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ROLAND GRAEME:
KNIGHT

A Novel of Our Time

BY AGNES MAULE MACHAR

AUTHOR OF "STORIES OF NEW FRANCE," "MARJORIE'S CANADIAN WINTER," ETC.

"***To Ride Abroad, Redressing Human Wrongs***"

MONTREAL
WM. DRYSDALE & COMPANY

Entered according to Act of Parliament, in the year of Our Lord, One Thousand, Eight Hundred and Ninety-Two, by W. DRYSDALE & Co., in the Office of the Minister of Agriculture at Ottawa.

TO
Lyman Abbott, D.D.,
ONE OF THE FIRST VOICES IN AMERICA TO ENFORCE THE RELATION OF
CHRISTIANITY TO THE LABOR PROBLEM, THESE PAGES ARE RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED.

"The highest truth the wise man sees he will fearlessly utter; knowing that, let what

may come of it, he is thus playing his right part in the world; knowing that, if he can effect the change he aims at—well: if not—well also; though not so well."

HERBERT SPENCER.

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ROLAND GRAEME, KNIGHT.

CHAPTER I.

ROLAND'S THREE VISITS.

The Reverend Cecil Chillingworth sat in his quiet study, absorbed in the preparation of his next Sunday evening's discourse. It was to be one of those powerful pulpit "efforts"—so comprehensive in its grasp, so catholic in its spirit, so suggestive in its teachings—for which Mr. Chillingworth, to quote the Minton *Minerva*, "was deservedly famous." In fact, this "fame" of his sat already like "black care" on his shoulders; or, as the Minton *Minerva* might have said, had it only known the secret, like a jockey determined on all occasions to whip and spur him up to his own record. The strongest forces are often those of which the subject of them is least conscious, and, though Mr. Chillingworth would not have admitted it to himself, he stood in mortal dread of "falling off" in his reputation as a preacher. Should that happen, he would feel—or so he would have put it to himself—that his "usefulness was gone," a reason that would have justified to him every possible effort to avert the calamity.

He was now hard at work, with the critical presence of the reporter of the *Minerva* painfully before his mind, as he racked his brain for new and original thoughts, fresh illustrations, apt and terse expressions, with an eager anxiety that often threatened to put too great a strain on even his fine and well-balanced *physique*. There were indeed already, in his inward experience, some

unwelcome tokens of overstrain in a growing nervous irritability, and a miserable day, now and then, in which all the brightness of life, and faith, and hope seemed to disappear before the deadly touch of nervous prostration.

It was not wonderful, then, if on the days which he set apart more especially for preparation for the pulpit, Mr. Chillingworth was peculiarly impatient of interruption. It was not consistent with his principles absolutely to deny himself, on these days, to all who sought him; but he always yielded under protest, with the impatient sense of injury which is often caused by the inconvenient pressure of our ideals on our preferences. The subject of the particular sermon on which he was at this time engaged was, the absolute self-surrender and self-sacrifice demanded by the religion of Christ. He was in the full flow of clear and elevated thought, and was just elaborating what he thought a specially apt illustration, with the enthusiasm of an artist.

A knock at his study door suddenly awoke him from his preoccupation; his brow involuntarily contracted, as, without looking up, he uttered a reluctant "Come in!"

A trim maid-servant entered and handed him a card. On it was inscribed, in clear and decided, though small characters, the name, *Roland Graeme*.

"Roland Graeme!" he mentally re-echoed. "I don't know the name—and yet it seems familiar." Then a ready misgiving crossed his mind, and, turning to the waiting maid, he asked, "Does he seem to be a book-canvasser?"

"No, sir, I don't just think he is," she replied, somewhat doubtfully; then in a tone of more satisfied decision she added, "any way, he hain't got any books with him *now*, as far as I can see."

"Well, say I'll be down presently," said the clergyman, with a sigh of forced resignation, dipping his pen into the ink to finish the interrupted sentence, in which he spent some minutes, with a half-conscious determination to have at least the satisfaction of keeping the unwelcome visitor waiting. The plan did not work well, so far as he was concerned. He wrote a few words, read them over, thought them tame and feeble, drew his pen through them, and then, as the dull winter day was fast fading, he thought he might as well go down at once; first putting some fresh coal on his grate, so that, when he returned, he might find the bright glowing fire which his soul loved, for its suggestiveness as well as its comfort, in a twilight meditation. It is curious on what trivial things great issues do often depend. That little delay of five minutes, as it turned out, was the means of changing the whole course of Mr. Chillingworth's life, as well as that of some other persons with whom this story is concerned.

