father?"

Lady Phipps became thoughtful in an instant, and looked around, wondering where Elizabeth had bestowed herself.

The old man grew white and began to shiver.

"Is the child ill? What malady has found her out? You may tell me, lady, without fear; with God's help I—I can bear it."

The poor, self-tortured old man sat down on the edge of a chair and lifted his large, wild eyes to the lady's face, waiting for the expected blow with piteous trepidation.

Lady Phipps drew close to him, with both hands extended, and a world of gentle sympathy beaming in her face.

"My friend, my dear, good friend, there is nothing wrong; Elizabeth is well."

"Thank God," broke from the old man, while his clasped hands unlocked themselves and fell gently downward.

"I was only wondering where she had hid herself," continued the lady. "Surely, when her father was waiting, she should have been here."

"Nay, I can tarry for the child without weariness, so that she is but well," answered the old man, heaving a deep sigh of relief. "Nevertheless, if she is near at hand—"

"I will inquire, I will inquire," said the lady, turning to leave the apartment, but at that moment the door was thrown hurriedly open, and Elizabeth Parris advanced toward them, her face pale, her eyes red and swollen with weeping.

"Why Bessie, child, what is this?" exclaimed Lady Phipps, "are you ill?"

Samuel Parris arose to his feet, holding out both arms with more passionate affection than had ever broken the iron bands of his reason before.

"Elizabeth! Elizabeth!"

The young girl flung herself into those outstretched arms, and clung to her father's neck, sobbing violently.

"Oh, father! father! take me home! take me home! I am wretched here—oh, so wretched!"

The old man smoothed her hair with his hand, and kissed her hot forehead with more than feminine tenderness.

"Hush thee—hush thee, my child," he murmured. Then, turning his face to Lady Phipps, he added:

"Forgive her, lady, she is but a child."

"She is ill, I fear," answered the governor, looking at his wife. The lady shook her head and smiled. Elizabeth lifted her face from the minister's bosom, and tossed the golden hair away from it in childish defiance.

"No, no, I am not ill," she sobbed, "but I can bear this no longer: send me away—let me go back to my father's house—I will not remain under the same roof with her."

"With whom?" asked Sir William; "what means this agitation, little one?"

"With this Mistress Stafford; I will not live another day in the same house with her—I believe that she is a witch."

Samuel Parris suddenly unclasped the wild girl from his embrace, and held her at arm's length, with horror in his face. The other listeners started at her passionate utterance of a word which had already grown so terrible throughout New England. Sir William spoke first; but even his usually firm voice was husky.

"What has she done, my daughter, that you should speak thus?"

"She has made me wretched; nobody loves me, nobody cares for me now, and it is all her work!"

"Shame, child, shame!" expostulated Lady Phipps.

"Where is Mistress Stafford now?"

"Where?" exclaimed Elizabeth, with increased violence; "go into the garden, and you will find her seated by Master Norman, looking into his face with her wicked eyes, and charming him with her serpent tongue."

"Is this true?" cried Sir William; "girl, is this true? Why did you leave them?"

"She fainted after you came in, and he blamed me harshly; then I left them—it is a full half hour since, and they are together still."

The girl threw herself out of her father's arms and clung to Lady Phipps, with a new burst of weeping that her friend strove in vain to check. Sir William strode into the passage, and called in a voice which penetrated like a trumpet through the whole mansion—

"Norman Lovel! Norman Lovel!"

The youth heard the summons as he was following Barbara Stafford down the steps, and startled by its sternness hastened into the house. The governor met him in the hall, and seizing his hand drew him into the apartment where the weeping Elizabeth still clung to Lady Phipps.

"What is the meaning of this?" he said, sternly; "what have you done to this poor child, Norman

Lovel?"

"Nothing, sir; I have not seen her for some time. Mistress Stafford fainted, Elizabeth came in for some water, and did not return."

"How long ago was that?"

"Fifteen minutes, mayhap."

"You see," whispered Lady Phipps; "he has lost all note of time. William, it frightens me—what can be done?"

"Are you angered with this maiden, Norman?" pursued Sir William.

"Angered—with Bessie?" repeated the young man; "how can you think it? She knows that I am not."

He took her hand and pressed it to his lips with earnest affection; Lady Phipps gently unlocked the young girl's arm from her neck, placed both hands in Norman's, and left the startled pair standing side by side, in front of the old man, who stood in the midst of the scene lost in astonishment.

A gleam of joy came back to Elizabeth's face, and she stood half terrified, half abashed, like a fawn ready to flee at the slightest sound. She cast one shy glance at her father from under the silken lashes that instantly drooped to her hot cheeks, and then drew away from her lover, ashamed of her own exquisite happiness.

"Let no new trouble come between your hearts," said Sir William, solemnly. Then turning to Samuel Parris, he added with deep feeling—

"My dear old friend, these two persons love each other deeply, truly, I think; as you and I have loved before this. Need I ask you to bless an attachment which has every promise of happiness?"

"But she is a child. My Elizabeth is a babe as yet. It was but yesterday that she sat on my knee learning her alphabet. Why talk of love between any one and a young creature like that? It is sacrilege; cruel, cruel. I have not deserved this at your hands, William Phipps!"

"Nay," answered the governor, deeply moved, but firm in his own idea; "her mother was but one little year older than Elizabeth when she became your wife."

"What! what!" cried the old man, looking upon his child with a sort of terror. "Has the babe advanced so close upon her womanhood? She loves another, and the old man will be left alone. God help us all, for this is a heavy blow."

"Nay, my friend," urged the governor. "The young man is well worthy of any maiden's love. Be content that I regard him almost as my own son. It is but gaining another child, Samuel Parris; a son who will support the declining years of your life with his strong arm."

Parris cast a long, half-reluctant look at the young man, who met his scrutiny with a frank, honest return, that half drove the look of dismay from that anxious old face.

"Oh, father, are you angry with us?" pleaded Elizabeth, creeping to the minister's side.

"Angry! and with thee, Elizabeth?"

"Nor with him? Oh, father, if you are angry with him it will break my heart!"

"Break *thy* heart, child! What! another? No, no; I have seen hearts break before now, and it was I that did it—I, a minister of God's merciful religion. Love the young man, girl; love him heart and soul. I will make no protest—give no sign."

Elizabeth, smiling through the vague terror produced by the old man's emotion, drew back to Lovel's side. Parris looked at them with a strange, bewildered air.

"They are waiting for something," he said, looking wistfully at Sir William. "Is it the old man's blessing? I must not withhold it, you say. They are young and fair, and love each other dearly. Ah, me! what anguish may lie buried in that word love! Yes, I will bless them. God helping me, I will bless them. Kneel down, young man—kneel, Elizabeth. When human hearts are consecrated to each other, it is a sacrament of which marriage is but the seal. Norman Lovel, take her hand—and God so deal with you as you deal with my child—Elizabeth—" Here the old man's voice filled with tears. He struggled a moment, fell upon his knees before the young couple, bowed his head earthward, and covering his face with both hands cried like a child.

Sir William Phipps went up to the minister, and bent over him, whispering words in his ear which no one else heard. After a little, Parris arose from his knees, laid two trembling hands on those young heads, and spoke to them with such gentle and loving pathos that even Lady Phipps wept. There was silence in the room for some moments after the young people arose to their feet. That solemn benediction had impressed all present too profoundly for the prompt reaction which is possible to lighter feelings. But, after a little, Lady Phipps spoke, smiling through the tears that still lingered pleasantly in her eyes. "Now, Elizabeth, I fancy you will be able to meet our guest with some placidity," she said, kissing the now pale cheek of the almost bride. "Oh, that little, jealous heart, it beats to another tune now. Sweet one, God's blessing be with you, and make you happy as I am." With the quick impulse of a warm-hearted woman the lady began to sob again. It

was but the dying out of an excitement which best exhausted itself in such April weeping as a heart unknown to sorrow loves to indulge in. But Sir William always linked tears with grief. As he heard the tender sobs rising in her bosom, he reached out his arm and drew her close to him, soothing her with caresses.

While they stood thus, a white face appeared at the window which opened into the garden, and, unregarded, a pair of wild eyes followed each movement of the features so touchingly grouped together.

Wandering like an unquiet-spirit through the garden, Barbara Stafford had fallen suddenly upon the scene. She saw it all: the young people upon their knees; the old man drooping before them; and Sir William Phipps stooping down to caress his wife.

She drew the scarf, which was trailing to the ground, closely around her, and fleeing through the garden walks like one in fear of pursuit, disappeared in the darkness of the street beyond.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE DEATH FIRE.

The house of Samuel Parris, the minister of the church of Salem, stood in a solitary place, a little out of the village, which lay between it and the sea, whose interminable beat could be heard throbbing like a pulse along the beach.

When every thing was still, and the hum of insects asleep in the forest, which, boundless as the blue ocean, stretched in an opposite direction, dark and teeming with mysterious shadows, the repose was almost appalling. Then, especially, the sweep of these waves, coming with distinctness to the minister's house, and blending with the shiver of the forest leaves, and the cry of such birds as sing to the darkness, rendered the night-time one of peculiar mournfulness in that out-of-the-way dwelling.

But the young girl who sat in the little family-room, late one quiet evening, had learned to love the dark hours, and so listened to the mighty and interminable throb of those waves with strange sympathy. The dull tick of an old oak clock, whose coffin-like frame was heavy with carvings, seemed answering the eternal anthem with its small noise, like a human voice striving to answer the hymns of universal nature; and the petty sound irritated her nerves, while the everlasting sweep, afar off, made her heart swell and her eye kindle.

As Abigail Williams sat thus restlessly listening, Tituba, the old Indian woman, came into the room, and sat down on the floor at her feet. The woman did not speak, but lifted her face, wrinkled like a dried plum, to that of the young girl, and waited to be addressed. The large, earnest eyes of Abby Williams looked down upon the Indian.

"It is late, Tituba," she said, "the clock has struck eleven, and no sign of his coming!"

"He will be here—Wahpee would have been home long ago, if any thing had kept the young chief away. Are you sleepy, Abigail?"

"Sleepy! no. I shall never be sleepy again. The knowledge of who I am, and what they are in whose bosom I have slept all my life, keeps rest away from me—I know well how Judas felt when he sold his Lord."

Tituba shook her head. She had no Bible, and could not be made to comprehend what one meant, though she had lived with the minister at Salem since Abigail was an infant. Hers was a wilder and more romantic religion—the Manitou of the Indians was her God, and she read his word in the leaves of the forest and the rush of the mountain stream. With her, treachery to the whites was faith to the Indian. Had Judas betrayed his enemy, she would have considered him a hero: but to betray his Master—old Tituba could not have understood that!

"You look like her now," whispered the woman, folding her hands over her knees, and rocking back and forth on the floor, as she always did when about to talk of the past.

"My mother—do I look like her?" said Abigail.

"About the eyes, when there is trouble in them; but hers were blue, like a periwinkle in the morning, while yours are darker, and change so."

"And her—that other woman—that grand, sweet-spoken woman, whose spirit will not rest—Anna Hutchinson—my grandmother? Have you seen her, Tituba?"

"Yes, when the warriors brought her into the forest for sacrifice. I was there. I watched the women, while they gathered pitch pine-knots, and scattered turpentine over the wood which the braves heaped on her death fire!"

"Did they torture her?"

"No. The wood was piled high; the Pequod women had brought heaps of pitch pine; the warriors, who held her and her little ones, came forward, ready to throw them on the flames together; they

only waited for the chief!"

"And she stood ready for this terrible death?" broke in Abigail. "Was she brave, or was it only in speech that she proved valiant?"

"Brave! The warriors grew proud of their victim, she looked death so grandly in the face. The chief came, and his eye flamed brightly when he saw her. She was worthy of the death fire kindled in his honor."

"And he, a king, stood by and saw this brave woman tortured?"

"Why, would you have them offer a meaner victim before the sachem?"

"It was a fearful cruelty," said Abigail, shuddering.

"She was brave for herself, but not for her children," continued Tituba. "When her little ones clung around her, holding to her garments, pale and terror-struck, she flung up her arms, and called aloud for some one to take them away and save them from torture. She asked the warriors to think of all their powers, and heap the pain on her; she would bear every thing; they might be days killing her; only take her children away, and keep them out of sight and hearing, while she died!"

"And did no one take compassion on her—even those fiends incarnate?"

"The same blood that burned in their veins beats in yours," answered the Indian woman, severely. "Who took compassion on her, when she was tied to a cart and whipped by constables from village to village, like a vicious hound? Ask yourself if the death fire was not mercy compared to that! The warriors knew how to respect her courage; but her own people mocked her shame while they tortured her."

"Both were horrible. But her little children? My mother was one of those helpless creatures!"

"There was a law in our tribe, maiden, by which a bereaved mother might adopt a captive, if she wished, in place of the child she had buried. By the side of the sachem stood a woman, who had lost a child, bright as the May blossom; and her heart was heavy with grief when she saw a little girl, with hair like sunbeams, clinging to that wretched woman, with its eyes, large like those of a young fawn, turned on the fire. Maiden, Manitou sometimes sends the soul of a dead child home again in another form, when its mother's heart is breaking. The woman knew that her child had wandered back from the great hunting-ground, with its hair turned golden, and its eyes blue like the sky in summer. So she went to the chief with many words, and asked for her child. The same mother bore the Pequod sachem and the woman who claimed the little girl, so he gave her leave to take, not only the golden-haired child, but both Anna Hutchinson's children; for the other was a brave girl, who stood between her little sister and the flames, till her hands and clothes were scorched by them."

"And the Indian woman took them both?"

"They would not be torn apart. When Anna Hutchinson saw this, she beckoned the Indian woman, and besought her to take the two sisters deep into the forest, away from the sound of her death cries. The sight of that little child made the woman's heart soft. She could have cried, but that the females of her race are ashamed of tears. When your grandmother saw this, she stooped and whispered, 'Take them away, and you shall fire the pile; you shall kill me with your own hands, and feast on my agony if it will please you.'

"So the Pequod woman took the two children, one a young girl, the other a little thing so high, and led them away to her own lodge. When she went back to the death fire it was flaming high. The warriors had drawn close around it; the trees above were heavy with smoke, and crisping in the hot wind. Anna Hutchinson was chained to the death pyre. Her arms were tied with thongs of bark, and her hair, thick with silver threads, shone gloomily in the death light; for the flames had already seized upon her garments and were creeping up the folds, hissing as they went. She stood firm, looking toward the path where her little ones had disappeared. When the woman came back she called out, with a great sob, 'My children, my children!'

"'They are safe in my lodge,' answered the Pequod woman.

"Then the warriors saw a smile break over Anna Hutchinson's face, which rested there till the flames surged up and veiled her form in a cloud of fire.

"Then the smoke rose blackly, and hot flashes of fire writhed in and out like serpents in torment. A great gust of wind rushed through the forest boughs and, sweeping the smoke away, drove the slumbering flames into fury. Then an awful cry broke from that poor woman. The thongs that bound her wrists snapped asunder—her arms were flung wildly outward through the hot flames and surging smoke, and her cry burst into words of awful entreaty that some one would be merciful and kill her.

"The Pequod woman had a soft heart. That cry ran through her like an arrow. She could not bear to see the woman who had brought back her child from the great hunting-ground, more beautiful than ever, writhing in the hot fire which hissed, and leaped, and clung around her like fiery snakes. The Indian woman took an arrow from her quiver, and aimed at the white bosom that the flames were licking with a thousand hot tongues. The arrow lost itself in the death fire, missing its aim. Then the Indian woman took the tomahawk from her belt and poised it. Blinded with

smoke and mad with pain, Anna Hutchinson saw the act, and struggled fiercely to step forth and meet the blow. But the thongs that bound her to the stake were green and defied the flames. So with one bound the Indian woman sprang into the fire and cleft that broad, white forehead open with her tomahawk."

"It was a brave, a kind act," cried Abby, while the tears that had stood in her eyes, flashed downward like broken diamonds. "And was this the woman who died uttering curses, and denouncing her persecutors—whose terrible maledictions cling to my own life? Tituba, tell me! Did you hear Anna Hutchinson's curse come out from those death flames?"

"No, maiden—that was wrung from her when her family were butchered at Aquiday, to which place she had been driven by the people of Boston. Then she grew mad, and words fell from her lips like hot coals; for the sight of her mangled children made her a prophetess; but afterward, at the stake, when the two youngest of her children were safe, she broke into smiles amid the flames."

The old woman spoke in the Indian language, and her narrative took a depth and force which no modern tongue can reach. Abby Williams sat trembling under the influence of the fearful picture she had drawn, for the blood of Anna Hutchinson beat loud in her heart.

"And the Pequod woman—where did she go with the children?"

"She took them to her lodge, and loved them both as her own children. But when her tribe was broken up, and Uncas dead, she wandered with them among such fragments of the Pequods as still dwelt in the old hunting-grounds. But the elder maiden never took kindly to the woods; her heart turned to her mother's people; and she pined for a sight of them. The Indian woman had a soft heart; so she came with the maiden and her little sister to the sea-shore, to find a home for them among the whites."

"Ah me! I know it all," cried Abby. "They came here into this very town. She, my mother, was forced into the wilderness, as her mother had been, driven with the constable's scourge. She was found almost dying in the woods by King Philip, who made her his wife. I know how he fought and died, leaving that woman a widow with two children. One, a noble boy, was sold into slavery, under the hot sun of Bermuda, from which he was rescued to be a fugitive and an outcast in the woods where his father once reigned. The other was brought by the dying widow to this dwelling, and left with the golden-haired daughter of Anna Hutchinson, who had become the wife of her sister's judge, Samuel Parris. The fair minister's wife, and King Philip's widow, met in this very room. The widow was dying from exposure, grief, and starvation; and fled to find shelter for her child before she joined her husband. From her cold lips the minister's wife heard, for the first time, that she was Anna Hutchinson's child; that her only sister had been scourged by the orders of her husband. The truth killed her. That night her child, Elizabeth Parris, was born. Two days after, King Philip's widow and the minister's wife were laid in the burying-ground back of that meeting-house. The two children were left together, and grew up lovingly, as sisters should, till all the mournful details of this story were told to King Philip's daughter by her fugitive brother, the Bermuda slave.

"You see I have forgotten nothing of this terrible story; how could I? it is graven on my heart, and every mark has left a wound. But let me tell you more, old woman; more of the poor forest-girl your love has tended so long. When this story first reached her ear, she stood by the double grave of these two sisters, and learned how they had been wronged. Then all the sweet love of her nature was turned to gall; she dreaded the sight of that fair being who had slept with her in the same trundle-bed, who had been her second life. She trembled with constant fear that her heart would fall back to its old love again. The sight of these rude walls reminded her no longer of domestic peace, but of her mother's wrongs. She was embittered by her grandmother's curse. Oh, Tituba, Tituba, this fearful thing have I become, I, Abigail Williams!"

"No, not Abigail Williams. That name was given in the meeting-house, out there, and does not belong to King Philip's daughter. He called her Mahaska."

"Yes," said Abby; and her head fell forward upon her bosom in deep despondency; "that is my name; it is burned upon my heart! All the waters of the ocean would not wash it out."

CHAPTER XXIII.

TITUBA'S STORY CONTINUED.

Abigail looked up again, after a little, with something of animation.

"But the Pequod Indian—what became of her? If the saviour of my mother is alive, I must see her!"

Tituba cowered down to the floor again, and clasped both hands over her knees, as she answered:

"She could not help it. They tore the two children apart. One was driven into the forest; the other was carried into the meeting-house, and baptized with a new name, by the very hands that had

driven her sister to the woods. In this golden-haired child, the soul of her own offspring had entered. How could she leave it to follow the other? Were not the wolves and panthers more merciful than the men who kept her little one?

"The Indian woman went into the edge of the woods, and built herself a bark wigwam; she gathered shells from the beach and strung them into wampum, which was money, as gold is now. She gathered willows from the brook, and made baskets which she carried on her back to the village, thus gaining a sight of the little one. Sometimes she would go into the meeting-house, that she might catch a glimpse of the beautiful girl who was possessed of her own child's soul, from the dark corner where these godly people allowed the Indians and negroes to creep and watch them as they worshipped God. They saw the Indian woman come Sunday after Sunday with her sorrowful face; so in time they began to regard her as a praying Indian, and one who might attain the salvation of her heathen soul, by looking at them from afar off. She was a harmless, humble creature, who asked but to follow the steps of the child she loved so much, without making it known that the little girl was any thing to her; like a dog they let her pass from dwelling to dwelling on week days, and in the meeting-house on Sundays, without hindrance. Sometimes she got a chance to speak to her child, to give her a bit of wampum, or a tiny basket to pick whortleberries in; and this was all the happiness she asked.

"One Sunday the Indian woman went into the meeting-house as usual. From her dark corner she peered out, looking for her child in the old place. The girl was not there, but down, close by the pulpit, she found her clothed in white, like a spirit from the far hunting-grounds. By her side was the minister, Samuel Parris, the man who had sat in judgment on her sister. Another minister preached in the pulpit; the people looked around restlessly, during the long sermon, and when it closed there was a rustling of dresses all over the house, like the stir of leaves in the forest.

"The Indian woman turned cold in her seat. For a little time she could not see; but when her eyes grew clear, her child, her beautiful child, whom she had worshipped afar off like a slave, that child stood in her white garments before the communion-table, with her hand in that of the old minister; and before them stood the man who had come down from the pulpit, muttering words that could not reach the dark corner where the poor Indian stood. But she knew that they were giving the young girl—her child—to that stern old man for his wife. Filled with horror, she strove to cry out and protest against it; but the tongue clove to the roof of her mouth, and she was dumb. When she struggled to get down from her high place in the gallery, and make her way to the pulpit, the beadle stopped her rudely. 'Indians were not permitted,' he said, 'to enter there.'

"While this poor Indian was struggling to pass him, the meeting broke up. The crowd came down the aisles, almost sweeping her away; but she stood firm, till that old man came forward, leading her child by the hand. His bride saw the Indian mother, of whom she had but a knowledge of vague kindnesses, and smiled softly as she drew near. Then the poor creature knew that it was too late; that her white enemies had bound the young one to them forever. So she forgot her own people, and followed the old man and his bride sorrowfully home to his house. There was no servant in the kitchen. She crept in through the back door and went to work. Her heart was full of bitterness and love: hate for him, love for her, the gentle one, who came in her meek beauty and settled down like a dove in his home.

"At first the Indian watched for an opportunity to tell the young wife that she had married the son of her mother's persecutor; that the father of Parris had been one of Anna Hutchinson's judges; and that he, her bridegroom, had been among the worst enemies of her own noble sister; but when she saw the young wife settling down in her new home, so serene and contented, the Indian's heart failed her, and she drudged on from day to day, putting the cruel duty off, till at last one night—"

Abby, who had been greatly excited during this recital, suddenly threw out her hand, laying it heavily on the old woman's shoulder.

"Do not speak of that. I cannot bear to hear in words what is in my own remembrance like a vague, wild dream. Enough! My mother died in that chair; her sister, Elizabeth Parris, expired the next day, with a new-born infant slumbering in her arms. That infant is my cousin Elizabeth. The meek, old man, whose heart began to break that night, was my mother's cruel, cruel judge. But the Indian woman—what became of her?"

The old woman folded her arms more tightly about her knees, and looked up with the glance of a faithful dog.

"Her children were dead, but their little ones had no mother, so she stayed in the kitchen."

"And died there?"

"Is Tituba dead that you ask this question of her?"

Abby stooped down, trembling all over, and drew the old woman up to her bosom. She kissed her withered face and her swarthy hands, with a burst of passionate feeling.

"And is it so? God forgive me that I did not guess this before! And you have been our slave, our drudge! The meanest work of the house has always been put upon Tituba—poor old Tituba, who saved our mothers from the flames, who followed us from wilderness to settlement, who left her own people for our sakes. And you are so old too! How many years, Tituba, has it taken to make this hair so gray?"

"Tituba is almost a hundred years old; but she can see like a night-hawk, and hear like a fox. When her children want help, they will find her thought keen and her feet swift!"

"But you shall work no more. I will save you from drudgery at least."

"No, no. Let Tituba alone. She is used to it. Work—work—work. What would Tituba be without work? Let her plod on in the old way, Mahaska. The tree thrives best in its own soil. Dig honeysuckles and wild strawberries from the wood—plant them in your garden, and they grow. But when an old hemlock begins to die like this, let it stand—stir not the earth about its roots."

The old woman touched her gray hair as she spoke, and drooped into her old position. Abby sat looking at her in tender astonishment. She could understand the great love which had brought that noble savage from the wilderness to be a drudge in her uncle's kitchen; it exalted the old, withered creature at her feet into a heroine.

"And for our sakes you gave up your people, your free life, all that makes the happiness of a forest child; and came here to be a slave!"

"Tituba only followed her child!" was the simple answer.

"But Elizabeth Parris knew nothing of all this! To her you are only—"

Abby broke off, for she felt that the truths she was about to speak were cruel.

"I am only old Tituba to her, but she is all the world to me."

"And yet you hate her father—her stern, kind-hearted father, for that the minister is."

"He was your mother's judge before he became her father!"

"And she is the grandchild of Anna Hutchinson, equally with myself!" said Abigail, musing.

"But not the child of King Philip. Not the sister of the last chief of the Wampanoags, who now wanders like a wild beast through the lands his people once owned. She, my golden-haired child, is not the one who must avenge her grandmother's wrongs. From the beginning, she and her mother were like singing birds to be fed and cared for. You and your mother were eagles, with strength to swoop on their enemies and your own. Elizabeth must never know the events that are making your face so dark."

"But why, why is the sunshine all for her, the darkness for me?" answered Abigail, with sorrowful bitterness.

The old woman began to weave her hands together, and rock to and fro with a troubled look.

"The eagle soars; the mocking-bird sings. One seeks her nest in the leaves, the other sits on the crags."

"The bleak, bare crags for me—flowery hollows for her," said Abigail, despondingly. "It was so with our mothers; it must be so with us."

As she spoke, the outer door of the house opened, and Wahpee, an old Indian, who, like Tituba, had been for years a hanger-on of the minister's kitchen, entered the sitting-room. He had been absent some days, and it was in expectation of his return that the young girl and Tituba were sitting up so late.

The Indian seemed tired with travel. His dress of homespun linen was torn in places, and the rents pinned up with thorns just plucked from their trees. The lank hair was moist, and a rain of perspiration glistened on his tawny forehead. Abby rose from her seat, and went eagerly toward him.

"Wahpee—Wahpee, have you seen him?—where is he now? Have any number of his people joined him yet?"

Wahpee shook his head.

"Ask Wahpee nothing; he has no words. Give him bread and dried-beef. The Wampanoags planted no corn, and they have no muskets to shoot down the deer that look in their eyes without moving as they file one by one through the woods. Even the young fawns grow bold, now that the warriors have given up their guns."

"And is he near and hungry?" cried Abby, hastening to the kitchen, where old Tituba was dragging forth bread from a huge oven, in which it had been left after the week's baking; and crowding loaf after loaf into a flour sack, she helped to lift it on Wahpee's back.

Both Abigail Williams and Tituba would have followed the old Indian into the forest; but he curtly ordered them back, and went on himself, carrying the bag of bread. They stole after him at a distance, notwithstanding his interdict, till they came to the meeting-house. Here they paused. The shadows upon the brink of the woods were black as death; and as the old man entered them he was lost in an instant.

"Let us wait," said Tituba, "they will come out together. Metacomet will come to his mother's grave; and then we shall know what he is doing."

Abigail went silently after the old woman, and sat down on a flat stone, half buried in moss and

ferns, at the foot of a huge pine tree, which sheltered two graves. There she seemed covered by a vast pall, the shadows fell so heavily upon her.

Tituba dropped down at Abby's feet, and gathering her limbs together, began a low chant, that mingled in the shiver of the pine leaves with inexpressible mournfulness.

Abby leaned her head against the trunk of the pine and listened. Strange to say, that chant, instead of depressing, kindled her spirit. She never came to that spot, and heard the mysterious whispering of the leaves, without a wish for action, an unaccountable desire to plunge into the wilderness and remain there forever. Only one week before, she had wandered to the same spot, and there, for the first time, learned from his own lips that she had a brother; that the blood of King Philip mingled with that of Anna Hutchinson, the martyr, in her veins; and that on both sides the most terrible wrongs had been done to her ancestors by the very people with whom she had unconsciously worshipped; nay! by the man whose roof had given her a loving shelter, from the cradle up.

On that spot she had seen her kingly brother, in all the grandeur of a noble presence inherited from his father, blended with the softened grace of a mother, whose pure white blood softened the eagle glances of his eyes and gave a glow to his face, kindling that which would otherwise have been saturnine into the poetry of an ever changing expression.

The slave chief had been rescued from his chains in Bermuda; and after wandering over many countries, studying things that were far beyond the grasp of a mere savage, had come back to his native forests, to gather up the fragments of his people, and win back their rights, or avenge their wrongs. Night after night he had waited by those graves, under the pine tree, hoping that his sister would come and meet him.

She came at last, a thoughtful, innocent girl. The gentle romance of affection, for there could be little more in a child who remembered her mother only as she thought of her in dreams, led her to the edge of the wilderness. She went away again, wounded by a terrible knowledge—a sybil in her imagination, the pledged avenger of her mother's wrongs, and of her father's and her grandmother's murder.

Thus the son and daughter of King Philip had met, for the first time since their childhood. The boy knew that he still possessed a sister, and this thought inspired him to greater struggles. Then Abby Williams learned, from her brother's own lips, how it chanced that her brow was darker than the sunny forehead of her cousin Elizabeth; that wrong and death had scattered her family abroad, leaving her a dependent, where she should have been an avenger.

All that week the hopeless girl brooded on the terrors of her birth, and the wrongs her family had suffered; her days were one long, vague dream—her nights restless with tossing thought. Never again would she know what tranquil peace was under that roof! A journey of fifteen miles only separated her from her uncle Parris and Elizabeth, so far as space was concerned; but there was no means of measuring the interminable distance that had grown up between their souls and hers in one single week.

That night she had again spoken of her parents, and expected to see her brother. During the hours that she waited, old Tituba had crept to her feet, with new revelations and more startling surprises. The young girl listened, seated in the very chair that had been her mother's death-couch. She was a creature of sensitive feeling and keen imagination, a thoughtful, ardent girl, to whom such knowledge came like fire to steel, melting and hardening at the same time.

CHAPTER XXIV.

AMONG THE SHADOWS.

Now Abigail Williams sat waiting for her brother, in vague expectation, for Wahpee had given no account of his chief's movements, and Abby could only listen for the sound of his footsteps on the forest turf.

All at once, as her eyes wandered toward the woods, she heard a movement, but not in that direction. The meeting-house stood close on the verge of the forest, and the arched window, back of its pulpit, was almost touched by the swinging tree-branches. Between them and the building Abby saw a human figure moving swiftly through the gloom.

"Tituba, Tituba—look up," she whispered, hushing her very breath, for the figure came out into the starlight, and glided toward them like a ghost.

Tituba lifted her face, and held the chant trembling on her lips; they were both in the deep darkness of the pines; but the woman who came forward had the starlight on her face.

"Is it—is it my mother?" whispered Abby, prompt to believe any thing strange in the excitement of the moment. "See how sad, how beautiful she is."

Tituba pressed back against her young mistress, striving to bury herself more deeply in the darkness.

"Is it my mother—or the one you loved so much?"

Tituba drew a long breath, but did not answer; for the figure came close up to the two graves, and stooping down, tried to make out the moss-grown letters on the stone, tracing the outline with her fore-finger when the light proved insufficient.

"Mother!"

The word died on Abby's lips, and was carried off in the whisper of the pine leaves.

Tituba lifted her hand, grasping that in Abby's lap with a warning force.

"Elizabeth—yes! it is Elizabeth—Elizabeth Pa-r-ris! The moss chokes up the name, but it is here. Poor girl—poor young wife!" murmured a low, sweet voice from out of the shadows. "And this grave, so close, with the vines creeping over both. Who can this be? Elizabeth Parris was an orphan, a beautiful charity child of the church—who can be lying so close?"

The woman knelt down, as she uttered these disjointed words, and touched the foliage on the two graves lightly with her hands.

"Here it was they buried the old man's heart. I almost feel the blossoms springing out of it!" murmured the voice. "Oh, if there were only a place for another here—surely this spot would be quiet and roomy enough for us all!"

The strange woman took a ribbon slowly from her waist, as she spoke, and held it in the starlight.

"I have but to tighten this about my throat, and lie down—a pang or two—a struggle, and when the light drives these shadows back into the woods, some one would find me here—in charity they would dig through the turf a little, and lay me down by sweet Elizabeth Parris. Who would know of it? Who, on the broad earth, would care? It would only be a poor, lone woman, dropping into death before her time—a wanderer, worn out with travel through a weary, weary world, who asked only to lie down and be still."

The tender sadness of these words—the despondency in that face, touched Abby Williams to the heart. She was about to rise, but Tituba held her back.

The woman's hand dropped, trailing the ribbon on the grass. She seemed to fall into thought. Her eyes were uplifted towards the stars, and with solemn mournfulness she spoke again:

"A little while, and this soul would be yonder, standing before those bright gates, and asking for that love in heaven which earth has denied; asking this of God, who has not summoned me, but who will look first on the crimson mark around my neck. No, no; even death is not mine to take—I must wander on and on, till God is merciful and calls me!"

With a slow, weary movement of the hands, she tied the ribbon around her waist again, and, sitting down on the grave of Elizabeth Parris, folded her arms, with a gesture of unutterable despondency, as if she were waiting for the death she dared not take.

That moment there was a movement in the forest. Abby and the Indian woman looked that way, but it was only a young fawn, which came leaping through the brushwood, and basked a moment in the starlight before she returned to the thicket, from which some stronger animal had frightened her.

When Abby looked toward the grave again, nothing was there. The cool, green leaves twinkled in the starlight, as if no human thing had touched them. She arose and searched the grass. Not a footprint could be found, and the open space, which lay between them and the meeting-house, was vacant. She looked at the Indian woman in vague alarm.

"Who was this woman? and where has she gone?"

Tituba shook her head. She was a firm believer in ghosts and witchcraft. The apparition had filled her with terrible awe. Once before, in her life, she had seen the same face gleaming before her in the starlight of a summer's evening; and after that came sore trouble on the household.

"Was it my mother searching for rest? Will she wander forever and ever, unless I avenge her?"

"Come into the house, child, it is near morning: the chief will not be here to-night."

"Tell me," cried Abigail, solemnly, "for I must know: was it my mother?"

"I did not see her face. Something came across my eyes and blinded them; but she was tall and stately like your mother."

"She need not come again, I will not falter," said Abigail, with sorrowful earnestness.

They went together into the house, full of vague dread. Tituba followed the young girl up-stairs, and forcing her to lie down, coiled herself up at the foot of the bed, and lay with her bright, black eyes wide open, till the morning broke. Then she arose softly, and going down to the kitchen, began to prepare breakfast. Wahpee had not yet returned from the woods, and there was no one to provide for but the young girl up-stairs; but the old woman mixed her corn bread, stamped the pats of golden butter, and set her rye coffee down to boil in its conical tin pot, with as much bustle of preparation as if the whole family were to partake of the meal she was preparing.

When all was ready, when the round, cherry-wood table was turned down from its place in a corner of the sitting-room, and drawn up to the window, through which the sweet summer air came rippling among the wild roses and bitter-sweet vines, Tituba went up to the room where Abby was sleeping. It was a singular face upon which the old woman gazed. The masses of raven hair, the long, inky lashes, and the mouth, so beautifully red, possessed a rare loveliness, which the agitation of other features could not altogether destroy. But the forehead was contracted with a frown, the lips writhed with a troubled expression, and her billowy hair rippled to and fro on the pillow from the constant change of position, sought for in her restless sleep.

"Abby—Abby!" whispered the old woman, "come, wake up; it is most seven o'clock, and the breakfast all ready."

Abby turned on the pillow, and her forehead gathered into a heavy frown.

"Do not call me, mother. Why will you wander on—on—on forever and ever, so restlessly, as if your child would not keep her oath? Wait a little, while I look on your face. The wave of your white garments troubles me. The starlight is dim. I cannot hold you in my look, or grasp you with my hand—oh—"

She opened her eyes with a groan, and sat up in bed. The gentle shake which Tituba had given her seemed to wrench the garments, she had seized upon in her dreams, rudely from her grasp.

"Breakfast is ready, child."

"Breakfast!"

"Yes, child, breakfast; warm Johnny cake, and a nice little bit of ham. Don't think any more about it. If the Great Spirit sends witches, he knows how to keep 'em under."

"I will come down," said Abby, wearily, holding one hand to her forehead.

"That's a good child—and do try and look a little like old times. What if the minister and our Lizzy should come back to-day?—who knows?"

"Heaven forbid!" cried the young girl, in pale affright. "I am not ready yet. How can I tell what the woman wants till she speaks to me? If Anna Hutchinson must be avenged, explain how the evil thing is to be done. Dear Tituba, tell me truly. You don't expect the minister home to-day?"

"Why, how can I tell for certain? He ought to have been home weeks ago."

"Am I changed, Tituba? Hold up the looking-glass, and let me see for myself."

Tituba raised the little looking-glass, in its carved cherry-wood frame, and held it before the girl's face.

Abby shook her head mournfully.

"How old I look! What a strange glitter comes and goes in these eyes. It is the Indian blood, I suppose. That, and the things I have been told, Tituba. Don't it seem a great deal more than three weeks since the minister went away?"

"I don't know—yes! I shouldn't wonder if it seems so; but Tituba counts time from the week when Miss Elizabeth went off to visit Lady Phipps in her grand, new house at Boston. Oh, it will be like a bird getting back to its nest when she comes home."

"A bird getting back to its nest—old Tituba? Well, why not? She will sleep quietly, and dream sweetly as ever. It is only I—I. Come, old Tituba, let's go down to breakfast; at least we have twelve hours of day before us: who knows what another night will bring?"

"Yes, yes—come to breakfast; it's unhealthy talking on an empty stomach."

As they went through the little entry way below stairs, a soft knock came to the outer door. Abby went forward and sat down at the breakfast-table, while Tituba lifted the wooden latch and opened the door.

A lady stood on the step, wrapped in a scarlet mantle, with the hood drawn over her face. She was pale, and seemed to have walked a great distance, for her light boots of foreign make were torn at the sides, and soiled with moist earth, while the edge of a light gray silk dress, which fell below her mantle, was frayed and spotted, as if it had been dragged over wet grass.

The woman lifted her eyes to Tituba an instant before she spoke; then, in a voice singularly low and gentle, she inquired if Mr. Parris had reached home yet.

Old Tituba replied, with a little unaccountable hesitation, that the minister had gone to Boston; that he intended to bring Miss Elizabeth home with him; but that there was no saying, for a certainty, when they would come.

"You may expect them within an hour or two," said the stranger, gently, "so I will step in and wait."

She glided softly into the hall while speaking, opened the sitting-room door like one used to the house, and went in.

Abby had seated herself at the table, but she arose as the stranger entered, naturally looking that

way. The thrill that passed through her frame amounted almost to a shock. Two contending wishes seized upon her. She longed to dash through the window and flee; yet was impelled toward the stranger by a power she could neither understand nor resist.

With this conflict of the nerves visible on her face, she came forward and laid her hand in that of the stranger. Again the thrill passed over her, but as those soft fingers closed upon her hand, this singular agitation went off in a pleasant shiver, and the two females smiled sadly on each other, like persons who had met for the first time after some severe bereavement.

"Your old servant tells me that the minister is not at home yet," said the lady, "so I have ventured to come in and wait. Do not let me disturb you at breakfast though; I will walk toward the meeting-house yonder; it seems a quaint, old building."

She turned as if to go, but Abby could not give up the hand in hers without a feeling of emotion amounting almost to pain.

"No, lady, stay and take breakfast with me. I am alone, you see; old Tituba never sits at a table, but eats her meals as she goes about her work. You look tired, and as if a warm cup of coffee would refresh you. Take off your mantle and sit down in this chair."

Abby drew the great oak chair up to the table, and stood with one hand on the back, waiting for her guest to throw off her mantle. But the lady only pushed the hood back to her shoulders, revealing a quantity of splendid hair, that was swept from her white temples in heavy waves. The face thus exhibited was not young, nor would a common-place observer have called it beautiful; but it was a grand face, nevertheless, and one which no great-hearted man or woman could have looked upon without a glow of enthusiasm.

She sat down in the oak chair, took the earthen coffee-cup which Abby had filled for her, and began slowly and wearily to drink the contents. She broke off a morsel of the corn bread now and then, with the indifferent air of one whose appetite is forced, but did not fail to say a few gentle words to her hostess, with that delicate self-abnegation which makes a well-bred woman forget her own weariness or suffering, at all times, where the feelings of others are concerned.

The reaction of a strong excitement was on Abigail. But the fascination which surrounded this woman was so irresistible that she forgot every thing but the charm of her presence.

Old Tituba came in and out of the room, clearing away the breakfast things as the two females drew back from their meal. At last, eying the stranger with keen interest, the old woman drew close up to the oak chair, and, peering over the lady's shoulder, said, in her curt way,

"You forgot to tell me what your name was when you asked for the minister."

"My name," said the lady, with a faint smile. "Yes! I did forget it. My name is Barbara Stafford."

CHAPTER XXV.

THE MORNING RIDE.

An old man and a young girl, followed at a little distance by a staid looking man-servant, in the gubernatorial livery, all mounted on fine horses, moved briskly through the forest road that ran between Boston and Salem, on the morning when Barbara Stafford presented herself at the minister's house. They had been abroad since the dawn, had watched the sunrise shed its first gold on the pine tops and budding hemlock branches, with the exhilaration which springs from a bright day. It was with difficulty that the young girl could keep from giving her horse the bit and dashing forward, she was so buoyant with animal life, so gay with the sweet joy that filled her heart.

Elizabeth Parris could never do wrong in her father's eyes. When she now and then gave her horse the rein and dashed under the forest boughs, scattering the turf with a storm of diamonds as she passed, the old man could only follow her with an anxious smile, till she wheeled again and made her steed come dancing toward him on the sward. Then she would join him, laughing so gayly in her saddle that the very robins sang louder as they heard her, as if some mocking-bird had challenged them to a musical rivalry.

"Look, father, look how beautiful the morning is," she cried, wheeling her horse around the trunk of a great elm tree, that stood out on the highway, and caracoling up to his side again; "every footpath which leads to the forest seems paved with gold, all the branches overhead quiver again as the dew that wets them begins to burn in the sun. You are right, father—I feel it in the depths of my heart—you are right in the pulpit and out, when you tell us to bless God forever and ever, that he has made us this grand, beautiful world. Oh, I could sing like a bird, but with a new tune, father; nothing that I have ever learned is joyous enough for this heavenly morning."

"Heavenly! my child," said the minister, with a gentle effort at rebuke. "Remember that the holy place, where our Lord rests, is sacred, and must not be compared to things of earth."

"Why not, father? The same God created the heavens and the earth, and all that in them is. So

when every thing here seems like heaven, why not say so in sweet thankfulness?"

The minister shook his head.