Down-stairs, in the handsomely furnished parlor, whose somewhat prim arrangement betokened the absence of any feminine occupancy, the clergyman found his visitor, a young man of more than middle height and noticeable figure, with a broad fair brow and wavy chestnut hair, candid blue-gray eyes, somewhat dreamy in expression, yet full of earnestness and hope, and lighted with a smile of peculiar sweetness as he rose at Mr. Chillingworth's entrance. That gentleman's manner, however, retained an expression of protest, and he remained standing, without any invitation to his visitor to resume his seat. If he did not say—"To what am I indebted for the honor of this visit?"—it was so clearly written on every line of his face, that the young man was constrained to begin in a tone of apology:

"I trust, sir, you will pardon the seeming intrusion of a stranger on your valuable time. May I ask you to grant me the favor of a brief conference on an important subject?" inquired the visitor, with a gentle courtesy of manner that impressed Mr. Chillingworth in spite of himself. "As a Christian minister, you——"

"As a Christian minister, sir, my time is much engaged. I must ask you to state the object of your visit as briefly as possible. Just at present, I am specially occupied with important work."

"I shall be as brief as possible," the young man replied. "I think you will recognize my object also as important. May I ask you to be kind enough to look at this prospectus?"

Mr. Chillingworth's high, arched forehead assumed a more and more clouded aspect. He made an impatient gesture as he said:

"I am afraid you really must excuse me! I cannot undertake to examine a long prospectus. Time is precious, and my own work is too exacting in its claims."

"That is what brings me here," the young man replied, still with a cheerful, undaunted look. "It is, I think, in line with your work, the importance of which I fully recognize. This is the prospectus of a paper which I propose to issue in the interest of our common humanity. It is designed to promote the brotherhood of man, to secure a better feeling between class and class, employer and employed,—a fairer scale of wages and hours for the operative, fuller coöperation between employer and *employés* and mutual consideration for each other's interests; in short, to propagate that spirit of Christian socialism which the minister of Christ——"

But here the clergyman's ill-controlled impatience broke its bounds. Preoccupied as he was, he had caught little more than the last words.

"I can have nothing to do with any socialistic schemes," he exclaimed. "There is far too much mischievous nonsense afloat!—simply producing discontent with existing conditions, and with the differences which, in Providence, have always existed. I must really decline any further conversation on this subject," and, with unmistakable suggestiveness, Mr. Chillingworth placed

his hand on the half-open door.

A faintly perceptible shade of vexation seemed just to flit across the bright serenity of the young man's frank, open face. He saw very well that persistence would do no good, and yielded to the force of circumstances with the best grace he could muster.

"Good afternoon, then, sir," he said, in a tone that, if not quite so cheery, was as amiable as ever. "I am sorry I cannot enlist your sympathy in our undertaking, as I should like to have all Christian ministers with us. I shall send you a specimen copy of the paper, and hope you will kindly read it."

"Good afternoon," the minister reiterated curtly, showing his visitor to the door with very scant courtesy.

Just as the door was about to close behind him, an unexpected interruption occurred, in the shape of an apparition of a character very unusual at Mr. Chillingworth's door. It was a little girl, who looked about eight or nine years old, but might have been older, quaintly wrapped in a shawl that had once been handsome, while a little fur-trimmed hood that was quite too small for her framed a mass of dark tangled curls, out of which large, lustrous gray eyes, strikingly beautiful in form and color, looked up from under their long dark eyelashes, with a soft, grave, appealing gaze. Her shabby, old-fashioned garb gave her, at first sight, the appearance of an ordinary vagrant child; but there was nothing sordid about the little creature. Her childish beauty, indeed, caught Roland Graeme, whose heart was always open to such spells, with an irresistible fascination.

The little girl looked eagerly up at the two men; then, seeming to divine which was the object of her quest, she said timidly, yet with a refinement of tone and accent somewhat out of keeping with her poverty-stricken aspect:

"Please, minister, my mother is very ill, and she wants——"

"I never give anything to begging children," interrupted Mr. Chillingworth, more sternly than he was himself aware of; for his irritation with his previous visitor preoccupied him so much that he heard and saw the child vaguely, without taking in the sense of her words, or according her any more consideration, than, to his mind, was ordinarily deserved by the nuisances he indiscriminately classed as "juvenile mendicants." "If your mother wants anything, she can come herself," he added, from behind the resolutely closing door. He was not an unfeeling man, but he never knew what to do with children, and had grown hardened by the sight of misery that he could not prevent;—the words he used being a well-worn formula, the crystallized result of many vexatious impositions. He had only, to "save his precious time," delivered himself over to a set of rules, and in so far, cramped and limited the flow of human sympathy.

Roland, left on the door-steps with the little morsel of womanhood, looked down at her, while she looked up at him with the keenly scrutinizing glance, which, in some children as in animals, seems to have been developed by force of circumstances. In the mutual glance, brief and inquiring as it was, a certain sympathy seemed to establish itself between the young man and the child. He noted, with an eye always minutely observant of human faces, the grieved, discouraged look which the child's flexible mouth had assumed at the unexpected rebuff. But she only said, in an explanatory tone, as if answering an unspoken inquiry,

"Mother's too sick to come; she's *awful* sick!"

"What's your name, my child, and where do you live?" asked Roland Graeme, who could no more divest himself of the quick sympathy that was always catching hold of other people's lives, than he could of the winning candor of his blue-gray eyes.

"Miss Travers!"—was the unexpected reply to his first question, given with a certain quaint dignity that touched Roland's sense of humor. "We live way up there," pointing in the direction of a long street that ran from the neighboring corner toward the outskirts of the city.

"And what ails your mother, and why did she send you here?" he continued.

"She said I was to come to this house," pointing to the number above the door, "and to say that she wanted to see *him* very particularly," said the child, evidently repeating her message, word for word, "and she's very sick and can't eat bread, and there's nothing else in the house!" she added, in a tone in which perplexity and resignation were strangely mingled.

The young man sighed heavily. Here was another atom, added to that pile of human misery which had begun to weigh upon his spirit like a nightmare. But he replied in the same cheery tone he had used to the minister:

"Well, I'm going that way, and if you'll wait a minute or two for me at a house I have to stop at, I'll go with you to see your mother, and perhaps I can help her a little." And, taking the little one's hand, the two passed on in the fast gathering dusk. The child, who had acquiesced with a look of real satisfaction, trotted on beside him, occasionally looking up, to study the face of her new friend and to return his smile, while doing her best to keep up with the unconsciously rapid pace which had grown habitual with him.

He drew up suddenly before a modest abode, the door-plate of which bore the inscription, "Rev. John Alden." The door was opened by a bright fair-haired boy, to whom Roland's heart went out

at once—for he loved boys, as much as some people detest them, and that is saying a good deal. This boy was evidently accustomed to all sorts of visitors, and did not even look surprised at Roland's odd little companion. Yes, his father was at home. Would they walk in? He seemed to know just what to do with the little girl, whom he carefully lifted to a chair in the hall, while he courteously ushered the young man into a parlor whose comfortable confusion and open piano, littered with music and books, indicated as much life and occupancy as the precise and frigid order of Mr. Chillingworth's reception-room betokened the reverse. A merry tumult of children's voices and laughter came through open doors, seriously diverting Roland's attention from the business part of his mission.

A quick decided step soon sounded in the hall, and, with a kindly word to the child as he passed, Mr. Alden entered. He was a man of rather less than medium height, and rather more than middle-age, strongly built, alert, with a large head, broad forehead and bright gray eyes, in which kindliness and humor often seemed to contend for the mastery. His cordial greeting led Roland to feel him a friend at once, while his keen observant glance took in every point of his visitor's appearance, and read his character with a correctness that would have amazed him, could he have known it.

"Sit down, sir, sit down! No intrusion in the world. I am always glad to see young men, and to do anything I can to serve them."

It may be remarked in passing that Mr. Alden's congregation usually contained more young men than any other in Minton. Perhaps this remark partly explained it.