"Indeed, I can't help it!" continued the girl, dashing up to a thicket where a red-winged black-bird had settled, and frightening the pretty creature deep into the woods with her impetuous admiration. "It's a beautiful morning. I'm going home. Every minute brings me nearer—I shall see cousin Abby. Oh, how her heart will leap for joy when we come up! and old Tituba, bless the precious old soul, and Wahpee; upon my word, father, I think, I am sure that is Wahpee yonder, with that young man in the hunting-frock. Indeed, I'm quite certain it is: he's coming to meet us perhaps. Wahpee, Wahpee, you blessed old Indian, how are you? how are they all at home?"

She rode forward at a gallop, dashing through the shadow, over patches of sunshine, and calling out for her father not to be afraid, she only wanted to speak first to dear old Wahpee; but just as she came up to the spot where he had seemed to be standing, she saw only a young man in a hunter's frock of dressed deer-skin, with leggins of crimson cloth, and a cap striped with blue and red velvet, which fell in a point to the left shoulder, where it terminated in a tassel of silk and glittering beads. He held a slender gun in his hand, which he planted on the turf as Elizabeth rode up, leaning upon it with the grace of an Apollo.

The young girl drew in her horse, and looked around, amazed to find the young man alone, and expecting to see Wahpee spring out from behind some bush to frighten her with a whoop, as he had done a hundred times before.

But the morning wind, whispering through the woods, was all the sound she heard. Where was Wahpee? What could have become of him? Surely it was his form she had seen a moment before standing by that singular man!

All this passed through her mind while the strange young man was preparing to move on; but when she saw that he was absolutely alone, the color mounted hotly to her face, and with a light laugh at herself she drew her horse on one side, saying, with that exquisite grace which renders the very boldness of youth sometimes very attractive,

"I beg pardon, sir, for cantering up in this wild way; but in fact I thought some one was with you whom I love dearly and haven't seen for a long time; pray tell me, where he is hiding."

The young man had been regarding her with a half smile. His fine black eyes sparkled with a sort of mocking merriment, mingled with an expression of such admiration as kept the blushes warm on the young girl's face.

"You have seen the shadow, which a bright morning sun keeps close to my side, and mistake it for a warrior, I dare say, young lady; for certainly no one could be more alone than I am."

He said this in accents so foreign that Elizabeth looked on him with new interest, wondering greatly from what part of the earth he had come.

His face was dark, certainly, but more from exposure to the sun than any thing else, and the cluster of raven hair that fell from under his cap, waving almost into full curl around his temples, had that purplish bloom which is so beautiful, but seldom found even when black hair is most glossy. Who could this man be, with those exquisitely cut features, that form at once so proud and so wildly graceful, above all with a voice whose broken sweetness went to the soul at once, even when its words were imperfectly understood?

"Was I, indeed, so miserably cheated?" said Elizabeth, at last, striving to laugh away her confusion. "Well, well, I ain't the first girl, by many, that has been caught by shadows. Pray forgive me, sir. I have no excuse but that Wahpee is a dear, old fellow, who carried me pick-a-back before I could walk; and I haven't seen him for months; besides, I am half crazy at getting home again. Perhaps you don't know what it is to return home, after a long absence, and, and—I beg pardon, sir—what have I said to offend you?" she cried, suddenly, startled by the look that shot athwart that handsome face.

"Offend me? Nothing," he answered, with a strange smile.

"Nay, but I am sure you looked either angry or pained," cried the young girl, anxiously.

"Shadows again. It was but the waving of that tree bough across my face. Why should any one feel either anger or pain, because a young lady is rejoiced to get back to her friends, after a long absence?"

"Truly—why should they?" replied Elizabeth, drawing her horse slowly back, beginning to be conscious that this conversation with a total stranger was a little out of the ordinary course of her strict, social life. "So, now that there are no more shadows to distract me, I will ride back and keep near my father."

"One moment," said the young man, drawing close to her horse, "tell me—who is your father, and, and—"

"Oh, here he is to speak for himself," cried Elizabeth, drawing a deep breath, for the young man's approach and earnest manner had startled her.

The stranger dropped his hand from the neck of her horse, where it had slightly rested, took up his gun, and with a sharp glance at the minister, took a footpath which led into the woods.

"What is this, Elizabeth? My dear child, what does it mean?" cried the minister, riding up with an anxious face; "a stranger with his hand on your bridle."

"No, no, father: only on my horse's neck. He was asking about you—nothing else—but did you see his face?"

"Yes, child, it was a dark, beautiful face. Like those we find in that book of poems by John Milton, where Lucifer shames all the angels with the majesty of his presence. Be careful, daughter, how you look on such faces, save with averted eyes, for they are dangerous to the soul."

"Oh, but, father, his smile—I wish you could have seen that—it was like—yes, father, as I live, it was like cousin Abby's. I declare this was why it brought the heart into my mouth—oh, father! if you had only seen him smile, you would never talk of Lucifer and the angels again. Who can he be?"

"Some loitering Indian, no doubt."

"No, father, no. His hair curls; his eyes are full of fire, not grave and sullen; he smiles often, and his forehead is white as—yes, as my cousin's—he is only dressed a little Indian fashion; but I like that best of all."

"And you heard him speak—that might have guided you a little. Was his language prompt and clear?"

"Not quite: it had a strange accent."

"Indian?"

"No, no; but something that made his broken speech sweet as music."

"Strange, very strange!" muttered the minister, with a heaviness at the heart which he could not account for. "It is but a man passing like a shadow across my path, and yet I am saddened by it."

"Strange," thought Elizabeth, from whom all the surplus life had departed, leaving her subdued and thoughtful by the minister's side—"strange! it was but a hunter resting upon his gun; yet I am terrified by the very beauty of his face. What would Norman Lovel say, I wonder? What will cousin Abby say? Shall I tell this among the other wonderful things that have happened during my visit to Lady Phipps's? Ah, me! if I had never left home, how much happier I might have been! But then should I have rode so lightly, looked so pretty, or learned to dance minuets, and dress like a lady? Then would Norman ever have fancied me but for these things? I hope I shan't be sick of home, and pining to go back again, the minute I've seen the dear old room and kissed them all round; that would break poor father's heart. Well, after all, I should like to know who this stranger is—an Indian indeed—he looks more like a king."

But all these thoughts were soon driven out of the young girl's head by the sight of objects that grew more and more familiar, as they neared home. Now an orchard, heavy with green fruit, crowded up to the wayside, where she had gathered harvest apples: then a gnarled old peach tree, with the moss of age creeping over its trunk, hung over the crook of a fence, and drooped a healthy limb or two over the turf that lined the highway on either side. Here was a thicket of blackberry bushes, where she had torn her dress a hundred times; then came a huge old stump, whose decay had given birth to clusters of red raspberry vines, which she had plundered time out of mind. Then came a young elm, bending over the wayside, from which frost grape-vines fell in garlands, that fluttered out into the sunshine and challenged the wind at every breath, its leaves singing, and its clusters of unripe fruit quivering over the wild flowers that slept dreamily below.

At last the house came in sight, with its great sheltering trees, its little square windows, and its rough logs, overrun with honeysuckles and morning-glory vines, the most picturesque little bird's-nest of a place you ever set eyes upon. She began to hear the far-off sweep of the sea, and feel an invigorating saltness in the air, which brought life back to her with a glow of pleasure in it.

"Father, father, ride on, ride on—do strike into a canter. Let's have a run for it. I want wings to get over this little bit of road with. Oh, father, do strike out of that irritating trot for once!"

No. Samuel Parris loved his child to dotage, but even she could not induce him to bring scandal on the church by an undignified movement. Who ever saw a minister of the Presbyterian church cantering toward home in front of his own meeting-house door, and in sight of the burying-ground where he had laid half his parishioners down to sleep? Notwithstanding all her impatience, the minister kept on at his old measured pace. With all that he most loved at his side, he felt no haste to get home which might compare with the breathless eagerness that gave wings to the heart of his daughter.

CHAPTER XXVI.

BACK TO THE HOMESTEAD.

Elizabeth broke loose at last, and darted off, leaving the man-servant far behind. Across the

greenwood in front of the meeting-house, over hillocks and between frowning stumps, littered around with new-made chips, which flew beneath the spurning hoofs of her horse, she rode, her eyes kindling, and her heart on fire with the joy of a first return home.

Up she came to the door-yard fence, cast one eager glance around, expecting some one to rush forth and welcome her; then, seeing that all was still, she sprang from her saddle and ran into the house, calling out,

"Cousin Abby! Abby Williams, I say, where are you? Don't you know that I've got home? Abby! Abby!—Tituba! Tituba! Dear me! where has everybody gone?"

She stood in the little sitting-room, looking around in breathless expectation. She ran into the kitchen: old Tituba was there, kindling the fire.

"Tituba, mammy dear, dear old mammy!" cried the young girl, springing forward, dropping upon her knees, and hugging the old woman with all her might.

"Oh! did I surprise you, mammy? Caught you napping, ha? How glad I am to see you, dear, blessed old soul! Why don't you speak? Why don't you kiss me to death? There, that seems something like. Now, where is cousin Abby? And how have you all got along without me? And where is the fawn? I've got a new bell for him—and—and—"

Here the warm-hearted young creature burst into an April storm of smiles and tears, while old Tituba untied her stylish bonnet, and took off her riding-cape with a sort of shy humility, for the entire love of nurse and child had been broken up, on the old woman's part, by the confidence which she had reposed in Abby Williams, during the absence of her young mistress. Somehow the old creature felt as if she had been wronging the young girl who came back so frankly and kindly to her arms, by her conversation that night with her cousin.

"What ails you, mammy Tituba? What on earth makes you look everywhere except in my face? Indeed you don't seem half glad enough to see me!"

"Oh, yes, how can the child talk so!" cried the old woman, with a great effort at self-control. "But with all these fine clothes on, and that bonnet; dear me, one hardly knows one's own child. Then, my dear, you've grown so proud and so handsome, it's enough to make an old Indian think twice before she dares to kiss you, rough and hearty, in the old way."

"Poh—poh. I'm always the same old penny, brightened up a little, that's all," said Elizabeth, blushing crimson. "So you think I am changed—improved a little," she added, glancing down at herself with graceful vanity. "What will cousin Abby think, I wonder? Oh! there she is."

Elizabeth darted forward, and threw her arms around the neck of Abigail Williams, so blinded by the joy of meeting her old playmate again that she did not observe the restraint with which all her enthusiasm was met.

At the time of their first parting, three months before, these two girls had never possessed an unshared thought; but now the hearts that beat against each other, in that close embrace, were swelling with secrets which could never be thoroughly understood. In that little time childhood had been left behind, and each had learned to tread alone the path, which, at this point, began, with them, to diverge into the wilderness of life.

But the old love would come swelling back, spite of the thoughts that lay in its channel, like rocks cast into the bed of a stream, which sparkles all the more from the obstruction.

"Abby—Elizabeth."

How different were the voices that uttered these words! Elizabeth's was loving and brimful of affection; that of Abby Williams answered it almost with pathos; both wept, one bitterly, the other with quick gushes of joy.

"Oh, Abby, Abby, I have so much to tell you," cried Elizabeth, blushing crimson under the tears that trembled on her cheek. "Don't ask me what it is yet, only wait a little, till we get into the woods together. Come along, here is father just getting off his horse at the door, with Gov. Phipps's servant doing the pompous in his new livery. Step into the entry way, or he will feel disappointed, as I did, at not seeing your face peeping out through the morning-glory vines."

Elizabeth felt the heart, which had been beating strongly against her own, recoil with a sudden shock, as she mentioned her father; and it was almost by force that she drew her cousin into the doorway in time to meet the minister, who came through the gate with his usual hesitating slowness, and held out his hand, gravely smiling as he approached his niece.

Her hand shook like an aspen, as she held it out, and the touch was cold as ice. But the minister simply said,

"Is any thing ailing you, Abigail?" and passing on, he hung his hat on a peg in the wall, and placed his riding-whip behind the door.

With a sudden impulse, Abby drew her cousin out on the stepping-stone, leaving the passage open.

"Come, come into the woods," whispered Elizabeth, clasping her cousin round the waist, and drawing her gently along. "I want to get into the shadows, where we can talk together."

Abby drew a deep breath, and hurried on, more eager to leave the house than her companion; for she was faint from the recoil of her whole nature against the old man, who had been more than a father to her. Ready to flee anywhere to avoid the touch of that hand again, she hurried with her cousin to the woods.

So the two sped on, across the meeting-house green, by the tomb-stones rising from the tall grass behind it, and past those twin graves over which the old trees bent their whispering boughs. Elizabeth would have turned that way, for the vines were quivering with dew-drops, and the periwinkles trembled like cerulean stars among them, so deeply did the shadows lie there almost till noonday. But Abby hurried on, turning her eyes resolutely from the spot, and almost forcing her cousin into the gloom of the woods.

There was a ledge of rocks piled along the side of a ravine, choked up by dogwood trees, sassafras, and wild honeysuckles, on which the girls had loved to play from childhood up. A lofty tulip tree sheltered it, and above that towered a hill-side, clothed with great hemlocks, through which the sun never penetrated, save in golden gleams that lost themselves in the topmost boughs. The different ledges of this little precipice were not only lined, but absolutely piled, with moss, which lay beautifully thick all around. On one shelf it lay in cushions, green as emerald, and soft as Genoa velvet; then another species, bright and feathery as the plumage of a bird, crept over a huge old log that lay in a parallel line with the edge, embroidering it with green lace-work, till there was a wild wood sofa erected by this simple freak of nature, more luxurious than the couch of an empress.

"See, see, how far the moss has crept since we were here before," cried Elizabeth, throwing herself on the sofa. "When I went away, that end of the log was bare; now every inch is green. See, all along the ledge at our feet, the buckthorn moss has spread into a crisp carpet; and the wild columbines have grown in a border all around it. Why, Lady Phipps's drawing-room is not prettier."

"Yes," said Abby, looking vaguely around. "Every thing has grown and thrives since you went away, Elizabeth; but the place does not look so beautiful to me, as it did once; the loneliness seems dreary."

"Yes, yes, of course; then I was away. But now the woods will be cheerful as spring time again. Sit down, cousin. Why will you stand there, tall and still, like a ghost, when the moss fleeces are so soft and the shadows so cool? It is pleasant as sunset here. One almost gets sleepy, with the hum of the bees and blue flies. Come, sit close by me: I feel lonesome without your arm around my neck, cousin Abby."

Those tones, and that dear old name, brought quick tears into Abigail's eyes. She drew gently to the side of her cousin, and sat down. As Elizabeth clasped her waist, the bosom beneath her arm began to heave; and all at once Abby burst into a great fit of crying: the first absolute storm of passion that Elizabeth had ever seen her yield to.

"What is the matter, Abby dear? What are you crying for? How you tremble! What have they been doing to you, while I was away? Don't, pray, don't cry so!"

Abigail checked her tears as suddenly as they had commenced; and clasping her hands hard for a single instant, seemed to control her nerves by stern, mental force.

"Don't mind me," she said, hoarsely. "I have been alone so much—but you had something to tell me—about Lady Phipps, perhaps, or the governor; of course they were delighted to have you with them; come, tell me all about it; one gets so little real information from letters."

"Oh! I could not write, at least what I wished to tell you, any more than I could talk it all over in broad daylight. Besides, one must see a rainbow to judge how its colors rise out of each other; there is no describing it; and some things, that one knows and feels, are the same. The best friend you have must guess at them."

"What is it you speak of?" questioned Abby, gradually withdrawing herself from the clasp of her cousin's arm. "I do not understand. In this visit to Lady Phipps, have you been crushed down with secrets that must not be talked of? Has the memory of your mother stalked forth like a curse to haunt you?"

"The memory of my mother, the young creature who died when I was first laid in her bosom like a poor little flower broken by a sudden weight of dew, as I have often heard my father say!—What should there be in the memory of my mother which you and I cannot talk about?"

"Nothing," said Abigail, vaguely. "Were we talking of—our mothers? It is a dreary subject; let us think of something else. God help us!—something else, Elizabeth—the woods are too lonesome for talk about the dead. You were about to tell me something."

"Yes! but I cannot tell it; your voice is so strange! You look afar off, as if talking to some one in the distance. I can neither catch your eyes, nor feel the old touch of your hand. Abigail Williams, I am afraid of you!"

The low laugh, which broke from Abigail's lips, was mournful as a wail.

"There it is. I knew it, I expected it: not an hour together, and she fears me already."

She turned abruptly, drew close to her cousin's side, and stealing both arms around her,

murmured in a voice of ineffable sadness,

"Don't, Bessy—dear, dear Bessy, don't be afraid of me. Is it not enough that I am afraid of myself? Now, tell me what this thing is! So that it is not about the dead, I can listen and be pleased."

"About the dead? Why, Abby, how strangely you talk! What have you and I in common with the dead? The sunshine is not pleasanter than life is to me since, since—"

"Since when, Bessie?"

"Since he loved me."

A strange sort of wonder crept over Abigail Williams. She looked upon her cousin with vague apprehension. The word love was a new thing to her; it had scarcely yet entered into her dreamy life. Elizabeth smiled at first amid her blushes, but as Abby kept gazing upon her with parted lips and that wonder in her eyes, her lips began to tremble, and the warm color ebbed away from her face.

"I forget," she said, deprecatingly, "you have not heard any thing about him. I could not write, and even my father knew nothing till he came to Boston after me. But oh! if you could see him, Abby! If you could hear him speak; or read his beautiful poetry that he writes; it would not seem strange that I love him so much."

"Then you have been treacherous also? You love some one more than me?"

"Forgive me, forgive me," pleaded Elizabeth, "I could not help it. We were in the same house—he was like a son to Lady Phipps."

"Better than your father, perhaps," continued Abby, pondering over this new subject in her mind, heedless of the tears and blushes with which she was regarded. "I have heard of such things, but never expected them to come so close. So you love some one better than us all, Elizabeth Parris?"

"Forgive me, dear cousin! Why are you so angry?"

"Angry? Oh! nothing of the kind. I only wonder how any one can look forward, when the dead will not rest—how it is the privilege of one human being to love, and the duty of another to hate!"

"The duty of another to hate!—why, cousin, there is—there can be no such duty. God is love, the Bible tells us so; and oh! when the heart is full of this blessed, blessed feeling, one sees him everywhere. Don't talk of hate, it is a new word between us two."

Abigail Williams attempted to smile, but only a quiver of the pale lips followed the effort. Still she grew more composed, and gently won her warm-hearted cousin back to bright thoughts again, by a few questions.

"His name? Oh, yes—his name is Norman—Norman Lovel—he is the private secretary of Gov. Phipps, who treats him like a son. He lives in the house, and but for his name you would never believe that he was in no way related to the governor. Still he is only a stranger, recommended by some friend in London, and singular enough don't know his own parents. Never saw them, or anybody that he knew was related to him in his whole life. But what difference does that make, when everybody else almost worships him?"

"And you among the rest?"

"I most of all," answered Elizabeth, bathed in a glow of crimson, from the white forehead to the heaving bosom.

"And this is happiness, I suppose?"

"Happiness? That is what seems strange to me, when life is full of glow, and I can hardly breathe from the rich swell of a heart that seems ready to break with joy, an exquisite pain creeps in, and I know by it that happiness can mount no farther!"

"But there must be a cause for this pain!"

"A cause? Yes! every thing must have a cause, I dare say, if one could but find it out. I only know that the joy was perfect till that storm arose, and the ship came in with a woman on board, who seemed to disturb every thing she looked upon. Even Lady Phipps never seemed to draw a deep breath while she was in the house. As for me! Abby, Abby, you don't know what torment is, till you have given your whole heart to one person, and see another stealing him away from you!"

"This," said Abby, who had listened with thoughtful interest, "this is the feeling they call jealousy, I suppose. Is it so painful?"

"For a time," answered Elizabeth, turning pale with the very recollection of her suffering, "it seemed as if I must die. Shame, anger, a keen fear of losing him, kept me silent. But when I was alone, with the door shut, and the curtains of my bed drawn close, all this pride and strength gave way; my brain grew hot; the very breath choked me as it rose; I could neither sleep nor rest, but walked the room all night, wondering if she thought of him too, if he were watching the light in her window, or if both were asleep and dreaming of each other. Sometimes I saw them in the garden, conversing together with the deepest interest; sometimes they sat in the great portico till the dark crept around them like a veil; and all this time I was overlooked and forgotten. Once in a while Norman would seem to remember me with a start, and force himself to say a few kind

words; but there was neither depth nor earnestness in what he said: the woman had bewitched him, I am sure of it."

"Bewitched? That is a fearful word," said Abby, looking around with a wild stare, as if the very foundations of her life had been disturbed by the word her cousin used.

"Yes, Abby, I solemnly believe she was a witch; for the moment she was gone all the beauty of my life came back; Norman was himself again; he seemed to wake up from a dream and wonder what he had been about; at first, he would not believe how much I suffered, and wondered that I had grown thin, and that blue shadows were creeping under my eyes, as if his own neglect had not been the cause; but when Lady Phipps told him how it was—I would have died fifty times rather than let him know—nothing could be more generous than his sorrow. He begged my pardon almost on his knees. There was no kind look or sweet word that he did not coin into a more loving expression, to win me back to our old happiness."

"And you were happy then?—you are happy now?" said Abby, looking wistfully into the bright face, over which smiles and blushes came and went like gleams of sunset on a summer cloud.

"Happy? yes, he parted with me so kindly—he was so earnest to make me forget that dangerous woman, who had disappeared from among us like a ghost—he seemed to love me again so much more than ever, that I could not help being happy. Besides, he is coming down to see us. I have told him all about you, darling cousin. Father has consented that in a year or two, if we do not change our minds, that is—"

"He will take you away altogether; and this has happened while I was ignorant of it all. Oh, Elizabeth! how many things can grow up to divide two souls, while one of the little wild-flowers yonder buds, blossoms, and fades away!"

"But no souls are divided here, Abby!" cried the young girl, earnestly. "The love that I feel for you and father only grows broader and deeper since I have known him. We are not parted, cousin."

"Not by love. I know that!"

"Not at all. Look at me, cousin Abby! how strangely you are peering into the distance, as if something in the gloom drew your eyes from my face! What is it you see, cousin?"

Elizabeth bent forward, and looked keenly in the direction her cousin's eyes had taken. Far down the hollow she saw the young hunter whose presence had surprised her on the road a few hours before.

"Hush, Abby! Don't speak yet; but look and tell me who he is?"

As she spoke, Elizabeth leaned forward till her golden curls took the wind and fluttered out like sunbeams on the air. The man saw her, turned and disappeared among the undergrowth of the hollow.

"Did you ever see him before?" questioned Elizabeth of her cousin, as she shrunk back with a sort of superstitious dread, for the man had vanished like a phantom; "or have the woods become haunted since I went away?"

Abby Williams started up with nervous haste. "Come, come, you must be hungry by this time: it is almost noon; old Tituba will be waiting, and you know nothing makes her so angry as leaving her Johnny-cake to be eaten cold. She will never forgive us."

Elizabeth sighed. A pang of disappointment came across her sunny nature. Why was Abby so changed? How had it happened that a confession, which she had shrunk from and dreamed over, should have been told in that hard, common-place fashion? Why were the sweet tidings which had cost her so much agitation received so coldly by the only creature who had never till then felt a thought or feeling unshared with her?

"Well," she said, and her bright eyes filled as she spoke, while a laugh that had bitter tones in it rose to her lip, "I did not think you would have taken all this so coldly. But never mind; as you say, Tituba's Johnny-cake must not get cold."

With a slight bound she reached the shelf of rock below her, and hurried away, followed by Abigail Williams, who stopped every other moment to look anxiously around, but still kept near her cousin.

"There he is—I say, Abby—there he is again, moving through that dogwood thicket," said Elizabeth, holding her breath, and speaking in a whisper.

"Be quiet; it is only a hunter searching for deer or wild turkeys."

As she spoke, Abigail made a quick signal with her hand, which sent the young woodranger into covert again.

"Who is he? What is the reason we never saw him before?" thought Elizabeth, as she moved homeward; but the silence of her cousin encouraged no questions, and the two girls reached the house without speaking of the stranger again.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE CHIEF AND THE LADY.

Scarcely had the two cousins left the woods, when, upon the very path they had trod, appeared Barbara Stafford, the woman who had inquired for the minister at his house that morning. Immediately after breakfast she had wandered into the open air, and, after lingering around the meeting-house a while, went into the forest. The hum of insects, and the rustle of leaves, fell soothingly upon her, and with a dreamy listlessness she moved on, sitting down at times when she came to some flower or shrub which seemed strange or curious; but frequently leaving it half examined, and moving on again restlessly searching for something else.

At last she came out on the ledge, which the cousins had just left, and sighing softly as she crossed the carpet of gray moss, sat down upon the rock sofa and fell into thought. The place seemed to have some peculiar fascination for her, for she grew paler and paler in that dim religious light, giving way to feelings that could only rise unchecked in the profoundest solitude. At last, her agitation became so great, that she fell forward upon the cushions and began to moan faintly, as those who have lost the power to weep express pain, when it becomes insupportable.

As she remained thus, the young hunter, who had twice appeared before the cousins, came out upon the lower shelf of the rock, and, without seeing her, threw himself on the edge, and lay still, as if waiting for some one.

The sound of Barbara Stafford's voice arrested his attention. He arose, clambered softly to the higher shelf of rock, and stood a moment, leaning on his gun, regarding her with vague thrills of agitation. Though he could not see her face, the mysterious atmosphere that surrounds a familiar person made its impression upon him, and he recognized her at once.

At last, oppressed by a human presence, which, even unseen and unheard, will make itself felt to a delicately organized person, Barbara lifted her head. She did not speak, but her lips parted, her eyes grew large, and a flash of wild astonishment rushed over her face.

"In the name of Heaven what is this?" she cried at last, reaching forth her hand, as if she doubted that the presence was real.

A convulsion of feeling swept over the young man's face; the gun dropped from his hold, and, forced to his knees, as it were against his will, he seized her hand, and pressed it to his lips wildly, madly, then cast it away, with a gesture of rage at himself, for a weakness of which his manhood was ashamed.

Barbara Stafford had no power to repulse this frantic homage. She had but just begun to realize that he was alive and before her—that it was his hot lips that touched her, and his flashing eyes that poured their fire into hers. The hand he had dropped fell listlessly by her side. She sat up, regarding him haughtily.

"Philip!"

The voice was stern with rebuke. The whiteness of anger settled on her features.

"Yes," said the young man. "It is Philip, the slave to whom you opened the avenues of knowledge, and whose soul you tempted from its strength by the dainty refinements of civilization. It is the Bermuda serf, whom you made free and enslaved again. But still the son of a king, and the chief of a brave people. Woman, you dashed the shackles from these limbs only to gird them around my soul; and then left me to writhe myself to death, a double serf, and a double slave!"

"Philip, you are mad—nay, worse—you are ungrateful. Am I to suffer forever for those impulses of compassion that took you from under the lash of a slave-driver, and helped you to the key of all greatness—knowledge? Am I blamable if that too fiery nature would not be content with gratitude, but, having gained liberty, and all the privileges of free manhood, asked that which his benefactress could not give—which it was presumption to seek?"

"I was the son of a king," said the hunter, proudly, "the only son of a brave man, and a woman beautiful as yourself, a woman who had blood in her veins as white and pure as that which my presence has just frightened from your own cheek. Look around: from the ocean to the mountains every thing was my father's till the people of your race came, like a pestilence, across the sea, and, more by cunning and hypocrisy than power, wrested his dominion away, and drove his people to death or slavery. Lady, there was no presumption in the thought, when the wronged heir of Philip of Mount Hope offered the love of a free, brave man, who had learned both how to think, and how to act, to the daughter of—"

"Hush! I charge you, hush!" cried Barbara, starting to her feet, "not even here must you pronounce that name—I thought myself utterly unknown. If I have ever been good to you—if it was a kindness when I won you from slavery, by tears and entreaties, that would not be refused—if the friendship of years, sacrifices, efforts, and that pure affection which a childless mother may bestow on the young man whom she would gladly have regarded as a son, gives me any claim on your forbearance, let my secrecy be respected! I am weary, wretched, broken-hearted enough already: do not add to the misery of my condition by a reckless word, or an unguarded look!"

Barbara clasped her hands, and was about to sink to her knees in pure agitation as she made this

appeal.

The young hunter prevented the action by a prompt movement, and fell at her feet with an impulse of generous humility.

"Lady, command me! Do not entreat! What have I done that you should rebuke me by a request?"

Barbara smiled, and touched his forehead lightly with her hand. Instantly, a soft mist dulled the fire of those splendid eyes, and the young man bowed his head, thrilled to the heart by the proud magnetism of her look.

"Tell me, Philip," she said, very gently, "tell me how it is that I find you here, in a place so full of danger. Why come again to the lands that have passed from the possession of your people forever—lands that are swept away, and held securely in the grasp of civilization? What can you hope—what can you expect, by this mad return?"

"What can I hope, lady? That the soil upon which I stand will still be mine. What do I expect? That my father's people may be gathered together from the swamps of the lowlands, and the caves of the mountains, and, united in the midst of their old hunting-grounds, meet their enemies face to face, and fight them as my father did—conquer them, as he would have done, but for the traitors in his bosom; or failing, perish like him!"

"My poor, brave Philip!" said Barbara, regarding the youth with unutterable compassion, "what men could do your father and his chiefs essayed, and in vain. It is not fighting man to man here. There is no fair combat of human strength or manly intellect; but you combat with destiny—that grand, cruel thing, which comes in the form of civilization. Ah, Philip, there is no contending against that."

"Then let me die with the people who call me king; but die avenging the wrongs that have driven our chiefs into slavery, and left our tribes nothing but basket-makers and hunters of musk rats!" cried the youth, desperately.

"Lady, do not counsel or thwart me here; the blood of two races, fiery and hot with a sense of wrong, urges me on. My brain aches with thought, my heart beats loudly in its hope for vengeance on the men who slew my father, and sought to starve my soul down to contented servitude. Neither heart nor brain will be argued or persuaded into submission. Beyond this, and inspiring it all, I wait for the sad scornfulness of that smile to disappear. When his people are once more a nation, you cannot say that the son of Philip of Mount Hope was presumptuous in loving you."

"And is this wild feeling at the bottom of it all?" said Barbara, in a voice full of regret.

"It has brought me across the ocean, lurking like a hound in the hold of the same vessel with yourself—it has filled me with ambition to rebuild the fortunes of a down-trodden people. When these brave men they call savages are linked in one common band and common cause—like the chieftains of Scotland, each a sovereign lord in himself—we shall meet these wily white men, and conquer back the forests they have wrested from us. Hitherto their brain-craft has more than overmatched our strong arms; but I have learned something of their coward wisdom in the lands to which you have sent me. If I studied law and military science in England, it was that I might learn the art by which men rule their fellow-men. I have used the means you gave me to learn that power of mind which sways multitudes more surely than the stout arm or certain eye. Lady, I have, in my search for the great secret by which your people stole away the Indian birthright, learned to despise our conquerors. But not you! not you! My gratitude lifted you out from among them all. It was because my soul thanked you so tenderly that it lost itself in love."

"Ah, Philip," said the lady, "but for this madness how great you might become!"

"Say not so. All the thirst for greatness that I have springs out of the mighty love that you will not listen to," answered the young man.

"Because it is madness—insanity. I say nothing of the barriers which rank and civilization build up like a wall between us two; but nature herself should chill such feelings in their birth. Why, young man, I had learned to hope and suffer, as woman can alone hope and suffer, before you were born."

"Be it so—I care not. Souls made for eternity are neither brightened nor dulled by a few years of time. I see only what is grand and beautiful in the only woman of her race that this heart ever deemed worthy of a warrior's love."

The young man towered proudly upward as he spoke. The gorgeous robe which he had assumed with his savage state, shook and rattled as he gathered it over his chest. The lady gazed upon him with irresistible admiration. She might rebuke his love, and shrink with womanly delicacy from any fulfilment of his hopes, which, in truth, seemed to outrage the august dignity of her years. But there was a grandeur in the young man that forced her to respect him—a truthfulness which enlisted all her sympathies.

"Philip," she said, extending her hand, which he kissed reverently, as if she had been an empress, and that moss couch her throne, "I will not bid you God-speed in the grand, but I think hopeless, task you have undertaken, much as I deem you wronged; because my judgment, calmer than yours, tells me how surely civilization must sweep the darkness of barbarism before it. The virgin

soil of this new world is required for the growth of food for the surplus population which is now sweeping across the Atlantic in a slow but steady tide from the old world. That which civilization demands it will attain. Hope not to match the bravery of your warriors against the keen energy of the Anglo-Saxon. Where he treads, opposition, nay, justice itself, sways backward. Cool, resolute, sometimes unscrupulous, he never recedes, but swiftly as time advances so does he. Look along the coast already has he hewn down the mighty forest, and let the sunshine in to ripen the grain planted within sight of your very wigwams. Already are cities and towns sending up their spires to heaven. Every courthouse, and every place of worship thus marked in the landscape, is a barrier stronger than any military fortress, against the idea of Indian sovereignty that now heaves that chest, and kindles those eyes."

The young man's lip curved, and his eyes shone as he answered:

"Lady, forgive me; but you speak like a woman, whose destiny is to think, not to act. But in my heart the barbarism out of which true heroes spring, and the Anglo-Saxon blood of which you boast, meet and swell together into one mighty resolve. We will first conquer our foes; then wrest from them the secrets that make the soil teem with food and beauty for their use. While the earth rolls, and the sun shines, brave men of all nations will seek the war-path; the church spires and halls of justice will never prevent that. But, like the white man, we will plant corn where the earth has been made richest with human blood, and let wild flowers start into bloom above the graves we have filled to loathing with dead foes."

"But if you are ready to follow the lead of our people so far," said Barbara, "why not join them in amity now?"

"Because the Indian would be master of the soil he plants, and the game he shoots. King Philip of Mount Hope acknowledged no peer. They slew him, but he filled a monarch's grave. Has the blood of a white woman, martyred for her faith, made his son so weak that he needs Anglo-Saxon adventurers and dissatisfied clergymen to share authority with him?"

Barbara arose, and reached forth her hand.

"Farewell!" she said, with sweet mournfulness. "That I meet you here and thus, is a new pang and a new sorrow. I had hoped to find you content and happy, on my return to Europe; but alas, these awful forests seem to swallow up every thing upon which my poor heart leaned. God help me, for now I feel more alone than ever. Ah, Philip, if you would only be persuaded to recross the Atlantic —there alone you are safe."

"Lady, when I am indeed a chief, and my brave warriors have turned the churches you boast of into wigwams, I will cross the sea, and ask again if great deeds and undying love may claim at least a patient hearing."

Barbara shook her head.

"Not with that hope—not with such intent," she answered, gravely; "for it can never be. Now, farewell."

"Adieu, but not forever," answered the young man, bending low over the hand she offered. "These are unsafe times, and with all your pride there will come a season when you will have need of me. The spirit which hunted Anna Hutchinson into the forest, and drove my mother out to starve, is not yet appeased. New victims will be wanted. The great Anglo-Saxon mind that you speak of is, after all, but slavish and half developed—the outgrowth of that very tyranny of opinion it fled to avoid. Those who brave martyrdom ever are foremost in persecution. Lady, beware of these new people. Nay, I had better say, take no heed; for I who, hating slavery, glory in being your slave, will guard you well."

With these words the youth snatched up his rifle, pointed out a footpath, which Barbara turned into, and both disappeared in opposite directions.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

WORKING OF THE EVIL SPELL.

Elizabeth Parris was in her own little chamber, in the gable end of her father's log house; the window looked out toward the sea, and a beautiful glow of sunshine lay upon the pasture land which stretched between it and the shore, turning the water to sparkling sapphires, and the green of the land to a richer emerald tint, as the day drew toward its noon.

There was something very pretty and picturesque about Elizabeth's room. Though a tiny little place compared to that she had just left in the gubernatorial mansion, it possessed a score of dainty trifles, that, at first sight, awoke in her heart a sweet home-feeling, which went rippling like a trill of music through her whole being. So she went from object to object, arranging one, displacing another, and fluttering to and fro like a bird that returns to its cage, after a long, pleasant flight in the open air.

"Ah, how white and nice everything is!" she said, addressing old Tituba, who stood by the door,

watching her with a glow of satisfaction in her sharp, black eyes. "This curtain is soft and pure as the clouds that hang over the sea out yonder. As for the bed, I shouldn't think it had been slept in since I went away, the pillow-cases shine like snow crust."

"The bed hasn't been slept in since we knew you were coming right away home, child," said old Tituba, casting a well-pleased look on the pillow-cases, polished by her own deftly urged smoothing-irons. "I put every thing on fresh, yesterday: all for yourself."

"Not used, Tituba, not used! Then where has cousin Abby slept? Where did she sleep last night?"

"She's gone into the back room, at t'other end of the house; the night we heard you were coming she went in there."

"What? The store-room, where you kept herbs and dried apples, and all sorts of things—where the old chest of drawers stands? What does this mean, Tituba?"

"I s'pose Abby was lonesome."

"Lonesome here, in this bright room, with a glow from the water breaking in whenever there is sunshine, and the first roses always peeping through that window, with dew on the leaves?—Tituba, you must be dreaming! How could Abby tire of our own room, even if I was away? But then, just as I was sure to come back—I can't understand it, Tituba!

"Come and see," said Tituba, crossing a little span of open garret, and unclosing a door which led to the opposite gable. "Sure as the world, this is Abby Williams's room now."

Elizabeth stepped into the little chamber. It was similar in size to the one she had just left; but not enclosed, like that, with wooden panels of a light, cheerful color, or floored with fine boards scoured white by the constant exercise of old Tituba's scrubbing-cloth. But in this still, neglected chamber, the rafters were dismally exposed, crevices of light broke through the shingles here and there, while the rough floor was full of knot-holes, and shook loosely under the tread as it was passed over.

A low trundle bed, covered with a blue-and-white yarn quilt, stood in a corner, close under the slope of the roof. A single chair was near it, and close by the door a tall chest of drawers towered into the roof. This was all the furniture visible. That the room had been used for rude household purposes formerly, was very evident; for opposite the bed, clusters of pennyroyal, sage, and coriander, were still hanging to the rafters; and on each side of the windows festoons of dried apples and rings of pumpkins fell, like a drapery, from roof to floor, but half concealing the rough logs underneath. The windows looked toward the grave-yard, and beyond that into the deep, dark forest.

Elizabeth gazed around with mingled surprise and distress. After her beautiful city life, this homely apartment seemed full of insupportable gloom.

"And does Abby mean to sleep here? She who loved our own pretty room so much? What does it all mean? Do tell me, old Tituba, what does it mean?"

Tituba shook her head.

"What does it mean?" persisted the young lady, with a burst of her natural impatience. "I want to understand all about it!"

That moment the door opened, and Abby Williams came in, looking pale and harassed.

"What is all this about?" cried Elizabeth, turning upon her cousin, with a burst of indignant affection. "I come back, Abby Williams, to find our dear old room white and cold as a snow drift—not a flower in the glasses—not even a branch of pine or hemlock in the fire-place—and worst of all, the bed so smooth that it looks as if no one ever slept in it, or ought to sleep in it, without being chilled to death. Why have you left our pretty room, Abby Williams? the chamber you and I have slept in since they took us from the same cradle; left it, too, for this dreary corner, just as I was coming home so happy, so very, very happy, at the thoughts of—of—oh! Abby, dear, dear Abby, what has come over you since I have been away?"

Abby Williams stood leaning against the chest of drawers. She looked sad and weary, rather than touched, or excited, by her cousin's almost passionate appeal.

"I came here," she said, gently, "because, since you went away, Elizabeth, I have learned to be alone. It seems unnatural to go back into the old life now: your heart is full of its own joys. But mine—you see I am fond of loneliness, and that is why we cannot sleep together any more."

Elizabeth's blue eyes filled with angry tears; her fair face flushed, and turned pale, and then broke into one of those heavenly smiles that seemed bright enough to win an angel from his place in paradise. She went up to her cousin, and flung one arm over her shoulder.

"Oh, I see how it is," she cried, turning the sad face toward her with a gentle pat of the hand: "she is jealous that I shall think of somebody else now, and not all the day and night long of her, as we used to think of each other. I know what the feeling is, Abby darling, and would rather die than give it to you. But then you are so wrong! This love—don't stare, old Tituba—indeed I love some one, very, very much—you cross-looking old thing—and that very love gives warmth and breadth to all the dear old household feelings, that nothing ever could crowd from my heart, just as a good mother loves all her children, better and better for every new baby. There now, don't

be jealous, cousin!"

"I am not jealous, Elizabeth Parris," answered Abby, oppressed by the caressing tenderness of the young girl, "only sad, and in love with my own company. When two girls like us are once separated, it is not so easy to fall back into the old ways."

"Indeed, indeed, this is jealousy, nothing else. But I do love you so much, Abby Williams, cross as you are; you don't know how my heart leaped, as I came in sight of the house; I wanted to fly, to kiss you, like this, a thousand, thousand times. There—there."

Elizabeth interrupted herself, pressing kiss after kiss on the lips, forehead and hair of her cousin, who shrunk and grew pallid in her embrace, as if those warm caresses had poison in them.

"Why, Abby, you do not kiss me back—you are trying to get away—is it because you do not love me any longer—is it really that?"

Elizabeth drew back, searching her cousin's face with reproachful eyes, while Abby turned away sullenly.

"This is hard, very hard!" murmured Elizabeth, choking back the sobs that struggled in her throat. "I am home again, my—my heart brimful of joy, and no one seems to care for it; even old Tituba stands looking at me, as if she expected to be hanged, and I had the rope somewhere about me. What have I done, or left undone, that my cousin should hate me so?"

Abigail muttered something beneath her breath. It was that fragment of Scripture, which speaks of children inheriting the sins of their parents. The poor girl did not remember that endurance and atonement make up the duty of this fell inheritance, not vengeance. But her whole being was in commotion. She began to look upon herself as an avenger, and this iron repulse of her cousin was her first step in the gloomy path which seemed the only one she could ever tread.

"What were you saying, Abigail?" inquired Elizabeth, softened with what she thought a relenting murmur.

"Nothing. I did not speak," said Abby, moving toward the window, and looking out.

Elizabeth also looked out: her glance fell on the outskirts of the grave-yard, along which a female figure was moving rapidly toward the house.

Elizabeth caught her breath. Abigail turned her eyes, that instant, and saw the change that came, like a storm, over that bright face.

"She here!" said Elizabeth, casting suspicious glances at Abby and old Tituba. "She here! Then I understand it all. She is the malignant witch that prowls forever along my path, turning every one against me. Abby Williams, you saw Barbara Stafford before I came home?"

"Yes," said Abby, vaguely, "I saw her; she is a strange, sweet woman, full of soothing, rich in all that gives tranquillity."

"It is her doings!" exclaimed Elizabeth, passionately. "This woman intrigues forever against me. I say again, Abigail Williams, and you, old Tituba, this woman, Barbara Stafford, is my enemy!"

Elizabeth was white and stern, as she uttered this denunciation. Every feature bore conviction that she solemnly believed what she was saying.

Old Tituba cowered down in a corner of the room, knitting her hands together in a paroxysm of nervous dread, for the sight of her child's distress made a coward of her. Even Abby, whose soul was full of a trouble more harrassing than superstition, felt a shudder creep through her frame, and a strange, intangible dread possessed her. She almost thought her cousin mad.

"See! see!" cried Elizabeth, pointing through the window, "that is my father; she is speaking with him—she dares to touch him—she turns—he walks by her side—he stoops his head to listen. Oh! my God, save him from her subtle power; I cannot move, I cannot run, to warn him: the very sight of the evil woman takes the strength from my limbs!"