Roland had soon unfolded his errand, less systematically and more discursively than he had done to Mr. Chillingworth. Mr. Alden listened attentively, read the prospectus with his head bent toward his visitor, and one arm resting on the back of his chair; then folded it up, and handed it back to him, with a twinkle of both sympathy and fun in his kindly eyes.

"Well, my dear fellow, I heartily sympathize with your object. I don't know that I can give you much help other than sympathy; but whatever I can do to promote your aims, I shall do with pleasure. Anything that can promote the true brotherhood of man must always enlist the sympathy of a minister of Christ."

"I wish all ministers felt as you do, sir," replied Roland, thinking of his last visit.

"Well, you see, I fear some of us have to be converted yet—to that doctrine, anyhow. As for me, I've had special advantages. My mother was a Scotch lassie, and used to rock my cradle to Burns' grand song,"—and the minister hummed the chorus:—

"For a' that and a' that,
It's comin' yet, for a' that
That man to man, the warld o'er,
Shall brithers be, for a' that!"

"My parents were both Scotch," said Roland, with quick pleasure. "But I suppose you guessed that from my name."

"Yes, a good old Border name it is! I dip into Sir Walter and the Border ballads now and then, and I think we've made some progress toward Burns' idea since those days! Well, I believe that time is coming, but it won't be in your day or mine; and only one thing will bring it about—the growth of the *brother-love*. I preach, that in my way, and I bid you God-speed if you preach it in yours. Send along your paper! We've got enough and to spare already, but I couldn't shut my door against one started on that platform. And if I conscientiously can, I will recommend it to others, and give you any other help you may need. Only, my dear fellow, don't be disappointed if you don't accomplish all you hope for. Many of us are apt to think at twenty-five, that if 'the world is out of joint,' we, in particular, were 'born to set it right.' I know I did, and though I have not done a hundredth part of what I hoped to do, I probably shouldn't have done that percentage, if I had not started with great expectations. Only don't be discouraged, if they are not all realized! Now—is this little girl with you?" he added, glancing out into the hall where another girl, somewhat older than the boy who had opened the door, was filling the child's hands with cake and fruit.

Roland, suddenly recollecting the child, told all he knew about her, while Mr. Alden listened with evident sympathy and interest.

"Ah! Another of the sad cases of hidden misery that one is constantly stumbling on," he said, his voice and eye grown soft with compassion. "That child doesn't look like one accustomed to beg. If the poor woman wants a minister, why shouldn't I go with you? I am at your service."

"If it's quite convenient," said Roland, "it would be very kind if you would."

"Oh, as for that, ministers and doctors mustn't stand too much on convenience. I've learned a good many lessons from my medical friend Blanchard. We both own the same Master, and I've no more right to be careful of my convenience than he has. Well, my dear, come away!"

For, as he talked in his rapid energetic manner, he had been as rapidly donning overcoat and gloves, and, hat in one hand, now extended the other to the little girl.

"That's right, Gracie, wrap her well up! Tell Mother that I'll be back as soon as I can, but you needn't keep tea waiting for me, if you are all too hungry. Now then, you can shut the door."

Roland courteously raised his hat to the young girl, as she stood looking after them with a smile very like her father's, while her long, wavy, golden hair was rippled by the cold December wind. He felt a wistful regret at leaving the warm, homelike atmosphere behind, when the door at last closed upon them.

Mr. Alden drew a few more particulars from the child as they hastened on. Her mother had been ill a good many days, she couldn't tell how many. No, there had not been any doctor to see her. Mother said she hadn't money enough. They had bread, but no tea, and mother could take nothing but tea!

Mr. Alden darted into a little grocery and came out carrying two small brown parcels. Frequent practice had made him equal to all such emergencies. They had gone a good way past the better class of houses, into a region of unpromising and dingy tenements—a region long ago deserted by all who could afford to leave it. At last the child stopped at an entry door.

"It's here—up-stairs," she said, looking up at her companions. They went up a rickety stair, black with years of unwashed footmarks, and followed the child into the room. She entered; but they stood still on the threshold, while Roland's brow contracted as if with a sharp sensation of physical pain.