A sudden faintness seized upon the young girl, as she spoke. She began to tremble violently, and crept away to her own chamber, moaning as she went. The change in her cousin, the shock of Barbara Stafford's sudden presence, the excitement in which she had been living, recoiled upon her all at once, and she was seriously ill.

For a little time she lay writhing upon the snowy bed, which had seemed so cold to her a few moments before. Sorrow, or any kind of anxiety, was so entirely new to her, that she wrestled all her strength away with the first encounter.

Old Tituba came into the room with a bowl of herb-tea, which the young girl strove to drink; but the first drop was met with a hysterical swell of the throat, and she pushed the bowl away, exclaiming, "I cannot swallow! I cannot swallow!"

Old Tituba stood by the bed, grasping the bowl in her little, brown hands, terrified by a burst of feeling which convulsed the slight form before her with strange throes.

She possessed no skill which could reach or even understand a paroxysm like this, for in those days the hysterical affections that spring from over-excitement and ill-regulated tempers, had not reached the dignity of a fashionable disease.

Abby Williams did not enter the chamber. She heard these moans and sobs with forced indifference. With the thoughts of the constable's lash across the white shoulders of her mother, and the Indian tomahawk mercifully buried in the broad forehead of her grandame, Anna Hutchinson, she had no sympathy to cast away on the causeless moans of a young girl. To her they seemed trivial and mocking. With mighty wrongs like those in the past, what right had any one to moan over the capricious rise and flow of mere household affection?

Under the knowledge of a great wrong, Abby Williams stifled the tender impulses of a heart naturally full of human goodness. She had learned to think revenge a solemn obligation. Was not this young creature writhing under the first recoil of her affections, the child of her mother's judge? Was not she, Abigail Williams, the creature of her enemies' bounty? From the cradle up, had she not received her daily bread from the hand which placed her mother beneath the lash?

These thoughts froze all compassion in her heart; but she could not listen to the sobs that broke from that room without a sensation of terrible regret for the love that had grown so icy in her bosom. In the grasp of that iron destiny, her poor heart, with a thousand kind impulses fluttering at the core, trembled to free itself, but had no power. A wall of granite seemed built up between her and the young creature who had once been her second life. So, stupefied and locked up in the iron destiny before her, she sat down in the open garret, and waited within hearing of her cousin's sobs.

CHAPTER XXIX.

ASKING FOR SHELTER.

As Abigail Williams sat upon a wooden box, with both hands locked over her knees, holding herself, body and soul, as it were, in a vice, the chamber door opened, and Elizabeth came out. Her hair was disordered, and her face flushed with weeping; but she walked with a gesture of resolve, and descended to the lower part of the house in quick haste.

The sitting-room was empty, but through the window she saw her father, standing with Barbara Stafford. The woman was talking earnestly, enforcing what she said, now and then, with a gentle motion of the hand.

Samuel Parris was looking in her face with a long-fixed gaze. His heart had not been so moved by a human voice since the day when the young wife, who lay close in sight, had turned from his embrace to bless her babe and die.

There was something in Barbara's look, or voice, that troubled all the deep waters of his memory, and yet she was in no one thing like the fair young creature lost to him so long ago.

Parris was speaking as his daughter came up. Almost for the first time in his life, he did not take a step to meet the idol of his home, as she approached; but kept on with the invitation he was giving.

"Surely, we will find you food and shelter, so long as you may require either," he was saying; "we are a simple family, and live as becometh a servant of the Most High, taking God's gifts in frugal thankfulness. You have, doubtless, been used to more sumptuous fare, lady, and a statelier roof; but in my poor house you will find peace and household love, which is better than cups of gold and trenchers of silver. Sojourn with us, then, so long as it pleases you. See, here comes my daughter, who shall speak our welcome better than I can—who, to own the truth, am somewhat unused to hospitable courtesies. Elizabeth, my child, this lady will be our guest a while, welcome her as beseemeth a lady of condition, for such make sure she is."

When Elizabeth came up, her cheek was on fire, and her eyes sparkled with some passionate resolve; but as she turned from her father to Barbara Stafford, with a proud refusal on her lip, the calm, blue eyes of the woman fell upon her, like sunshine on a thunder-cloud. The repulse that had burned on her lip quivered into a murmur of welcome; her eyes drooped to the earth, and she grew ashamed of her passion. The fire upon her cheek melted into a modest blush, and her voice was sweet with new-born humility.

And all this change arose from a single, calm glance, prolonged and vital with that mesmeric power which endows some human beings with wonderful influence—an influence that might well arouse the superstition of an age like that, and prove a dangerous gift to its possessor.

As Elizabeth stood before her, mute and blushing, Barbara reached forth her hand, clasping that of the young girl with a gentle pressure.

"You will not find me troublesome," she said, with a sad smile, quietly ignoring the fact that they had ever met before; "I want a little time for rest and thought. You will not grudge me a corner in your home, or a crust and cold water twice a day. My wants will be scarcely more than that."

"You shall be welcome, lady," murmured Elizabeth, almost in a whisper. "But deal kindly with us, for you have great power."

This was not at all the reply Elizabeth had intended to make; but she had no courage either to

expostulate or protest; her heart swelled, and her limbs shook, but she had lost all ability or wish to send the stranger from her father's door.

"Shall we go in-doors now?" said Samuel Parris, who saw nothing unusual in the reception his daughter had given to their guest. "I have scarcely spoken to my niece yet; but methought, Elizabeth, that she looked sad, as if the loneliness of our absence had stricken deep. Pray, call Abigail Williams, my child. I would greet her once more, and present her to our guest."

"I have already seen the young lady," said Barbara, smiling upon the old man; "she gave me some breakfast, this morning, before you came!"

"And in all that time we were together never mentioned it," murmured Elizabeth, with a swell of jealous indignation at the heart; "this is why Abby shuns me so cruelly!"

"She has a fair—nay, that is not the right word—she has a strangely interesting face," continued Barbara, softly, "a sibilline face, full of sweet gravity. I have never seen features so beautiful."

"Nay, nay," said the simple-hearted old man, looking with jealous fondness on his own child, "Abby is a comely girl enough; but great painters, I am told, give blue eyes and sunny hair to the angels."

Barbara smiled. His words bore a double compliment, for her own hair, though concealed under the folds of a lace coif, was lightly golden, and her eyes were of that deep bluish gray, which might at one time have been as rich in sparkling life as those of Elizabeth; but were now sad and hazy, with crushed tears.

Samuel Parris had not noticed this. His heart was turning back to another fair creature, who had indeed been the angel at his hearthstone years before; and her memory was the very type of human loveliness to him.

Barbara Stafford seemed to understand his thoughts.

"Yes," she said, "you are right; there is something almost divine in a pure, young face like—like—" she broke off suddenly, with a little confusion which satisfied the strong love of the old man for his child. Of course, the strange lady could not praise the beauty of Elizabeth, and she present. He looked at his daughter, wondering at the cloud on her forehead.

Barbara stepped forward, and laid her hand on that of the young girl; Elizabeth shrunk back, but as Barbara's fingers closed over hers, a thrill of almost imperceptible pleasure stole the pain from her heart, and she blushed like a naughty child beneath the grave, kind look, fastened on her face.

Abby Williams looked out from the gable window of her little chamber, and saw the action. A vague sense of loneliness drove her back into the room. She locked the door, creating for herself a moral desert, in which she sat down, a second Ishmael, ready to lift her hand against every creature of the white race.

A week went by, and all the bitter feelings, starting up in the hearts of those two girls, grew and throve like nightshade which overruns all the sweet flowers of a garden. Elizabeth was grieved and wounded into coldness. Abby grew silent, and shrunk away from her warm-hearted cousin. Her whole habits of life changed. She gave up all her dainty needle-work and passive knitting; from choice she toiled all day long in the kitchen with old Tituba, doing the hardest and coarsest work with a zeal that threatened to undermine her strength. The sweet, dreamy portion of her life gave place to hard reality. She toiled like a slave, and thought like a martyr.

Samuel Parris sometimes expostulated with his niece, in a solemn, kindly way; but she answered him vaguely, and went on her own course, denying his authority to chide only by a persistent refusal to change her new mode of life.

"I will earn my own bread," she would say to herself, "the hand that smote my mother shall not feed her child."

Then would come bitter, bitter hatred for the shelter she had received, and the food she had eaten from her cradle up. She loathed the very roundness of her limbs, and the richness of her beauty, because both had thriven on the kindness of her mother's arch enemy. Yet it seemed strange, very strange, that any one could feel a moment's bitterness toward that good old man, who had but acted up to the light of an iron age, believing himself even as Paul believed, when he persecuted the saints most cruelly.

Thus the household of Samuel Parris was divided against itself; and in the midst of this growing discord, Barbara Stafford rested, after many a heavy trouble, unconscious of the good or evil her presence created. She was a stranger in the land, the very reasons for her coming rested a secret in her bosom. Distressed, disappointed, and filled with heavy regrets, she had lost the keen perception which might have enlightened a less occupied person regarding the effect of her visit at the minister's house. Besides all this, Barbara knew nothing of the previous habits of the family, and had no way of learning that the two girls, now so far apart, had, up to the last two months, been like twin blossoms which a storm had never touched. But the days wore on, as if no discontent were known under that humble roof. When Abby Williams was not drudging in the kitchen, she spent her time in the woods; and in this lay the greatest danger of all, for during their lives, the two girls had haunted those forest nooks in company. Now Abigail went alone, in

the day and in the night, without a word of explanation when she went in, or when she came out.

I do not know how Barbara Stafford spent her time, or what led her so much into the open air. She sat hours together on the sea-shore, looking wistfully over the swelling blue of the waters, waiting and musing like one who had no world out of her own thoughts. She seldom went to the forest, but sometimes walked slowly out to the outskirting trees, and came back again breathing fast as if something had frightened her away.

Sometimes Elizabeth, weary of the solitude forced upon her, would join Barbara in the sitting-room down-stairs, for the young girl seemed constantly torn by opposing influences. In the absence of her father's guest, jealousy, suspicion, and bursts of dislike, embittered every thought; but some strange force seemed constantly bringing the two in company. Then Elizabeth was like a little child, so gentle, and regretting so much the bitter feelings of her solitude, that her whole character was disturbed with contradictions.

CHAPTER XXX.

STRANGE SHADOWS.

One evening, after Barbara Stafford had found shelter beneath the roof of Samuel Parris, Jason Brown and his wife sat upon the lonely hearth, just after the tow-wicked candle was lighted, and the evening knitting-work brought out. Jason was sitting near the round stand, scooping out a rude butter-ladle with his jackknife, from a thick piece of pine, which he had brought in from the wood-house. The hired man occupied a closer place by the dim light; for he was employed in the more difficult operation of mending a broken harness.

"Look a-here, Jase," said the hired man, looking up from his task, while he jerked two waxed ends through the leather, and tightened them at arm's length. "What du yer mean ter decide on about them tarnal heavy boxes in the barn? The hay is eenamost gone, and by-an-by there won't be enough left to kiver 'em with. Besides—what is in 'em? I should kinder like to know that, my bisness or not."

"What du you know or care about that?" answered Jason, lifting his butter-ladle to the light, and eying its growing symmetry with great satisfaction.

"Don't know nothin' and don't care a darn," was the reply, given in perfect self-complacency; "only the all-fired things will be tarnally in the way when we come to thrash."

"But they can be moved then."

"Moved! why you might as well try to lift a tombstun. I reckon I've tried it."

Goody Brown kept on with her work, without joining in this conversation, and for some minutes the click and rattle of her needles kept time with the splinters cast off by her husband's jackknife.

Then the hired man spoke again.

"How long afore you'll be going to sea agin, Jase?"

"That's raythe unsartin. There'll be a good deal of jiner work to do on the vessel afore she puts out agin. That storm tore her eenamost tu pieces."

Goody Brown looked up from her knitting with the ghost of a smile hovering over her lips.

"Then you'll have so much longer to stay tu hum," she said.

"Wal, yes; I shouldn't much wonder if Thanksgiving found me in this identical spot."

The good wife breathed deeply, and went on with her work, sending out absolute music from her needles. Then the hired man spoke again.

"Any passengers this trip?"

"One bespoken for the cabin."

"Who, of all the Bosting folks, are going over now?" asked the housewife.

"It ain't a Bosting woman that I ever hearn on," answered Jason, "but the same lady that stayed with you so long arter the storm. She's going straight hum agin, I reckon. Her passage was took the very day arter Governor Phipps jined the church. She was uneasy enough about getting off ter once, and wanted the ship to put out jist as she was, jiner or no jiner. But the captain said he couldn't and wouldn't hist a sail till his craft was sound and taut from stem to stern, not if the lady offered him her hull weight in guinea gold. So she had ter put up with it."

"Poor lady, how homesick she must be!" said the housewife, setling a fresh needle in the quill of a knitting sheath of red cloth fastened on the right side of her waist, and twisting the yarn around her fore-finger. "She was a proper purty woman, wasn't she, Jase? See here what she gave me the morning afore she went away."

Goody Brown laid down her work, and, thrusting one hand deep into her pocket, drew forth a steel side thimble, a lump of yellow wax, crossed and recrossed with marks of the thread she had drawn over it, a trunk key, two great copper pennies, and a tiny parcel done up in an old book-leaf. This she carefully unfolded and laid four golden guineas on the stand.

"You can have 'em, Jase," she said in a low, husky voice. "They ain't of no use to me now."

Jason understood her and made a reckless cut at the butter ladle, for his hand became all at once unsteady.

"When I was a scrimpin' and saving to send our own—"

"Wal! wal! it ain't no use to talk about that now," cried out the father, stung into a passion of angry grief. "What God has done is done. What's the use of pining over it?"

"Why, Jase," answered the wife, rebuking him with her grave, deep eyes, "I didn't mean that—only the gold ain't of no use ter me anyhow since I haven't any children to edicate. It isn't for me to fly into the face of Providence, and I never thought of doing it."

"Buy a yoke of oxen with the money," interposed the hired man. "I've hearn of people loving their oxen a'most like children. It's enough to make a fellur's heart yearn to see how patiently them critturs will bend under one yoke and kinder help one another along. Talk about friendship and brotherly feelin'—wal, if that thing ain't found in a yoke of oxen brought up together from steers, it's of no use to sarch for it. If yer feelings is touched and kinder hankers arter something ter love, buy a yoke of oxen—that's my advice."

Jason Brown was thoughtfully whittling down the edge of his ladle. His wife took up her knitting, which dragged on with slow monotony, for she looped each stitch through a blinding mist of tears; but the hired man snapped his waxed ends as if they had been bow-strings, punched his awl furiously through the unyielding leather, and looked out from his bending eye-brows now and then, in vague astonishment that his advice was so blankly received. All at once he paused with both threads half drawn, and listened.

"What on 'arth is that?"

A sound, as if from the falling of some ponderous object a little distance off, had occasioned this exclamation. Jason Brown and his wife suspended their work in astonishment, and sat gazing at each other.

"I will go see," said Brown, closing his knife with a defiant snap. "It don't seem like the stomp of horses."

"Hush up!" whispered the hired man. "Set down this minute and look behind you!"

Jason had a powerful will of his own and was not to be ordered about by any one, but he turned toward the window which the man was pointing out with his awl and saw it crowded with dusky faces, rendered terrible by great, fiery eyes and stiff, upright plumes, that shot up through the darkness like shafted arrows from a quiver.

"Great God, help us, for it is the Indians!" exclaimed Brown, in a hoarse whisper.

The woman held her work suspended, as if it had frozen in her hand. The hired servant went on with his stitching, but his sunburned face grew whiter and whiter with each pull of the thread, and the sidelong glances he cast at the window betrayed the keen terror his stolid obstinacy suppressed.

"Shall we pitch in, or keep still?" whispered Brown.

"Keep still," answered the woman.

"Or else God have mercy upon us," muttered the hired man, "for I dare say there is a hundred to one."

"Wife, where is my father's gun?" demanded Brown, ashamed of standing helplessly on his own hearth.

"Behind the bedroom door, Jason."

"Is it loaded?"

"With buck shot," answered the hired man. "I loaded it for wild game, but blaze away at them varmints, if you want to, and I'll back you up with the fire shovel. The old woman can pitch in with a flat-iron or rolling-pin. They shan't say that we didn't show grit afore they scalped us, anyhow. Darn 'em!"

"Hark! they are gone."

True enough, the crowd of faces vanished from the window like shadows, and a confused tread of feet followed, so mellow and soft that it seemed as if the earth throbbed with a faint pulsation. This sound lasted some minutes, and then died away in the whisperings of the forest that crept along the shore close up to the stone homestead.

When all was still again a footstep stole over the turf and paused before the threshold. This was

followed by a low knock and a gentle stir of the latch string. Brown went to the door. The ruddy color had left his cheek, but his hand was firm as it lifted the wooden bar and threw the door wide open. A young man stood in the opening, and the light fell upon his face.

"Wal, now, if this don't beat all. Is it raly you? Come in, come in, and shet the door, for just as true as you live there's live Injuns around to-night."

The young man came in, lifting the cap from his head as he entered. He was a workman employed on the vessel. Then Brown attempted to appear unconcerned, but his face was disturbed and his voice shook.

"Why, you seem to be frightened," said the young man. "What at?"

"Did you meet nothing on the way?" asked Brown.

"Yes, a flock of sea-gulls wheeling out to sea."

"And nothing more—no red Injuns?"

"Red Indians! Indeed, I saw nothing worse than myself," was the cheerful reply.

"And did you pass close to the window?" asked the hired man.

"Yes, I passed the window."

"And did you twist one face into ten, and crown them all with eagles' quills?"

"No, not exactly that, but I did look in."

"And no one else?" asked Brown.

"Truly, friends, you question me close, but I was alone."

"Husband," said Goody Brown, in a solemn whisper, "it might have been a witch gathering. Who knows?"

Jason Brown turned deadly white, and the hired man thrust the awl through his thumb.

"In that case you had better not speak of it," said the young man, with a shade of gravity. "It is almost as dangerous to be visited by witches as to join in their wicked rioting. I remember, at the last trial, it was set forth in evidence that the woods around here were given up to witchcraft: I for one do not believe it, but yet if you saw the faces?"

"We did! we did!"

"Crowned with eagles' plumes?"

"Yes, like savage Indians."

"But no Indian would dare flount his war plumes in this neighborhood. It is too near Boston for that."

"True, how is that possible? The tribes are quiet now," answered Brown, thoughtfully.

"It is witchcraft beyond a doubt," whispered the good wife. "I remember, now, the needles turned to stones in my hands. I lost all power to move them."

"And my feet were nailed to the hearth," answered Jason. "I, who never knew what it was to be scared in my life, could not move."

"See how the pestilent things have wounded me," added the hired man, exhibiting his thumb from which the blood was falling in heavy drops.

"Hark! I hear footsteps again," whispered the good wife.

Sure enough, slow and steady footsteps came across the turf, and a knock sounded at the door.

"I will open it," said the young man, cheerfully. "No witchcraft can harm me, save that of a bright eye and cherry lip."

He opened the door with a brave swing while uttering these words, but started back in dismay, for there, upon the gravel of the path, stood a woman with a crimson mantle over her shoulders and its hood drawn close around her face.

"Is the dame or her husband at home?" inquired the woman in a clear, rich voice that made the housewife start. "I wish to see either Jason Brown or his wife."

"If you are an honest woman and no witch, come in," answered the young man, half closing the door against her, notwithstanding his invitation.

The woman advanced to the door and pushed it gently open. Goody Brown arose with a flush on her cheek and called out, in a voice of infinite relief, "It is the lady! it is the lady!"

Barbara Stafford entered the room, and went up to the excited housewife.

"I come at an untimely hour," she said, pushing the red hood back from her face, "but it could not be helped."

"Sit down, sit down, and take off your things," said the housewife, greatly relieved, for she had learned to love the gentle lady, and believed in her.

"Sit down. We have had tea long ago, but Jase shall rake open the fire, and hang on the kettle in no time."

"No, no, it is impossible! I cannot wait," answered the lady, resisting Mrs. Brown's effort to unclasp her cloak. "A few words only and I must go back again."

"What! to-night?"

"Yes, at once."

"To Boston—to the governor's house?" questioned Goody Brown.

"No, no, farther than that. I have a long ride through the woods."

"Through the woods!" exclaimed four voices at once. "Why, they swarm with wild beasts and savage Indians!"

"Ah, me," answered the lady, "it is not of them I am afraid: my best friends are in the forest."

"But how will you ride, lady?" asked the young carpenter, looking at her with growing distrust.

"I have a swift and sure horse, and know how to ride even in the night. Beside I came with an escort."

"Of white men or devils?" questioned the hired man, nursing his thumb, and eying the lady with sinister glances.

"Nay, it is wrong to speak of these unhappy children of the woods in this fashion. They have been a grand people, and possess power even yet. I marvel that they are pursued with such hatred."

The benevolent smile that broke over her noble face as she spoke charmed half the superstition out of that rough heart. As for the others, they forgot all distrust, and oppressed her with offers of hospitality.

"Not to-night. I will come and sleep in your pretty room again," she said, laying her small hand on Goody Brown's shoulder. "But now I must be in haste. Tell me, Brown, for it is urgent that I should know, when the ship will be ready to sail."

"It is hard to tell," answered Brown, "but here is the master workman: he knows best."

Barbara turned a questioning look on the young man, who answered it as if she had spoken.

"Some time this fall the craft will be ready."

"This autumn and not before!" cried Barbara, with surprise and even anguish in her voice. "Oh, my God! how am I to get over this weary time?"

"It is slow work, and hands are scarce," said the carpenter.

"But gold can do much, every thing, they tell me, and I have plenty," cried Barbara, with nervous eagerness. "Young man, spare nothing that can speed this work. Get more men—toil night and day. I will find means for all. Only let the ship be ready before the leaves turn from green to red."

"Lady, I will do my best," answered the carpenter.

"I tell you again spare nothing that money can pay for. No matter what labor costs, I will find gold to meet every demand. Jason Brown, urge this matter forward. Those who serve me I can enrich."

"Yes, lady, I will do my best."

"It was for this I came to-night. I waited for news that the ship was ready to sail, till delay made me heartsick, and I could tarry at rest no longer. Now, ah, me, you say wait till fall, as if it were an easy thing."

"Be content, dear lady," said Goody Brown, touched by this pathetic cry of disappointment. "My old man shall go in search of workmen. He can do any thing when he's a mind to."

"Thank you! thank you! See, I have brought money with me," said Barbara. "When that is gone I can find more."

Barbara laid a purse, heavy with gold, on the candle stand, as she spoke. All three of the men looked at it with a thrill of superstitious dread. At last Brown spoke.

"Is it English gold, honest guineas, with His Majesty's face on it?"

Barbara smiled.

"Certainly," she answered. "I have no other. The coin of England is current here. Why this hesitation?"

Brown took up the purse and emptied a quantity of its gold into his hard palm.

"Truly it is the king's head, and full weight," he muttered. Then turning more confidently to the lady, he said:

"And I am to use this about the ship?"

"Yes! yes!"

"And crowd on all the work we can," joined in the carpenter.

"Yes! yes!"

"That is easy understood," observed the hired man. "I only wish that I could swing a broad axe."

"Now I must go," said the lady, taking the hard hand of Goody Brown in her friendly clasp. "You have been kind to me and I can never forget it. Only help me to these shores, and see if I prove ungrateful."

These words had hardly left the lady's lips when she was outside the door and moving toward the woods in a rapid walk.

These three men and Goody Brown flocked to the window and looked after her as she moved through the light of a moon buried half the time under the fleecy whiteness of drifting clouds. She approached the woods and they saw her engulfed in shadows that seemed to move and sway with the wind. Directly she came forth, riding on a milk-white horse, that stood out from the leaden shadows distinct as marble; for that instant the moon threw off its fleecy burden of clouds, and rode clear and bright across a plain of blue sky. Directly another horse and rider, that looked black as ebony in the distance, came out of the shadows, and then a third; but whether the riders of these black steeds were men or women no one could tell. For a little time the horses kept along the edge of the woods, but at last they plunged into some forest path and were gone.

Still the inmates of the farm-house watched by the window, for there was something weird in the woman's departure which stimulated curiosity. As they looked, the edges of the wood grew alive. Dusky forms moved to and fro, now in the darkness, now in fitful gleams of light; and the forests began to sway and moan as if oppressed by some evil presence, which made all its boughs heave and its foliage quiver. Then a muffled yell broke out from the heart of the woods, and a line of what seemed to be human forms came into an open field that lay close to the forest, and, curving onward like an enormous serpent, crept away through the darkness.

There was little said in the farm-house that night about these mysterious appearances, but a vague superstition took possession of those three men, and they all felt as if the gold they had received might vanish into thin air before morning.

When the day broke, Brown and his hired man went into the barn in order to clear the thrashing-floor of all incumbrances. They found the door shut and every thing in place. But when the man went to the corner where those ponderous boxes had been stored, they were gone. Then the thick hair on Jason Brown's head stood up with terror, and turning from the astonished look of his companion he went into the house.

"Wife, take that purse of gold from your bosom and give it to me."

The woman obeyed him, and drew forth the purse. He snatched it from her hold, left the house, and ran down to the shore. When he reached the verge of the water, great drops stood on his forehead, and he panted for breath. A little way off was a line of breakers dashing up spray from a cluster of hidden rocks. Brown waded knee-deep into the water, swung his arm backward, and hurled the purse into the seething foam.

CHAPTER XXXI.

NOON IN THE WOODS.

Old Wahpee had procured a forest-bred horse for Barbara Stafford and another for his own use. Restless from a strong desire to leave the country, she had besought him to act as her guide to the stone farm-house. Their object was unknown to the family, for the Indian was sadly afraid that Samuel Parris would know of his share in the business, and for this reason Barbara promised to keep her journey a secret. Tituba alone of all the household was taken into their confidence, and she undertook to divert attention from Barbara's movements.

This was no very difficult matter, for the cousins were occupied with each other, and Samuel Parris in his self-absorption would hardly have missed his guest had she remained absent a week. So one day Barbara went as usual into the margin of the forest, mounted the white horse that Wahpee held by the bridle, and following a trail which the Indian informed her led by a short cut to Boston, entered fearlessly on her adventure. The vast solitude of the wilderness harmonized with the solemn depression of her own thoughts. Its profound silence filled her with a sentiment of sublime resignation. Sometimes, as she rode along, a whispered prayer brightened her face, and you would have thought that she was travelling through those deep forest shades directly into that happier world where the weary are at rest. So far as conversation went, she was

completely alone. Wahpee never talked, and if she asked him a question it was answered in some brief monosyllable. So deep was the forest and so remote the way, that wild deer leaped across her path, and stopped to gaze on her more than once with almost human curiosity.

No matter how deep or persistent unhappiness may be, there is something in nature that will charm it half away, if the heart it troubles is capable of real poetic sentiment. The unselfish and pure-minded cannot look upon all the munificence of God lavished everywhere in objects of beauty and usefulness—for the glorious Artist of the universe has created no one thing that has not a peculiar gift of beauty to recommend it—without an outburst of thankfulness. If the supreme object for which the heart yearns so hungrily is withheld, nature holds forth a thousand lures of beauty which are sure to draw the soul out of itself and thus nearer to its God.

Barbara Stafford was very unhappy. Since landing in America, her life had been one struggle. She was a woman of gentle nature, not the less pliant and sweet because her will was firm and her powers of endurance wonderful. She was now absolutely without earthly hope. If she turned to the past, it was full of pain. The future lay before her a desert. She could not endure, even in thought, to travel over the waste which lay between her coming sea-voyage and the grave. But though unhappy, disappointed, and dejected, she was neither bitter nor cynical. The grandeur and breadth of character which had led her silently into making almost impossible sacrifices would be sufficient to carry her to the end without faltering. Her history and her object, whatever they were, remained a secret in her own bosom. That she suffered, no one who looked upon the lines about her mouth and the shadows in those eyes could doubt. Yet a casual observer would have guessed nothing of this, and even a friend might have sometimes mistaken her kindness and urbanity for the expression of a serene life.

Let her history be what it might, the woman was sufficient unto herself. She knew how "to suffer and grow strong," without hope and without counsel. That day, as she rode through the woods, so rich in leafiness, so lavish in beauty, her soul expanded itself thankfully to the sweet influences that opened upon her. She was no longer young, but, perhaps, more capable of enjoyment when alone with God's works for that very reason. So for the hour she put aside the one great sorrow that haunted her life, and rode cheerfully through the woods, enjoying each ferny knoll or grassy hollow, with a brook whispering along the bottom, as if she had nothing but sunshine in her heart.

It must have been somewhat after noon when Wahpee came upon a little opening in the trees, where some Indian hunter had cleared away the undergrowth and cut down a few trees in order to build a lodge, which was now a heap of mossy logs. It was a lovely spot, lifted a little from the level of the woods and crested with half a dozen stately old trees, through which the sunshine came shimmering down upon the forest turf, luring ten thousand lovely blossoms up through its greenness. Half in the sunshine, half in the shadow of overhanging pines and hemlocks, a lovely brook went singing on its way through bending ferns and the wild vines whose roots drank life from its crystal waves; while around this bright spot the dark barriers of the forest crowded up on three sides, rendering its green slopes more sunny from their sombre contrast.

Barbara drew up her horse as she felt the sunshine bursting so warmly over her path, and uttered an exclamation, half astonishment, half delight: "Why, Wahpee! You have led the way to a paradise," she said, gazing around. "One almost forgets to be mortal in a place like this, but my horse reminds us that he at least is hungry."

In her admiration, Barbara had loosened her bridle, and the beautiful animal which she rode was cropping the sward with great zest, eagerly sweeping up grass and blossoms in one fragrant mouthful, as if he feared that her hand might the next instant curb him up from his sweet repast.

Wahpee got down from his own horse, and cast him loose. Then he lifted Barbara from her saddle, and saying only, "Come here," led her along the margin of the brook, where she observed, with some surprise, that the grasses and ferns had been recently trodden into something like a path. The brook swept its crystal curves around one side of the clearing, which took the sun so warmly, then widened into a beautiful pool, margined with golden willows, growing wildly, under a sumptuous drapery of vines. Beyond this basin of water Barbara saw a column of blue smoke curling up from the foot of a great hemlock, and flashes of fire shot in and out through the quivering green of the undergrowth.

Pleased and expectant, for Barbara began to surmise that she had not been brought to that lovely place by accident, she followed her guide in silence, and at last came out on a mound of grand circumference, covered so thickly with grass that her feet trod a hundred tiny flowers to death without her seeing them. The willows that margined the miniature lake at its base, and the hemlocks that crowded up from the forest, hedged in this pretty eminence, flickering its edges with tangled shadows and sunshine, but leaving a broad flat rock on the summit bathed in golden light. Around this rock, clusters of wild trumpet vines, trailing arbutus, and golden bitter-sweet, wove their beauties together in luxuriant wildness, creeping in rich traceries over the rock, or falling in garlands down the grassy sides of the mound. The centre of this rocky table was bright with sparkling crystals and clean as granite could be made. Something more than the hand of nature had been at work there. Not a dead leaf or broken twig could be found littering on the rock or in the grass.

"Ah, how lovely!" exclaimed the lady, flinging back the hood of her mantle, and looking around in pleasant astonishment. "Surely, Wahpee, this is not your work?"

"Would you be offended, lady, if it were mine?" said a voice close by, and from beneath the bending hemlocks came forth Philip, or Metacomet, the young man whose fate had been so strangely enwoven with her own.

"Nay, Philip, I am neither offended nor surprised. It was kind to provide me this lovely spot to rest in, and I am glad to look once more on the face of a friend."

Barbara sat down on the rock as she spoke, and unfastening the clasp of her scarlet cloak, allowed it to fall loosely around her. Philip flung himself on the grass at her feet, kindling up its green with the gorgeousness of his savage raiment. Seated thus, they could catch gleams of blue water under the willow branches, and watch the broad lily pods heaving softly up and down as if stirred with human pulses.

Barbara's face brightened, and her lips parted with smiles. She was naturally of a cheerful disposition, and such beauty as this gladdened her whole being.

"It seems like enchantment," she said; "some beautiful witchcraft has been at work here."

"It has brought a smile to that face, and I am happy," answered the young man.

"Have you known this spot long?" asked Barbara. "It looks like a corner in some English park. The clearing must have been made years ago, for, save that once massive stump, which is now more than half moss, no trace of the axe is visible."

"It was cleared years ago, lady, for I was born here."

"Here!"

"Yes, my father was out hunting with the chiefs of his tribe. He never went even to the war-path that his wife did not follow and rest somewhere near him. That year he built her lodge in this spot. A few of the old logs lie in the clearing yonder even yet, held together by the moss that has been years and years creeping over them. When Wahpee told me that you would ride through the forest, I directed him to bring you along this trail. But you look tired and must be hungry."

"Yes, a little tired, and not a little hungry," answered Barbara. "In my anxiety I quite forgot that food might be needed on the way."

"Would to heaven that I could always think for you!" was the humble reply. "Oh, lady, how lovely these forests would be if you never left them!"

Barbara looked around, and her eyes filled with tears. "If you were my son."

The young man made an impatient gesture.

"Or my brother," she added. "Then, Philip, I might find that rest here which all other places in the world deny me. But my destiny leads me into the world, where I shall be far more alone than you can be here."

The young man looked searchingly into Barbara's face, and saw how honestly she spoke.

"I know! I knew from the first how hopeless this fatal love was," he said, passionately. "Yet spite of every thing it will break forth to offend you."

"No, I am not offended," answered the lady. "God forbid that honest affection should anger me! I am only sorrowful that my destiny is always to give pain. I do not even reason with you, Philip, knowing well that human love is not the growth of human will. But you must learn patience, my friend, and strive, as I must, to be useful, and with God's help happy, without love."

Philip shook his head, and arose suddenly that she might not see how near he was to weeping. He advanced a few paces into the forest and came to another small opening in the trees. There a fire was blazing up redly, surrounded by a group of Indian women, who were busy turning a half-dozen birds, fastened by delicate withes of bark to the branches overhead, and roasting before the fire.

"Come," said the chief, in the Indian tongue, "is all ready?"

A woman was busy peeling strips of birch bark from the trunk of a sapling close by. She cut the bark into fragments and gave them to the women about the fire, who laid the roasted birds daintily upon them, nesting each one in leaves from a golden spice bush which grew near. Then they took hot corn-cakes from the ashes, and brought from under a cool thicket two little painted baskets full of blue berries, with the bloom on them.

This rustic meal the women brought forth to the mound and placed upon the rock, without a sign of curiosity about the stranger, or a spoken word. Barbara looked on in wonder. The whole scene really did appear like enchantment to her. Philip took a case from the pouch by his side, and extracted from it a knife and fork, mounted with silver. Barbara's eye brightened: they had been her gift to the young man when he first went forth on his travels after those dreary years of bondage.

"Eat," he said, carving one of the birds with his hunting-knife, "and see if wholesome food may not be found in the woods."

"Yes, if you eat also," she answered. "In our hard journey through life we may at least take this

one quiet meal together."

Philip took a piece of the bird, but could not eat; his heart was too full.

"This is our last meal together on earth, perhaps," he said, in a broken voice. "If you return to England I may perish here, and never look upon your face again."

"My friend, there is another world," Barbara answered, "and at the longest only a few short years divides us from it."

"But what if the Indian's hunting-grounds and the white man's heaven should be eternally sundered?" answered the young chief mournfully.

"That cannot be," was the gentle reply. "If friendship and love are immortal, God will not make a torture of his holiest gifts. In the next world as in this I shall surely be your friend."

"And the friendship of angels must be sweeter than earthly love," answered the youth. "That shall content me, lady; something tells me that it will not be long before I can claim this beautiful promise, up yonder. The path that I have chosen is full of danger, and its end may be speedy death."

Barbara looked down upon him with all the light of a noble soul in her eyes.

"Oh, Philip! may you never learn how sweet the hopes of death can be to a human soul."

The young man smiled mournfully.

"Perhaps I have already learned that," he said. "But I am wrong, inhospitable, selfish; my complaints trouble you, and you cannot eat. Come, come; let me carve another bird, this is cold."

An hour after this Barbara mounted her horse, and accompanied by her old guide took the forest path again. As the night came on, and the shadows around her grew blacker and blacker, though the tree tops were aflame with scarlet and gold, she became conscious of some strange companionship in the woods. Sometimes it seemed as if the mellow tread of hoofs stole up from the recesses of the forest. Then she could hear the bend and sway of branches; and, closer still, whispering sounds among the leaves, as if every thing around her were full of active life. What these signs could be was a wonder to her; neither restless birds nor deer, bounding through the undergrowth in flocks, could produce a noise at once so subdued and persistent. But no harm came, or appeared to threaten her. On the contrary, legions of spirits seemed to guard her path unseen. It was dark before Barbara came out of the thick of the forest, and made her way to the farm-house. Up to the very margin of the trees these whispered sounds and almost inaudible footsteps accompanied her. The moment Barbara's feet crossed that threshold hundreds on hundreds of human beings swarmed out of the woods, and moved noiselessly toward Jason Brown's barn.

A crash, as of broken boards, followed by a low, rattling sound, came from the building. Then, as each man filed by the door, a musket was placed in his hand, which he carried straight to the woods, following the warrior who had gone before, as savages tread a war-path. It was the end of this procession that Jason Brown had seen, coiling like a serpent along the edge of the forest, after Barbara Stafford came forth into the moonlight on her white horse and rode away. Of all the arms secreted in the barn, not a gun was left; even the boxes were carried off in fragments.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE BEACON FIRE.

Barbara rode on her way, altogether unconscious that the woods around her swarmed with armed men, who had been for hours following her at a distance. But all at once another hoof-tread sounded in her path, and looking around she saw young Philip, mounted on a horse that seemed black in the darkness, riding close by her side, while Wahpee lagged behind.

"Do not be afraid; I have been near you all the time," said the young horseman.

The woods were so dark, except where the light of a clear moon could penetrate to the path she rode over, that Barbara was glad of this addition to her escort. So they rode on together at a quick pace, penetrating more and more deeply into the heart of the wilderness. The hum and rush of what seemed a current of wind in the distance still haunted her way. Sometimes she heard the crackling of underbrush, afar off; but these sounds were so continuous that she soon ceased to regard them. Then, for a mile or two, all was profound stillness. It seemed as if every living thing had suddenly dropped to sleep upon the earth, and in the leaves. The very moonlight ceased to tremble along the forest turf, for the branches which had sent it quivering like frost-work around her path, hung motionless over Barbara's head.

Over the soft turf the three horses sped till the moon went down, and midnight came on. Then, all at once, the woods just ahead of this party burst into sudden flame; a vivid column of fire shot up to the sky, leaping, hissing, and rioting along the sapless boughs of a dead pine-tree, that crowned an eminence around which their path lead. Thus the blackness of night was swept away,

and all the forest trees turned of a rich, golden green, inexpressibly beautiful.

"We are near the encampment," said Philip, and a proud smile lighted his face, upon which the sudden radiance shone. "Ride on, dear lady; your halting-place of yesterday is but just ahead: that flaming pine-tree will light us to it. This time you will find it filled with warriors."

The horse which Philip bestrode leaped forward while he was speaking, and with a spirited bound Barbara's white steed sprang after him.

Directly they came in sight of the clearing, illuminated by the burning pine, which, uplifted by a ledge of rocks from a level with the forest, towered behind it like a steeple of quivering fire. Bathed in this golden light Barbara saw the turfy mound on which she had taken that noonday repast, and under it the miniature lake with all its crystal waves flame-tinted by the fire. The sparks, which fell in a perpetual storm from that burning tree, seemed eddying and shimmering in the depth of its waters, and the willows which drooped over them were of a rich luminous green that quivered with every stir of the wind.

The larger clearing was less broadly in the light, but that presented one of the grandest scenes that human eye ever dwelt upon. There, swarming, jostling, heaving together in gorgeous masses, a multitude of savages crowded the open space. Within the glow of that mighty council fire the scattered tribe of the Pomperoags had gathered to meet the son of their slain king. Burning with war paint, and resplendent with barbarous ornaments, they turned the sweet rural scene of the morning into a war camp so wild and picturesque that the lady uttered a cry of astonishment when she came thus suddenly upon it.

"Do not be afraid," said Philip, reining in his horse and bending a triumphant look upon his forced guest. "You are safe here. Keep close to my side, and I will show you how hard it is to subjugate a brave people."

Barbara drew her rein tight: this scene, so grandly beautiful, the passionate eloquence in her companion's look and voice, aroused all the enthusiasm of her nature.

"Ride on; I will follow;" she said.

With grave dignity, and curbing the heroic fire that burned in his eyes, the young man advanced into the clearing. Barbara followed, threading her way through crowds of armed warriors, some standing in groups, others sitting on the half-illuminated sward, while the edges of the forest swarmed with savage forms; for the multitude gathering into that spot had already overrun the open space, and was crowded back into the woods.

Barbara drew up her horse on the margin of the lake, where she sat, like an equestrian statue, under the willows. Philip rode directly up the mound, and as the hoofs of his war-horse struck the rock at its summit, called out in a loud, ringing voice that penetrated every nook and corner of the encampment—

"Chiefs and warriors, Metacomet, the son of King Philip, has asked the people of his tribe to come hither that he may hold a talk with them. He is here."

The young man's face and figure were thrown into splendid relief by the fire light. His dress, savage only where it could be made picturesque, gave kingly dignity to his presence. The eagle's plume, that proclaimed him chief, rose from a cap of crimson cloth, from under which his bright hair swept in curling waves. The horse stood motionless, his neck arched proudly, his wild eyes a-glow with animal fire.

While Philip's voice was yet vibrating through those savage hearts, a line of warriors, laden down with arms, defiled out of some unseen path of the forest, and belted the mound in with a triple wall of braves, which bristled so thickly with pikes and bayonets that the men who bore them were almost invisible.

As the fiery pine flamed skyward and flashed on this bristling steel, rank after rank of savages, concealed in the woods, pressed into the light, till the whole clearing was alive with Indians, some armed for the war-path, others bearing calumets, doubtful if they had been summoned from their hiding places in the forest to hold council or sound a war-whoop. But the whole multitude was ready for either, and a sea of dusky faces was uplifted to the young chief in stern attention.

"If there lives a warrior who knew Philip when he was king and chief of the Pomperoags, let him step forth, look on this face and say if it is not his son who talks with you?"

Thus the young Metacomet addressed the throng of savages as they swarmed in from the forest.

Two old medicine-men came out of the ranks and passed through a lane of bayonets crowded back to give them free passage. They went close up to Philip, and, shading their eyes from the hot light, searched his face with keen glances. They fell back satisfied, and, so far as their feeble voices could reach, the savages heard this curt decision:

"His face does not lie."

Here a low shout, or rather groan, of approval, ran through those savage ranks and died away in the forest. Again Metacomet turned to the crowd.

"Warriors, I have come back from across the great waters with the heart of King Philip beating loud in my bosom. He died fighting for his people. So will I, or set them free, with broader

hunting-grounds than they ever trod, and richer cornfields than their enemies have learned to plant. When King Philip died, his enemies laughed, like cowards, for they knew that a great warrior had fallen, such as will never tread their cornfields, though they plant them over our fathers' graves ten thousand years. When he fell, the Pomperoags were a conquered people, not from lack of bravery, but because the white man's cunning was more powerful than the strong arms of all our warriors, with the bravest man that ever lived at their head.

"Warriors, your king, betrayed by a traitor, hunted down like a wild beast, was murdered. His son seized the rifle as it fell from his hand and sent its last bullet through the brain of a white soldier, who attempted to drag him away from his dying father. When he was disarmed, bleeding, desperate, they seized upon him. Warriors, I see by the fire in those eyes and the grip of those hands that no one of you has forgotten that story. The captors of this wretched boy sold him into slavery. They chained his limbs and gave him over to the lash—sent him under the hot sun to work like a beast of burden. He did work and he suffered, but slavery never reached the soul of Metacomet—that forever turned back to his people. Still he must have died like a brute beast, worn out with toil, but for the woman who sits yonder with her face turned this way in wonder at what she sees. She came to the island where he toiled under the lash, and saw how wretched he was. With her gold she broke his chains. With her smiles she cured his wounded heart. She taught him how to think, and out of that came a power which turned thought into a great purpose, which has never left his brain a moment from that day to this.

"He went across the great waters, and learned all the cunning secrets with which our enemies conquered the red man. He searched out the wonderful power which conquers without fighting. He learned that knowledge is more powerful than the tomahawk, and swifter than a rifle bullet. He learned that white men cut eagle plumes into pens, and with their sharp points send out thoughts like arrows, striking whole tribes at once.

"Warriors, with this knowledge the son of King Philip will give force to your strong arms. This night swift runners shall be on their way to friendly nations along the coast, and the great hunting-grounds on the big lakes. The thought that speaks here will run as fire leaps along yonder dead tree, burning up the hate that we have felt for each other, and linking us, tribe to tribe, nation to nation, till the coast is lighted by one belt of council fires, our forests threaded with war-paths, and the fields, cleared by our enemies, grow corn for the Indian alone. Warriors, has the son of your chief spoken well?"

A groan of general assent once more ran hoarsely through that savage multitude, dying away in the depths of the forest. Again Metacomet spoke:

"Warriors, like the son of King Philip you have been slaves. The whites have taken away your rifles, and driven you into holes and corners to hide like foxes when the dogs are out. But I have brought muskets from over the great waters, and sharp spears that kill without leaving the hand. Powder and lead we have in plenty, hidden away in dry caves which our foe can never find."

Philip turned to the Indians that surrounded him closest standing under a forest of bayonets. Some of these men carried two muskets and a spear, some more.

"Stack your guns," he commanded.

Instantly, and with great precision, the savages stepped forward and stacked their weapons. These men had been for weeks drilled by their young leader, and were quick to learn. Philip guided his horse through the bristling weapons, and rode up to Barbara, where she sat pale with excitement and thrilled with vague terror.

"Lady," he said, "can you forgive the use to which I have applied your bounty? During all these years, I have been hoarding up the gold of which you were so lavish, for this purpose alone—'To free his father's people, Philip consented to be a beggar after he ceased to work as a slave.'"

"Great heavens! and have I done this?" cried Barbara, violently agitated. "God forgive me if my kind intent leads to bloodshed."

"It shall lead a brave people to freedom! Oh, lady, regret nothing that you have done. Never on the earth did gold perform a more holy work."

Barbara made no answer: she was appalled into silence by what she saw and heard.

Philip took hold of her bridle-rein gently, and turned her horse from the lake.

"Let the warriors see your face, lady," he said: "dangerous times are coming on and it is well that they should know to whom their protection is promised."

Barbara made no resistance, but she trembled on her saddle. As her horse stood side by side with that of Philip on the mound, a crowd of dusky faces was uplifted to hers, and she grew pale under the wild light of a thousand burning eyes that seemed piercing her like arrows.

"Braves," said Philip, and his voice sounded full and clear as a trumpet, "look upon this lady, and remember that so long as a man of our tribe lives she is his charge. The white man may yet become her foe as he is ours. She may be driven into the woods, as other women have been, but I charge you, wherever she is found, in forest or settlement, obey her and guard her as if she were a prophet of our people."

The groan of approval that followed this speech swelled almost into a shout, and went rolling off

into the forest like the smothered howl of wild beasts.

Terrified and distressed, Barbara pleaded with the young chief to send her away. Her face was white, her lips trembled as she spoke. She was completely overcome by the shock of this unexpected scene.

"Braves," cried Philip, standing up in his stirrups, "on this spot, where he was born, Metacomet has kindled his first great council-fire: light your pipes and smoke while he rides with this lady on her way through the woods, and let no man forget that from this hour she is a daughter of our tribe."

Again that hoarse, growl-like shout answered as he wished, and while it swelled along her path Barbara rode from the encampment, followed by Wahpee and accompanied by Philip. During all the waning night he kept by her side, and she made no protest. The wild grandeur of the scene she had left still impressed her with awe to which she could give no words, and a ride of so many hours had almost exhausted her strength when she came to the encampment. An hour before dawn Philip left her and rode back to the beacon fire at her own urgent request.

The first flush of morning was scattering rose leaves in the east and turning the far-off waves to liquid opals when Barbara came in sight of Samuel Parris's dwelling. She would have dismounted within the shelter of the trees, but was so overcome with fatigue that it seemed impossible for her to walk across the open space that lay in front of the meeting-house. But old Wahpee drew up his horse, and motioned obstinately that he intended to go no farther.

"But what shall I do with the horse?" questioned the lady, wearily.

"Turn him loose: he will know Wahpee's call," answered the Indian.

Barbara rode on, so worn and weary that she could hardly keep her saddle.

Elizabeth Parris was looking out of her bedroom window and marvelled at the strange apparition of her father's guest on a horse which she had never seen before; but Tituba passed the threshold of her room that moment, and she turned to answer some question that the old woman asked. While she was so occupied Barbara descended from her horse. Scarcely had her foot touched the ground when the creature heard a shrill whistle from Wahpee and bounded off to the woods. When Elizabeth looked out of the window a few moments after, Barbara Stafford was walking slowly toward the house, but there was no sign of the white horse; at which the young girl drew her breath painfully, and sunk to a chair shocked with an awful dread.

"Tituba! Tituba!"

The old woman, who was half-way down-stairs, came back again, alarmed by that sharp cry.

"Tituba, you told me that Mistress Barbara Stafford was ill and wished to be left alone."

"So she is," answered the old woman, entering the room and closing the door after her.

"But I saw her just now."

"Saw her, Miss Lizzybeth!" answered the Indian, listening keenly to a rustling sound that came from the stairs. "Saw her! why everybody is asleep in the house. What did you get up for, child?"

"Oh, Tituba, I am so restless! There is something strange, terrible, going on in this house. What is the matter with Abby? What keeps this woman here when nobody wants her? Is she truly ill? When did you see her last?"

"This very morning," asserted Tituba, who had in truth seen Barbara near the door, and now heard her moving in the back room.

Elizabeth leaned her head on one hand as if some distressing thought pained her.

"Strange! strange!" she muttered.

"Do you want me any longer?" asked the Indian still listening keenly.

"No. Yes, Tituba, don't go down yet. Where is Abby?"

"In bed and sound asleep."

"How can she sleep away from me? Oh, Tituba! Tituba! I am so lonesome."

Tituba went close to her young mistress, and kneeling down received that drooping head on her shoulder.

"Come close, Tituba. Oh, how I want my mother now!"

This cry of nature touched old Tituba's heart, but she had no words.

Elizabeth lifted her face and searched those withered features with her beautiful eyes.

"Tituba, just as sure as I live, Barbara Stafford sat out yonder on a white horse only a little while ago. The horse vanished. Then I saw her on foot near the door," she said wildly. "What does it mean? What can it mean?"

The old woman made vague efforts to caress the girl, but said nothing. At last Elizabeth sprang to

her feet.

"Are you speaking truth, Tituba?" she exclaimed, "or am I bewitched?"

The last words of this sentence were uttered in a whisper: even the word witchcraft was full of awe to that young heart. Then, struck with a sudden resolution, she flung the door open. "I will see for myself! I will see for myself!"

She went out into the passage, opened the door of Barbara Stafford's room and stole in on tip-toe, holding her breath. Barbara Stafford was in bed—sound asleep. The moment her head touched that pillow she had fallen into the death-like slumber which follows extreme fatigue. Her garments lay in a heap on the floor, save the scarlet cloak, which hung in its usual place against the wall.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

ALL OR NOTHING.

The third week after Samuel Parris's return from Boston, Norman Lovel arrived at his house. When we first met this young man he had the face of an angel and the impulsive manners of a child; even then he possessed a depth and earnestness of feeling which only broke out when the occasion was important enough to draw forth high and brave qualities.

But a few weeks of thoughtful experience had changed him greatly. He had all at once taken a leap into manhood. The bloom and grace of extreme youth had risen into the calm dignity of quiet self-reliance. This was a result most likely to follow the young man's intimate companionship with a woman like Barbara Stafford, who always gave to others the self-respect which never forsook herself.

When Elizabeth saw the young man coming, she forgot all coldness, and uttering a joyful cry, ran into the little garret room, where Abby Williams sat brooding over her thoughts.

"Oh, Abby! dear, dear Abby! he has come! Norman is here! Run and look at him as he dismounts. Then say if he is not the brightest, the handsomest—oh, do come!"

In her eagerness, she almost lifted Abby from her seat on the bed, and kissed her averted face again and again. Abby was taken by surprise: her heart gave a wild leap, and her cheeks grew red and warm. The good, true heart for a moment flung off its bitter load.

They crossed the garret, each with an arm girding the other's waist, and stood by the window, while the young man dismounted. Abby could not feel that young heart beating and fluttering against her own without a thrill of warm sympathy, and for a little time the old love triumphed.

"Stand back a little, just a step, cousin Abby, or he will see us watching him," cried Elizabeth, blushing crimson as the fear crossed her mind.

"There now—ah!"

Elizabeth gave a start, and, forgetting her late precaution, drew close to the window. The young man had sprung from his saddle, and was moving eagerly toward the door-step, on which Barbara Stafford seemed to be waiting for him. The sound of his voice, clear and full of glad surprise, rang up to the two girls where they stood.

"You here, lady—oh, if you only knew how anxious we have been, how lonely the house was after you left so strangely. The governor has scarcely spoken since, except on state affairs—and as for Lady Phipps, she moves about like a shadow. Somehow all the sunshine went out when you disappeared."

Barbara Stafford answered, in a constrained voice, but with gentleness,

"I have a few weeks to wait, before the ship goes out. My business in this land is accomplished. I only wanted some place to rest in, till the time came, and was reluctant to burden the governor's hospitality for so long a time. Avoiding a formal farewell I found my way here, knowing that the good minister would give me shelter."

"Oh, but we have been so troubled at your sudden disappearance: it was very cruel."

"Was there any one who felt my loss?" asked Barbara, with a thrill of tenderness in her voice. "Who cared to inquire if I was dead or alive?"

"You ask that question in earnest? I will not believe it. How little you knew of the friendship, the love you abandoned!"

These words rose to the window less distinctly than the others had done; but Abby felt the form, still encircled by her arm, waver as if about to fall.

"Listen—listen," she said, "it is not of himself he speaks."

Elizabeth did not answer. Her breath was hushed. With all her soul she listened for the next

words. They came like a gush of bright waters.

"But now that I find you safe, and have good tidings to carry back to Sir William and Lady Phipps, I will pass in, lady, for I must see another before my hard gallop is quite rewarded. Surely, Miss Parris is not away from home, or ill?"

"He thinks of you—he inquires for you!" whispered Abby. "It was surprise, only surprise, that kept him at the door so long."

"I will go down. Shall I go down at once? Dear cousin, tell me—don't let me go if it is unmaidenly, or if you think he has been too cold. Shall I go, cousin Abby?"

"Yes, go," answered Abby Williams, withdrawing her arm. "He is waiting for you!"

Elizabeth smoothed her hair with both hands, looked shyly at her cousin as she turned from the little mirror, and glided away. She entered the lower hall; there between her and her lover stood Barbara Stafford, with the sunshine on her head, but casting a dark shadow across the door-sill. So the young people met with constraint, and each thought the other cold.

Barbara Stafford glided away when she saw Elizabeth, and bent her course to the sea-shore. Young Lovel watched her, with a long, earnest look, and when she disappeared behind a grove of orchard trees he sighed deeply, and fell into thought. Elizabeth stood on the threshold, leaning against the mouldings of the door. Her cheek grew red, and she began to tremble beneath the rush of a terrible idea, that took distinct form on that fatal moment.

"Strange, strange woman!" muttered the youth. "By what power does she drain the heart of all thoughts that do not belong to herself?"

Elizabeth drew back keenly disappointed. The young man seemed unconscious of her presence; yet they had not seen each other for weeks. She turned proudly, and went into the house. The movement aroused Lovel. He withdrew his eyes from the retreating form of Barbara Stafford, to which they seemed drawn by some fascination, and followed the young girl, unconscious that he had done any thing to wound or offend her.

Elizabeth sat down in the oaken chair, that had belonged to her mother. She could not understand the iron feelings that crept over her.

"Has that woman's shadow chilled all the love from my heart as well as his?" she said to herself. "Am I too bewitched?"

CHAPTER XXXIV.

TOWARD THE SHORE.

This word made the idea, that had haunted her so long, painfully tangible. The young girl began to shudder at the thoughts that crowded upon her. All the feelings, connected with her love of this young man, had been strange from the first. So much of pain was mingled with its sweetness, so much of passion, temper, and the bitter tears which spring from both, that she could not comprehend them. The very development of her own nature, under the workings of a passion utterly unknown to her before, had something mysterious in it, which aroused ideas of some supernatural power, checking and thwarting it into a wild pain.

Barbara Stafford had undoubtedly connected herself with the evil power, which sometimes held her heart girded like a vice, and again forced the young creature to throw herself upon the woman's bosom in a paroxysm of regretful tenderness.

Why was she to love or hate Barbara Stafford, a woman she had never seen till within the last few weeks—a stranger wrecked upon the shore, and cast up, as it were, from the foam of the ocean, without a history, and it might prove without a true name. If it must be that their destinies jostled each other, why could it not be all love or entire hate?

Elizabeth Parris sat still, thinking these things over, while Norman Lovel was talking to her of the friends she had so lately left. He brought a score of sweet messages from Lady Phipps, and kindly remembrances from the governor himself. He spoke of the loneliness that fell upon the family when its guests had departed; but after his words to Barbara Stafford, any thing he could say to her seemed cold and common-place. Without knowing it, Elizabeth was possessed of that proud hunger, which every true woman feels, when she really loves—that craving desire to be all or nothing, which makes so many noble hearts miserable.

Yes, Elizabeth would be all to Norman Lovel, or she would be nothing. She did not say these words, or think these thoughts; but the resolution rose and burned in her heart like a fire. Filled with the tumult of these sensations, she did not heed what her lover was saying. His voice seemed to come from afar off; and as for the meaning of his speech, her ears refused to drink it in.

Norman saw her distraction, and was amazed by it. Had he ridden fifteen miles through the woods, almost on an unbroken gallop, to be met with half looks, and greeted only by

monosyllables? The young man took fire at once. He would give Elizabeth plenty of time to collect her thoughts. His kindest words should no longer be wasted on a sullen statue.

In this heat of temper, Norman took up his hat and went out. Elizabeth started, looked wildly over her shoulder, and tried to call him back; but her voice was husky, and refused utterance; she could neither speak nor move, till he had crossed the threshold, and was gone. For some moments she sat motionless. It seemed as if her limbs were girded to the chair. She thought with bitterness that the power of Barbara Stafford's evil will held her tight, when it was but the reaction of her own overwrought feelings. The fiend Jealousy was torturing her.

Elizabeth broke free from this painful thrall, started up, and went to the door, shading her eyes with one hand as she looked forth toward the ocean. It lay in the distance, blue and sparkling, like ridges and waves of sapphire, breaking through streams of diamond dust. The glory of the sunshine was nothing to her. She turned away, searching the shore; there she saw young Lovel walking rapidly in the path from which Barbara Stafford had just disappeared.

"He is going to her! he is going to her!" cried the young girl, pressing one hand upon her forehead, to still a thought that seemed gnawing at her brain like a viper. "She has charmed him away, she and the sweet-toned familiar, that whispers in her voice, and looks through those velvet eyes—"

"Elizabeth, child! Elizabeth!"

She did not hear the voice of Tituba, who stood in the entry, behind her, waiting to be noticed.

"Child!" she repeated, touching the uplifted arm with her finger, "child!"

Elizabeth dropped her hand, and shrunk away, looking at Tituba suspiciously, over her shoulder.

"You hurt me, old Tituba. Look—my arm is black and purple where the marks of your nails have been. She has taught you this, old woman. I have seen her in the kitchen, with fresh herbs, which you made into tea; and roots, which she dug up with a dagger from among drifts of sea-weed on the shore. Keep away from me, old woman; my flesh creeps as you come near."

Old Tituba was confounded. She had only come to consult her young mistress on the propriety of killing a chicken, and making up a batch of blackberry pies, if the young gentleman was likely to stay over night; and this charge of hurting the creature whom she loved better, almost, than any thing on earth, struck her dumb. At length she spoke.

"You are sick, Miss Lizzybeth; something dreadful is the matter, or you'd never say this to old Tituba. Go up-stairs, and lie down while I make some tea."

"No; you gave me herb drink last night, and once before this week. I will not take that drink from any one."

"Why, child?"

"Hush, Tituba, hush, if you love me! I don't mean to be cross; but my head is full of awful thoughts; they make me say cruel things even to poor old Tituba."

"The poor child—and she will take nothing," said the old woman, while her face, dark and wrinkled like a dried peach, began to work, the nearest approach to weeping her Indian blood ever permitted. "What can I do? Where is the young brave?"

"Yonder," said Elizabeth, bitterly, "going toward the sea!"

"Shall I bring him back? Shall I tell him he has left your heart full of tears?"

Tituba clenched her little withered hands with energy, as if she were about to give a leap, and start off at full speed, while her sharp eyes followed the retreating figure of the young man. But Elizabeth held her back.

"No, no. See, Abigail is coming down. I will tell her. Abigail! cousin Abigail!"

But Abigail Williams, who had been so caressing and kind half an hour before, came into the passage with the dull, heavy frown on her forehead which had become habitual now; answering her cousin's appeal with a repulsive motion of the hand, she passed by her, and went into the open air.

The sun was very bright, and for an instant she stood upon the stepping-stone, shading her eyes with one hand, looking first toward the forest, and again, with more lingering earnestness, sweeping the horizon with her gaze, where the sky melted into the ocean. A boat lay like a speck amid the brightness of the water. If Abigail had not been searching for it, an object so diminished by distance would have escaped observation. But she saw the floating speck, and, without a look or word for those she left behind, started off for the shore.

CHAPTER XXXV.

UNACCOUNTABLE SYMPATHIES.

Barbara Stafford sat upon the roots of an old oak, that held the edges of forest turf together, just where they verged into the white sands of the beach. The woods had been thinned on that portion of the coast, and the oak stood out almost alone, amid a sea of whortleberry bushes, ferns, and low-vined blackberries, that covered the sparse soil with their many-tinted herbage. Behind her loomed the forest; before her rolled the ocean. The sunshine lay upon both, turning one to sapphires, the other to shifting emeralds. The sunshine lay everywhere, save in her own heart—there was unutterably darkened.

I do not say that all this brightness in nature fell around her like a mockery; for her soul was too heavy even for a thought of external objects. It is only sudden or light sorrows that shrink and thrill to outward things. When depression becomes the habit of a life, it weighs upon the existence, as stagnant waters sleep in a landscape. When they are disturbed, miasma starts forth, and makes the earth feel that a weight is forever upon its bosom, whose breath is poison, which no power can fathom, and brightness can warm.

This great burden lay upon Barbara Stafford. Had the ocean been lashed with storms, she might have looked upon it in awe, for she was a woman full of feminine timidity, and only a few weeks before had been snatched from the waves by the very youth from whom she had just parted. She was thinking of the youth, but not of the waves from which he had rescued her—thinking of him with vague yearnings and fond regrets, which seemed all of human tenderness that gleamed across the desolation of her hopes. She felt something like joy singing through the dreariness of her life, whenever the image of this young man presented itself. Why was it? she asked herself again and again. Were the blossoms of a new love springing up from her soul, after it had been laid waste for so many years? Had the ashes of dead hopes fertilized her life afresh, that she should feel this glow of affection, when the lad spoke or looked into her eyes?

Barbara was no girl to wave these questions with blushes. She knew their meaning well, and searched her own heart to its depths, as the surgeon probes a wound. The unnaturalness of this attachment did not startle her pride as at first; for she was one of those who measure souls by their capacity, not the years that might have fallen upon them. Still every sensitive feeling was wounded by the very idea of love, in its broadest and most beautiful meaning, as connected with this youth. Affection deep and steadfast, a love that thrilled her with holy impulses, she found; but nothing that could bring the pure matronly blood warmer to her cheeks, or cause her frank eyes to turn aside from his glances. The feelings that she was forced to acknowledge to herself were inexplicable, for gratitude was never half so tender, love never in a degree so unselfish. Barbara had never experienced the sweet worship which a mother feels for a living child, therefore could not judge how far these sensations approached that most holy feeling; but she knew that the presence of this strange emotion had filled her with ineffable content. The hard realities of her condition faded away at the approach of this young man, and all the gentle sensations of her youth came softly back across the desert of her life, keeping her soul from the despair that for a time had threatened it.

She was thinking of the youth, nothing else, though her eyes gazed wistfully across the sea, and her face was thoughtful, as if she expected some pleasant approach from the far-off blue of the deep. So, when footsteps came across the bench, she started, and the wings of a brooding dove seemed to unfold in her bosom as Norman Lovel approached and seated himself on a fragment of stone at her feet.

Barbara could not resist the impulse, but laid her hand caressingly on his head, burying her fingers in the rich waves of his hair.

He looked up, and smiled. This gentle caress was pleasant, after the coldness with which Elizabeth had driven him from her side.

"How profoundly you were thinking!" he said. "I was almost afraid to disturb you."

"Yes," answered Barbara, "I was trying to find out what has swept so much of the darkness from my life within the last hour."

"And did you find a happy conclusion? I hope so, for then I shall think that some pleasure at my coming was mingled with your thoughts. Oh, dear lady, you never will know how keenly we felt your loss."

"And yet I am a stranger to you all."

"Some people are never strangers. I feel as if I had known you from the cradle up—as if my happiness would never be complete if you were away. The touch of your hand soothes me, and your voice stirs my heart, like music heard before thought or memory comes. When I am near you, a solemn gladness quiets me into a very child. Oh, lady, I love you dearly."

Barbara did not start, or change color. This language seemed natural to her, as the rush of the waves on the beach. She simply bent down and laid her hand on his forehead. He drew a deep breath and was silent. The smile upon his lips was like that of an infant Samuel when he prays.

"I have found you at last; you will never, never leave us again!"

"When the ship sails I must go yonder," she answered, pointing seaward.

"To England! Why should you go? Have you friends there more dear than those you will leave behind?" questioned the youth, anxiously.

"I have no friends there, but many duties," said Barbara, and her voice trembled painfully. "When I leave these shores, every living being that I love will be left behind."

"Why go, then? Why abandon those who regard you tenderly, for a land that contains no friends?"

Barbara turned pale as she looked down into those beautiful, eager eyes.

"Because," she said, extending her hand toward the ocean, "because that must roll between us and—and this continent, before I can fall into the heavy rest, which is all I hope or ask for now."

"But why go away? This is a new country; a mind and energy like yours may find ample scope for exertion here. Become the missionary of intelligence. We have school-houses, but few teachers. What grand men and noble women would be given to the world, from a teacher at once so strong and so gentle."

Barbara smiled a little proudly. The idea of becoming a school-teacher in one of the colonies had evidently never entered her mind.

Norman saw the smile and blushed.

"You think it a humble means of good," he said, "and are, perhaps, offended with me for naming it. But Governor Phipps thinks it a calling of the utmost importance in these settlements. He says that the man, or woman, who gives wisdom and Christianity to our little ones, holds an office higher than that of any judge or statesman in the land."

Barbara gazed wistfully in Norman's face, while he was speaking. An earnest gleam came into her eyes, and her lips began to quiver. Why was her voice so like a hoarse whisper when she spoke?

"Did—did Governor Phipps speak of me in this connection?"

"No, but when I had been speaking of you, he said it, as if the idea came with your name."

Barbara shook her head, slowly and mournfully.

"It can never happen. This land holds no corner of rest for me now. Here is struggle, temptation, bitter soul-strife; there, is rest, that leaden rest, which comes when there is nothing to hope or fear. Oh, my young friend, it is a terrible thing, when one reaches the hill-tops of life, and finds a broad, ashen desert beyond, with a grave on the other side, which you long to reach, but must not."

"But surely this is not your case, lady?"

"Alas! what else?" she whispered, casting that wistful look seaward again. "What of joy, or hope, can ever come to me again?"

"And are you so unhappy?" questioned the youth, almost with tears in his eyes.

"Unhappy! I do not know—but let us talk of other things: this fair girl Elizabeth."

"Do not speak of her—she wounds me with her coldness, she insults me with suspicions—let us talk of any thing rather than her."

"But she loves you, for all that."

"I do not believe it!" cried the youth, impetuously: "love does not turn a maiden into stone, when a true heart appeals to hers. You would not repulse me one hour, and adore me the next. I am tired of girls!"

Barbara smiled, as if the prattle of an infant had amused her.

"Fiery young heart," she said, laying her hand on his shoulder, "how little you comprehend the feelings that trouble you!"

"I can only understand how much sweeter your voice is than hers, how grand your words are, how like heaven the earth seems when you permit me to rest as I do now at your feet, and look forth on the ocean. With you, all is rest—with her, excitement, discontent. She does not love me, and I begin to think that I do not love her."

"Boy, forbear. This is madness. Your heart does not speak out here. Such impetuosity will end in evil. Check it. Your wild temper belies a noble nature. Remember Elizabeth Parris is your betrothed wife!"

"I can remember nothing, except that I have offended you," answered the youth, passionately, "and I would rather die here at your feet."

"Hush," said Barbara, "here comes Samuel Parris. He turns this way. I will stroll toward the beach, while you converse with him."

"Nay! I will follow you."

Barbara had arisen. The young man started to his feet, and prepared to walk forward with her. His color rose, and a glow of haughty resentment came to his forehead as he caught a glimpse of Samuel Parris, who was walking quickly toward them, while his face lowered with sombre anxiety.

"Stop," cried the old man, lifting his staff. "Move not to the right or the left, till I have spoken with you both, face to face."

Barbara Stafford drew her proud figure to its height. There was something too imperative in his command for her humble endurance. At times, blood, that seemed born of emperors, mantled over that broad forehead. It rose red and warm now.

Norman Lovel stood by her side, his lips curved, his eyes flashing fire. The two looked strangely akin in their haughty astonishment, as that voice of command sought to arrest their footsteps.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

SOUL TORTURES.

When Elizabeth Parris was left standing on the door-step, and saw every one drift toward the shore, a sensation fell upon her, so strange and even terrible, that she thought herself dying. The blood seemed to stop in her veins, blocking up all the avenues of life. The breath choked up her throat, and from heart to limb she seemed turning to stone. During some heavy minutes, she stood in this position, like a thing of marble, save that her hair had sunshine in it, and her eyes deepened in color till they seemed black. At last she turned, as a statue might have wheeled from its base, and entered the house.

A little wing had been added to the building, in which Samuel Parris kept his books, and wrote his discourses. It was dimly lighted, and a sombre gloom hung about it in solemn accordance with the old man's habit of mind. Samuel Parris had spent much time in this apartment after the excitement of returning home; and with a feeling of gentle complacency was looking over some of the familiar books that lay on the table. Engaged with these old friends, he did not observe when the door opened, and his child glided through. Her small hand, pale as wax, dropped heavily upon the open page he was reading, first warned him of the dear presence.

The old man gently pushed the hand aside.

"It is the Holy Bible," he said, in explanation of the act.

"The Bible," muttered Elizabeth, bending down and attempting to read. But the words all ran together and melted into an intangible network of characters under her gaze. She started back with a moan of horror, and clasped both hands over her eyes.

The minister looked up in dumb astonishment.

"What—what is this?" he said, greatly troubled. "What have I done to make you moan so piteously, Elizabeth?"

The young girl dropped her hands from her face, and wrung them in bitter anguish.

"Father, I am smitten in my sight. The blood is frozen in my veins. The breath settles in my throat, strangling me when I speak. I scarcely feel your touch. I cannot draw a deep breath. When I bend my looks on the Bible, the pages are striped with ragged, black lines, as if a devil, not God, had written it."

"My child, what is this? A little while ago you were quiet and cheerful. What disease can have fallen upon you? What evil thing has touched you?"

She fell upon her knees, grovelling on the floor. Her eyes glittered painfully, her lips bluish white.

"Father, do not touch me. I am smitten. Lo! I am *bewitched*."

The old man began to tremble in all his limbs. He shrunk away from his child, gazing wildly at her, as some holy man might watch an angel changing into a fiend before his eyes.

"Elizabeth, daughter Elizabeth," he cried, "oh, my God—my God!"

She bent her face downward, shrouding it with her garments, sobbing out,

"Do not touch me, father. I am unholy—body and soul I am unholy. God blinds my sight to his word. Fiery fiends have tracked their footprints over His promises. Oh, me—oh, me—the curse is here!"

More pale, more terribly stricken than his child, the old man stood up, and, clasping his thin hands, lifted them slowly to heaven. At last he spoke, in a voice of solemn command, which vibrated to the poor girl's heart:

"Elizabeth Parris, rise up, and say unto me, who has done this thing—whence comes thy affliction?"

Elizabeth arose very slowly, and looked her father in the face.

"Come and see!"

Uttering only this one sentence, she led the way out of the house and into the open air. On she sped, through the sunshine and along by-paths, toward the sea-shore, looking over her shoulder now and then to be sure that her father followed close, but never turning aside or speaking a word.

At last she came out upon a curve of the beach, within sight of the oak tree under which Barbara Stafford was sitting with Norman Lovel.

"Behold!" she said, throwing out her hand, with the look and gesture of a priestess. "Behold the strange woman, Barbara Stafford—the evil one cast forth from the depths of the sea to torment us. Behold the WITCH!"

After the young girl had uttered these awful words, for awful they were in those days, a dead silence fell upon the father and child. At last they both turned away, slowly retraced their steps, and entered the house together. When they were alone in the library, the minister fell into his chair and began to weep—weep and pray with a troubled abruptness that proved the terrible hold with which his daughter's charge had seized upon him. He saw now the complete change that had come over her, the wildness in her eyes, the deadly white of her face. The inroads, which a week of anxiety had made upon her person, struck him with consternation and irresistible belief. What, save some fiendish influence, could have changed the rosy bloom of her youth into that dull, hopeless look?

"Kneel down," he said, at last, "Elizabeth, my child; for if all the evil spirits of the black realm have entered that form, thou art yet my child. Kneel down, and with thy hand upon the Bible, tell me how this strange woman has poisoned thy young life; tell me all, that I may ask the Most High God to help us in this strait."

Elizabeth answered more consistently than her state of terror would seem to warrant. She had evidently thought deeply on the matter, and reasoned with an intellect rendered keen by the alarm of a loving heart. She was very pale, and sharp, nervous quivers shook her now and then, but the pretty wilfulness of her character had entirely disappeared. She was like a priestess preparing for some solemn oracle.

"First, let me ask you, father, who is this woman whom you and Norman Lovel dragged up from the depths of the sea?"

"In truth I do not know," answered the minister, greatly troubled. "Did I not tell you, Elizabeth, that it happened on the second day of my arrival in Boston?"

"The second day; and I had not seen you then."

"Truly, these words are sooth, my child. I was beset by this weak heart to visit thee at once, but some feeling, which seemed from above, held me back, whispering ever, 'Do not make to thyself an idol of this fair child, for thy God is a jealous God, visiting the sins of the fathers upon the children.' Then, feeling that the great love in my bosom might fall upon thee in wrath for mine offence, I dared not come within sight of thee, mine only child; but was driven by the storm, as it were, on to the heights overlooking the ocean."

"And what did you see there, my father?"

"A ship, breaking through the clouds, afar off, that waved and surged around and above it like fiery banners."

"And this woman came down the sides, entered a boat, and was whelmed in the waves, from which you and Norman Lovel, my betrothed, rescued her. All the rest I know. But who is she? Where is her country, and from what good or evil influence did she get that wonderful power, which wins every heart to her glance?"

"Elizabeth, I do not know!"

"Father, let us be just. From the depth of my soul I believe this woman an emissary of the Evil One, sent hither to break up the harmony of our lives. But speak to her, father; question her, as a judge might do, when afraid to sentence unholily. If the conviction fastened in this poor heart springs from the selfishness of too keen affections, let me have the proof, and I will kneel at Barbara Stafford's feet till she pardons me. But if there is truth in these things—if she possesses no power to sweep suspicion of diabolical influence away from her—then will I, of my own strength, surrender her to the magistrates, that the evil spirit may be driven from our house."

Samuel Parris was sorely perplexed. In his simplicity, the introduction of this strange lady into his household had been preceded with none of the usual explanations. There was something about the woman, a dignity of reserve, that, notwithstanding her sweet graciousness, forbade all close questioning. When Samuel Parris remembered all the incidents connected with their first meeting—the reserve maintained ever since—the confusion left behind when she fled so strangely from the governor's house, and the animosities that had sprung up under his own roof since it had sheltered her—the justice of his daughter's accusation fastened strongly upon him. He shivered with dread. Events hitherto of simple solution, took a lurid form in his eyes. He looked wistfully at the pale face uplifted to his—at the trouble in those beautiful eyes—and was ready to cry out with anguish when he thought that it was through him the evil influence had reached that young soul.

"Stay here," he said, rising from his chair, and searching for his staff, for the tremor in his old limbs was painfully visible. "Sit here, and pray for help. Before the Lord I will question this woman."

He kissed his daughter on the forehead, trembling all over, as if his lips pressed the brow of a corpse, and taking up his staff went out, followed by her heavy gaze, and a succession of low moans; for with great mental anguish came bodily pain, and for a time Elizabeth Parris seemed as if shrouded in ice.

The old man bent his steps toward the beach once more.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

DENUNCIATION AND REPROACHES.

Barbara Stafford was both disturbed and offended by the abrupt challenge of the minister. There was something wild, even rude in his manner, that aroused all the force of her really proud nature.

"Leave me, Norman!" she said, gently. "It was wrong to abandon the young lady on the first hour of your arrival; one does not readily forgive such slights. Go back to the house, and make atonement."

Norman obeyed, lifting his hat with haughty reverence as he passed the minister. The old man turned, and followed him half way to the house. Then he paused—stood a moment lost in thought, and slowly retraced his steps.

Barbara would not appear to wait his coming. She had wandered forth, as was her frequent habit, in search of rare flowers that excited her botanical fancy, from their beauty; or roots that possessed some medicinal property, useful in the minister's household. Without appearing to heed the old man, she left the foot of the oak, and was walking along the curving lines formed where the forest turf crumbled away into a surface of white sand. Now and then she paused to gather a leaf, or some wood blossom, which she put in a little Indian basket, which hung upon her arm.

As the minister came up with her, she was kneeling on the turf and eagerly unearthing a bulbous root, from which two or three rich leaves sprang, shading a cone of red berries that shot up from their midst like a flame.

She looked over her shoulder, as the minister approached, and half rose, with the little stiletto, with which she had been digging, in her hand.

"Wait a moment," she said, falling to her work again. "This is a rare specimen. I have almost uprooted the bulb. Old Tituba will find it wonderfully useful in making up her drinks."

The minister grew pale, as he stood leaning on his staff gazing at the root. Barbara spoke again, rather cheerfully, for exercise and a bright sea-breeze had excited her a little.

"It has a common name, I think, among the people here. Wake robbin—isn't that correct?"

"Wake robbin—wild turnip, a deadly poison," answered the old man, hoarsely.

"Ah, that is as you take it. Well dried, and ground to powder, it is sometimes a wholesome medicine. I will teach Tituba how to use it."

"Tituba—my woman servant, Tituba—and is she of this diabolical confederacy?" muttered the old man, while a sensation of horror crept over him. "Am I beset with fiends?"

Barbara arose from the earth, held up the cone of scarlet berries in the sun, while the bulb was clasped in her hand, with the green leaves falling over it.

"How can poisonous things be so beautiful?" she said, with a sigh. "Who would believe that one of these glowing drops could take a human life?"

"You know it to be deadly, then?" questioned the old man.

His voice was so hoarse that Barbara looked him earnestly in the face.

"Yes," she answered, thoughtfully, "I know all its good and all its evil qualities. Like many other things in life it can both cure and kill."

As she spoke, Barbara cut away the leaves and the red cone with her poignard, dropping the root into her basket. Then she put away the stiletto somewhere in the folds of her dress, and dashed off the soil that clung to her white hands.

"You would speak with me, I think?" she said, a little anxiously.

"She knows that already," thought the old man, feeding his suspicions with every word Barbara Stafford uttered: but he only said:

"Lady, what have you in common with the young man who sat with you a few minutes ago, under the oak yonder?"

Barbara smiled. These words were a relief to her. She had expected something more important by his strange manner.

"Oh, Mr. Lovel—he joined me on the shore where I went in search of a shrub I wanted for old Tituba who has a bad cough. I hope his wish to join me has not encroached on pleasanter duties."

"And he too?" muttered the old man—"he too?"

Barbara listened keenly, but the words escaped her. Her silence, however, was impressive.

"Let us go forward to the oak yonder," he said, pointing the way with his staff.

Barbara turned, without a word, and walked slowly toward the oak.

They sat down together, the old man and the strange woman—she with a calm look of preparation; he stern and pale, but hesitating how to begin. Her dignity and the grave attention with which she waited took away all his self-possession.

"You would speak with me," Barbara said, at length: "you look agitated. Surely nothing has gone amiss since I left the house!"

The old man's face changed, and his voice trembled as he spoke.

"Lady, I helped to save you from the deep. I surrendered to you the sacred wine after it had touched the lips of the man who stands highest in our land. I have given you shelter in my dwelling, and placed you at the same table with my daughter and my niece; yet so far as your worldly life is concerned, I know you not, neither your outgoing nor your incoming. What could I answer to the Lord, were he to say to me, 'Samuel Parris, who is the woman with whom you have broken bread, and shared the same roof?' I could but reply, 'Lord, I know not—for good or for evil she was cast upon my care, like a drift of sea-weed from the great deep—without a history—without a friend!'"

"And in so much your answer would prove correct. Be satisfied, kind old man, that you have done a Christian duty, for which the poor woman you saved will not prove ungrateful."

The minister shook his head, muttering to himself,

"The arch enemy is most potent when he speaks in a sweet voice, and takes on himself the meekness of an angel."

Barbara only heard a word or two of this low speech, but she saw that the old man was troubled, and a mournful smile came to her lips.

"You are weary of me, I have become a burden in your house; do not fear to say this."

"Not a burden, lady, but a mystery—not an unwelcome guest, but one around whom tears and discord centre, like storm clouds over the sky. Lady, in the name of God, I ask, who are you, and for what purpose do you sojourn among us?"

Barbara Stafford arose, pressed both hands to her eyes for a moment, and answered—ah, so sadly—

"I am nothing but a lone, lone woman, Samuel Parris, a sorrowful woman whose way of life lies through the ashes of dead hopes. I am a woman to whom love is a forbidden blessing. This is your first answer. As for my object in coming among you, it is not accomplished, but dead. A few weeks and I shall pass away. The sea, which would not mercifully overwhelm me, spreads its waters between us and the land where my grave will be dug. Let me rest in peace, old man, till a ship sails for some British port: then I will trouble no one longer."

"Then she will trouble no one longer," muttered Parris, writing with his stick upon the ground. "God teach me how to deal with this beautiful demon, if such she is: her words disturb my soul with compassion against its will."

He was tempted to go away and leave the gentle lady in peace, with her basket of roots, and the fragrant flowers with which she had interspersed them. The task of questioning her was too much for his kind nature; while, influenced by the sweetness of her voice, and under the magnetism of her presence, he felt humbled and gentle as a child. His daughter was quite forgotten; but, as he stood irresolute, a cry came out from the distance, and looking toward his house, he saw Elizabeth coming swiftly toward them, her golden hair all afloat in the sunshine, her blue eyes bright as diamonds, her lips apart and tremulous with the cries that came sobbing through them.

"My child! my child!" cried the old man, stretching forth his arms as the young girl drew near. "Woman, behold your evil work!"

Barbara was bewildered. Her eyes turned from the old man to the girl, who came up swiftly, her face all flushed with fever, her eyes burning, and her lips filling the air with broken words.

"Father! father! Come away! There is witchcraft in her eyes: they have beguiled him and now turn upon you. Come away, or she will lure you upon the sands, and sing you into the coral caves,

which are built by her sisters, the sea witches."

"Alas! the poor child is ill. This is the delirium of fever!" cried Barbara, going toward the frantic young creature, who flung herself back, and with her hand motioned the woman away.

"Avaunt! get you behind me!" she cried, with the voice and air of a priestess in full inspiration. "Sister of her of Endor, I denounce you. Demon, whom the waves have hurled forth to our destruction, I denounce you. Let the old man alone. He shall not taste your roots, or be poisoned with a touch of your hand. Lo, it is in my veins, it burns in my eyes, and aches on my forehead—body and soul, your evil power possesses me; but remember, he is a servant of the Most High. His heart is full of prayers, his brain armed with holy thoughts. The fiends you serve shall not prevail against this holy man!"

Barbara was struck with astonishment. She turned deathly white as these words were hurled against her, but she had great knowledge of diseases and instantly saw the truth.

"Poor child!" she said, approaching Elizabeth, "this is the delirium of brain fever. She is very ill!"

Elizabeth flung out her arms, staggered back, and fell to the earth, moaning with pain.

"Stand back," said the old man, planting himself before the prostrate form of his child, "your sorcery has done its work; a demon possesses her. Woman, before the most holy God, I denounce you as a Witch!"

Barbara staggered back, stunned and white, under the minister's solemn denunciation. The horrible magnitude of his charge paralyzed her.

"What can this mean? Who denounces me?" she cried out at last, rising to her full majestic height, and casting a look of sorrowful indignation at her accuser. "I am a stranger, and helpless!"

The old man was bending over his child. Her flushed face was turned upward to the sun, her eyes wandered to and fro, dazzled and bright with pain. She had ceased to mutter now, and lay motionless.

Barbara would have helped the old man, but he put her aside, and in a stern voice bade her depart.

The unhappy woman looked wildly abroad, upon the ocean—the land—it all seemed a dreary wilderness to her. Why should she remain where men hated her so? Why did she wish to escape the awful danger threatened by that old man's words? Fleeing, as much from the minister's evident abhorrence as from fear of the consequences, the woman turned and walked slowly toward the woods.

When Samuel Parris arose, lifting his child from the earth, Barbara Stafford had disappeared. Unheard and unseen she had vanished from his presence; and this was remembered as another proof against her.

While the scene had been in progress, a boat grated on the sands of the beach, and two persons stepped out, going different ways: the young man bent his course toward the forest; the maiden came softly up to the place where Samuel Parris stood staggering under the weight of his child.