It was a wretched little room, bare beyond anything Roland had ever seen in Minton. There was no table, only one dilapidated chair and a low wooden stool. On a shake-down on the floor lay the slender form of a young woman, nearly covered by an old shawl which did not quite conceal her poor and shabby attire. There was scarcely any fire in the rusty little stove. On an old trunk near the window were an evidently much-used box of water-colors, a few brushes, and a card or two, with flower designs painted sketchily, yet with some spirit;—objects so much out of keeping with the rest of the apartment that they at once attracted the eye. The young woman, who eagerly pushed the shawl aside and looked up the moment the door opened, was evidently very ill indeed. Her face was slightly flushed, though the room was far from warm, and her labored breathing told Mr. Alden's experienced ear that it was a severe case of bronchitis.

The little girl ran up to her mother at once, throwing her arms around her neck with a passionate clasp. Then in answer to the eager inquiring eyes that met hers, she explained:

"Here's a minister, Mammy! *That* one wouldn't come—but *he* did! So now you'll be better—won't you?"

As the mother remained for a moment in the child's close embrace, Roland, absorbed as he was in the distressing scene, could not help thinking that it was very evident whence the latter had derived her unusual type of beauty. The mother had the same dark rings of clustering curls—tangled now with the restless tossing of illness; the same large liquid eyes of dark gray, under long, dark lashes; the same exquisite curves of mouth and chin, even though suffering—physical and mental—had dimmed a beauty that must once have been bewitching. But the eyes had a restless, pining look; and now, all at once, the fevered flush ebbed away, leaving her deadly pale, while she seemed to struggle for breath, unable to speak.

Mr. Alden rushed to her assistance, and raised her a little, with difficulty detaching the clinging arms of the child; then, glancing around the room, his quick eye fell on a small flask that stood in a corner cupboard, otherwise empty enough. He motioned to Roland, who followed his glance, and brought him the flask. Mr. Alden seized a cup that stood near containing a little water, and, pouring into it some of the spirits that the flask contained, put it to her lips. She drank it down eagerly, and then lay back on the pillow, in a sort of exhausted stupor.

"She must have medical attendance at once," said Mr. Alden. "She is dying from neglect and exhaustion. I suppose you don't know any doctor near?"

"No," said Roland, "I am a stranger here as yet."

"Then I must go for my friend, Blanchard. Or stay—it won't do to leave this poor woman alone with that child! She might have died just now. And you'll make better time than I should. I'm sure you won't think it too much trouble to take a note to Doctor Blanchard, and to pilot him here."

Roland willingly assented. Mr. Alden tore a leaf out of his note-book, on which he hastily wrote a few lines, addressed it to his friend, and handed it to Roland, who hurried off at his customary "railroad pace," leaving Mr. Alden in charge of the scarcely conscious patient and the frightened child.

CHAPTER II.

A TWILIGHT REVERIE.

After his unceremonious dismissal of his unwelcome visitors, Mr. Chillingworth betook himself once more to the quiet sanctum into which no profane foot ever intruded. The fire was blazing brightly now, lighting up, with its warm glow, the stately ordered rows of books that lined the walls, and the two or three fine engravings which Mr. Chillingworth's fastidious taste had selected to relieve their monotony. A charming etching of Holman Hunt's picture, "The Hireling

Shepherd," opposite the fireplace, came out distinct in the warm light that just touched another of the "Light of the World," by the same painter, above the mantel. Mr. Chillingworth threw himself luxuriously into his easy-chair by the fire, to enjoy this twilight hour of meditation, when, the dull winter day shut out, his thoughts could roam freely in that realm of religious speculation which was most congenial to his mind. He wanted to complete the particular train of thought which had been flowing so successfully when he had been interrupted by Roland Graeme. He took the unfinished page that he had been writing, and held it in the glow of the firelight, so that he might read again the last completed sentences, and so recall the thoughts with which he had intended to follow them. The subject of the sermon was, the opposition of the religion of Christ to the easy-going, selfish materialism of the age. And the last sentences he had written ran thus:—

> "Men often labor under the delusion that Christianity is an easy religion. Its Founder taught another lesson. The palm is to be won, only in the blood and dust of the battle; the battle with sin, with the world, aye, hardest of all, with *self*! The warp and woof of the 'white raiment' are the incarnadined hues of self-denial and self-sacrifice, which, collected and fused by the prismatic power of love, blend in the dazzling purity of light itself."