"What is this, uncle? Has Elizabeth hurt herself that she cannot keep her feet?" said Abigail Williams, in the cold, still way that had marked her of late.

"She is possessed—God have mercy upon us! the child is possessed!"

Abigail looked on her cousin's face, and a spasm of pain crept over her own features.

"She is indeed very ill—something terrible is upon her. Let us go to the house: the hot sun makes her worse."

The old man gathered Elizabeth closer to his bosom and turned to obey this suggestion. In moving, his foot struck the little basket which Barbara had carried, scattering some of the roots and flowers on the ground.

"Bring that, also!" he said, glancing earthward; "bring that also!"

Abigail took up the basket, replaced the scattered roots, and followed the minister home.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

SHELTERED IN THE WOODS.

Barbara Stafford found herself in the deep shadows of the wilderness, walking slowly and steadily on till their gloom lay around her—heavy and dark, like the terror that settled on her soul.

Barbara was a woman strong to suffer, to endure, and to act; but a woman still, timid like her

sex, shrinking from pain, and afraid of violence, as true womanhood is. Though full of that gentle courage which is so beautiful when blended with softer qualities, she was sensitive to blame and easily wounded in her personal dignity. This abrupt charge of witchcraft shocked her to the soul. Was she to give up every thing, to suffer a martyrdom of affection, and go down to her grave branded as a demon? Barbara knew well the importance of a charge like that denounced against her by the lips of Samuel Parris. There did not exist a person in the colonies whose power of character would give more crushing force to an accusation of this kind, both in the courts and in the congregation. She felt that the good old man was convinced of her evil power against his own wishes—that, added to his natural fanaticism, a solemn belief in witchcraft, which had spread from the old country into the colonies, had seized upon his quick imagination, and he would pursue her to death from an honest sense of duty.

She felt the danger to be imminent. But where could she fly? to whom appeal? A stranger, without history, with a name utterly unknown in the colonies, with no ostensible motive for leaving her own land, or remaining an hour in this, who would step forward in her defence? Norman Lovel? Alas! he was young and entirely dependent on Gov. Phipps, the tried and bosom friend of Samuel Parris. What hope could lie in that direction?

There was no shelter—no help. A feeling of strange desolation crept over her. She had thought herself lonely, and her life dreary before, but her heart was full of gentle sympathies that would put forth their fibres and search for something to cling to, even in her worst hours. Now she was literally driven forth to the wilderness, branded by a horrible accusation, which must turn all compassion into hate wherever she approached. She had gold about her person, but even that all potent metal was valueless here. Who would touch coin that came from a denounced witch? Who would believe in its validity, or dare to receive money which might turn to some poisonous drug in the handling?

In her distress, Barbara bethought herself of the broken tribe of Indians that she had seen only a few nights before mustering with such solemn purpose around the man whom she had so signally befriended. She remembered that promise to protect her, which had stirred the very heart of the wilderness as with a single voice. She was ready to trust these savages, and without a pang accept protection from their chief. But how could she find their hiding-places in a forest so deep, and without a guide?

The night was drawing on, dark and heavy. Storm clouds gathered in masses over the sun as it set, turning all its gold to lead, and filling the woods with pall-like shadows. Then came sounds of low thunder, mingled with a sough of the winds as they swept in from the distant ocean. The loneliness grew terrible. She fell upon her knees and prayed to God, the only being to whom she could appeal, in heaven or on earth.

As she prayed the rain began to fall. It came pattering among the leaves, breaking up the gloom with opposing dreariness. When the foliage was all saturated and dripping, the drops began to fall heavily around her, but she had no shelter—no friend. The elements seemed driving her from all approach to heaven. She arose heart sick, and seating herself on a fragment of rock, buried her face in her folded arms and wept.

A hand laid upon her shoulder broke the deadness of her grief. She looked up and saw the young Indian chief.

"Lady, why are you here alone, so far from home, and a storm brewing?" he said.

She lifted her face with a look of touching gratitude. It was something to feel that human life was near—that she need not shiver in the rain, and be left to starve in the deep woods.

"They pursue me—the white men of my race—they charge me with grave crimes—they have driven me into the woods," she answered, with touching mournfulness.

The young man drew himself up, and clutched the gun which he held with a passionate grip.

"Again," he said, bitterly, "are they at their old work? Must another bright head stoop beneath their blows? Come with me. I have nothing but savage fare and savage protection to give, but with us you will be safe. When the Indian strikes a woman, it is upon the forehead, not the heart. We torture with fire, not with words."

Barbara arose, thankful for his kindness, but her limbs trembled. She had walked many miles, and now that protection came her strength fled.

"Where would you take me?" she inquired. "Is it very far?"

He saw how helpless she was, and his brow fell. The encampment was far distant over the broken hills.

"Wait a little," he said; "gather strength and courage. Not far from this are a few of my people, who follow me always when I approach the settlements. We can soon reach them."

Barbara made a brave effort, and followed him through the gathering darkness. He did not pause more than was necessary to help her through the undergrowth where the ground was broken and difficult of ascent. It seemed as if her lonely condition and utter helplessness silenced all the fiery devotion which had marked their previous interviews. He touched her hand with reverence when she extended it for help once or twice, but never looked upon her face, or uttered a word of the

passionate homage that burned in his heart.

At last they reached a basin in the hills, locked in by a chain of ledges, crowned with trees and covered with creeping ferns and mosses. A fire was burning in this little hollow; the rain beat upon it through the branches, but still it flamed up, giving glow and warmth to the night. Around this fire a group of Indians sat in patient watching for their chief. He approached them softly and spoke a few gentle words. The Indians stood up and gazed at Barbara in respectful wonder. She in her turn looked upon their stately forms and worn habiliments with a strange feeling of safety.

These men wore no paint; their robes of dressed deer-skin were faded and without ornament. Nothing about them seemed worthy of care, except the guns that they leaned upon, and the pouches in which they kept powder and lead.

The young chief spoke with his followers in their own language. He told them more of Barbara Stafford's history than any person in America knew except himself. How she was the daughter of a proud old chief in the mother country, who owned lands broad almost as the wilderness they stood in, with a vast dwelling which rose from the earth like a mountain peak. The savages needed no more than this, for they had heard his speech near the beacon fire, but he seemed to find proud joy in telling them that the lady, so gentle and so good, now their guest, so far as God's wilderness could afford hospitality, had bought him of his task-masters, and taken him to foreign countries, where she and her father travelled together in sad companionship, for both were unhappy, and found his affection a solace. She had in her beautiful kindness redeemed his soul from ignorance, as she had purchased his body from the slave-driver's lash. After this she and her proud father had taken him to their home in England—that grand home in which they were held as chiefs and princes—where the old chief died, leaving his daughter alone in her proud domain.

Here the young man paused, his eyes fell, and his haughty lip began to tremble. He spoke in the Indian tongue, which Barbara could not understand, but the swarthy blood burned on his forehead as her eye turned upon him, and for a moment he shrunk from telling the whole truth; but his brave nature gained the mastery, and he went on, yet with humility in his voice, and shame burning in his downcast eyes.

"My children, I loved the lady from the hour her hand unlocked my chains, but the secret lay buried deep in my heart, and no one guessed how it burned there. When her father was dead, and I saw her alone, with no one but me to counsel or comfort her, this love broke from its covert and frightened her almost into hating me. She did not mock me with scorn, but—"

Here the Indians broke their grim silence, and signs of proud anger passed between them. At last one spoke.

"Why should the woman treat you with scorn? If she was the child of a great chief, Philip, your father, was the king of a mighty tribe—your mother was white as the boxwood in flower, and proud as the hemlock on a cliff. What woman dare receive the love of a king's son, save with her forehead in the dust?"

"Not with scorn, my braves. I said she was frightened, not angry: my wild passion was its own enemy. She commanded me from her presence, told me of the years she had lived before I was born, and with cruel gentleness sent me away.

"But I would not go. Like a disgraced hound I hung upon her track, unseen, unthought of, it may be, till she left her home and came down to the sea shore, where a ship lay ready to sail. I followed her, and buried myself deep in the hold of the vessel, not caring—may the Great Spirit forgive me!—where the ship went, nor how long she might plough the ocean. We were sheltered by the same timbers once more, and that was enough. Before starting I knew that the ship was bound for Boston, and felt that the Great Spirit had been leading me back to my father's people—back among my father's enemies, that I might accomplish the great object of my life, and avenge the wrongs which no Indian can forget. So, urged on by two great passions, I obtained such means of war as lay within my power and came among you.

"The lady left our vessel when we neared the land. She descended into a frail boat, and was launched forth into the harbor, which was lashed and angry with storms I dared not offer to go with her, but looked on sick at heart till the tempest swept her away. She was hurled among the breakers, buried in the sea; but an old man, the persecutor of our people, the minister of Salem, dragged her forth, and with him a youth."

The chief paused abruptly, and his reproachful eyes turned upon the lady.

"He was younger than I am, and a stranger, yet she did not drive him from her presence."

He spoke these words in English, but Barbara did not comprehend their meaning or connection. She only knew that his eyes were full of sad reproach, and, smiling softly, drew close to his side, murmuring,

"I am driven into captivity now, and it is from you I seek shelter."

"I have told my braves whom it is they will defend. While they live you are safe in the wilderness which was my father's hunting-ground. As for me, have compassion and let me go hence."

A flush reddened Barbara Stafford's forehead as she bent it with a gentle sign of acquiescence.

The chief gave some orders in their own tongue, and the Indians instantly fell to work cutting away wet branches from the hemlocks and pines, tearing green bark from the giant elms, and felling young saplings, which they planted in the earth, and curved downward in the form of a tent. Over these they laid the bark, and covered the whole with green boughs, till a bower was formed worthy of a wood nymph. Two of the Indians brought great fleeces of moss down from the ledges and heaped a couch with them, and over all a noble white pine spread its massy branches, through which the full moon sent a thousand gleams of silver, as if laughing at the bank of storm clouds from which it had just escaped.

Upon the couch of moss which his people had heaped in this bower, the young chief spread a robe of skins, and laid his blanket, which he unwound from his shoulders. Then, with the air of a prince offering the hospitality of a royal palace, he approached Barbara Stafford where she sat by the fire, and led her to the shelter provided for her.

Barbara was greatly moved. With an impulse of thankfulness, she bent down and kissed the young chief's hand as he was about to withdraw it from hers; but it trembled like a wounded bird beneath her touch, and his magnificent eyes filled with tears—the shame of an Indian's soul.

Angry with his weakness, the young man turned from her and dashed away into the woods.

When Barbara awoke in the morning, for fatigue made her sleep heavy, she inquired for the young man. The Indians answered that he had gone deeper into the wilderness, where the main body of his tribe lay, and when a cabin was prepared for her reception, he would come back again; till then the five warriors whom he had left behind would protect her with their lives.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

TAKEN CAPTIVE.

Samuel Parris bore his daughter home and laid her on her own white bed, where she writhed like a wounded fawn in the snow. Her face was rosy with flushes, that came and went like gleams of light on marble; her lips were in constant motion; she muttered continually about Barbara Stafford and Norman Lovel. Sometimes she called aloud for her mother, and declared with child-like earnestness that she saw her gliding through the room with her golden hair smoothed under a close cap, and a white dress sweeping around her like the wings of an angel.

The old minister listened to all this in stern sorrow. His ewe lamb was smitten down before his eyes: God had suffered his idolatrous love to find a terrible punishment. What could he do? how act to save that beautiful one from perdition?

Norman Lovel was sad. Barbara Stafford had disappeared like a myth. His approach seemed to have driven her away, and he found Elizabeth, from whom he had parted in anger, writhing on a bed of pain, muttering her wild fancies and crying aloud for help.

Abigail Williams moved about coldly and in breathless silence. The curse of witchcraft was upon the house, hatred and death clung around it like cerecloths to a coffin. What if she, too, were possessed—the story of old Tituba, a device of the Evil One, and the young chief so wildly beautiful, who claimed relationship with her, the arch fiend himself? The very foundations of her reason seemed shaken by these doubts, and as the moans and cries of Elizabeth reached her ear from time to time, she would pause in her work and stand motionless like a block of marble, till some new sound startled her into life again.

All night Samuel Parris sat by the bedside of his child, pallid and thoughtful. Over and again he questioned her in the midst of her wild speeches, as a judge sifts the words of a doubtful witness. Sometimes he fell into audible prayer, and again sat in dull silence pondering gloomily.

When the morning came he went forth, and, mounting his horse, rode to the nearest magistrate, who was a deacon in his own church, and a man of iron domination. Samuel Parris knew well that after his appeal to this man, there could be little free will left to him.

No wonder then that he walked heavily, and paused long upon the door-step before entering. He shrunk from hunting down the life of a helpless woman, and shuddered at the thought of making a charge from which there was no chance of retreat.

The minister went in at last, and the door closed heavily after him. The sound of a muffled drum could not have followed his footsteps more solemnly.

After an hour the old man came forth again, and moved with a slow tread down the village street toward his own dwelling. As he passed the doors of his parishioners, men and women came out and questioned him in low tones, and with looks of awe, regarding the condition of his child. He answered them all patiently, but with a sad weariness of manner that turned curiosity into compassion.

On the threshold of his home Samuel Parris met three men, members of his own congregation, who greeted him in silence, as neighbors salute the chief mourners at a funeral. Then the four passed in, and mounted to the chamber where Elizabeth lay, with her wild eyes lifted to the

ceiling, and her hands waving about in the air.

These four good men—for after the manner of the times they were good—sat down in silence, and each gathered from the lips of the delirious girl the evidence which was to imperil a human life. When they had listened an hour keenly and conscientiously, each according to his light, they arose and went forth, shaking Samuel Parris by the hand with touching solemnity.

The old minister saw his friends file away from the house, and bend their course toward that of the magistrate, and then he felt with a pang of unutterable sorrow that the fate of Barbara Stafford had passed out of his hands.

That day a posse of men, headed by a constable, armed with a warrant to arrest Barbara Stafford for witchcraft, passed through the village and into the forest, taking the track which the unhappy woman had pursued. The moss and forest sward was moist yet, and with the keen eyes of men accustomed to pursue an Indian trail they found traces of her progress—now a faint footprint—then a broken twig or a fragment of her garments. Thus step by step they pursued her, till at last the whole group stood upon a swell of land that overlooked the hollow in which the Indians had built that sylvan lodge. At the entrance a red shawl had been stretched, which was now folded back to let the daylight through, and in the warm shadow beyond they saw the object of their search sitting in dreary thought.

A single Indian lay upon the turf a little way off, guarding the lodge with a vigilance the more watchful because his companions had gone forth in search of food.

The posse of men held a whispered consultation. They understood the condition of things, and resolved to act promptly before help came.

In the savage warfare which had ended in the subjugation of the kingly tribes, Indian life was held scarcely more sacred than that of the wild deer and panthers that infested the hills. When the constable saw that athletic savage lying upon the turf, with his broad chest exposed like that of a bronze statue, he drew the gun which he carried to his shoulder with a grim smile, called on God to bless the murder, and touched the ponderous lock with his finger. A sharp click, a loud report, a fierce cry: the savage leaped into the air, fell upon his face, all his limbs quivering, and with a single spasm lay dead across the entrance of Barbara Stafford's hiding-place.

Barbara came forth white and trembling, saw the dead savage at her feet, and looked fearfully around for his murderers. A group of men and a wreath of pale smoke curling out upon the air revealed all her danger. She did not retreat, but fell upon her knees and lifted the head of the Indian up from the ground. Drops of crimson stole down the bronze chest and fell slowly to the turf.

Barbara did not attempt to escape, though she saw at a glance all her danger. The savage who had been her protector was shot through the heart. The sight of so much life and strength smitten down in one instant paralyzed her. She had never witnessed a violent death before, and the shock bereft her alike of hope and fear.

The constable understood, and whispering his men to follow, crept toward her. She saw him without caring to escape, but, stooping over the body of her friend, shook her head mournfully as he came up.

"Unhappy man, you have killed him," she said, lifting her eyes to his face with a glance of pathetic reproach.

The constable stooped down, dragged the body from her feet, and cast it headlong down the slope of earth on which she stood. Then, without a word, he seized Barbara by both her wrists, and grasped them together with a firm grip of one hand, while he searched in his pocket for a thong of deer-skin prepared for the occasion. Putting one end of the thong between his teeth, he wound the other tightly over her wrists—so tightly that the delicate hands grew purple to the finger ends. Then he finished his barbarous work with a double knot tightened with both hands and teeth.

The outraged woman lifted her eyes to his face with a frightened look as he performed this brutal act, but she neither protested nor struggled; once she observed gently that he hurt her hands, but, when no heed was taken, allowed him to proceed without further remonstrance.

When her hands were bound, the constable tore down her shawl from the entrance of the lodge and placed it on her shoulders, crossing it over her bosom and knotting it behind, thus forming a double thraldom for her arms.

She bore it all patiently and in silence; once she cast an earnest look into the depths of the forest, perhaps with a hope that her savage friends might come to the rescue, but she only met the gleaming eyes of a wild-cat, swinging lazily on a bough to which human approach had driven him. Even there her glance was answered by a low growl and a gleam of savage teeth. The wild beasts were defying her in one direction, and human cruelty dragging her to death in another.

Thus, helpless and unresisting, she was forced into the settlement again, bound like a criminal. She made neither protest nor resistance, but remained quietly in the hands of her captors, accepting her fate with touching resignation.

CHAPTER XL.

THE ACCUSERS OF BARBARA.

When the constable and his followers came into the town of Salem, with Barbara Stafford in their midst, a wild commotion seized upon the inhabitants. Every door and window was crowded with human heads. The public streets were swarming like a bee-hive, and a look of solemn consternation greeted her at every point. Pale and still Barbara passed before them. The subdued feeling, the majesty and grandeur of her carriage, impressed many with awe, and a few with gleams of compassion; but the ban of witchcraft was upon her, and no one ventured to step forth for her defence or comfort. She was not insulted: among the whole crowd there was no man or child cruel enough to assail her. Little boys who had gathered up stones and handfuls of turf to hurl at the witch, felt the missiles dropping from their grasp when those great, mournful eyes turned upon them. Some little girls, in the tenderness of their youth, began to cry when they saw how her hands were bound; but one or two old women called out, and with jeers bade her prove her descent from the devil by breaking her own bonds, exactly as like revilers mocked our Saviour more than sixteen hundred years before. But some supernatural power seemed to bind the voices of these women, and the words they would have uttered died out in low groans: the gentle power of that woman's presence silenced even the spite of unredeemed old age.

The constable and his men bent their way to the house of Samuel Parris, where the accused was to be confronted with her victim. The inhabitants of the town followed the cortege, and gathered in groups upon the stretch of sward that lay between the minister's dwelling and the meeting-house; while the functionaries of the church and officials of the government entered the house.

Elizabeth Parris still kept her room, but in her delirium she had insisted on wearing her usual apparel, and when her father came up, with distress in his face, to prepare her for the approach of her strange visitors, the young girl was resolute to descend to the rooms below where she would entertain her father's guests with due state.

Possessed of the idea that there was some great entertainment at which she was to preside, the beautiful lunatic—for such fever and intense excitement had made her for the time—began to rummage in her chest of drawers for the pretty ornaments with which she had adorned herself while the guest of Lady Phipps. The old minister dared not resist her; with him these vagaries were solemn evidences of witchcraft with which it was sacrilege to interfere.

Thus, in a little time after Barbara Stafford was led into the house, Elizabeth Parris appeared on the staircase, crowned with artificial roses that glowed crimson in her golden hair, and gathering the white muslin robe to her bosom with one pale hand, as if the inspiration of some old master, when he searched his soul for the type of a heathen priestess, had fallen upon her. Her cheeks were flushed, her eyes shone like stars, and the gliding motion with which she descended the stairs made her presence spiritual as that of an angel.

Abigail Williams came after, very serious, and with a look of terrible pain upon her forehead; her eyes, dusky with trouble, watched the movements of her cousin. She seemed a dark shadow following the spirit.

Then came Samuel Parris; how white his hair had become! how old and locked were those thin features! He moved like one who felt the curse of God heavy upon him and his whole house. Desolation was in every movement.

Old Tituba crept after, quick and vigilant as a fox. She traced back all this trouble to her own story of the martyred Hutchinsons. From the day of her confidence with Abby Williams the curse had entered her master's house. She was the evil spirit that the people sought. She had concocted the roots into the drinks with which Elizabeth had quenched her fever thirst when the disease crept insidiously over her. True, Barbara Stafford had told her they were cooling and wholesome; but what right had she to take the word of a strange woman like that? Was not her darling witch-stricken, soul and body, by the very decoctions with which she had hoped to cure her? Had not the words of her own tongue changed Abigail Williams from a calm, gentle maiden, full of thoughtful affections, to a stern prophetess, such as her people evoked when they thirsted for vengeance?

Tituba had pondered these things over and over in her thoughts till she almost believed herself a witch and a demon, and this was the frame of mind in which the poor old creature followed the stricken family into the presence of the magistrates.

When Elizabeth Parris entered the room that had once been the favorite retreat of her mother, she bent her slight figure with gentle recognition of her father's friends, and moving toward the old oaken chair, which had been, time out of mind, in the family, sat down, or rather dropped into it, for her strength was giving way. But, feeling that something was expected of her, she looked around, making mournful efforts at a smile. Her glance fell on Barbara Stafford, who sat near the window, watching her movements with a look of gentle compassion.

All at once her eyes dilated and shot fire, her brow began to throb heavily under the roses that bound it, and uplifting herself from the chair, she pointed at Barbara with her finger, reeling to and fro, as we remember Rachel when she sung the Marseillaise almost upon the brink of her own grave.

"Take her away! take her away! I cannot breathe while she sits yonder, with her soft, calm eyes! That look has poison in it!"

She began to shudder, and fell back into the chair, crying piteously.

The old man approached Barbara Stafford, and clasping his withered hands, began to plead with her.

"Behold," he said, stooping meekly toward her, "behold your evil work! When you came here, only a few days ago, she was bright and fair as the rose when it opens. Every thing made her happy. If she went out, joy followed her; when she came back, the sound of her footsteps was like an answered prayer. Till you came, the Lord dwelt in our household, and blessed it. We loved each other, and helped each other, as Christians should. Woman, what had we done that you should drive out our household angels, and fill their places with fiends of darkness? I saved your life, and lo, my child, my only child, is accursed before God and man!"

The minister lifted his hands as he ceased speaking, and covering his face, wept aloud.

"Alas!" said Barbara Stafford, and her voice was full of unshed tears, "I have done you no wrong, kind old man. The life you saved was of little worth, but such as it is, I would gladly lay it down to bring peace under this roof once more. Do believe me, not for my sake, but your own: Elizabeth Parris is ill from natural causes, not from any power, evil or good, that rests in me. Sudden excitement—a cold perhaps taken in the night air—anxiety to which her girlish nature is unused—all these may have conspired to disturb her brain."

Barbara would have said more, but at the sound of her voice Elizabeth began to writhe and moan in her chair, till the sound of her anguish drove the old man wild.

"Oh, my God! my God! why hast thou forsaken this household!" he cried, while his quivering hands dropped apart and fell downward, and his deploring eyes turned upon his child.

"Oh, woman, are you not potent to redeem as well as to inflict? Is your power all evil?"

"I have no power save that which belongs to a weak woman," replied Barbara; "but if you can unbind my hands, I will strive to soothe the poor child."

"Unbind her hands," said the magistrate, who had not spoken till then. "Let the spirit within have full sway. Heaven forbid that we judge without sure evidence. Constable, set her limbs free!"

The constable unknotted the red shawl from Barbara's shoulders, and loosened the thongs that tied her wrists together. A broad purple mark was left on the delicate skin, and her fair hands were swollen with pain. She drew a deep breath, for the sense of relief was pleasant; and moving gently across the floor, she laid her two hands on Elizabeth's forehead.

Up to this moment the girl had moaned and writhed as with overwhelming pain, but as the hands of Barbara Stafford fell upon her forehead and rested there, the tension left her nerves, and with a sigh she sank back in the chair. Barbara smiled, passing her hands softly down the now pale cheek, till they rested for a moment on the muslin that covered Elizabeth's bosom. She again lifted them to the drooping forehead, and let them glide to the bosom again, leaving quiet with each gentle touch.

At last Elizabeth Parris turned her head drowsily, and the lids fell over her eyes like white rose-leaves folding themselves to sleep, and with what seemed a blissful shudder, she resigned herself to perfect rest. Then Barbara looked at her accusers with a sad smile, and took her seat by the window, little dreaming that the holy impulses of pity that had just soothed the pain of a fellow-creature would be the most fatal evidence offered at her trial.

"Take her away—take the woman hence!" cried the magistrate, rising up, hardened in all his iron nature. "The devil, her master, has for once betrayed her into what might seem an angel's work, but it proves more than an angel's power—away with her!"

In his supreme ignorance, this magistrate of the seventeenth century followed the example of the rabble that hunted our Saviour to death. Surely the world had progressed but slowly in its soul knowledge since that awful day of the crucifixion.

While Elizabeth Parris lay sleeping sweetly in her chair—it was the first slumber she had known in three days—Barbara Stafford was bound again with those ignominious thongs and taken from the room. Samuel Parris watched the movements with a thrill of compassion: grateful for the rest that had been given to his child, he could not see those white hands bound so rudely without a thrill of pity.

But the people without obtained intelligence of what had been passing, and the words sacrilegious and blasphemy ran from lip to lip. "What," said one, "does the witch mock the holy miracles of our Saviour, and attempt to heal with the laying on of hands? Dares she to brave God in the very presence of our most worshipful magistrate, and that gray-haired Christian, Samuel Parris? Why should we wait for a trial? is not this evidence enough? Let us take her down to the sea and cast her into the deep."

"Let us hang her at the town post," cried another. "The sea has vomited her up once; it is no use trying that."

Then other voices set in, and the tumult became general. The throng gathered closer and closer

around the minister's house; the women most eager, and crying out loudest that the witch should be given up to them.

The magistrate was, so far as he allowed his own nature freedom, a just man, and fully believed himself right in giving Barbara up to the law, still he would have guarded her with his life from the howling rage of the mob. But it is doubtful if even his steady courage could have saved her, so intense was the excitement; but just as he appeared on the door-step standing in front of the prisoner, a company of soldiers, wearing the colonial uniform, came galloping up the forest road with Norman Lovel, Governor Phipps's private secretary, at their head.

The crowd fell back tumultuously as the young man came forward, for he dashed on with little regard to life or limb, and drew up in front of the house.

"Worshipful sir," he said, addressing the magistrate, "I have come to relieve you of a painful duty. Here is Governor Phipps's requisition. This lady being a stranger, will be tried where his excellency can himself have cognizance of the proceedings. I am authorized to convey your prisoner to Boston."

CHAPTER XLI.

BARBARA IN HER DUNGEON.

The trees were leafless, and snow lay thick on the ground, when Barbara Stafford was brought from the prison where she had been kept in close captivity, and presented for trial in the North Church of Boston. A trial for witchcraft was considered somewhat in the light of an ecclesiastical tribunal, and thus the sacred edifices of Boston and Salem were frequently used in such cases. But this was the first legal assemblage that had ever entered the North Church, for the governor's attendance and membership there gave it a prestige over all other places of worship. Besides it had of late been doubly consecrated by the baptism of the chief magistrate in the very plentitude of his power; and for common witches, such as had been tried, hung and drowned, by dozens during the year, the place would have been considered far too holy.

But Barbara Stafford was no common offender. She had been a guest in Governor Phipps's mansion. The people of Boston had seen her seated, side by side, with Lady Phipps in the state carriage, with servitors and halberts, right and left. It was known far and wide that she had come to the country in a strange ship, heaved up, as it were, from the depths of a raging storm; that the elements had battled against her and overwhelmed her in the deep, wrecking the boat in which she strove to reach the shore, and swallowing her up in whirlpools, lashed into fury doubtless by her evil presence.

From all this peril it was known that Samuel Parris, the minister of Salem, had rescued her. The studious, holy man of books and prayer, who had saved her life, was now ready to stand forward as her chief accuser.

Many remembered that her garments had been of a texture more rich than those of the governor's lady, while many who had been present at the baptism of Sir William Phipps were impressed by the grandeur of her countenance, and the almost unearthly stateliness with which she had glided through the throng of worshippers on that memorable day.

All these things made a great impression on the people, the more because of the profound silence which had reigned regarding her, since she was placed in the prison at Boston. It was said that, during the first three days of her incarceration, she had been visited by Governor Phipps, who, urged by the solicitations of his young secretary, had consented to see her. But the interview had been brief and unsatisfactory. When apprised of his coming, the lady had protested, and by every means in her power sought to avoid the visit; but young Lovel hoped to gain her a potent friend by persistence, and overcome by his persuasion she submitted.

Her dungeon was badly lighted, and Barbara sat in the darkest corner, with her face bowed and her form muffled in a large shawl. She lifted her eyes as the governor approached, and he felt their glance coming out from the darkness without really meeting it with his eyes. The thrill, that ran through his form, warned him of the diabolical power which the woman was said to possess, and it was with a solemn reserve that he drew near her.

She neither spoke nor moved, but her form shrunk together, and her garments began to tremble, as if she were suffering from cold. He spoke to her, but she did not answer. He stooped down to address her, and the shivering fit came on again. His stern heart was filled with compassion, and yet she had not spoken a word. A gush of strange, tender pity swelled his breast, and he turned away, with dew in his eyes—such dew as had not sparkled there in twenty years.

He went back and bent over her; the velvet of his cloak swept her lap, his breath almost stirred her hair.

She gave him one wild look, and dropped her head again, while, with her two hands, she grasped a fold of his cloak, and pressed it to her lips. The hands fell to her knees, the cloak swayed back to its natural folds, and he was all unconscious of the movement. In his earnestness, and

compelled by a power that endowed him with momentary eloquence, he was pleading with her to give her true name and history, in order that he and those who wished her well might find some means of defence when she should be brought to trial.

She heard him, like one in a dream—a sweet, wild dream—for her lips parted with a heavenly smile, and she held her breath, as if it had been a delicious perfume, which she would not permit to escape from the bosom it thrilled. A shiver still ran through her frame. It was no longer as an expression of pain, but like the exquisite tremor which the south wind gives to a thicket of roses.

She could not have spoken, had the whole world depended on her voice; so his pleading was all in vain. Had she uttered a sound, it would have been a cry of wild thanksgiving. Had she moved, it would have been to throw herself at his feet. She did move, and half rose from the wooden bench on which she was seated, but, seeing young Lovel at the door, fell back again, shrouding her face in the shawl, and murmuring prayers of entreaty and gratitude that she had escaped a great peril. The shawl muffled her voice, but the governor saw that she was praying, and retreated toward the door.

"Tell her to think of what I have said—to send me any information—I will not ask it to be a confession—on which she may found a defence before the judges," he said, addressing young Lovel; "she is frightened by my presence and has no power to speak; persuade her to confide in you, Norman. Surely, as the Lord liveth, this woman has some great power, for good or for evil. Those who visited Peter in his prison must have felt as I do now."

"Hear how she sobs!" said the young man, deeply moved. "Oh! your excellency, go back; her heart is softened; she may speak to you now; I never heard her weep so passionately before."

"No," said the governor, gently, "I will not force myself upon her grief. Give her time for thought, and opportunities for prayer. The devil had power over the Holy One forty days and forty nights. It may be that this poor lady is going through a like probation. She may come forth with the radiance of an angel at last."

"She is an angel," answered Lovel, with tender enthusiasm. "Oh! if she could but be brought to confide in you."

"We can at least delay the trial, and give her time," said the governor. "Perhaps this scourge of the evil one may pass away without crushing her, if she is protected till the power has reached its climax."

The governor went away, after saying this, a thoughtful and saddened man. His intellect was clear, and his strength of character too powerful for that profound faith in witchcraft which influenced many of the clergy and judges of the land. He was not a person to join men, who should have stood between the superstition of ignorance and its victims, but rather gave this superstitious frenzy the force of their superior intelligence, and such dignity as sprang from position. The commotion which this subject had created in his government—the solemn trials held upon helpless old men and women, followed by bloodshed and terror—had already filled his mind with misgiving. Though, for a season, he was borne forward by the public clamor, and had in his own experience no strong proof against the phenomena produced in confirmation of witchcraft, he had never entered heartily into the persecutions of the courts. Nor had he risen up against them, because in his own soul there was doubt and misgiving.

Barbara Stafford had not spoken a word in his presence, yet her silence and the very atmosphere of truth that surrounded her had affected him deeply. After this interview he began to doubt more than ever if the great excitement of the day might not merge into persecution; if the pure and the good might not possibly suffer with those given over to the prince of darkness.

CHAPTER XLII.

OLD FRIENDS IN COUNCIL.

When Sir William returned home, he found Samuel Parris, his old patron and early preceptor, waiting for him. The good man had taken his staff and walked all the way from Salem, to seek counsel and consolation of his powerful friend.

Between these two men was a tie which no one could fathom—a tie stronger than that which might have bound master and pupil, or benefactor and protege. Phipps had sprung from a poor apprentice boy, to be the richest and most powerful man in New England. He had won title and wealth from the mother government, by his indomitable energies, while Samuel Parris had dreamed his life away, under the roof where the embryo great man had taken his first charity lesson. But though one was a man of thought, and the other of progress, no distance of time nor station could separate them.

Governor Phipps was in the prime of life, a man of noble presence, strong in intellect and in power. Parris was old and bowed to the earth with trouble; the white locks floated thinly over his temples, his black eyes were sharp and wild with protracted anguish. But the two met kindly, as they had done years before. The strong man forgot his successful ambition, and the state to

which it had led. With the feeble old minister he was an apprentice boy again.

Sir William found the minister sitting in his library, exhausted with fatigue and completely broken down by the awful affliction that had fallen upon him. Dust from the road lay thick upon his heavy shoes and along the seams of his black garments, while it turned his snow white hair to a dull gray. His stout cane was planted hard on the carpet, and his weary head fell on the withered hands clenched tremulously over it.

Thus tired, desolate, and broken-hearted, the old man waited for his former pupil.

"My dear, old master—my best friend!" cried Phipps, smitten with a thousand memories, both of pain and pleasure at the sight of his preceptor. "I can guess what has brought you hither. The same subject is weighing on my own heart. I have just returned from a conference with that unhappy lady."

Samuel Parris looked up eagerly.

"You saw her? She spoke with you? Tell me, tell me, did the woman confess?"

"Nay, she did not speak."

"What, obstinately silent? does the evil spirit take that course?" said Parris.

"Not obstinately silent: I did not say that; on the contrary, she seemed deeply moved, and her sobs filled the room as I left it."

"But she confessed nothing?"

"Nothing!"

"Nor has she told any one a word of her own history?"

"Not a word."

The old man lifted his wild eyes to those of his friend, and searched the expression there as if his life depended on it.

"William Phipps, you think this woman innocent?"

"I feel that she is innocent, but magistrates do not judge by feeling. Justice appeals only to the brain, while mercy is a child of the heart. Samuel Parris, as I came from Barbara Stafford's prison, it was with a thankful spirit that God had not made me one of her judges."

"But I—I am her accuser!" cried out the old man, in passionate sorrow.

"But you had good grounds. This charge came not from you or yours, lightly or with malice: of that I am certain," said the governor, soothingly.

"But it came from me in terror and sore perplexity. The sight of my child possessed with the evil one urged me on. William, William, I thought of her, rather than of God's service! It is this that troubles me."

"But how of the maiden? Is she better or does this fiend rend her yet?"

"She is better. Since the sound sleep into which the woman cast her, Elizabeth has been quiet; but thoughtful as I never saw her before. The flush has left her face and half the time her eyes are full of tears, but she says little."

"These are favorable symptoms," answered Sir William. "Does the maiden still persist in thinking this woman the cause of her malady?"

"Both its cause and its cure. To her she has been an angel of wrath and of mercy both. But another cause of sorrow has sprung up in my household—Abigail Williams!"

"What, the dark-eyed girl that Lady Phipps thought so beautiful? Has this wicked contagion seized on her also?"

"Worse than my child. She seems smitten to the soul with sullen sorrow and deadly hate. Above all she dreaded old Tituba, who followed her from room to room like a dog at first, but when the girl drove her away, she sat down on the kitchen hearth with her feet in the ashes, refusing to eat or sleep, but kept up a weird chant that filled the house night and day with deathly music."

"Does this old woman accuse any one?"

"Nay, she simply accused herself. Once or twice she has gone out to the forest and stayed all day. At last she persuaded Abigail to go into the woods with her. After that, the strange animosity which had seized upon the maiden died out, and she was much with old Tituba who went quietly about her household work again."

Sir William listened to all this with grave attention. He was striving to judge how far the disturbed state of the minister's household had arisen from natural causes, but in his profound ignorance of all those sources of irritation which had preceded Barbara Stafford's arrest, he was unable to give them any solution save that of witchcraft, strongly as his sound judgment rebelled against it.

"Tell me, and speak I adjure you in the fear of God—tell me, William Phipps, if after hearing the evidence on which I have accused this woman, you can find one reason for thinking the charge of witchcraft without just foundation."

The governor, who sat with his elbow resting on the library table, bent his forehead thoughtfully on one hand.

"Friend, you ask a solemn question, and I will solemnly answer it. Before the Most High I cannot yet give a full and free belief to this enormity, which men call witchcraft. Yet when such judges as Hale, and many of like sort, give it credence, and hold solemn tribunals over it, I dare not oppose my judgment against theirs."

Samuel Parris arose to his feet and leaned heavily on his cane for support.

"What if these doubts be true?" he said, moving his head and looking away into vacancy. "Then what am I but a bearer of false witness, a persecutor, and if this lady is driven to her death, a murderer!"

"We can but walk according to the light which God has given us," answered Sir William.

"Tell me," continued Parris, "did this woman impress you with a sense of her diabolical power? Did your heart beat evenly as she spoke? Could you breath without an effort?"

"Nay, I cannot tell if the sensation I felt was evil or good," Phipps answered. "Compassion never yet swelled my heart so near to bursting. I tell you of a truth, Samuel Parris, when I was talking to that unhappy woman, I felt my knees shake, my breath stand still, and my very being go out to her in a flood of sorrowful tenderness, such as I never felt for mortal woman—but one."

"Then—then—you did think of *her*!" cried Parris, suddenly standing upright. "That was the question I dared not ask. Has her memory haunted you as it besets me, night and day, not only now but ever since that ship came drifting toward me through the storm?"

"Hush!" said the governor, and his voice scarcely rose above a whisper, while his face turned coldly white. "If this thing is witchcraft may it not drag the memories we love out of the very grave to haunt us?"

"Even so I have reasoned," answered Parris.

"God help us!" exclaimed Phipps, rising and beginning to pace the room with long, powerful strides, "for we have fallen on evil times."

Samuel Parris followed his friend's tall figure as it strode to and fro in the room with wistful interest.

"I came hither for counsel of thy younger and more vigorous mind," he said, with touching melancholy, "but everywhere that my footsteps turn, doubt and terror spring up. It grieves me sorely, son William, that my words have driven the color from that face, and the calm from thy bosom. Forgive me before I go!"

Phipps broke off abruptly in his walk. His grand face had regained its composure: it was pale still, but resolutely calm.

"Father," he said, gently, using an old term of endearment, "I am unfit to give counsel in this matter. See you not how weak I am?"

Parris took the hand held out to him and pressed it with solemn fervor.

"William, I too will see this woman in prison: peradventure some light may be vouchsafed to me."

"After that, come to me again," said the governor.

Thus the two friends parted.

The minister did indeed go to the prison, where his victim was confined, but she resolutely refused to see him. "No good could come of the interview," she said. "She was resigned to her fate, and only asked to be left in quiet till her day of humiliation came on." The only person that she would permit to enter her presence was Norman Lovel, whose faith in her goodness had never been shaken for an instant. Twice a dark-browed and singularly handsome young man made urgent solicitation to be admitted to her prison, but she never heard of it. Being a stranger of singular appearance, the guard had refused him without communicating his wish to her, but the fact was stated to Samuel Parris with such interpretation as an ignorant and superstitious man might be expected to give. To him the singular beauty of the visitor's face, the magnificent eyes and raven hair, could alone belong to the evil one himself. Certain it was, no human being like that had ever been recognized by any one in or out of the city till he began to haunt the witch-prison.

Here was new cause for suspicion, and once more the minister's heart hardened itself. Disappointed in his hopes of counsel from the governor, the restless man betook himself to his brother divines, and told them his doubts and sorrows with the simple truth so natural to his character. When he described the condition of his child and told how Barbara Stafford, who seemed at first an angel of light, had wrought a fiend's work in his household, the ministers rebuked his unbelief and reasoned with him diligently, till he began to look upon his gentler

feelings as a snare of Satan, ever on the alert to save his own. To this belief, at last, Sir William Phipps brought himself, but slowly and with reluctance. His heart smote him as he gave the lady up, but how would he oppose such evidence? After admitting so much it was impossible for a just man to feel any thing but holy indignation against the person who had, by satanic power, disturbed the beautiful character of his favorite Elizabeth Parris.

From that time he began to look upon the interest which young Lovel manifested in the prisoner as a proof of her pernicious influence, and rebuked the young man sternly when he sought to arouse kindly feelings in her behalf once more.

Thus weeks and months went by, leaving Barbara Stafford in miserable solitude, till the frost crept over the forest, and the white snow fell upon the earth like a winding sheet; then they brought her forth for trial.

CHAPTER XLIII.

THE MINISTER'S EVIDENCE.

The trial was one which filled the community with a certain sense of awe. It was no old woman, brought up in their midst, whose very ignorance could be urged in judgment against her; but a brave, beautiful lady, full of life, and bright with intellect, whose very presence as she walked up those aisles, with a forest of halberts bristling around her, made the proudest of her judges hold his breath. The prisoner sat down upon a bench placed near the pulpit, within sight of the communion-table which was surrounded by her judges, for whom a platform had been built, lifting them in sight of the people. She was very pale, and her eyes had a mournful look inexpressibly touching, but there was neither timidity nor unconcern in her appearance; she seemed quiet as a lamb, but weary unto death, like one who had been driven a long way, and through rough places, to be slaughtered at last.

The meeting-house was crowded. The square pews, the galleries and staircases, groaned under a weight of human life. Men crowded upon each other, like hounds on the scent, only to obtain a glimpse of the beautiful witch, or to catch a tone of her voice. Like sportsmen who had brought down a splendid bird in their search after common game, the rabble gloried in the queenliness and grace of its victim. The public had become tired of hanging withered old crones on the witch-gallows, and wanted exactly a creature like that, to give piquancy and zest to their terrible hunt after human life.

Inside and out, the meeting-house was beset with a breathless throng. The windows were open, though the air was sharp and full of frost, that the curious crowd, which trampled down the snow without, might get a glimpse of that pale face. The forest, out of whose bosom the city of Boston had been cut, swept down close to the building, and the crowd extended into its margin. It was observed that a few Indians mingled with the people in this direction, and that others were occasionally seen moving among the naked trees farther up the woods, where a hemlock hollow broke off the view.

When the trial commenced, and the prosecuting attorney was about to open his case, drawing all eyes to the meeting-house and the proceedings within, a train of savages came gliding out of these hemlock shadows, and mingling imperceptibly with the crowd, through which they moved like a brook stirring the long grass of a meadow.

It was a common thing for friendly Indians to mix in such crowds, and no one observed that a sort of military precision marked the movement of these seemingly friendly savages, even while penetrating the multitude, and that they dropped into line, after entering the meeting-house, forming a cordon from the platform, on which the judges sat, to the front entrance doors.

Had these savages been in full costume, their number might have seemed formidable enough to excite some anxiety; but they wore no war-paint, and came after the fashion of a friendly nation, with blankets to keep them from the cold, and a movement so quiet that their very presence gave little apprehension.

At their head, and walking so far in advance that no one but a keen observer would have guessed him of the party, came a young man, handsomely garbed after the fashion of the times, as a person of condition might be, and with a certain air of self-centred ease that would have distinguished him in any place where the general attention was not fixed on one point.

He was a young man of wonderful presence, dark like a Spaniard, with quick, brilliant eyes, and features finely chiselled, bold in the outline, and yet delicate. His mouth had a beautiful power of expression, and his forehead was like dusky marble, cut when the artist was thinking of war and tempest. This man had made his way close up to the platform, where the judges were seated, and listened with keen attention to the proceedings.

The prosecuting counsel opened his case with great vigor and eloquence. Then witnesses for the crown were called, and Samuel Parris stood forth. The old man was agitated, but firm in his sense of right. It was seldom that a witness of so much dignity appeared upon a trial like that, for usually the accusers, like their victims, were persons of low position and small attainments. Here

the wisdom and piety of the crowd rose up in array against one helpless woman.

Samuel Parris required no questioning. He told his story with brief earnestness, unconsciously drawing conclusions from the facts he related, fatal to the prisoner, but with a solemn conviction of their truth.

"Did he recognize the prisoner at the bar?" he was asked. "Yes, he had known her some months; it had seemed to him from the first that she must have been familiar to him years ago. That was doubtless one of her delusions; but the feeling had led him to think of her with friendly interest, and extend hospitalities which had conducted him and his family into a deadly snare."

"Where had he seen her first?"

"In the midst of a terrible storm, which the inhabitants of Boston might well remember; when the shores were lashed and trampled down by the tempest, where the waves rioted and tore against each other like mad animals, and out to sea all was one turmoil of wind, waters, and black, angry clouds.

"That woman's influence must have been infernal in its power, for in the midst of this storm he had been impelled forth to the heights—he, a feeble old man, urged forward by a premonition, that, in the black turmoil of the tempest, he would find something waited for all his life. He went, with his garments in the wind, and the cold rain beating against his temples—went, and saw, in the midst of the storm, a great ship heaving shoreward, with vast clouds falling around her, lurid and luminous with a red sunset, in the midst of which stood that woman—the prisoner. As he watched, a young man had come up to him on the heights, even Norman Lovel, the youth who was but now whispering to the woman. This young man confessed there, in the whirl of the wind, that he, too, had been impelled to seek the shore, and look for some great good, which was to come to him up from the stormy sea.

"They saw the ship in company. That woman was upon its deck, around her surged angry billows and looming clouds, fringed for a moment by the sunset.

"They saw the woman come down the side of the vessel, where it rocked and plunged like a desert horse in the lasso; saw her put off in a small boat, amid the boiling waves; saw the boat leap and reel toward the land. He and young Lovel rushed down together to the base of the hills, far into the waves. They saw the boat strike, saw it crushed into atoms among the rocks, and saw the woman weltering in a whirlpool of waters. The two, he and the young man, rushed into the waves, breasted them, battled with them like lions. A wild strength came to his arms, a supernatural power, that neither belonged to his feeble organization nor his age. From that time, no doubt, the evil one possessed him. How he tore the woman from the waves that had engulfed her he never knew; for the youth was hurled upon the shore, cold and dead, grasping her garments with both hands.

"The youth was dead, he could solemnly testify to that, for he felt his pulse, and kept one hand long over his heart feeling for the hushed life, but there was neither breath nor pulse—Lazarus, in his tomb, was not more lifeless when the Saviour looked upon him. Yes, the youth was surely dead. But when the woman arose from the sand, with her hair dropping salt rain, and her lips purple with cold, she saw him lying there, prone and white at her side. Then her pale face lighted up with supernatural gleams. She lifted his head and breathed upon it. She gathered him to her bosom, and pressed her cold lips down upon his forehead and his marble mouth—those kisses, the unearthly warmth of her eyes, brought him to life. She had purchased immortality of the evil one, and gave part of it to him.

"This was the one great act of sorcery that he had witnessed, and to which he now bore testimony before the most high God. After that, the woman obtained an unbounded power over the youth, who manifested an uncontrollable desire for her company; he had neglected his old friends and the most binding attachments; body and soul he had become the serf of her diabolical power."

Here Samuel Parris paused. The perspiration rose in great drops to his forehead, his hands shook as he wiped the moisture away.

"And is this all?" demanded the judge, while the audience broke the silence by hoarse murmurs, that stole through the windows, and grew louder as the people outside took them up. "Is this all?"

"No," said the old man, and the white hair rose slowly from his temples, while shadows gathered about his mouth, "I, too, was in the hands of this woman of Endor—I, the servant of the Lord, who have broken the holy bread to God's people for more than fifty years. Here, in this consecrated building, while I stood with the sacred wine in my hands, after that just man, William Phipps, had drank of it in baptism, this woman appeared to me. Standing in the very spot where he had partaken of the sacrament, she appeared to me as an angel of light, for her eyes shone like stars, and a smile of tender humility beamed on her face—with those eyes, with that smile, and with a voice that might have dropped from the golden harps to which cherubs sing. She won me into a great sacrilege."

Again the minister wiped his brow; the judge grew pale, and leaned forward breathlessly. The audience was still as death; you could hear the shivering of the naked tree boughs afar off in the forest, but nothing nearer.

Amid this appalling hush, Barbara Stafford lifted her face to the witness, and a faint, pitying smile lay like a shadow on her lips. She seemed about to speak, but the judge lifted his hand.

"A great sacrilege, brother Parris?"

The minister cast a pleading look upon the judges at the bar and his brethren of the ministry, as if beseeching forbearance.

"Yes! a great sacrilege. As I stood, with the unleavened bread before me and the sacred wine in my hand—stood alone in this holy building, for all else had departed—the prisoner, Barbara Stafford, by the sweet wiles which I speak of, won me to give the wine to her, that she might taste it; and so beguiled of the devil, I broke with her of the bread which is a symbol of the body of Christ. This, brethren, was my sin—I was beset of the evil one and fell!"

A groan broke from the ministers that heard the confession. The judge bent his forehead to the palm of his hand, shading the pallor of his features. The foreman of the jury muttered a low prayer, and the jury whispered a solemn amen.

Even the face of young Lovel took an expression of affright. The stillness that reigned in the body of the house was appalling.

CHAPTER XLIV.

PROGRESS OF THE TRIAL.

The old minister sat down, shading his face with both hands; then, in his place stood Elizabeth, pale, thin, wild. The shadow of her former beauty seemed hanging around her like a shroud.

When she saw her lover standing close to Barbara Stafford, a faint glow stole over her cheek, as if a peach blossom had blown across it, leaving its reflection behind.

The judge lifted his head and looked kindly upon her. The jury whispered together, and cast pitying glances that way; and through all that vast crowd a thrill of sympathy ran.

Poor girl! she was sincere as a child, earnest as a woman. She told of the power of love and hate which Barbara Stafford had attained over her; how, in her absence, the most bitter dislike filled her bosom, but when Barbara's eyes were upon her, or her voice in her ear, a sweet revulsion followed, and she was like a babe, or a slave, in the woman's presence. She spoke of the time when Barbara came to the parsonage at Salem, of the strange effect it had upon Abby Williams, and the more terrible results to herself. Then she said the presence of this woman became a torture. When she spoke, a knife pierced her heart; when she smiled, lurid fire seemed creeping over her brain. At last, her entire being was given up to the sorceress, whose power filled her room with strange shapes, that tormented the sleep from her eyes, and all peace from her heart. She was better now. The prayers of her Christian father had emancipated her; but the judges might see by her pale face, and thin hands, how fatally the curse had fastened on her life.

"Had she seen no further proof of the infernal powers of the prisoner?"

"Yes. One morning, just at daylight, while standing at her bedroom window, she saw what seemed to be the figure of Barbara Stafford, riding out of the forest on a white horse. She turned her eyes away for a moment, and, lo! the horse was gone, and the woman stood on the green sward alone. Determined to satisfy herself if it was in reality a witch spirit, or the woman in person, she went into Barbara Stafford's chamber and found her in bed and asleep. Old Tituba could bear testimony to this, for she also went into the prisoner's room, and saw her lying on the bed so buried in slumber that all the noise they made on entering did not arouse her. As for the white horse, she saw it as plainly, with that woman on its back, as she ever saw the sun at mid-day."

This was the evidence of Elizabeth Parris. She laid all the pains of her jealous heart open to the judges, and in the natural agony of disturbed love they read only the power of witchcraft. Reticent from the exquisite delicacy which made her susceptible to so much pain, she did not mention Norman Lovel in her evidence; thus, all clue to the origin of her suffering was concealed.

When her evidence was complete, Elizabeth fainted, and was borne from the court in the arms of Norman Lovel, who, touched by her gentleness and her innocent confession, sprang forward to save her from falling.

Governor Phipps appeared as the third witness, and it was remarked that, for the first time that day, Barbara Stafford became greatly agitated; her lips, hitherto serenely closed, began to quiver; her eyes dilated, and the blue tints deepened under them. When he spoke, her hands clasped and unclasped themselves, nervously, under her shawl. Once she arose and looked around, as if tempted to fly into the open air.

But the constable laid his heavy hand on her, reminding her that she was a prisoner. She looked in his face with a bewildered stare, remembered what she was, and sat down with a dreary smile about her lips.

Sir William Phipps was also greatly agitated. He had been summoned by the court, and with proud humility obeyed its behests.

"To the best of his remembrance," he said, "he had never met the prisoner but three times in his life: once at his own door, when, by mistake, he for a moment thought her to be Lady Phipps."

Here a low moan broke from the neighborhood of the prisoner; but, if it came from her, the anguish to which it gave voice was instantly suppressed.

Barbara was looking at the witness. The light fell on his face, but hers was in shadow, still and white like that of a marble statue.

"Yes, for a moment," he resumed, "he had mistaken the prisoner for his wife, and in the darkness held her to his bosom for a single moment; during that brief time, a strange swell heaved at his heart, and took away his breath; it subsided into a heavy pain, which hung about him for days, though the woman had departed before he could look upon her face, and he had not heard the sound of her voice. This pain had seized him once before while he stood in that sacred building, with the sacramental wine at his lips; and he was informed afterwards that the prisoner had entered the house just as he took the goblet in his hand. Again her supernatural influence—for he could account for these sensations no other way—had been exerted on him as he entered her place of confinement, for such was the compassion she inspired, had it rested with him, his own hands would have been impelled to open her prison doors and set her free."

As the governor uttered these words, Barbara Stafford's eyes filled with tears, and a glow of exquisite tenderness softened her face. She drew a deep breath, and then the tears began to drop, large and fast, from her eyes, as if her very heart were breaking.

Unimportant as the governor's evidence might seem in these days, it had a powerful effect upon the court. He was known among the people as a stern, proud man, cold as steel, but just beyond question, even to the sacrificing of his own life, had it been forfeited to the law. That he should be influenced to such tenderness of compassion, against his reason, and in spite of himself, was, to the people who listened, deeper proofs of witchcraft than the facts to which Samuel Parris had sworn. He was known as a tender-hearted, visionary old man, half poet, half philosopher, by all the country round. But the governor—whoever supposed that sentiment or imagination could cloud his clear judgment?

Thus, though the governor was guarded in his evidence, which to men less influenced by superstition would have been nothing, it bore heavily against the unhappy woman looking at him so wistfully through her blinding tears.

After this, Norman Lovel was brought to the stand, sorely against his will, for though, in the depths of his soul, he was satisfied that the influence which the noble woman possessed was only such as God always lends to true greatness, he could not, after those who had gone before, urge his convictions on the court, and alas! the facts he had no power to contradict: they were even as Samuel Parris had sworn them to be.

When Barbara Stafford saw his troubled look, she beckoned him toward her, and before the constable could interfere, bade him be of good courage and speak the truth, trusting her with the Lord.

It could not have been otherwise. He did speak the truth, and his very efforts to explain and soften the facts which Samuel Parris had stated, only served to prejudice the jury more deeply. These astute men brightened up, and crowding their heads close together, whispered that it was easy to see the influence of the beautiful witch strong upon him, and, therefore, his words must be weighed with grave caution, as coming directly from the father of lies.

Then Abigail Williams came forward, but her evidence was clearly in favor of the prisoner. She disclaimed all impressions of evil obtained from the accused lady, so far as she was concerned. She admitted that a sudden and great cause of grief had fallen upon her—that she had been influenced against her friends, and suffered greatly by day and by night, but Barbara Stafford was not the cause; of her she only knew what was feminine and good. When questioned regarding the sources of her knowledge, and of her estrangement, she refused to speak. So the judges, after consulting together, drew a proof of Barbara's power from her perverse silence. How was it to be expected that the witness could bear unprejudicial evidence while the glance of the prisoner was upon her?

CHAPTER XLV.

CONCLUDING TESTIMONY.

The prosecuting attorney had been vigilant in the management of his case. No one event of Barbara Stafford's life, since she landed in Boston, had escaped him. Jason Brown and his wife took the witness stand next. The honest sailor was prejudiced against the prisoner. He solemnly believed that she had turned his own peaceful home into a den of iniquity, and made it the centre of a fearful witch-gathering. His frank, honest face, and profound self-conviction, aided his words powerfully.

Yes, he knew the woman. She came over from England in the same vessel with him. During the

voyage he had seen her cheerful, and easily pleased. She always had a sweet look and kind word for every one on the ship, till all hands on board, even to the cabin boy, almost worshipped her. Still no one ever knew from whence she came, or what business she had in the new country. She had plenty of gold, and gave it liberally to all who served her.

Brown had never seen any thing very remarkable in her conduct while on ship board; sometimes he heard her singing in the cabin, and often, as the sun went down, he had seen her gazing westward with a bright, hopeful countenance, as if she expected some great happiness in that direction.

When the storm rose and drove them furiously toward the land, Barbara Stafford came on deck with her cloak on, and seemed to glory in braving the tempest, which swept her so furiously coastward. She was fearless of danger, and exulted in every fierce plunge of the vessel, which made even tried sailors turn pale.

At last they came in sight of the harbor, but were compelled to cast anchor, the heave and swell of the ocean were so tumultuous. As the vessel lay there, tugging like a chained beast at its hausers, with a heavy fog drifting over it, and red clouds heaped up in the west, this woman had pleaded with him to let down a boat and put her on shore—anywhere, so that her feet touched the soil of America. She offered a handful of golden guineas to several of the men, but they all refused, holding the attempt to be certain death. How he was persuaded to let down the boat, unless impelled by the witchery in her look and voice, it was impossible for him to say. Certainly he did it, and not for the gold, for he only took one piece. The boat was dashed to pieces, and but for that God-fearing man, Samuel Parris, and young Lovel, every living soul in it would have been lost.

In answer to the question if he knew any thing more of the prisoner's practices in witchcraft, Jason Brown replied:

Some weeks after the woman left his house she returned to it one evening alone, just after dark. Before she entered, himself, his wife, and the hired man had been terrified by a crowd of dark faces piled, as it seemed, against the window and all peering in with eyes wild and bright as fiery stars. They had seen feathers wave, and red garments gleam through the glass, but tumultuously and half lost in shadows. Before any one could move to search this strange appearance more thoroughly, the faces disappeared, and did not come back.

Directly after this, one of the carpenters at work on the ship came in, and being questioned declared that he had seen nothing unusual about the house, though his path led him almost around it. While he was saying this Barbara Stafford came in, with her hood thrown back, her garments disturbed and covered with dust. She besought them almost with tears to hasten the repairs going on in the nearly wrecked vessel, and left a purse of gold in his hands to be used to speed the work. Then the woman went away in haste, as she had entered the house.

"Did they follow her to see where she went?"

"Not exactly; but they gathered around the window and watched her as she walked towards the woods. As they stood there, she rode forth out of the shadows on a white horse, and with her came two dark figures; no doubt the fiends who attended her. Scarcely were they swallowed up by the darkness, when all the woods swarmed visibly with dusky figures. He saw them moving under the trees and sweep in a slender column through a small opening into the thick of the forest again, where the weird pageant disappeared, following the prisoner."

In the morning after these strange doings, Brown had gone to his barn, where some boxes had been stored for a passenger who came over in the ship, and which he was to call for. These boxes were remarkably heavy. Of course he did not know any thing of their contents; but he was a powerful man and could not lift one of them an inch from the floor. But he found the corner where they stood empty. Every box was gone, and nothing but some trusses of loose hay remained. Astonished at this, he had searched the ground for wagon tracks, or some other sign of the way in which the boxes had been carried off; but nothing was there; not a wheel track or hoof print. Still the earth was trampled down, but not with human beings, barefooted or with honestly made shoes on their feet.

This was all Jason Brown had to say, except that he had felt the strange influence, described by so many, when the woman addressed him. In spite of himself he was always constrained to lift his hat when she went by. Indeed, so far had this feeling prevailed, that he had more than once put the quid of tobacco back into his pocket when it was almost to his mouth, because she happened to be looking that way; and would hide his cup of grog behind him if she chanced to be present when the rations of gin or rum were dealt out to the men. Jason Brown could not account for these things. He had never felt afraid or awkward in the presence of womankind before. If it was witchcraft—well, he couldn't say that the sin was altogether an unpleasant one. He knew nothing more; but his old woman had been with the prisoner a good deal, and might have something to tell.

As Jason Brown stepped heavily down into the crowd, his wife appeared on the stand, prim, cold, and self-possessed, like a statue of wood. She looked toward the prisoner with a cold, quiet glance, and then gave herself up to be questioned. Her story did not vary from that of the other witnesses, save that she threw no feeling into it, but spoke the simple truth without even an implied comment. Yes, she had loved the lady, loved her so well from the very first, that it seemed almost like a sin. But it appeared to her that this affection sprang out of the dreariness

left at her hearth after the two children died. It was very pleasant to sit at her spinning-wheel and see the sweet, mournful look on that face. Goody Brown could not help but think that the poor lady had lost something that she loved, and felt lonesome over it, for sometimes she would sit minutes together looking out on the sea till tears filled her eyes and blinded them. It was these tears that went to her heart. Others might have been bewitched by her smiles and her sweet voice, but she always thought of her children when the lady fell to crying, and longed to kneel down at her feet, sorrowful like herself, and pray God to help them both.

Had the witness seen nothing else that was strange in the prisoner?

Yes; one thing did happen which she had never mentioned to any human being except her husband. One day when Barbara Stafford was taking some things out of a trunk, Goody Brown went into her room suddenly, when the sunshine was streaming in at the window, and saw what seemed to her a wreath of living fire on the bed; a pair of handcuffs blazed in the same light, and a chain, half gold, half flame, rippled across the pillow. The prisoner started when she opened the door, and made an attempt to fling a purple silk mantle, that she had just taken from the trunk, over these things, but seeing that it was too late she dropped the garment and, pale with fright, asked what brought the housewife there, in a voice that was almost cross.

The witness looked in wonder at these strange objects, and asked if they would not set the bed on fire; at which the lady smiled, answering: "No, they were only bright stones playing with the sunshine, but cold and hard as rocks."

Then the witness touched the chain and saw that the prisoner spoke truth. It seemed like handling drops of frozen water. She asked what they were good for, and what use they could be put to. At which the lady sat the wreath upon her head, hung the chain around her neck, and fastened the handcuffs to her wrist with a snap that sounded like the click of a lock. She stood close by the window, and it appeared as if a rainbow had been broken over her.

Then the witness asked what the stones were called. The prisoner did not answer, but took them from her head and arms with a deep sigh, saying that they were of little use to her, and only made her heart ache. Then she put them up in a leather box lined with red velvet, and pressed them down into her trunk.

The witness had heard that witches sometimes crowned themselves with fire; and this thing troubled her even then, for the lady had not acted like herself, but turned red and white in the same breath, and spoke sharply, as she had never done before. The witness had not wished to stay in the room after that. When Barbara Stafford came out she looked very anxious, and asked Goody Brown not to mention any thing about the stones she had seen, or the rich garments packed in her trunk, as the farm-house stood in a lonely place, and the knowledge that such things could be found there might tempt robbers, she said.

This request, and the evident anxiety of the prisoner, had given the witness some troubled thoughts, but she had not really considered the fiery stones as witch ornaments till after Barbara Stafford's visit that night, when the shadows swarmed so thickly along her path.

Here the judge asked if the prisoner's trunk had been searched, and was answered that a thorough examination had been made, but no jewels found.

Then Goody Brown remembered another event. One day she had gone down to the wharf to carry her husband's dinner to him on shipboard, and was returning home, when a young man, who looked like a foreigner, came from the direction of her dwelling, carrying a small travelling-bag in his hand. He passed her, walking fast, and lifting his hat as if she had been a lady.

But what was there in this to implicate the prisoner?

Nothing, only that same man had come to the house to ask for a drink of milk on the very day that Barbara was rescued from the waves, and the housewife had caught a glimpse of him coming out of her room as she lay sleeping there. Besides, the boxes which had disappeared so strangely were his property. More than this. When Goody went back to her house she found the door open, and the trunk in which Barbara Stafford had packed the witch crown had been moved from its place. The lock was secure. But she knew that it had been opened, by a girdle of blue ribbon which hung over the edge, and was half shut in.

Was this all the witness had to say?

Yes; she knew nothing more, except that in every thing the lady had been kind and gentle in her house—more like an angel of light than a witch. She had again and again heard her praying in the night. Besides, she had given her money to buy a marble grave-stone for the two children who had left her house so lonesome.

At last old Tituba took the stand. Her withered face seemed small, and more shrivelled up than ever; but her eyes, usually sharp and piercing as those of a rattlesnake, were now hard as steel. Instead of glancing round the court with her usual vigilance, she kept her gaze fixed on the judge, as if all her duty lay with him. The prosecutor expected much from this witness. She had been with Abigail Williams and Elizabeth Parris from their infancy, and must know better than any other person the effect which Barbara Stafford had produced upon them. She had helped to decoct the herbs and roots which Barbara loved to gather, and had herself drank of this devil's broth, as those pleasant, wholesome drinks were now denominated. It was these drinks, no doubt, that had shrunk up her own features, and made her eyes so bloodshot.

Tituba's first words flung the court into consternation. When called upon to look at the prisoner, she turned her head resolutely another way, calling out,

"No, no! What has old Tituba to do with the stranger? It was I, old Tituba, who made the drinks, and it was I who went out in the night for herbs. Poor old Tituba meant right; but if witches walked by her side, unseen, and put strange plants into her apron, how was she to know? She had heard the mandrakes cry out when she tore up their roots; and once had plucked a plant from the earth out of which the blood dropped red when her knife cut it, and whispers ran through the forest as she carried it away. These roots she had been tempted to put into the household beer just before Elizabeth was taken ill."

"Had Barbara Stafford tempted her?" This was a question put by the judge. "Had she been near when the mandrake shrieked?"

"No; old Tituba was alone, it was her work altogether. She was the witch—she had yielded herself to the evil one in her old age—it was her lips which had given forth the poison that ran through the whole household. Beguiled by unseen devils, she had talked strange and wicked things to Abigail Williams, and turned her to stone. The witch poison had spread from cousin to cousin—from father to child—from parlor to kitchen, till the minister's household was utterly accursed, and she, old Tituba, the Indian woman—she, the witch of witches, had done it all."

When Tituba was dismissed from the stand, she cast one imploring glance toward the dusky young stranger, who still kept his place near the judges. When she saw by his look that he seemed satisfied with what she had done, the fire came back to her eyes, and passing quickly down the aisle where he stood, she whispered:

"Has Tituba done well?"

The young man did not answer her, but turned another way, apparently unconscious of her whisper.

While the judges were consulting together, Tituba glided through the crowd; an Indian who stood near the door, withdrew the blanket from his shoulders and cast it over her head. Thus disguised after the fashion of her tribe, she found her way into the forest, thinking, poor old soul, that in confessing herself a witch, and taking the household curse on her own head, she had saved the beautiful, strange lady from death.

Alas, it was all in vain! The judges looked upon old Tituba as an accomplice, not as a principal. Thus, in their minds, Barbara's guilt was confirmed.

CHAPTER XLVI.

THE STRANGE ADVOCATE.

The evidence for the prosecution was here exhausted, and Barbara had nothing to offer in her defence. A judge, more compassionate than his brethren, asked the prisoner if she had no counsel.

Barbara looked up at this question, smiled faintly, and shook her head.

"Wherefore should I seek counsel?" she said. "I have no friends, and those who bear witness of my innocence injure me most. What could eloquence or wisdom do in behalf of a creature so forsaken?"

"No, not forsaken—do not say that. One friend is ready to stand by you," whispered a voice in her ear, and looking suddenly around she saw Norman Lovel, with all the fire of a generous nature in his face, ready to die at her feet, or in her defence, despite his patron—despite all the judges on earth.

A beautiful joy broke over Barbara Stafford's face; the loneliness of desolation was no longer around her. But other eyes were bent on Norman Lovel, and when Barbara smiled, the frown upon that dark forehead gloomed like midnight.

"The prisoner refuses counsel," said the judge. "Let the trial proceed."

"Not so," cried a clear voice, that rang over the crowd with singular distinctness. "The lady has counsel. I, an admitted advocate in the English courts, as these credentials testify, stand here in her defence."

Barbara Stafford started at the sound of that voice. It was the son of King Philip, who had flung himself in the midst of his most deadly enemies to rescue her from death. Norman Lovel started forward and took his place by the young man, whom he saw for the first time, and toward whom his heart leaped in quick sympathy.

The judges consulted together. The case was a singular one, and they were not altogether certain about admitting a stranger into the provincial courts without due question. But the credentials which the young man submitted were genuine, and after a little he was escorted with

considerable show of dignity to a place before the judges. Though armed with the impulses of a giant, and a kind of eloquence that might have kindled enthusiasm in any heart not locked close by superstition, which is the romance of bigotry, he might as well have argued with the rocks on the hills, as attempted that woman's defence before a bigoted jury, and those iron-hearted judges. What argument could he use which would not wound the self-love of those solemn men? how could he arouse sympathies which they repudiated as a sin, or appeal to the judgment which was bound down by prejudices, reverenced as solemn allegations?

At first his voice was husky and faint; the very might of his sympathy for the woman who sat gazing on him so piteously paralyzed his powers; but indignation at last broke the trammels from his speech, and with a loud, clear utterance, he entered upon her defence.

Had not both judges and jury been blind with bigotry and solemn self-conceit, his first argument must have enforced the prisoner's acquittal. With the might of a powerful intellect he unravelled the tissue of evidence, and exhibited the case as it would appear this day. "The evil," he said, "lay not in the gentle lady arraigned before them, but in the disturbed minds of the witnesses: Samuel Parris was a man of books, of meditation, and thought—a poet, diseased by the unwritten music in his soul, which had no power to express itself in long sermons, and to which all other avenues to sympathy were closed up. It was this that had drawn him into the storm, and had sent him to battling the waves face to face with death on the coast. It was this that made love for his child idolatry, from which he was compelled by a sensitive conscience to fast and pray, as from a grievous sin.

"Samuel Parris, the principal witness, was neither insincere nor insane, but a man born in advance of the age, to whom endowments, that would have been greatness if understood even by himself, were turned into a torment and a curse. This quick imagination, this sensitive love, had seized upon the old man's reason, and thus rendered him a most dread witness—a thousand times more dangerous than falsehood or malice could have been, because of his honesty." The other witnesses he touched on lightly and with gentleness, but when he left them and threw his fiery soul into a protest and appeal for the prisoner, the passion of his eloquence was enough to stir even that crowd of prejudging accusers.

Why had Barbara Stafford done these strange things? How, except from the Prince of Darkness, had she attained the power of winning every soul that came in contact with hers into subjection? Why was she possessed of a beauty which died with the first youth of most women—a fresh, proud beauty, to which years only gave grandeur, except that she had made a compact with the evil one, and given her soul in exchange for the marvellous beauty in which her diabolical power principally lay? How could he, or any man, answer charges like these—charges based on imagination only, yet for which a fellow-creature was in jeopardy of her life?

How should he answer? Let the judge and the jury look upon the woman where she sat, with halberts bristling around her, and a tribunal of death that moment waiting to hurl her into eternity; for, guard the dignity of that court as they might, such was its object. See how gently she watches these proceedings—see how brave she is. Though a woman upon the brink of eternity, rich in beauty, and strong with life, she is not afraid to die. Was that the attitude of a fiend? Was that troubled smile, so full of forgiveness and pity, the smile of a devil or an angel? Let the jury look upon that face, and answer to the most high God if they refused to profit by the evidence beaming therein!

Here the men of the jury looked at Barbara Stafford with a single accord, as if they had no power to resist the direction of the young advocate's eye, and it seemed impossible to turn from her gaze, so mournful was the gloom of those large eyes, so calm was the attitude with which she met their scrutiny.

But here one of the judges arose, and warned the jury, that a glance like that was the most dangerous fascination that Satan gave to his witch children, and besought them to look straight toward the bench, thus saving their souls from jeopardy.

Then the wonderful eloquence of the young man was aroused, his magnificent eyes shot fire, his lip curved, and his thin nostrils dilated; all the strength and fervor of his being was flung into the scathing denunciation which he hurled against the court, and against the people whom this tribunal represented. It was the wild eloquence of despair, for he knew when the jury turned to look upon Winthrop, the chief judge, whose rebuke had crushed the rising pity which might have saved Barbara Stafford, that her doom was sealed. Thus, with the terrible conviction that he was avenging the fate of a doomed woman rather than pleading with a hope, he poured out a wild outburst of passionate eloquence—now appeal—now denunciation—now a wailing lament, that made the jury tremble, and the judges turn white in the face, as if an avenging angel had descended to protect the woman they were about to adjudge to death.

This eloquence, native to the Indian, overbore the restraint of education, and as the wild torrent of feeling rushed over the multitude, it fired the superstition, brooding there, into a terrible conviction. A word only was wanting, like a lighted match, to ignite these lurid apprehensions. It came from a far-off corner of the meeting-house, where one of the witnesses stood aghast with wonder, and trembling in all his massive limbs.

"It is the man who came with us in the hold of the vessel. He followed her after the storm. He it was who left the heavy boxes in my keeping."

A shrewd bystander caught these words as they fell from the white lips of Jason Brown, and he

cried out in a voice that rang through the court like a trumpet,

"Behold the confederate of her sorcery! The beautiful witch has brought Lucifer himself to plead her cause: mark the fire in his eyes, the breath from his nostrils; see the bronze on his forehead, the proud curve on his mouth!"

At these words there rose a tumult in the house. Women shrieked, and pressed forward to the doors; men broke into wild murmurs, or whispered together in low voices; while the judges stood up, pale as a group of statues; and the jury huddled together, looking into each other's faces aghast.

In the midst of this turmoil, Barbara Stafford felt a breath on her cheek, and looking suddenly up, met the glance of those eyes, which, a moment before, had frightened the people with their burning passion, now full of determined purpose.

He whispered something, but in the tumultuous noise Barbara lost its meaning. The next instant the rush of the crowd carried the noble youth from her sight, and when the court, recovering from its panic, looked around for this emissary of the dark one, who had denounced its proceedings face to face with the august judges, the strange advocate was gone.

Then, while the crowd was hushed with unconquerable awe, and the very heavens bent over it black with a mustering storm, the verdict of the jury ran in a low whisper from lip to lip, till it reached the savages brooding in the forest, and was mingled with the deep, deep curses of the white man—

"Guilty! guilty!"

Then the storm burst over them, shaking the window-panes, like angry fiends, uphurling great trees in the woods, and plowing up the virgin soil; and in the midst of its fury sentence was pronounced.

On the second day from that Barbara Stafford was doomed to suffer death by drowning for the crime of witchcraft.

CHAPTER XLVII.

THE WIFE'S APPEAL.

Governor Phipps was a changed man during the progress of Barbara Stafford's trial. His character, usually so sternly calm, seemed all broken up. He was restless—almost irritable—and would start as if wounded if any one mentioned her name, or discussed her cause in his presence.

After giving his evidence he had not once entered the court, but shut himself up on a plea of pressing papers to write, and remained almost entirely alone. He neither wrote nor read, but sat with both elbows on the library table, wondering moodily if he were indeed bewitched and given up to the evil one.

One great cause of his depression arose from the awful responsibility which must fall upon him if this strange lady should be found guilty. With him, as chief magistrate of the colony, rested the pardoning power. If she was condemned her life would lie in his hands—her death perhaps rest upon his soul should he refuse the mercy that might be demanded of him. He felt that she would be condemned, and the coming responsibility lay heavy on him.

In this frame of mind the afternoon of the closing trial found him. The storm which had been slowly gathering all day broke fiercely over his dwelling; sleet and hail rattled like a storm of shot against the window-panes; the wind howled and raved among the old trees that sheltered the gables, beating their branches heavily against the roof, and forcing weird sounds, almost of human anguish, from every tree and bough.

Sir William shuddered as these dismal sounds swelled around him. It seemed indeed as if some demon were turning the elements into great bursts of wrath. Had the trial ended? Was the beautiful witch condemned; and were kindred demons tearing through the elements, exhausting their fiendish powers there which had been insufficient to save her?

This thought certainly passed through his disturbed mind, but took no lasting hold there. But for the strange influence this woman had exercised over his own feelings, his reason, always clear and logical, would have rejected such wild fantasies. But something weird, and yet enthralling in his own soul, rendered the strong man for once clearly superstitious.

The library door was hastily flung open, and Norman Lovel came in, pale as death, though he had been buffeting the winds, and with terrible excitement in his eyes. He was shivering, and cold sleet and ridges of fine snow hung on his garments and powdered his hair.

Sir William started to his feet, cast one glance on that white young face, and sat down suddenly, stifling a groan.

The young man flung himself into a chair, threw his arms out on the table, and buried his face

upon them.

"Speak to me," said Sir William, hoarsely. "Is the trial ended?"

The young man lifted his head; every feature of his face was quivering. His eyes, heavy with anguish, turned upon the governor.

"Day after to-morrow they will murder her."

"Day after to-morrow! Great Heavens! so soon?"

"You will not permit it. Thank God her life rests with you!" cried Norman, passionately. "You have the power. Use it, and save the highest and best creature that the sun ever shone upon."

The governor slowly regained his manhood under this appeal. Remembering that he was chief magistrate of the province, he put aside the sensitive tenderness that had almost swayed him for a time, and asked himself whence that strange feeling had come? Could this woman's influence reach him even from her dungeon? Had the evil spirit within her seized upon Norman Lovel, the being held closest to his heart, that she might thus possess him, and force mercy from his hands?

"Norman," he said, gravely, "by what power are you so wrought upon? What is this woman to you?"

"What is she to me? My soul! my life I—every thing that an angel of light can be to a human being. If she dies, Sir William, I will perish with her."

This wild outburst hardened the governor, who absolutely believed the young man possessed.

"Leave me, boy!" he said, not unkindly; "in this matter I must take council with my God alone. Would that this hard duty had been spared me! I am admonished by the weakness here, that the scales of justice tremble in my hands. This must not be. Men who govern must be firm, or mercy is but cowardice."

"Oh, if you could but see her as I have! feel for her as I feel!" cried the young man.

"Were I Norman Lovel, and you governor of this province, it might be so," answered Sir William. "But plead with me no more; this heart is heavy enough without that. If it must withhold the mercy you ask, the pain here will far outweigh any thing that you can feel."

Sir William pressed a hand hard upon his heart as he spoke, and there was an expression of such pain in his voice and on his features that Norman forbore to press him further, but arose, and stood up ready to go.

"Yes, leave me," said Sir William, reaching forth his hand with a sad smile. "I have need to be alone."

Norman kissed the hand which Sir William held out to him, and his eyes filled with tears.

"Oh, think mercifully of her, if you would not break my heart!" he said.

Sir William drew back his hand, turning his face away.

"Leave me, boy! leave me!"

Was the strong man weeping, or were all his tears forced back into that thrilling voice? Never in his life had Norman seen the governor so moved.

From the library Norman went to the little breakfast-parlor, where Lady Phipps sat in dull silence with Elizabeth Parris and Abby Williams.

The lady had evidently been weeping, for there was a flush under her eyes, and her cheerfulness was all gone.

"I have heard the sad news," she said, moving upon the sofa, that he might sit by her. "Poor lady! I cannot choose but pity her."

"I knew that her fate would touch you with compassion. God help the sweet lady, for men and women both seem hardened against her."

Elizabeth Parris, who sat in a great easy-chair, with her tear-stained cheek gleaming white against the crimson cushions, began to cry piteously, and sobbed out,

"Ah, me! If she could but go over seas and live her years out there! If they drown her I shall never know rest again."

Norman went up to the young girl, and kissed her forehead.

"Help me to save her, darling. Plead with Lady Phipps, and with Sir William. He has the power to pardon her. As I came from the court an English ship hove in sight, struggling against the storm. Let us save this unhappy woman from death, Elizabeth, and that ship shall carry her away from these shores forever."

"Would she go—would she?" questioned the girl, looking up eagerly.

"It was her earnest wish to leave the country before this awful charge was made."

"Lady Phipps—Lady Phipps! May I go to Sir William? May I kneel to him and beg for her life?"

"I will go with you, child," answered the lady. "Alas, it was an evil day for this poor woman when she came among us!"

"Let us go—let us go at once!" cried Elizabeth, rising, and pushing back the hair from her forehead. "I shall not sleep till it is done. He cannot resist you. May Abigail Williams come with us?"

Abigail sat by herself, looking wistfully out into the storm. She turned her head as Elizabeth called to her, but did not attempt to rise.

"No," she said. "I have done nothing toward hunting this unhappy lady to her death."

"Always cruel, always cold," said Elizabeth, reproachfully. "Well, as I have borne witness against her, so will I go alone and beg for her life on my knees."

"It is better so," whispered Lovel, as Lady Phipps hesitated. "When it comes to the worst, dear friend, we must claim your help. That will be our last hope."

Elizabeth left the room as they were conversing, and went into the library. Few words were spoken after she left. Abby Williams gazed out into the storm as if she had no part in the general trouble. Lady Phipps sat with downcast eyes, looking thoughtfully on the floor. Norman paced up and down the room, turning anxiously at every sound, expecting to see Elizabeth.

She came at last, pale and heavy-eyed, moving wearily across the hall.

"She has failed!" cried Norman. "Oh, misery, she has failed!"

A smile, that seemed malicious, quivered across Abigail's lips, but she did not turn her head.

Elizabeth tottered across the room, and fell into an easy chair, exhausted.

Norman Lovel bent over her, hoping against hope.

"It is of no use," she murmured; "he would not let me plead. Oh, Norman! must she die?"

"Shall I go now?" whispered Lady Phipps. "He never refused me any thing in his life."

"Not yet, dear lady," answered Lovel. "At present leave him alone."

"To-night, when he comes to my room," answered the lady; "that perhaps is best."

Lady Phipps seemed glad of a reprieve. She went back to her sofa, sighing heavily.

"Feel how I tremble!" she said, giving her hands to Norman. "It is strange, but nothing ever shook my nerves so till this lady came across the seas. Oh, Norman! that was a weary day for us."

"But most of all for her."

"True, true. Poor soul, I shall not sleep till she is pardoned. If she is proven guilty of witchcraft, it was not of a harmful sort, though we have been made very unhappy by it. Elizabeth, child, you are worn out; take my arm and we will go to our chambers, for I, too, am weary. Be hopeful, Norman; I will surely speak to the governor before he goes to rest."

But the lady was doomed to disappointment. All that night Sir William remained in his library, with the door locked. In the morning the gentle wife claimed admittance, and he let her in, smiling sadly upon her as she entered.

"My husband, this has been a weary night. How mournful and pale you look! Surely, it is not because you have doomed that poor woman?"

"She was doomed before her case came before me. God knows, dear wife, I would gladly save her if my conscience permitted."

Lady Phipps sat down on a cushioned stool at her husband's feet, resting her hand lightly on his knee. Her sweet, gracious face, formed a striking contrast with the haggard whiteness of his.

"Nay, sweetheart; you will be more merciful than the judges," she pleaded. "They are naturally stern and hard—but you—"

"Must be stern also, or betray my trust," he answered. "If I pardon this woman, who enlists your sympathy so much more than others, because of her beauty and gentle breeding, what will be said of me—that I withhold mercy from the ignorant crones and common-place witches who have perished, and give it to a gentlewoman because of her fair face? If they were held worthy of punishment for setting a few cows wild, and scattering mischief among their neighbors mostly pertaining to the body alone, how much more severely should this woman be dealt with who fastens her witchcraft on the soul! Have you marked the progress of her sorcery on the young man under our roof, who still clings to her as if she were part of his own being—on the maiden you love so, Elizabeth Parris, whose very life seems to have been half shrunk up under the evil influence which she struggles against in vain?"

"Nay," answered the lady, with an arch smile, "so far as Elizabeth is concerned, I think the witch that most troubles her is Jealousy. Indeed, indeed I do! It is the dark-browed beauty, who says so little, that seems most deeply affected. Yet she exonerates this woman entirely. As for Lovel, he is

generous and good to every one: impetuous in his likings, he is always indignant if he suspects oppression or injustice. Had this Barbara Stafford come among us without mystery, and been left unnoticed, he would have cared little about her."

Sir William looked at his wife thoughtfully while she was speaking, and a deeper shade came over his face. She was so frank, so sweetly generous, that he felt conscience-stricken at having given these trivial reasons for withholding mercy from Barbara Stafford while those, so much deeper and more potent, lay buried in his own bosom.

He took her two hands between his, and pressed them with nervous energy. "My wife, bear with me—neither give way to anger nor fear—and I will tell you why it is impossible that this woman can receive a pardon at my hands. Even as it has enthralled the souls of these young persons, her wonderful power has bewitched your husband. Since that hour when she stood near me at the altar, and the night when she lay for one moment against my heart, I have had no rest. Nay, sweet wife, do not turn pale, or draw these hands from mine. What power there is in mortal man to resist the evil one I have striven for, but in vain. Absent or present this woman is forever in my mind, standing, as it were, like the ghost of some buried love between us two."

Lady Phipps gave a sharp cry, and wresting her hands from his grasp buried her face in them.

"Between us two? Alas! alas! I felt this but would not believe it."

"Nay, sweetheart, be calm. Is your husband a man to yield up his love, or his integrity, to the evil one, come in what form he may? Of my own free will I have never looked upon this woman, or spoken to her but once in my life."

"I know it, I know it," moaned the unhappy lady.

"But she is always here," continued Sir William, laying a hand on his heart. "She haunts me. I cannot drive her image away. Sleeping and waking I am shadow-haunted."

Lady Phipps gazed on her husband in pale dismay. At last she cried out—"Oh, my God! my God! help him—help me, for he loves this woman."

"Be calm, and let me tell every thing. In this matter I would not have a single reservation. What I say will give you pain, but my conscience must clear itself. Since I first saw this woman, something that I cannot describe—a feeling so intangible that it is in vain I strive to grasp it—divides me from—it is hard to speak, and I would rather perish than wound you, my wife—but it seems to point out my union with you as a—a—I cannot utter it. God help us both! This witch in her prison poisons my heart with feelings that I can neither repel nor describe. Either she or I must perish before my soul is free again."

Lady Phipps sat gazing on him in affright; her eyes widened, her face contracted. "Oh, my husband! has it come to this?" she cried out in bitter anguish; "and I was pleading for her life. Poor, poor Elizabeth! it was thus her young heart suffered. What can I do? How ought I to act?"

"Let us be still, and crave help of God," said the governor, solemnly. "I have been asking such questions of the Lord all night, and my resolve was firm."

Awed by the thrilling earnestness of his voice Lady Phipps bowed her head and fell into a painful reverie, half thought, half prayer. When she looked up a sweet calmness shone in her eyes.

"Still, my husband, I say pardon this woman, and let her go beyond the seas."

"That she may render other men wretched as I am?" exclaimed Sir William. "Nay, do not plead for her. The evidence of her sorcery is here, in my bosom. This clamorous pity, which will not let me rest, is a part of it. Knowing what I know, feeling the entire justice of her condemnation, I have but one course before me."

"And the woman must die?" exclaimed Lady Phipps, piteously, forgetting her own wrongs in the flood of compassion that filled her heart.

A shudder ran through Sir William's strong frame as he repeated her words: "The woman must die!"

"Take time—only take a few more hours for consideration," pleaded the self-sacrificing wife. "It is like sending her into eternity when you banish her across the ocean. Do that, and so let her pass out of our lives."

"Nay, I will do nothing. Think you, child, that this heart does not tempt me enough? Must your sweet magnanimity urge on its weakness? Hark! that is Samuel Parris claiming admittance. I will not see him. Of all others, I will not see him!"

"Oh, but he is a good man—a just and merciful man," pleaded the wife.

"I will not see him, nevertheless, nor any one till to-morrow is over. Bring my overcoat and hat. I will go through the back entrance to the stables and so escape him."

"Here is the coat and hat as you cast them off yesterday. I am glad of this. The fresh air may put merciful thoughts in your heart. Which way will you ride? We will not give up the hope that some good angel will urge you back with a merciful resolve." The lady spoke rapidly and with tears swelling into her eyes.

"I shall ride to Providence, nor return under some days. Farewell! God be with you, and forgive her."

Sir William went away in haste, without other farewell.

It was a full hour before Lady Phipps left the library.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

THE FOREIGN PACKAGE.

After Sir William's departure a package was brought to his house bearing a foreign postmark, and sealed with unusual formality. It was for Barbara Stafford, directed to the care of Sir William Phipps, and had doubtless come over in the ship which Norman had seen the day before buffeting its course shoreward through the storm.

When this package was brought to Lady Phipps she held it irresolute for some minutes. An idea flashed across her mind that it contained some hint of that unhappy woman's life, and a wild impulse rose in her heart to read it. But such thoughts could find no resting-place in her pure nature. She called to Norman Lovel, gave him the package, and bade him take it at once to the prison.

Norman placed the package in his bosom, drew his cloak over it, and went forth one of the heaviest-hearted men ever called upon to undertake a cruel labor of love. He had stayed away from the prison purposely, hoping that the governor might yet return; but when the night stole on with such ruthless certainty, he was preparing to visit the prisoner with the heart-rending assurance that Sir William Phipps had uttered his irrevocable decree. There was no hope for her. On the morrow she must die. Filled with such trouble as youth seldom knows, he took the package in silence, and went his way.

Norman found Barbara Stafford in her dungeon reading in a prayer-book which the authorities had permitted her to receive with other articles of her own property from her trunks in the farm-house. She looked up as Norman entered, and met his despairing glance with a faint smile.

"I have been expecting you," she said.

"And now I come to say—"

He could not utter the word, but stood before her dumb with anguish.

"That I must suffer to-morrow. Do not grieve; I expected it," she said, with sweet sadness.

"It is true. The governor is inexorable."

Never to his dying day did he forget the expression of that face when he told Barbara how hopeless his suit had been. It was like that of a grieved angel, calm and mournful, but holy with resignation. It seemed as if her soul were repeating the words of our Saviour, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do!"

Norman sat down by her, but could not speak. He had come himself with the terrible tidings, hoping to soften her fate by words of soothing and consolation, but the occasion was too overpowering; he could only sit at her feet and gaze wistfully into her eyes for the comfort he had lost all power to give.

After a time the doomed woman made a gentle attempt to soothe him, and calm the anguish, which was the more terrible because of its stillness. But the very sound of her voice thrilled him with pain. She saw that he could not speak. Her hand fell gently on his head, and bending over him she whispered:

"My son, remember how few years lie between this home and that meeting which will be all joy. Nay, do not weep so, or you will make me wish to live."

"Oh, would to God that I could die for you!" cried the young man in a burst of passionate grief.

"Hush! hush! In this world one meets with many things harder to endure than death. When that comes we may hope for such sweet pity as you give me now; but there exist sorrows which must be borne in silence, to which even a violent exit from life is happiness. Do not mourn for me, now, dear friend, for I have learned to suffer and be patient. Come, cheer up. I must find that smile on your face before we part to-night. See how your grief has disturbed me. I had almost forgotten to inquire after that sweet child, Elizabeth Parris, for in the greatest peril I did not forget that the young girl, my innocent enemy, was borne from the court insensible. Nay, do not shake that head, but tell me how much you love this pretty creature. My time is short, but I may yet have power to brighten your lives."

"There will be nothing bright for me after you are gone!" was the mournful answer.

"Nay, but I will make my very memory a blessing to you both. You must wed this girl, for she loves you dearly."

"I know it," answered the young man, lifting his head and gazing on his doomed friend through a blinding rush of tears. "And I loved her before—"

"Hush, hush! You love her now—ever will love her. There is one thing, Norman, which I think would make me die happier."

"Any thing that I can do?" he questioned eagerly.

"Yes; before I—before to-morrow it would comfort me to feel certain of your marriage with Elizabeth Parris."

"What! now, in this gloomy place, can you think of that?"

"But it is not so very gloomy. I am prepared. Now, I remember, where is the leather case which I entrusted to your keeping that day when you claimed me from the soldiers in Salem? I trust it is in safety, for when I am gone its contents shall be yours; and they are of value."

"I brought the case with me, under my cloak, thinking that it might contain gold which you could use."

"Yes; you will find gold there after I am gone. Keep it with the rest."

"Dear friend, you will break my heart with this cruel kindness."

"What! I? No! no! I wish to make you very happy."

"Lady, in my grief I forgot every thing. Here is a package which came over from England in a ship which has just arrived."

Barbara started, and a sudden color came to her face. The excitement was but momentary. She received the package from Norman's hand without looking at it.

"Like all things else it comes too late," she said, quietly; "still I thank you."

That moment a turnkey opened her dungeon door, and peered in with a wistful, inquiring look; over his shoulders appeared a thin face, sharp, and grayish pale, whose black eyes wandered through the dungeon with a sort of timid eagerness, as if he searched, and yet shrunk from some object.

Barbara Stafford saw the face, and stood up with a mournful smile on her lip; thus she remained, waiting, till Samuel Parris came in, and paused before her, like the ghost of some pale friar that had wandered from its substance.

"Samuel Parris, my kind host, my stern accuser," said Barbara Stafford. "Alas! old man, you seem more dreary than I; no wonder: my troubles will be over to-morrow; but yours—oh! God forgive you, Samuel Parris! May the God of heaven help you to forgive yourself!"

Samuel Parris sat down upon a stool. He had come to persuade Barbara Stafford into saving herself by confession, for her coming death troubled him sorely; but when he saw her standing there, so calm and pale, like a queen—no, like that grander thing, a brave, delicate woman, who knows how to die like a woman—he had no voice wherewith to tempt her weakness, or win on her conscience; but sat down, with trouble in his eyes, gazing on her in silence.

"Old man," said Barbara, smiling, oh! how mournfully, "if you came to encourage me to support my weakness through the dark scene of to-morrow, I thank you."

"Nay," said the old man, "I came to exhort thee to confession."

Barbara made a faint movement with her hand.

"Without that," continued the minister, "there is no hope. Governor Phipps has left his home, that his heart may be no longer wrung with our importunities, for I, even I, and Elizabeth my daughter —nay, the very wife of his bosom—have been on our knees before him to no avail. Now, that death treads so closely on our words, we, who have been thy honest accusers, would fain see thee sent safely beyond seas, rather than this fearful sentence should be fulfilled."

Barbara Stafford bent her face, shrouding it with both hands, while a flood of soft, sweet tears rained from her eyes. It was comforting to know that even these, her bitter enemies, had relented a little.

"Old man," she said, with gentle dignity, "I have nothing to confess connected with the crime of which you charge me."

"But without confession there can be no forgiveness; of that rest assured," pleaded the minister.

"Nor can I ask forgiveness for a crime which has never been committed. Old man, I thank you for this kind intent, but it can be of no avail. I am a weak woman, it is true, and shrink from suffering, but that which God permits I will strive to endure with befitting courage."

"Unhappy woman," said the minister, regarding her with a look of intense compassion, "can nothing be done to persuade thee? Wouldst thou die and leave doubt on the soul of an old man who never meant evil by thee?"

The minister's voice was low and entreating. He seemed about to weep. Barbara went close to

him.

"If it will avail to make you happier," she said, gently, "I can say of a truth that I believe you have dealt honestly with me, and when death comes, I, the victim and the sufferer, hold you free from all blame. If I have in any thing brought trouble under your roof, forgive me now before we part forever."

As she stood thus, bowed forward, with both hands up to her temples, there was something in the attitude, and in the very depth of her sobs, that struck the old man with compassion. He stood up, and with his withered hands attempted to put back the hair from her face, as if she had been a little girl whose grief he pitied.

"Would to God thou hadst never crossed my path," he said; "or that I had now the power to save as it has been given me to destroy."

"Do not mourn for me, or blame yourself," answered the lady. "If it seems hard to die, it was harder still to live. Give me your blessing, Samuel Parris, for, despite the fate that threatens me, I do think you a Christian. So let us part in peace."

The old man lifted his hands, and blessed the woman he had destroyed.

Barbara turned to Norman Lovel. "Go with this good old man," she said. "He is heavy-hearted to-night. Speak kindly to him, and come early in the morning. You will stay with me to the last."

"To the last!" answered the young man. Then he and the minister went out, leaving Barbara Stafford alone.

CHAPTER XLIX.

STRANGE TIDINGS.

When the footsteps of her visitors died away in the ante-room, she became conscious of the package which Norman Lovel had given her, and going up to a window sunk deep in the wall, and dim with dust, she broke the seal and began to read its contents. All at once her face lighted up. She read one passage over and over again, clasped her hand in a delirium of sudden gladness, and cried out in her prison:

"Thank God! oh, thank my God that I have lived to know this! But to learn it now, with only a few hours of life. Father of heaven, grant me a little time—just a little time, in which I may taste all the fulness of this great blessing!"

She walked the room up and down, seized with a wild desire to go free. Her bonds for the first time seemed insupportable. The sound of a turnkey near her door drew her that way. She beat against the massive oak with her hand, calling aloud. A heavy key grated in its lock, and the man came in.

"Go," she said, handing him a piece of money; "send a messenger after the minister, Samuel Parris, who has left me but now. Say that I would speak with him at once. Lose no time, I beseech you."

The man closed the door, turned the key in its lock, and Barbara was alone again—alone, with what different thoughts to those that had occupied her when Lovel came in! Thrilling excitement, eager hope, a wild commotion of feelings forbade all connected thoughts. She walked the floor—she clasped and unclasped her hands—words of tender endearment dropped from her lips. Mine mine! mine! The baby that they told me was dead—so beautiful! so generous! Ah, after this wonderful blessing I should be ready to die. But now the fear of death is terrible. All the life within me rises up to reject it. I would live to a good old age. He, my son—my own dear son—should watch the gray hair stealing over my head, and love me all the better for them. It must be pleasant to grow old in the sight of one's child. This is why he loved me so. I could not understand it—nor could he. How I longed to kiss him as he knelt before me not an hour since! To-morrow I shall see him again. To-morrow—oh, my God! what is to happen then!

She paused in her walk, and stood in the middle of the floor, struck dumb and white by a terrible thought. How fate mocked her! This revelation, which had thrilled her whole being with new-born joy, was after all only a temptation to entice her from the sacrifice she had resolved to make. On all sides events seemed forcing her on to death. Now, when life might have been so sweet, she must turn resolutely away from it, and meet her awful fate. Pale still, dumb with mighty anguish, Barbara fell upon her knees and prayed. All things conspired against her. Death, that she had considered with such resignation an hour before, was now surrounded with the bitterness of revolt. Her heart yearned for the life which it still rejected.

She knelt and prayed, wringing her hands and crying on God for help—not to escape her doom, but to bear it now that existence had been made so precious. She arose firm and resolute, but not calm—that she could never be again. The struggle in her soul was terrible; but the spirit of self-abnegation grew strong within her, and would prevail.

When Samuel Parris entered the dungeon again, he scarcely recognized the prisoner; her cheeks were scarlet, her eyes like stars. A hundred lives seemed to have been crowded into that one hour.

Barbara went up to the minister, and took his hand with an eager grasp.

"A little while ago," she said, "you asked me to confess, and I refused. I have now recalled you for that very purpose. I had intended to die and make no sign, but that resolve is broken up. Sit down, Samuel Parris, and listen to me."

"I listen," said the old man.

"It is not of this idle charge of witchcraft that I wish to speak," she said, hurriedly; "but of myself, my life, my history. Can you listen with patience?"

"With patience, and in all charity," was the solemn reply.

"But first I must have a promise—your solemn promise before God—that what I say to you shall not be revealed to any living soul till after my death. Samuel Parris, will you give me this promise? Remember it is a dying woman who asks it."

"Even if it prove a confession of guilt that you wish to make before me as a minister of the Most High, there would be no wrong in the promise; therefore I will give it."

"But there is no confession of sin to wound your ear or trouble your conscience; that which I have to say need not draw a blush to my own face, or a frown from yours. Have I your promise?"

"I have promised already," said the minister.

"Solemnly and before the God of heaven?"

"Every promise that a just man makes is registered in heaven. Lady, thou canst trust me. Never yet have I broken faith with man or woman."

"I can trust you—and I will. Samuel Parris, look at me."

Barbara unwound the lace scarf that was usually twisted about her head like a turban, and the waves of magnificent hair thus fully exposed fell loose upon her shoulders. Throwing all these golden tresses back from her forehead with a sweep of her two hands, she turned her face full upon the minister.

"Samuel Parris, do you know me?" The old man looked at her in dumb bewilderment. The scarlet burning in her cheeks, the splendor of her eyes, made his heart leap toward a full recognition. He could not answer, but stood gazing upon her with a strange, doubtful look. She dropped her hands; the hair fell in curling masses down her back. Her face drooped forward. She was disappointed that he did not recognize her at once.

The thin features of Samuel Parris kindled up, first with doubt, then with fear, and again with positive conviction.

Her attitude and the disposal of her hair revealed her to him.

Samuel Parris stood dumb and pale, gazing at her resolutely.

Neither of the two spoke. They looked in each other's eyes afraid: at last the minister found voice.

"Alive!" he said, "alive! and here? Oh! my God, my God, what has thy servant done that he should see this day?"

"You know me then, Samuel Parris? You know me then?"

"Alas! alas!" The old man wrung his hands in wild excitement.

"And now you understand my presence here, my anguish and my silence?"

"Oh! God forgive us!—God forgive us!" moaned the old man.

"You thought me dead, Samuel Parris: would that it had been so, but the unhappy cannot die when they wish."

"And thou art condemned to death! we, the wrongers and the sinful, have done this. But it is not too late, it shall not be too late."

The old man started toward the door, but Barbara laid her hand on his arm. "I have your promise, Samuel Parris."

The old man fell back against the wall as if he had been shot.

"Henceforth my fate rests in my own hands," said the lady, with gentle firmness. "If I revealed myself to you it was not to save this poor life, but because in no other way can justice be done to the living."

"But it must not be," cried the minister, wringing his hands. "Woman, woman, why did you not confide in me from the first?"

"And thus ruin him?"

"Oh, mercy! mercy! how hard it is to act rightly!" cried the old man.

"Sit down by me here on this bench," said Barbara, kindly. "I have no better seat to offer you. Sit down, old friend, and be calm as I am."

The old man obeyed her, and, lifting his haggard eyes to her face, gazed upon her with the helplessness of a child.

She had become almost calm: a gracious dew overspread her forehead and the light of a holy resolve shone in her eyes.

"I must tell you every thing," she said, "for after I am gone you will take my duties up and bear them forward for my sake."

"Speak on: I listen," answered the old man in a broken-hearted voice.

CHAPTER L.

BARBARA STAFFORD'S STORY.

Barbara Stafford covered her face with both hands, for a moment pressing her temples hard, as if she hoped thus to still the crowd of thoughts under which her brain struggled.

"Let me begin years back when you performed the marriage rite which has been the glory and bitterness of my life," she commenced at last, in a low, forced voice that betrayed the painful effort she was making. "My father was a proud man, as you know, but how much reason he had for this lofty ancestral pride no one on this side of the Atlantic ever guessed. He was, in fact, when we came to this country, the next heir to one of the richest earldoms in England—one of those few titles that fall alike to male and female heirs. My paternal grandmother was then living, and his near connection with her honors was but little known. After my mother's death—her maiden name was Barbara Stafford, that which I now bear as a disguise—we came to America, urged by curiosity to see a country so grand and wild, so full of wonderful promise.

"I was young then, scarcely more than sixteen. We were thrown together—you know who I mean—even here I would not mention his name and wound the honor for which I am ready to die. We loved each other with the first bright passion of youth, with the enduring love which fills a whole life with bliss or a perpetual weight of pain. We were young, rash, mad. I knew how hopeless it was to attempt winning my father's consent. The noble youth your solemn voice made my husband was his equal or the equal of any man who ever drew breath; but he was poor—a man of the people, a working man, though educated with the best, in intellect and energy equal to those who build up dynasties. My father was struck dumb with his audacity, when he asked my hand in marriage. So embittered was he with this outrage to his pride that he hastened to leave the country. But for a few days, contrary winds held him weather-bound. Then driven to despair, we fled to you, my husband's old friend.

"Do not shrink and moan so. It was a holy union you sanctified that night. I have suffered, oh, how terribly, since, but never regretted it, never shall regret it even in my death-throes.

"During three weeks after that ride through the forest when I returned to Boston a happy bride—for, spite of all, I was happy—we met in secret and arranged that he should follow me to England, and there, before the whole world, demand me of my father. We sailed. Hidden away in an inferior part of the vessel, he went with us, never appearing on deck till after night-fall and keeping his presence in the ship a secret from my father.

"We reached England at last and went up to London, where my father threw me into a whirl of fashionable life, hoping thus to win my thoughts from the man who was my husband. I resisted: the pleasures of society were worse than nothing to me, and I thus once more incurred my father's anger. Samuel Parris, you know the man who was my husband, his pride of character, his indomitable integrity. Holding my father's objections trivial and insulting to his manhood, he had swept them aside in scorn: it was only for my sake that he consented to concealment for a single hour. When he saw that the result of this secrecy was my humiliation—that I was forced to act a falsehood before the world—he put every other thought aside and resolved to declare our marriage and endure its consequences as he best might.

"I remember the morning well. My father was at home in our town residence, surrounded by all the pomp of state and subserviency of well-trained menials. The knowledge that my young husband had a painful duty to perform excited all that was courageous or noble in my nature, and I felt a certain sublime animation in the thought of standing by his side while he proclaimed me his lawful wife. I was young, and loved my husband so dearly that the disobedience of which we had both been guilty seemed trivial compared with the complete happiness of our union. Since then I have learned how fatally domestic rebellion may root itself into a human life. The day came. My father was in his library. Every thing had gone well with him since our return. He stood high at court, was a favorite in society, and all his projects of aggrandizement, some of them bearing upon my fate in life, seemed to promise a happy fulfilment. He did not dream of the impediment my marriage would cast in the way of his ambition. Up to that time he had no idea

that William was in England, or that my liking for him had amounted to more than a passing folly.

"Half an hour before the time appointed for our mutual declaration, my father sent for me. I found him in brilliant spirits and almost caressingly kind. He met me with unusual affection, kissed me with smiling lips, and proclaimed triumphantly that a noble suitor had just left him, and that it was my own fault if I did not become a duchess within the month.

"I might have met this announcement with some courage had my husband been there with his strong will and calm self-reliance; as it was I could only tremble in my father's arms and shrink guiltily from his caresses. He looked for blushes and found me pale as snow, for I knew that this offer, so gratifying to his pride, would give tenfold bitterness to his disappointment.

"While I stood mute and cold, dreading to speak, William was announced. I dared not look at my father, but knew, from his suppressed breathing, that he was silent only from intense rage. You saw William in his youth, and know how grand was his presence, how distinguished his bearing. If nobility was ever written upon a human form, it shone out in native splendor there. Approaching me as if he had been an emperor and I his mate, this man of humble birth took my hand in his, and, with simple but most touching earnestness, confessed his fault in making me his wife.

"Dumb and white with wrath, my father attempted to annihilate him with a look, at which my heart rose in proud rebellion, and I felt the hot blood in my cheek. But William was self-poised, and bore himself with a sort of brave humility that should have disarmed even rage itself.

"'If I have done wrong in stealing this dear one from you,' he said, 'we have both suffered more than you will believe. If there is any penalty that you can impose—any probation that will atone for an act, which though wrong we cannot repent of—name it, and if human effort can win a blessing from your lips it shall yet be deserved.'

"My father stood before us, towering haughtily upward in his outraged pride; his face was ashen with the white heat of smothered wrath. He was always a man of few words, but those which fell from his lips then burned into my memory like living coals.

"'Go, earn a station high as that of my daughter; back it with wealth such as makes her one of the richest women in England. Then, and not till then, ask her at my hands.'

"'If I do earn a title, and honorably gain such wealth, will you give her to me with a free will and generous blessing?' asked the young man in a voice that vibrated with intense feeling. 'In the brave acts or persistent efforts of some strong man, once unknown, the nobility of every illustrious house in England is rooted. To win her, and know that she is mine without dishonor, I will undertake impossibilities; if I succeed, or fail, you shall yet acknowledge, proud sir, that I deserved your daughter.'

"'When that time comes, claim her at my hands,' answered my father, with cutting unbelief in his look and voice. 'But till then she remains under my authority, and bearing the name she has secretly dishonored. Barbara, if this young man is your husband, take leave of him now, for never, till his boasted promise is fulfilled, shall you meet again.'

"I fell at that haughty man's feet, shivering with dread, cold with terror.

"'Not that—oh, father! father! not that!' I cried out in the depths of my anguish. 'Have mercy upon us. If we part I shall perish. Give me any punishment you will, but let us suffer together.'

"But for a haughty sense of high breeding my father would have spurned me from his feet. Still I clung around his knees, and without violence he could not fling me off. My arms were softly unclasped from those iron limbs. For one blissful moment I was strained to my husband's bosom. His tears fell upon my face.

"'Barbara, take hope. I will claim you, even as this proud noble mockingly suggests. Be patient! Have faith in me! One kiss; one more, and now farewell!'

"My heart gave a frightened leap in my bosom. A cry froze on my lips, and all was dark.

"This was in broad daylight; the sun streamed in upon us through the gold and crimson tints of stained glass. When I became conscious, stars were shining dimly through the curtains of my chamber window. I was alone; faint, weary, and almost dead. Samuel Parris, I never saw my husband again till he stood before the altar of that church taking the sacrament from your hands."

The minister groaned heavily, but did not speak.

"He had left me insensible—left England, and gone no one would tell me where. My father was dumb regarding him. If he wrote letters, they never reached me."

"But he wrote them. As God liveth, William Phipps wrote to his young wife again and again, but received no answer. He told me so with his own lips," cried the minister. "It was for her he toiled and thought ever on the broad ocean, and while wresting treasures from the deep where they had been engulfed for centuries. He went back to England, possessed of enormous wealth, and received a title at the king's hand for the wonderful energy with which he had dragged silver and gold from the bosom of the ocean, discovering their hiding-place almost by a miracle. But all that he had done turned to dust in his hands, for when he went to that proud old man and demanded

his wife, the stern father answered that she was dead."

"Did he mourn her, Samuel Parris? tell me, truly, did William Phipps mourn the death of his wife, or had he learned to live without her?"

Parris looked up, with rebuking fire in his eyes.

"Woman, thou knowest that he loved thee, even to human sinfulness. When William Phipps came back to this country, broken-hearted and alone, he was but the shadow of the brave youth whose hand I joined with thine that fatal night."

"Forgive me," pleaded Barbara, with plaintive humility. "I loved him, and am but a weak woman. Think how hard it was to yearn so for one word of comfort, and never dare ask it."

"Unhappy woman! thine has been a hard lot," cried the minister, clasping both her hands in his, and weeping over them like a child.

"Tell me again, kind old man—for I am so near death that it cannot harm me to know—did he in truth mourn my loss?"

"Poor martyr! he has never ceased to grieve over the ruin of his love."

"Then he did love me, dearly?"

"So dearly, that I thought he would have died deploring thy loss."

Barbara drew a deep breath, and tears swelled heavily under her drooping eyelids.

"But he married another!" she said, with an effort.

"Yes; but he was still faithful to the love of his youth. It was but the ruin of a heart which William Phipps gave in his second marriage. He said this to me on the night when I was summoned to perform the ceremony."

"Did he say this?"

"Of a verity he did. It was like whispering it to his own heart, for I alone held his secret. In the future he hoped that tender friendship might warm into love; but I had buried the wife of my bosom, and knew how vain was the hope."

Barbara's eyes were fastened on the old man's face. She drank up his words eagerly. A smile parted her lips; a flush of roses warmed her cheeks. Then a shadow swept over her, and bending her head in gentle humility she murmured:

"Poor, poor lady!"

For a moment both Parris and the lady sat together in silence. Then Barbara looked up with a sad smile, and went on with her story.

CHAPTER LI.

A MOTHER.

"Time wore on, and I became a mother. With the first gleam of maternal hopes, such as thrilled my whole being with new-born happiness, I was hastened into the country; and, in a remote estate seldom visited by the family, gave birth to a son. My life was in great peril; a fever set in, and for a week I wandered unconsciously on the very brink of the grave, delirious, and sometimes wild. When reason came back, my father was there: he told me that my child was dead.

"Alas, old man! mine was a dreary life after that. Honors and wealth were showered on my father. By the death of his mother he became Earl of Sefton, and one of the wealthiest peers in England; but all this was embittered by the fact that I, who must inherit all these privileges, was wedded to a man, as he persisted in believing, so utterly beneath me. This thought seemed to pursue him like a demon. At times my very presence appeared hateful to him; there was never affectionate companionship between us. He was content that I should remain in the solitude of the estate to which I had been consigned almost as a prisoner, and I, still hoping against hope, was willing to live in seclusion till my husband should claim me. For, strange as it may appear, I had faith in the accomplishment of his promise, wild as it seemed.

"One day—it was in the second year of my solitary life—Lord Sefton came down to the country, after the rising of parliament; and for the first time since the death of my child was announced to me spoke of William Phipps.

"'Read this,' he said, placing a newspaper before me, 'and thank God that the disgrace of your connection with that man is unknown.'

"I unfolded the paper. It contained a paragraph copied from an American letter, dated two months back.

"How I read this paragraph through—the agony of fear that possessed me—I cannot tell; but every word of the cruel statement reached my heart. My husband was dead—lost at sea! I was a widow.

"This mournful knowledge broke up my life. Even my father was terrified by the state of dejection into which I fell. Thinking that it was only the promptings of compassion that induced him to take me away from England, I was grateful. We travelled for years through Europe, into Egypt and the Holy Land. Sometimes we rested in one place for months and months together; then again we would make long sea-voyages, and visit places far remote from the usual course of English travel. Among other countries we went to Bermuda and the West India islands, taking with us, on our return, a young person, whose history I have no time to give, but with whom my after-life has been strangely associated.

"We returned to England only a year ago. My father was an old man then. I had left youth forever behind, and with it, all hopes of such happiness as a woman's heart craves most. We had long since ceased to talk of the past. It was a sealed subject between us, but as my father drew near the grave, he became more tender and gentle in our companionship.

"A few weeks after we returned to London, Lord Sefton was taken ill. The disease ran its course rapidly, and in three days he was on his death-bed. God forgive the old man! With his last breath he told me of the terrible fraud that had been practised upon me. My husband was living. He had achieved all that seemed audacious in his promise, and had been in England years before to claim his wife. Then another fraud was perpetrated, and they told him that I was dead.

"My father made this confession in broken gasps. I had no details, and could scarcely gather the facts out of his imperfect speech. Something more he would have told me, but death was inexorable, and the secret died on his white lips.

"Thus, striving to retrieve the evil his pride had occasioned, my father died and I became a peeress in my own right, the inheritor of more wealth than I knew how to use. But, far above all, was the certainty that my husband was alive, and had kept the noble promise of his youth.

"At last, my father, whose pride had widowed me while yet scarcely more than a child, was laid with the cold and proud of his ancestors, dust with their dust, and I, the inheritor of his estates, the lady of a proud line, thought nothing of these things, but, urged by one wild wish, turned from his very grave and set forth for America, searching for the husband of my youth—the father of that child which had blessed me for an hour and disappeared, but whose tomb I had never seen.

"Thus, full of hope, I pursued my voyage, counting every hour as a loss till I once more saw the man who had been dearer to me when I thought him beneath the waves than all the earth beside. Never had a voyage seemed so long, and yet the wind was fair. How I wished the good ship that bore us had wings! When a storm blew up hurling us westward, I rejoiced, for through danger we should reach him the sooner. When a calm overtook us my heart was restless with impatience. So much of life had been spent away from him that I grudged each moment as a treasure forfeited.

"Oh, how I loved him, myself, and all the world! I had worshipped him as a girl—you know a little how much. But what was that to the holy affection of mature womanhood, to the yearning tenderness that filled my soul and kindled up every bright idea in my brain that it might do him homage? I thought of the change years must have made in him—not to regret that he was no longer young, but feeling how much grander he would be with age on his brow and a consciousness of power in his bearing.

"On the passage I had thought of myself differently. Sometimes I would look at my hands and wonder if they had lost any thing of the symmetry and whiteness he once so much admired. When I found a few silver hairs dimming the tresses he had praised for their golden hue, it would make me sad; for love grows timid sometimes as it deepens, and though I cared not for his departed youth, every grace that had fled with mine was remembered with regret. But I recalled his last words and had faith in him. For his sake I would have gifted myself with perpetual youth and immortal beauty. There was no good thing on earth or in heaven that I would not gladly have brought him.

"Had it been possible, I would have gathered up sunlit colors from the sky and those rare tints that sparkle in the ocean for his sake. I had never given much thought to the titles and possessions which had fallen to me, but now they grew precious in my estimation, for all that I had was his.

"We came in sight of the coast in the midst of an awful storm, and buffeted by the elements that seemed striving to force me back from my fate. I thought nothing of that. The tedious voyage was over. The land which he governed hove in sight. In a day—in an hour—it was possible to see him. The thought filled me with wild impatience. For the universe I could not have remained on board that ship one half-hour after she cast her anchor.

"The captain and crew expostulated with me, but it was impossible to heed their reasonings with the shore in sight. Careless of danger and with my heart fairly singing with secret hopes, I descended into that boat, with the waves leaping and roaring around it. I had no fear, after suffering so much; it seemed impossible to die within reach of him. You know the rest: it was your hand that dragged me from the breakers, yours and Norman's.

"God sent you to the shore that day, Samuel Parris. I felt it then, I feel it now. Had the waves swallowed me I should have died with a sweet hope in my heart, and the struggle would have been hard. But now that all is lost—nay, nay, I shudder yet!"

CHAPTER LII.

THE LAST WISH.

"I awoke in sight of the spot where we had first met, in hearing of the waves that had borne us, twenty-two years before, a happy pair, across the ocean. All the dear, old memories came back to me then—the night when we rode through the forest to your dwelling, and were sacredly wedded under its roof—the secrecy, the doubt, the happiness, and the love unutterable which bound me, the daughter of a proud earldom, to the fate of a being rendered greater still by the energies and strength which make the nobility of manhood.

"Full of these thoughts, rich in the holy love that runs like a golden thread from time into eternity, I waited in that old farm-house, to which exhaustion confined me, for the hour when I could tell my husband all that I had suffered—all that I had hoped, since the pride of my father forced us asunder. But while I was resting in the sweet hush of a new hope, with the sound of the far-off waters reaching me like a perpetual promise, content with the dear certainty that he was close at hand, a cruel blow was preparing for me. I was resting in peace, with a new life before me, and sweet hopes singing at my heart, when a lady came to my presence, a fair woman, whose smiles made my heart ache under their sweet welcome. She came with offers of hospitality and cordial good-will—came in the plenitude of her rich happiness to invite the storm-tossed stranger to share the luxuries of her home—to share the society and protection of her husband, Sir William Phipps, Governor of Massachusetts!

"I fainted at the lady's feet, but kept my secret safe. She left me smitten to the soul with a great blow, for which I was utterly unprepared. Old man, you would pity me could you guess at the anguish, the terrible, terrible desolation that followed this interview with my husband's second wife!"

"Oh, me!" said Samuel Parris, dropping the hands that had covered his face—"oh, me! I do pity you. And it was I that married you both—he, so noble, so grand of character—you, so bright and good. God have mercy upon us!"

"At last," continued Barbara, "my decision was made. I could not force myself to wrest happiness from others, or build my home on the ruins of an honorable household. I would return to my native land, and tread the ashen desert of life which must yet be mine, for I was strong, and could not die. Utterly, utterly wretched, for his sake and hers I would take up this penance of life, and endure its loneliness silently to the end. But I could not bring myself to this all at once. There came moments when my soul rose up in arms for its rights, and the love of my youth grew mighty in its own behalf: but it is easier to suffer than inflict suffering, better to endure than avenge. I resolved to see my husband, and after that decide.

"I went to the North Church, where he stood by its altar in the pride of his state and the humility of his faith, and was baptized for another life. Then it was, Samuel Parris, that a resolve of perfect self-abnegation possessed me—then it was that I almost wrested the consecrated wine from your hands, and made a vow which I have kept even unto death—a vow to remain dead to the man who had been my husband, to leave him forever, and go away into utter loneliness.

"But I could not remain dumb within reach of his presence—I could not see him in domestic converse with another without such anguish as makes the breath we draw a torture. For one instant he—mistaking me for her—held me to his heart. Oh, my God, I had need of thy help then! My resolve grew faint; but that insensibility came, I should have betrayed myself. Stung with agony, wounded to the soul, I fled from him—fled through the wilderness to your dwelling; and there—oh! my God! help to do away the evil—there the mystery spread from my own heart through your household. You had seen without recognizing me, and I supposed myself safe till a ship should come. But the instincts of memory filled you with unrest, and you mistook them for supernatural influences; your child grew wild with wounded love. So my suffering bore poisonous fruits, and were tortured into proofs of witchcraft, and for that I am to die!

"My friend, is it a subject of wonder now that my presence thrilled both him and you with a mysterious influence? Is it strange that shadowy memories haunted my footsteps wherever they turned? Can you guess how I suffered, how terribly I was tempted? And for all this I must die!"

Samuel Parris started to his feet; his eyes were wild, his face haggard.

"Die! die! And is self-sacrifice like this rewarded by murder? Unhappy lady, sweet martyr, no. I will follow the governor; he must learn the truth; you shall not die! In this case magnanimity is suicide."

Barbara Stafford laid her hand on his arm. "I should have kept all this a secret, and died unknown and unregretted, but for the strange intelligence that reached me from England in the package Norman Lovel just brought to my prison. Samuel Parris, I am a mother! My son did not

perish, as they made me believe. They took him from me, in my delirium, and put him out to nurse near London under a false name. Afterwards he was placed at school, and in his youth sent to America. For three years he has been under the roof of his own father. Not two hours ago he knelt here at my feet and bemoaned my fate. After the cruel work of to-morrow he will be Earl of Sefton—before that, if you will yield to the wish of a woman standing close to her grave, he shall become the husband of your child. It was for this I summoned you—for this I laid bare a heart that meant to carry its secret to the grave. Look up, my good friend, and smile. What matters it that a few years are taken from either of our lives so long as our children are made the happier by it? Our children—our children! Oh, my friend, my friend! it is of no use deceiving you. I should so like to live, that he might know that I am his mother. Pity me! pity me! You have been a parent for years, and I so little time. Husband and son both left behind, and I must die to-morrow! Oh, it is hard to bear!"

Samuel Parris covered his face with both hands, and tears streamed over his withered fingers. "Oh, God! teach me how to act," he prayed; "help me to save this wronged woman, or permit thy servant to depart with her!"

Barbara drew the withered hands from his face, and held them firmly. "Nay, do not weep, old friend; pray earnestly, however, that I may be prepared for death—life is impossible! I was weak a moment since. Forget it. I but ask strength to endure."

"But thou shalt not die. He can save thee—and shall."

"But how?"

"I will tell him the truth!"

"Against that solemn promise?"

"It was ignorantly given."

"Nay," she said, "I forbid you to interfere in this. I am content to suffer the penalty awarded by the court. Others, innocent as I, have suffered death, and to me sleep will be sweet, even in the grave."

But Samuel Parris would not be persuaded: he put her hands away. Now Barbara Stafford stood up with a gesture of command.

"Old man, you are a minister of the Most High: tell me if a vow, taken with the sacred wine and strengthened by the breaking of holy bread, can be put aside because death stands in the way? This vow I have taken—never to reveal myself to William Phipps, never to claim him or recognize him, and to its sanctity you, with your own hands, administered. In the name of the Most High God, who heard us both, I charge silence upon you now and forever!"

The old man groaned aloud.

"Be comforted! be comforted, my friend! to-morrow terminates the poor tragedy of a life which has had but little of happiness in it. When I am gone my husband will feel the shadow, which he could not comprehend, lifted from his path. It must no longer darken the noble aims of his existence. What is the life of one person compared with the happiness of so many? Until you are assured that I am no more, William Phipps must never guess that his wife lived to perish for his well-being."

Parris lifted his head, and gazed upon her in silent wonder. To his imaginative nature there was a grandeur in this resolve which bordered on the marvellous.

"Woman," he said, at last, "art thou tempting me to falsehood? If thou diest on the morrow, while there is a possibility of salvation, I—even Samuel Parris—am thy murderer."

"Not so, old man. The law has convicted me of a heinous crime—sentenced me to a death from which there is no escape, save by the betrayal of a secret which will heap dishonor and misery on an innocent woman, and a man whose happiness is a thousand times more precious than the life I am willing to give. Were it otherwise, what would existence be to one who has lost all hope, save that which seems to have dawned on my last moments, only to mock them? But that justice might be secured to my son, I had gone to the doom which awaits me with sealed lips. Remember that I voluntarily bound myself to secrecy by an oath taken before Almighty God, who can alone absolve me from it. Do not, therefore, attempt to decide between me and my Maker. I will not be pardoned at the cost you would have me pay for life. Think you I could hurl *him* from the profound respect with which men hold him—or her, that gentle, happy woman, from her place in his home, to shame and undeserved reproach? No, no, old man. Death is a thousand times sweeter to me than life at the price of misery like that. Once more I charge you keep sacred the promise you have given."

"I will, I will," cried the old man, subdued and saddened by the solemn eloquence of her look and words. "Deal with me as thou wilt, woman, or angel—I know not which to call thee—that which thou hast entrusted to me I will surely keep to the last."

"Nay, it must be kept always; and revealed only to William Phipps and my—own son. In this package is full evidence of Norman's birth and parentage. All other heirs are dead, and none are left to dispute his rights: simple proofs of my death will be sufficient. No one will ever know how his mother perished, or connect the Countess of Sefton with Barbara Stafford."

Samuel Parris took the package which Barbara held out, and thrust it into his bosom, bowing his head low for answer to her solemn injunctions.

"Now," continued Barbara, "I will task your kindness once more, and have done. My friend, while there is yet time, bring your daughter hither, with my son—the young man they call Norman Lovel. Before I go they must be wedded, else some new trouble may arise to separate them."

"Even as thou wishest it shall be done," answered the old man, taking his hat and staff. "I who have wrought so much evil would fain make atonement—so far as a weak mortal can."

Parris went to the door, but came back again, struck with a sudden objection.

"But Sir William Phipps—the young man being his son—might hereafter blame me as ambitious for my child," he said.

"Have no fear," answered the lady. "When I am dead, he will thank you for giving me this one gleam of happiness. Norman, when he knows that it was his mother who blessed him—and he must learn this hereafter—will look on his young wife with double tenderness."

"And must it now be kept secret from him?"

"Even so, or to-morrow would break his heart."

The old man went out. He had not far to go, for Elizabeth had accompanied him to the jail, afraid to be separated from him for a moment, and hoping, poor child, to obtain forgiveness for the honest evidence she had borne against the unhappy prisoner before the death hour. She that moment sat shivering in the jailor's room, waiting to be summoned into Barbara's dungeon. Norman Lovel was by her side, but she refused to be comforted even by the voice of her lover, who would not leave her till the minister came. Thus, hand in hand, they were found together when the old man entered the room, where they sat; and solemnly, as if he had been summoning them to a funeral, bade them follow him.

CHAPTER LIII.

THE PRISON WEDDING.

That was a gloomy, almost terrible wedding. There those young people stood waiting for the ceremony, pale as death, their trembling hands linked together, shivering with nervous chills, as if it were a doom of judgment about to be pronounced upon them, rather than those sacred words which should make love immortal.

When she entered the dungeon, Elizabeth had cast herself at Barbara's feet, and meekly begged the pardon that young heart would never grant itself. All the doubt and bitterness which had blinded her so long were swept away. The true-hearted young creature would have found courage to die in the place of her victim, and think that too little atonement for the evil she had done. But, alas! alas! the power of restitution is not always vouchsafed to our crimes or our mistakes in this world. The inexorable law had seized upon its victim, and Elizabeth Parris might moan her life away in unavailing regret without aiding her, or arresting, for one moment, the doom that was darkly closing around her.

"Nay," said Barbara, lifting the wretched girl from her feet and resting that beautiful head on her bosom; "it is not your fault that I am here, simple child; destiny wove its own cruel links around me. Do not mourn for the harmless part assigned to you in the tragedy which will close to-morrow. The evidence you gave was true in all its parts. If superstition blinded my judges, the fault rests with them only, my daughter."

A strange thrill connected the two women as Barbara uttered the word daughter. Elizabeth lifted her blue eyes with a sudden glow of pleasure, and the prisoner kissed her twice upon the white forehead, as if she were sealing that young heart for its baptism of love.

"Norman, come hither, and take your wife from my arms," said the prisoner, turning her face, all glowing with generous exaltation, on the young secretary. "I give her to you. Love her—trust her; and remember on this earth God has no more precious gift for any man than the love of a good woman."

Norman Lovel came forward and took Elizabeth gently from the arms that supported her.

"What is it you ask of us?" he said, addressing Barbara in a trembling voice. "I, for one, am ready for any thing."

"Nay," said Barbara, "I ask but that your happiness shall be assured before I leave you."

The young man shook his head.

"There will be little happiness for us after that," was his sorrowful answer; "but it will be some consolation if we can mourn together."

"Norman, you love this girl?"

"Better than my life—better than any being on earth, save one, who, living or dead, will ever share my heart with her."

Tears swelled into Barbara Stafford's voice before she could answer.

"You will not grudge me a place in his memory?" she said, turning to Elizabeth.

"Oh! If it were to save your life, I would give him up! I would—I would!" sobbed Elizabeth.

"It will make the few hours left to me almost happy, if you become his wife now," said Barbara, placing her hand on the little book which lay near her.

"Elizabeth, your father has consented that it shall be even as I wish. Do you love this man well enough to wed him in the gloom of a prison?"

"Do I love him! But that I loved him so madly you would never have been in this strait," cried the girl.

"Then let it be as I wish, dear child. Love makes its own sunshine even in a dungeon. Norman, take her hand. Samuel Parris, they are ready."

The old minister, who stood leaning against the wall, came forward silently, took the two hands reached out to him in his firm clasp, and in a few, deep, solemn words, made Elizabeth Parris Norman Lovel's wife. Just as the ceremony was completed a cloud passed over the sun, and its light, filtering dimly through the iron bars which grated the window, shed a weird gloom over the group of persons so strangely brought together. While the newly-wedded pair stood hand in hand, pale as death, and scarcely daring to feel happy. Barbara went to her pallet-bed, and took a leathern case from beneath the pillow. This she unlocked with a key suspended to her neck, and opening it revealed the contents. A quantity of bank notes, bills of exchange, and gold, lay in one compartment; from the other she took the coronet of diamonds, which had been mentioned as the witch-crown at her trial, and placed it on the head of the bride.

"It is my gift to your wife, Norman," she said, addressing the young man with subdued tenderness. "Before long you will both prize it for something more than its value. Here are other jewels for the bosom and arms. My sweet child, may the heart which beats under them prove happier far than their poor owner has been. Some day you will know why she gives them to you."

Elizabeth shrunk, and almost cried out with terror, as the coronet settled down upon the waves of her hair, for, spite of herself, thrills of superstition shook her disturbed nerves, and it seemed as if the prisoner were crowning her with coals of fire. But the sweet voice of Barbara Stafford soothed all fear away, and the bride received this princely gift with her head drooping in meek thankfulness under its starry crown.

Lovel was astonished and bewildered. As he turned to gaze upon his bride the sun broke out, and streaming through the window set the coronet on fire with rainbow hues. "Lady, lady, I know the value of these things. We must not accept them," he exclaimed.

"What will they be worth to me after to-morrow?" answered Barbara.

"But would you have us profit by the awful crime which your enemies will perpetrate?" he persisted.

"Hush!" she said; "it must be so. The gold for yourself—the jewels for your wife. I will not be disputed in this."

"Oh, lady! I shall never have the heart to wear them," said Elizabeth; "they burn my temples even now."

"Yes, child, you will learn to wear them for my sake; and because I loved you—for my sake, remember."

"Oh! this kindness is breaking my heart!" sobbed the bride. "Only reproach me, and I can bear it better."

"Reproach you! Come, come, we will lock the gems in their case again," said Barbara, smoothing Elizabeth's golden tresses with her hands, as she took off the coronet. "They do seem like a mockery in a dungeon. When this dark passage of our lives is over, they will not seem so out of place."

As she spoke, Barbara locked the leathern casket again and, taking its key from her neck, gave both to Samuel Parris.

"When you go forth take them with you," she said; "but they must not be otherwise disposed of."

Parris took the case in silence. He knew, far better than the others, how sacredly these young people would hold her wishes hereafter.

"Now, my child, farewell! We must not see each other again on this earth," said the prisoner, kissing Elizabeth on the forehead. "When we do meet, be able to look in my face and say, 'I have been a faithful and good wife to the man who blessed me with his love.'"

Bathed in tears, and trembling under the solemn effect of these words, Elizabeth left the dungeon with her father. Lovel remained behind.

When they were alone, Barbara stood before her son. Slowly her eyes filled with the intense love which up to that moment she had suppressed in her heart. She reached forth her arms and, without understanding the power of natural affection that urged him on, Norman wound his arms around her neck, and resting her head on his shoulder, broke into a passion of grief that shook his whole frame. She trembled in his arms, not with sorrow, but thrilled with a joy so intense that it lifted her into a state of wonderful exaltation.

"He loves me completely, with more than filial devotion, and yet knows nothing of our kinship—never dreams that I—even I—am his mother," she thought. "After this one moment I should of a truth be ready to die, for the bliss of a life-time falls upon me now."

But that craving affection which never was, and never will be, fully satisfied in a loving woman's heart, demanded an assurance of this feeling in words. She drew her head back, and looked into Norman's face.

"And you love me?" she said, passing her hand over his hair in an unconscious caress. "My noble boy, you love me!"

"If I could but explain how much, and with what pure, pure affection! Surely the Catholics must worship their saints as I worship you. My love for you is made up of tenderness and prayer. I shall never kneel to my God hereafter without feeling that you are near him."

"And near you, also, my—my friend. If spirits are ever permitted to retrace their steps in the eternal progress, no grief shall ever reach you that I will not be near to soothe."

"My heart will feel your presence, and take comfort from it, sweet mother."

"Mother! boy—boy! Why did you call me mother?"

"If I did so, the word escaped my lips unconsciously. Forgive it."

"Forgive it—yes, yes, my son, I can forgive it, for the word has a sweet sound."

"You called me son," said Norman, gazing on her with a sad smile.

"Did I? That sprung from the word mother. I would gladly hear it from those lips again. Norman, I once had a child—a sweet babe, which was taken from me long before it could pronounce the word mother, and no one, even by accident, ever called me by that dear name till now."

"Mother! mother!" repeated the young man, pausing on each word, as if to drink in its hidden music. "It is very strange, but ever since I first saw you that word has been constantly whispered in my heart. I never thought of it before, save as a sound full of regrets. To me, an orphan from the first, it had no other meaning."

"But now—now you love it?"

"Yes; now it has depth and significance. A tender significance, which makes my heart swell, and fills my eyes with tears. Lady, I am glad the word escaped me, since it does not wound or offend you, for it has unlocked my heart. I could rest your head on my bosom thus, and weep my life away with yours."

"Oh!" exclaimed Barbara, "if God would be merciful, and let us die so."

"Or permit you to live. How beautiful existence would be for us all!"

Instantly, the holy tenderness that had trembled on Barbara's features went out from her face. Her head rested like marble on the young man's shoulders. The thought of what must happen to-morrow broke through her exaltation, and froze her into ice.

"Go," she said, in a husky whisper. "Go! your wife is waiting. Take her out of this place—from the town itself. You must not be near me when the time comes. I shall be better alone."

"Not near you!" exclaimed the young man. "Though my heart break—and I feel that it must—you shall not drive me from your side."

"But it will take away my strength. I shall falter at the last moment. Boy, can you not see how weak I am?"

Her voice broke out of its husky whispers; she shivered from head to foot, and held out her shaking hands that he might clasp them.

Norman folded her close in his arms till the trembling subsided. Then she was firm again, but cold as stone.

"Go, now," she said. "Here we part forever. To-morrow, if I am to perish as a Christian woman, with the example of our blessed Saviour before me, I must meet the agonies of death alone. With you standing near me, my friend, it would be to die twice. Nay, take your arms from around me. I am stronger standing alone. But—but your hand still; let me hold that to the last."

"Oh, that it had the power to lead you from this horrible place!"

"Hush! hush! we must not think of that. Farewell! farewell!"

The last words were spoken on whispers, that came like a breath of frosted air from her lips.

"Farewell!" cried the young man, wringing her cold hand. "My God! my God! this is indeed like parting with a mother."

Norman moved toward the door, and struck its oaken planks blindly with his hand, thus summoning the turnkey. Barbara followed him a single step, her blue eyes strained with anguish, her lips moving like snow stirred by the wind.

A key turned in its lock; a heavy bolt was drawn. The door slowly opened. Then her voice broke out in a sharp cry.

"Norman!"

The young man turned and received her in his arms. She laid her hand faintly on his shoulder again.

"My—my friend, kiss me before I die."

Norman pressed his lips upon her forehead. She drew a deep breath, the pallor of her face broke away, leaving it calm and still. She sunk from his arms to the floor, and he left her kneeling there, so close to her God that she did not know when he left the dungeon.

Norman Lovel found his bride and her father waiting for him in an ante-room of the prison.

Samuel Parris had resumed all his vigor of mind. When a duty was to be performed he was prompt and energetic enough.

"Young man," he said to Norman, when the poor fellow came in, white and haggard with suffering, "we have not a moment to spare. Leave this child to me; but that I am old and feeble, the duty of saving the grand woman in yonder should be mine. But on an errand like this, strength and endurance are wanted. Go to the governor's stable, mount his fleetest horse, and hie thee with full speed on the road to Providence. Sir William is heavy-hearted, and perchance may stop on the way, but pause not to eat or draw breath till he is found. Then say to him—'Thy old friend, Samuel Parris, having the fear of God before his eyes, desires thee to come back at once to Boston, that a great crime and a terrible murder may be prevented.' Say to him that the woman condemned to die on the morrow has privately confessed every thing; setting forth her own innocence, and the wrong that has been done her. Tell him to trust in the faith of an old man who, like Paul, has had his eyes unsealed in the very midst of his blind persecutions, and come back to save the innocent. If he hesitates, or falters, tell him that it is to save his own soul from eternal remorse that I command him to retrace his steps."

Norman listened eagerly. "Is there hope in this?" he asked.

"Hope for us all. Life for her!" was the answer.

Norman snatched Elizabeth to his bosom, and sprang to the door.

"I will reach him. Be sure I will reach him," he cried, almost with a shout of triumph; and he dashed away on what was in truth an errand of life and death.

CHAPTER LIV.

THE ICE COVE.

In the progress of generations, much that was wild and beautiful about the city of Boston has been entirely obliterated. Lovely eminences and picturesque ravines have been levelled into common-place wharves and streets. Streams, that crept through the hills, to lose their crystal brightness in the turbulent waters of the harbor, have been turned aside, or literally choked up. Bunker Hill was crowned with primeval forest-trees at the time of our story. Dorchester Heights was here and there dotted with a clearing, and all the curving line of the shore, which now bristles, like a dense forest, with shipping, was wild, and beautiful in its wildness.

There was one lovely spot on the beach, of which a perfect view could only be obtained from the harbor. Here, a forest stream of some depth stole softly out of the woods, concentrating its crystal waves in a little bay, sheltered by overhanging trees, then sweeping into the harbor, where it mingled with the waves of the ocean, and became, like them, opal-tinted under the broad sunshine.

This cove had been selected for the place of Barbara Stafford's execution. Even in the depth of winter it was not wholly devoid of beauty. Its surface, clear to the edge of the cove, was sheeted with ice, as yet untouched by a human foot, and pure as the spring from which that stream took its source. The cove was crescent shaped, and locked in by two curving promontories dense with evergreens, drooping under ten thousand garlands of snow. As the beach curved inward, these hemlocks and pines grew thinner, and in their place beech trees, maples, and sturdy oaks, pencilled their naked branches against the sky, and sent forth a low, chiming music, inexpressibly mournful, for every twig and fibre was encrusted with frozen rain, and struck together with a sort of rythm. Here and there, along the margin of the shore, logs, covered with fleeces of rich green moss, thrust themselves out from the snow, and clusters of laurel broke its

white surface with the brilliant greenness of their leaves.

Little preparation had been deemed necessary for the cruel work which was to render that lovely spot a place of horror. A cart path had been widened through the woods, that the troop of soldiers which were to guard the unhappy woman from her prison might pass easily forward with their victim; and where the ice grew thin, as it approached the restless waves of the ocean, some planks had been laid down, that the guard might be in no danger of sharing the fate assigned to that helpless woman. Samuel Parris had pleaded with the sheriff, who possessed some discretion in the matter, and obtained the latest hour possible for the execution. But those winter days were short, and people came from a great distance to see a fellow-creature murdered in the face of high heaven, so four o'clock was the latest moment that the sheriff could be prevailed upon to name.

At twelve the whole shore far back into the woods was lined with human beings, though the day was unusually cold, and the wind moaned through the forest, and shook the icy tree-boughs with a sound which seemed like the whispers of weird spirits. As the time wore on, this crowd deepened, and grew blacker. The snow crust, even into the woods, was trampled down. Some, more eager than the rest, moved forward on to the ice, while little boys and men, more reckless than their fellows, climbed the trees, sending showers of shivered crystals upon the throng below. As usual in such crowds, many Indians were seen huddled close in their blankets, waiting with stolid patience for the death-scene to commence. On one of the crescent-like promontories which formed the cove, a large number of these savages had gathered, and stood under the sheltering hemlocks, looking on. Near them, and yet apart, was a young girl of remarkable beauty, with an eagle's plume in her small felt hat, which but half concealed the abundance of her hair, which was of that bluish black seldom found disconnected with the highest type of a peculiar kind of beauty. If the Indians near her seemed indifferent, she was keen and vigilant enough. Wrapped in a foreign shawl glowing with rich colors, she stood leaning against a young tree, attentive to every thing that passed. Once a young man came softly up behind her, and spoke in a whisper—

"Mahaska!"

The girl started, but did not turn or seem to notice that any one was behind her. She only answered:

"I hear, Metacomet. Speak on."

"I have been three times to her prison, in as many disguises, but they will not let me in."

"Then she is unprepared? All attempts to warn her have failed?"

"All! She has no hope that a friend is near."

"Then we have but to act with more courage and caution," answered the girl.

"Mahaska!"

"Well, Metacomet."

"If Moneto has need of me, and I fall, go to the woods with my people; be their prophetess and queen. Do not let our white foes drive them from the face of the earth."

"I will live with them or die for them!" was the firm answer.

Her promise received no rejoinder, and when Abigail Williams looked around to learn the cause of this silence, Metacomet was gone.

It was now close upon four o'clock, and the tramp of men marching in solid masses came with painful distinctness from the woods. Still it was some time before the awful cortege appeared, and Abigail Williams, who was searching both the forest and the ocean with keen glances, saw that a ship had drifted down the harbor, and lay at no great distance from the cove, as if its crew were anxious to witness the execution. This seemed a hazardous undertaking, for there had been a storm the day before, and the waves swelled heavily shoreward.

But that awful sound from the forest came louder and nearer. Along the cart path, plainly visible now, appeared file after file of armed men, and in their midst that woman, clad in a voluminous robe of black silk, with a lace scarf, wrapped turban-wise, on her head. Her pale hands were folded upon her bosom, and tied there as men bind felons.

Those who have seen Guido's picture of Beatrice Cenci can have some idea of the face that snowy lace and black robe but served to render more deathly pale—a face so eloquent of hopeless sorrow, that those who came to gloat upon the woman's agony grew heavy-hearted as they looked upon her.

Thus Barbara Stafford was brought through the dense multitude of men, women, and even little children, who surged up from the forest, and out upon the ice, jostling each other, wrangling for every foot of space, eager as hounds for the hunted deer, and only kept from laying hands on the prisoner by the soldiers, who forced them back with charged bayonets.

At last they brought the unhappy woman out upon the ice, beyond the line of soldiers; outside of which no one was allowed to pass. Then a picture was formed, full of solemn grandeur, and inexpressibly mournful. Behind, was the forest, stretching drearily into the distance, while its

margin swarmed blackly with human life, jostling, heaving, crowding the shore and the ice, till forced back by that line of glittering bayonets.

Before them was a lake of crystal, stretching into turbulent waters of the harbor. In the near distance, riding the swell of incoming waves, lay the ship with its anchor up, and its sails unfurling one by one, as it would seem, without human aid. Beyond all this bent the horizon with the wintry sun slanting toward it in gleams of amber-tinted flame, while great ocean waves, heaving in from the chase of a spent storm, rushed shoreward, and hurled themselves against the ice, which trembled and bent under each shock.

This was the picture revealed on that winter's day. Snow upon the earth—cold sunshine in the skies—brightness and death; funereal stillness in the crowd, and the cold winds wailing over all. In the midst—midway between the ocean and the forest—that woman stood alone, waiting for death. The soldiers had unbound her hands—for that little chance of life was to be granted her. Still she kept them folded on her bosom, and stood motionless; her eyes strained wide with terror, fixed on the great waves that came heaving toward her, and her white lips apart, as if some cry of agony had torn them asunder never to be closed again.

Two men, wearing tall, conical hats, and with pistols in their leathern belts, came softly up behind her, seized both her arms, and attempted to drag her forward. She gave a sharp cry, and held back, resisting them. The waves were even then heaving up the ice beneath her feet. Before her was a yawning hollow of greenish water, scooped out like a monstrous grave, into which those men were attempting to hurl her headlong. She broke from them and turned to flee—turned upon a double line of soldiers with bayonets levelled against her. These iron-hearted men grasped her again, and dragged her to the verge of the ice. Then, above all this horror, her gentle nature and womanly pride rose against their rude handling.

"Let me go alone," she implored; "I will not falter."

The guard knew that there was no chance of escape; and perhaps even their cruel natures shrank from hurling that noble creature so rudely to death. After a moment's pause they released her arms, and fell back.

Slowly and firmly she walked forward. The ice cracked under her feet, sending out bright, silvery lines, with each tread. Then it swelled upward with a sudden heave, broke, and with one plunge hurled her into the vortex of a wave that leaped upon her like a wild beast, and carried her off.

All this had been so sudden that the multitude could hardly believe that she was gone. Some, who had been near enough to look upon her face, wept, and crowded back, shrinking at the very last from a sight they had courted an hour before. Others grumbled that the agony of the scene had been so brief; and some cursed the witch aloud, hoping that the waves would toss her well before she died. These hard-hearted ones seemed for a time to have their wish, for when the disturbed waters swelled back, the fragment of ice on which the wretched woman had fallen was hurled out to sea. Her face was turned upward to the sunshine, and it seemed as if unseen spirits were guiding her frail support.

"Look! look how the witch floats!" shouted the crowd. "Devils are holding her up; you can see them buffet the water."

Sure enough, two dark objects rose on each side of the woman, and seemed to be guiding her frail support through the turbulent waves.

"Shoot! shoot! Has any one a silver ball? else the witch will escape!" cried a voice from the crowd. But the soldiers, appalled by what they believed to be the close presence of the evil one, stood dumb and motionless.

While the general attention was fixed upon this one object, a boat shot out from the right hand promontory, rowed by six men, and, struggling fiercely against the waves, moved toward the fragment of ice to which the woman was clinging.

"Look! look! A boat rowed by Indians! The red devils will save her! Fire upon them—fire on her!"

A dozen guns were uplifted. The click of their ponderous locks sounded fearfully distinct, for a deadly stillness had fallen on the multitude. But on the moment a tumult arose in the crowd, from which the Indians had cautiously separated themselves. With the leap of panthers they sprung upon the soldiers, and failing to wrench the muskets from their hands, flung them headlong to the ice. Then making a sudden dash through the crowd the savages plunged into the forest, leaving wild commotion behind. While the tumult raged fiercest, half a dozen guns went off at random, and others were fired blindly as the soldiers scrambled up from the ice. But they failed to reach the boat, which moved steadily toward the mass of black drapery, now visible, now submerged in the water. An almost superhuman sweep of the oars brought that toiling craft close to the wretched woman, who clung, cold and senseless, to that crumbling fragment of ice. While the boat rocked like an egg-shell on the waves, the tall figure of a man rose upright among the oarsmen, made a desperate leap into the water, and tore that deathly form from its hold on the ice. Aided by the two Indians who had swam from their covert under the sheeted ice, and bravely kept the fragment which bore Barbara Stafford from submerging, he lifted her to the strong arms stretched down to help him, and clambered into the boat. There, upon a pile of blankets, she lay, white as snow, and cold as the ice that clung to her wet garments. The young man stooped to make sure that she was not quite dead, when a bullet hurtled out from the shore and struck him

in the side. A wild leap in the air—a cry, sharp and clear as the yell of a wounded eagle, and Metacomet fell, bathed in blood, by the woman he had served so faithfully.

Now the tumult on the shore raged with fearful vehemence. Shouts and shrieks of cruel triumph swept over the waters. A boat was pushed across the ice, and shot out into the harbor, giving chase to the fugitives. The dying chief lifted himself up and saw this new danger. He struggled for speech, but fell back gasping for breath.

Wahpee dropped his oar and attempted to staunch the blood which flowed in a crimson stream down his side.

"Let me die—but save her!" shouted the young man, in his last agony. "Pull for the ship—or never dare to look for your chief up yonder!"

The savage sprang to his oar—and now the strength of fifty men seemed urging the boat forward. It fairly leaped through the water. Panting for breath, straining those sinewy arms till the muscles stood out like whip-cords, the savages bent to their desperate work, and by main strength distanced their pursuers. The ship's crew gathered on the deck watched this pursuit, and stood ready to aid the fugitives. A rope ladder was flung over the side of the vessel. Up its knotted cordage the savages toiled, carrying the rescued woman with them. They laid her on the deck, leaped like wild deer into the boat again, and pulled for the promontory they had left. The good ship, hired to do this merciful work by the last gold Metacomet possessed, was ready, with her anchor up, and with her sails all set. As the savages leaped down her side, she bore on her way, almost sinking the boatful of armed men that had daringly crossed her bows. In a desperate effort to save themselves these men allowed the craft, in which the dying chief lay, to gain a safe distance, and approach the promontory. But now a storm of bullets swept over it from the shore. Two of the oarsmen fell headlong to the water; another lay upon his face in the bottom of the boat. Still the little craft cut its way through all danger.

Abigail Williams stood on a strip of white sand at the extreme point of the promontory. Curving around the inner crescent of the bay, the soldiers were crowding back from the ice which was breaking up under their feet, but with their guns still levelled, and their bayonets flashing like tongues of flame in the sunbeams that slanted across them.

When the fugitives drew near the promontory, Abigail stood directly within range of the guns. Metacomet had lifted himself to a sitting posture, and saw her, through the blinding agonies of death. Then, with his last strength, he pointed her out, and, speaking to a chief who still kept to his oar unharmed, cried with his last breath—

"She is my sister—the daughter of your king; take her to the forest. Obey her—pro—"

He broke off. A shot struck the chief to whom he appealed. Concentrating all the life that was in him in one hoarse shout of defiance, which filled his mouth with blood, the son of King Philip fulfilled the destiny of his race, and fell dead upon the bodies of his slain friends.

Cold as stone, and white as a corpse, Abigail Williams stood upon the beach while this awful scene was enacted, and saw her brother fall. Again the soldiers levelled their guns for another volley, heedless of her danger—heedless of every thing. Right in the pathway of the bullets levelled at the boat, she stood. They flew over her head—they fell like rain in the water; and at last, one more merciful than the rest, pierced her through the heart. She fell without a moan, just as the savages, landing under a shower of hurtling lead, carried the body of their chief from the boat in open defiance, and bore him into the forest.

While the shot that killed that unhappy girl was still ringing in the air, two horsemen rode fiercely into the crowd, scattering it right and left, till their horses dashed out in bold relief on the ice in front of the soldiers. One was a gray-headed old man, who reeled in his saddle, and looked wildly from the soldiers to the water without the power to utter a word. The other, young and strong of purpose but wild with apprehension, called out in a voice so full of horror that it could scarcely be heard:

"Magistrates and soldiers! where is the woman you came here to murder? I bring her full pardon, signed by our governor, Sir William Phipps."

The sheriff came close to Norman Lovel's horse. "It is too late; she has gone."

With a groan that left his white lips in a single heave of agony, Samuel Parris dropped from his horse. He had fainted quite away.

"Not dead, peradventure, but yonder!" cried the sheriff, pointing to the vessel which was still clearly visible. "A party of Indians, led by the young man who defended her at the trial, rescued the sorceress—stark or living; I cannot affirm which."

"And she is gone safe—she is in that ship?" cried the young man, starting up exultingly in his stirrups, and gazing after the vessel with a great outburst of thankfulness. "God forever bless the man that saved her!"

"The pestilent heathen is dead, and half his boat's crew with him," answered the sheriff, with a grim smile. "We gave them three volleys. See—their boat is drifting this way, bottom upwards, riddled through and through. They got off to the forest with the body of their leader; but I have sent a company after them."

"Recall that company, I command you, on the authority of Sir William Phipps! I would myself stand by the body of this young man, were it permitted, and do him the reverence his bravery has earned. March your soldiers back to the city, good master sheriff; they are no longer wanted here."

The sheriff received this order with a stiff bow, and turned away to muster his men.

Then for the first time Lovel discovered that Samuel Parris was lying prone upon the ice insensible, with scattered locks of gray hair blown across his face. The young man got down from his saddle at once, and dropping on one knee lifted the old man in his arms.

"Has no one a drop of brandy?" he inquired in great alarm. "See how cold and pale he is!"

A flask of spirits was handed over his shoulder by one of the by-standers. Lovel poured some of its contents by force into those cold lips, and after a little the minister revived.

"Oh, my son, God is against us! She is dead! dead!" murmured the old man. Great tears rose and swelled in his eyes, choking his voice; but the anguish he could not speak swept over his face.

"She is safe, father; she has escaped! Lift your eyes, and they can yet discern the ship which carries her out of danger."

"Art thou sure—quite sure, Norman?" cried the old man, clasping his hands in an ecstasy of gratitude.

"Here are those who saw her borne up the sides of the vessel."

"Let us go home, my son. Elizabeth will be sorely anxious," said the old man, struggling to his feet. "But you avouch for this? a mistake would be terrible."

"Yes, yes. Dear lady! She is out of their reach at last, and I much fear neither you nor I will ever see her face again."

"Nay, nay; but I have great need of rest and thought. Let us go home."

Norman helped the old man to his saddle, and the two rode slowly away, following the soldiers. When the sun went down that night, not a human form could be seen along all that trampled shore save one, so cold and beautiful, that but for the garments and those masses of rich, black hair, it might have been chiselled from parian marble. Thus, partly on the sand, partly on the crusted snow, all that was left of that unhappy girl, called Abigail Williams, lay, till the sun set behind those naked trees and the moon arose. Then out of the black depths of the wilderness, came the figure of an old woman, toiling through the snow, and almost bent double. She sat down by the lifeless girl, and attempted to lift her head; but it resisted her hands, and fell back on the snow like marble. Then poor old Tituba stretched out her withered limbs by the side of her dead charge, and winding her arms around that cold form broke into a funereal chant, so sad, so thrillingly mournful, that it wailed through the whispers of those naked tree-boughs with the anguish of a soul in pain. Then along the track she had made in the snow came a file of Indians, whose death-chant swelled with hers into a wild, fierce music. They lifted the young girl from the ground, and bore her away, filling the winter's night with that weird chant as they went. Behind them, following meekly along the beaten path, the lone Indian woman crept, her slow footsteps faltering with age. Still her feeble voice sent forth its death-wail, and thus like a shadow she disappeared.

In a hollow lined with crusted snow and overhung with naked forest-trees, they had laid the young chief Metacomet upon a rude bier formed of evergreen branches, with the foliage fresh upon them. By his side they placed the sister whose life had been broken up so fatally by his kingly ambition. Then these savages, chiefless and wanderers forever more, lifted the bier, and turned their footsteps toward Mount Hope, where the brother and sister were laid in one grave, the last of a kingly and most persecuted race.

CHAPTER LV.

CLOSING SCENES.

Samuel Parris kept his word faithfully; for added to his own promise was the sacramental oath taken by Barbara Stafford, which he dared not force her to break. But the secret confided to him lay heavily on his conscience, and the struggle there wore away his strength. For a whole year he avoided his old friend the governor, and refused to visit his house, even when Elizabeth became its permanent inmate as Norman Lovel's wife. But at last there came a period when the old man went mournfully to the house he had shunned. This time, he was summoned there to attend, not a wedding, but a funeral—Lady Phipps had laid down a life all sunshine, and gone suddenly into the valley and shadow of death. When Samuel Parris rode up to that stately mansion, he found its pillars draped with black, and a hatchment over the front entrance. These emblems of grief struck him with singular feelings of blended grief and thankfulness. His eyes filled with tears of regret for the gentle woman who had gone; but his heart beat free once more, and a grievous load fell from it, when his foot passed that threshold. In an hour after his arrival at the mansion, a

funeral cortege went forth from its portals which surpassed any thing known to the colony in its exceeding solemnity and worldly grandeur. In the procession, Samuel Parris rode with his friend; and, for the first time since Barbara Stafford's escape, the two men sat hand in hand, yielding to the old sympathy, and united by the old love. Both mourned the dead with sincere grief; but it was observed of Samuel Parris, that a gentle hopefulness had settled on his face, and there was something in his voice, when he prayed, that thrilled the hearer with strange accents of thanksgiving.

When the coffin, palled with black velvet, and rich with silver, was placed before the altar where William Phipps had partaken of his first sacrament, Parris knelt beside it, in violation of all usage, and prayed, for some moments, silently; but as if he were in absolute communion with the dead. Then he arose, like one reassured, and with benign calmness went through the funeral ceremonies.

That night the gubernatorial mansion was indeed a house of mourning. Elizabeth, clad in black from head to foot, glided from room to room, like a troubled spirit. Every other instant tears would fill her beautiful eyes, and she would creep close to Lovel's side, under the pretence of comforting him. The governor spent those first sad hours in his own room, and Samuel Parris sat musing in the library. He thought of the poor lady who was gone—of her bright cheerfulness, her beauty, and gracious manners. All her life she had been the favorite of fortune and of circumstances. But Samuel Parris well knew that she had never wholly and entirely possessed the heart of that strong, great man, whose entire nature was, in fact, beyond her comprehension. Affection, care, indulgences, he had given her, and with these things she was content. But the great happiness of married life—that of being mated, heart and intellect, in one noble union—she could not have comprehended. She was quite ready to worship her husband's greatness, without understanding it; but blind worship satisfies no man entirely. In order to be thoroughly loved he must be understood.

Samuel Parris did not reason in this way. It would have seemed cruel, thus coldly, and under that roof, to analyze the life that had just passed away; but he had a solemn duty to perform, and welcomed such thoughts as promised to make the result a happy one. For three days the minister remained the guest of his bereaved friend. All the kind relations of pupil and tutor came back to them. In his sincere grief, the governor loved to fall back upon that highly cultivated and generous nature for sympathy and Christian comfort, and both were given him entirely.

A few hours before that appointed for his return home, the old man quietly followed Sir William into his library, and closed the door.

"William," he said, laying his hand on the governor's arm, "William, my son, sit down by the window here; I have something to say to you."

Sir William smiled kindly and sat down, a little surprised by the old man's nervous manner.

"William, thou rememberest that night when thou camest to my house with that young girl?"

"Remember!" answered Sir William, shrinking visibly, as if some heart-wound had been touched. "Think you, my friend, that I ever forget it for a single hour? After the terrible grief of losing her I am prepared for any thing."

"But she is not lost, William Phipps."

Sir William started up. It was wonderful to see that noble form so agitated.

"Not lost, old man? I am no longer a boy, and you see how thickly gray hairs are creeping over my head; but I cannot bear to hear her mentioned. I know that in heaven nothing perishes; but this earth lost all its bloom for me when she died. Talk of something else. I would not have the old grief overwhelm my regret for the sweet wife we buried three days ago. It shakes my very soul even to think of that crowning sorrow of my youth. Oh! Parris; she was one of the grandest, most generous, and loving creatures that ever lived. I could weep like a child with the bare memory of what I lost and suffered. I can say this to you now, my faithful friend, without injury to any one. What a life mine would have been, had she lived to share it with me. Now that I am alone, these thoughts crowd upon me. I cannot help it, force them back as I will."

"But I say unto thee, William Phipps, the woman to whom I married thee that night is alive. Thou hast seen her—held her in thy arms. When thy hand signed the pardon for Barbara Stafford, it saved the wife of thy youth!"

"Barbara Stafford? Old friend, do not mock me; I cannot bear it. You are an imaginative man, I know, and harbor strange fancies; but do not let them fire a hope in me which after-truth will quench. You look serious, and wonderfully calm; notwithstanding, I think you are insane, Samuel Parris."

"Nevertheless, the woman who was tried, condemned, and would have suffered for sorcery, but for the interposition of friends more generous than we were, was and is thy wife."

"Was and is my wife? Are you mad, or am I?"

"William! William! look up! how white thou art! Let me wipe the drops from thy forehead. Nay, nay; these strong hands should not quiver thus. Let them clasp mine. That is well; now look into these eyes, William, and read my story there. As the Lord liveth, and as I am his servant, the wife

of thy youth is still living—still loves thee as woman never before loved man. Dost thou believe me?"

A wonderful expression swept the strong man's face, an ecstasy of hope broke into his eyes, and parted his lips with such smiles as no human being had seen there before.

"I do! I do! My wife—my fair young bride. Why, Parris, that stern man parted us in less than a year. Living! loving! and I—are these tears, Samuel Parris? Am I a boy again?"

"There, there, my son; drive all these doubts away; for this life has joy for thee yet, and for her. I tell thee, my son, thy wife, who called herself Barbara Stafford, is a mate for thee, heart and soul, or for any man living."

"My love! my wife! Now I understand how it came about that this heart was so disturbed. But why did she keep away from me?"

"The father, who told thee that thy wife was dead, when thou soughtest her, practised a double deception, and, till his death, she believed herself a widow."

"But she was undeceived, and loved me still?" cried Sir William.

"She came to this country in search of her husband, and found him married to another."

"My poor wife! That was terrible! I understand: she would not claim me; but was ready to suffer doubt, contumely, death, rather than harm her husband. I was not faithless to her. God is my judge, in this soul I was not faithless. She knew how I had been deceived? She did not hate me?"

"Hate! nay, nay; does hate ever produce actions like hers?"

Sir William Phipps arose; his eyes bright, his face radiant. Even Samuel Parris gazed on him in wonder. Was that the grave, stern man, who had seemed so long incapable of a strong emotion?

"My friend, we will go to her. Where shall we search?"

"She is in England, Sir William; one of the first ladies in that proud land—a countess in her own right—the possessor of great wealth."

"She is my wife! that is all I ask or care," exclaimed Sir William. "Old friend, a ship lies in the harbor; when will she sail?"

"To-morrow. I went forth to inquire this morning."

"I will send at once and bespeak the cabin. You must go with me."

"Aye, truly; but there is something else which thou must hear before we start. Her son and thine is under this roof!"

"Her son and mine? Is it my wife you speak of? That fair girl who loved me so?"

"Even her."

"A child, and I never knew it! Oh! Father of mercies! this makes life too precious! A son? Did you say it was a son, and under this roof? Not the young man I have loved so—not Norman Lovel?"

"Truly, thy heart divines aright. The youth is her son and yours."

"My son! my son! Where is he? Bring Norman hither. Why, it was her soul I saw and loved in his young face. And she knew this? Knew it, and gave him up rather than harm her husband! Old friend, who shall dare to say, after this, that women are on a level with us? or affirm that they never perform the work of angels? And she is now my wife! I have but to stand before her, and she will forgive the unintentional wrong which put another in her place. Samuel Parris, in the joy of this moment, I had forgotten the new-made grave up yonder, where that good and gentle woman lies. Yet I think she, who was all goodness, might forgive me if she knew how I have suffered. Is my son coming, and his wife? So you and I are made nearer by the love which unites our children. I am glad of it. Is that Norman's step? Norman! Norman!"

The young man heard Sir William's voice, so clear and animated that it thrilled him with pleasure. He entered the library, and saw the governor standing near the table, so changed and brightened by the happiness that filled his whole being that the young man gazed on him in silent astonishment. Sir William came toward him, and, pressing a hand on each of his son's shoulders, looked in his face.

"Norman! Norman!"

His voice failed. For the first time in his life, the young man saw tears in his father's eyes; still, a grand, joyous smile broke through them.

"Norman! my—my—" Sir William's voice broke, and his chest heaved; he threw his arms around the young man, and strained him to his heart. "Boy, boy, I am your father!" he cried.

"My father! mine!" repeated the young man. "Oh! that it were so in name, as it has been in kindness! Father! how sweet the name sounds!"

"Repeat it again, my son; for before God and man you are my son. I did not know that human language could be so beautiful!"

Norman released himself gently from the clasp of his father's arms, and stood before him, lost in amazement.

"Has your heart no voice? does your lips refuse to call me father?" questioned Sir William, in tones that thrilled through and through the son.

"Forgive me, forgive me; but I am bewildered," he said. "You call me son for the first time, having acted more than a father's part by me for many a year. Is it your will that I henceforth call you by the dear name I have never known? If so, from my heart of hearts I thank you."

Sir William saw that he was not fully understood; but impatient affection foiled all explanation. He could only affirm, with imploring tenderness, what he had already said.

"Norman, it is a truth. Receive it into your heart at once. You are my lawfully-born son—a part of my own young life—the child of a love perfect as mortal beings ever knew. It is no adoption I offer. By law and right you, from this day, take position before the world as my son and heir."

"But—but my mother; who was my mother? Not the sweet lady whose death we mourn?" questioned Norman, seized with a sudden pang, "or I should have known this before."

"My son, it is not an hour since I learned it myself," answered Sir William. "Ask this man, my old and faithful friend, who married me to your mother."

The young man's face cleared; his heart flung off the painful dread that had seized upon it.

"Father! father!" he cried, reaching forth his arms; "tell me who my mother was. Have I seen her? Was she ever known as Barbara Stafford? It is impossible, and yet my soul claims her."

"Boy," answered Sir William, and his voice took sweet solemnity as he spoke, "this lady is my wife and your mother! Do not question me so earnestly with those eyes; I have no dishonor to proclaim, no wilful wrong to atone for. This good man will tell you more than I have yet learned. Sit down here, close by my side, and we will listen together; but first bring my daughter, your wife; we must have no secrets from her."

Before Norman could reach the library door, it was opened, and Elizabeth came in. Weary of her loneliness in the desolated rooms her friend and almost mother had filled with so much cheerfulness, she ventured into the library, and now stole softly to her father's side, and took a seat by him, anxious to share every moment of his company during the short time that he would remain in the house. She saw, by the agitated faces around her, that some unusual subject was under discussion, and sat down in silence. The minister took her hand, smiled faintly upon her, and began his story.

The next morning, a ship cleared from the harbor of Boston. Its cabin was taken entirely for Governor Phipps, his secretary, and the lovely young wife, whose beauty had been the admiration of every one who found access to the gubernatorial mansion. A fourth person in this party was Samuel Parris, minister of the gospel from Salem.

CHAPTER LVI.

OVER THE WATER.

In the loveliest county of Old England stood one of those fine baronial castles that have outlived the ravages of many a rebellion. It had not only defied all ordinary causes of decay, but grown beautiful from time, which loves to make up for its own depredations by the embellishments which nature is sure to supply as it draws art slowly back to its own bosom.

In this noble mansion, surrounded by a tenantry that worshipped her, and retainers who had grown old in those majestic walls, the Countess of Sefton performed the duties of a station that required no ordinary ability; and, despite the sufferings which we know of, performed them well. She was one of those who grow lofty and strong by suffering. Had that woman thought only of herself, or most frequently of herself, she would have died broken-hearted, or dwindled down into the sentimental nothingness to which sorrow often levels a weak mind. But Barbara Stafford—for we like that name best—strove to forget herself, her troubles, and her wrongs, in a benevolent effort to serve her fellow-creatures. She allowed herself no time for useless lamentation, but gave all her energies and vast wealth for the good of suffering humanity. Pleasant cottages arose, like enchantment, all over her vast estates; school-houses reared their modern fronts among the moss-grown buildings of past times. Wherever industry could be encouraged by rewards, it was generously fostered. With so many human beings depending upon her efforts for their advancement in life, she held the sorrows that always lay heavy at her heart in abeyance, and stilled the yearnings of a loving nature by constant self-abnegation.

Barbara lived a solitary life so far as intercourse with her peers went. She neither sought nor greatly avoided the society which would have crowded around her. Having spent so much of her life abroad, she had few acquaintances in England, and made none after her return from America. Twice she received letters from that country, directed in a stiff, cramped hand, which

always left her in a state of depression for days after she read them. But a gracious calmness would gently sweep these sad memories away, and she went on steadily with her life, twining hope into prayer, and waiting God's time for her deliverance.

Barbara loved the stately edifice, which had been repaired and beautified by her grandmother. Indeed, hers was a nature to love every thing good and beautiful. Her rooms were full of pictures, statues, and rare objects collected in her travels. The gardens and broad pleasure-grounds around her mansion glowed with flowers, which clustered thickest and brightest beneath the windows of her private apartments. Sorrow had neither rendered her austere nor indifferent. She loved the grand old forest-trees which waved in groups upon the lawn, and every tiny blossom that gemmed the turf at their roots. The pretty birds that flashed from thicket to tree-bough found a welcome in her heart, heavy as it was at times. She strove, with Christian fortitude, to replace the husband and son lost to her, by the gentle beauties of nature; and, desolated as she was, life had its sunny side even for her.

One morning this noble woman—the more noble that she was so womanly—sat alone in a little breakfast-room which overlooked a vista of the park, and nearer yet a flower-garden radiant with June roses and such sister flowers as link spring to summer. That morning she was weary and heavy-hearted; her mind wandered far away in spite of herself, and a strange yearning to look upon the two faces dearest to her in life seized upon her. She sat gazing out upon the flowers, with unconscious tears rolling down her cheeks, when a servant knocked at the door, and, receiving no answer, came in.

"My lady, a note from a gentleman who waits below: two others, with a lovely young lady, are with him; but he is the only one who asks to see you."

Barbara reached forth her hand wearily, and took the note thus presented from the salver. She did not look at the address, but tore the seal apart, and read one word—William Phipps—all the rest ran together, and she could distinguish nothing. With her lips apart, and the paper shaking in her hands, she sat a full minute gazing upon the name without seeing it. The voice of the servant aroused her.

"My lady, is there an answer?"

"Wait."

The voice in which this one word was uttered scarcely rose above a whisper. Barbara swept one hand across her forehead again and again, clearing her confused vision. At last she read—

> "I am here, my wife—here, with our son and our old friend Samuel Parris. Will you receive me? Can you forgive me?
>
> "William Phipps."

When Barbara Stafford arose, and turned her face toward the servant, it was so radiant that the man stared at her in amazement; but she gave no other expression of the ecstasy of joy that swelled even to pain in her heart.

"Show the gentleman up to this room," she said. "I will see him here."

The servant went out, closing the door after him; and there Barbara stood, in the centre of the room, with one hand supported by the carved woodwork of her chair, and the other pressed to her bosom, waiting for the one blissful moment which would be enough to repay all her sorrows, all her anguish of suspense. She heard the first sound of his footstep, and her heart, that had stood still up to that moment, beat fast and loud. The door opened, and the husband of her youth stood on the threshold. She could not speak; she did not move—but that look was enough. His strong arms saved her from falling. Her head was pressed to his bosom; she felt his kisses on her forehead; but no words were spoken—a few sobs, a name brokenly uttered, a rain of tears falling delicious and still, like dew upon thirsty roses—then this man and woman sat down, hand in hand, looking at each other.

They were no longer young; he found threads of gray in those golden tresses, and traces of time around the loveliness of her mouth. But what of that? Those who love each other go out from their youth soul-bound, and time has no change which does not deepen and sanctify that true affection which can perish only with the soul's immortality.

After a few moments of this delicious silence Barbara spoke:

"Our son, William; is he here?"

"Yes, my wife, and waiting impatiently. But not yet. Even he must not break upon our heaven so soon."

Beyond the crowning happiness of these few minutes we will not go.

THE END.

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