Mr. Chillingworth did not feel quite satisfied with this illustration, though he had been delighted with it while in the glow of composition. Now it seemed to him a trifle confused, and he tried to think it out—for of all things he disliked mere vague and glittering rhetoric in pulpit oratory. But, somehow, his mind refused to stick to the point, and insisted in slipping off perpetually into the reverie which the dreamy influences of twilight and firelight are so apt to foster. There was nothing uncomfortable or self-reproachful in his reflection. No thought of the earnest young man he had repulsed, or of the child to whom he had refused to listen, troubled him in the least. Mr. Chillingworth was a conscientious man, and he had not done anything contrary to his own sense of right. He was simply protecting himself from the profitless invasion of time dedicated to important work, by matters that lay outside of his sphere. This, at least, is how he would have put it, had any one ventured to argue the point with the dignified Mr. Chillingworth.

But his mind this evening seemed caught by some hidden link of association, operating sub-consciously as such things often do, and was thereby carried off to scenes and events long left behind. Mr. Chillingworth did not often indulge in retrospection. When one gives one's self up to its influence, one cannot select at will. Pleasant recollections are interwoven with painful ones, which have a way of pouncing unawares on the unwary dreamer. And men whose lives are filled to overflowing with present engrossing interests, do not usually give much play to the power of painful memories. Still, whatever it might be that had stirred the vision, he was haunted to-night by a picture that stood, as real as the engravings opposite him, before that "inward eye" which is not always

> "... the *bliss* of solitude."

The picture was one of an old-fashioned English garden, sweet with pinks and lavender, bright with early roses and laburnum, framed in by walls clustered over with masses of glossy ivy, by stately old cedars, and, beyond these, by blue, wooded hills, soft-tinted in the dreamy hue of an English June. And the centre of the vision he saw might have served as an illustration for Tennyson's "Gardener's Daughter":

> "But the full day dwelt on her brows and sunned
> Her violet eyes, and all her Hebe-bloom,
> And doubled his own warmth against her lips,
> And on the bounteous wave of such a breast
> As never pencil drew. Half light, half shade,
> She stood, a sight to make an old man young."

For a few minutes, Mr. Chillingworth closed his eyes and yielded himself without stint to the overpowering reminiscences of days that could never be entirely effaced, not even by the remembrance of succeeding bitterness. Sweet voice, sweet eyes, sweet lips! how sweet you were! And why, ah why, should all that sweetness have been swallowed up in a horror of great darkness? Cruel fate! No, he did not believe in fate. Was it then one of those mysterious providences which seemed so often to mar human lives, or had he, himself, been to blame? He supposed he had. The temptation of a mere outward beauty had been too strong for him, who should have been proof against it. Well, that old folly was all past, long ago! All trace of it seemed to have vanished from his life. Old wounds were healed. Why should he let them smart again? Fruitless regrets for the past were contrary to his principles. So, to fight off the troublesome recollection, he rose and went to an open parlor-organ that stood near his study-table, his one special recreation and delight. And, taking up a score of the "Messiah" that lay open upon it, he struck a few opening chords, and, in a fine tenor voice, began the recitative "Comfort ye, Comfort ye my People."

But the music could not soothe him to-night as it usually did. The restless mood was too strong, and presently he rose abruptly, as a sudden thought occurred to him. He had promised to drop in, very soon, at Dr. Blanchard's, to talk with Miss Blanchard about the proposed rendering of this oratorio for the benefit of his projected new church, in which he wished to enlist her coöperation as a vocalist. This was the hour at which he was most likely to find her at home, the hour at which Mrs. Blanchard usually dispensed afternoon tea, a ceremony of which he

thoroughly approved. The pleasant cosy drawing-room, with Miss Blanchard's graceful figure as a centre-piece, seemed, just then, infinitely more attractive than even the tranquil study with its glowing fire and the prospect of a summons, erelong, to a solitary tea-table. For Mr. Chillingworth was a comparatively young man still, and, notwithstanding a certain fastidious exclusiveness, his social instincts were by no means weak. He gave himself a little inward pinch as he thought of some sentences of Thomas à Kempis that he had read that morning; but, as he said to himself, he had a good reason for breaking through his ordinary rule of shutting himself up on the last days of the week, and he was no ascetic, nor meant to be! So, after telling the trim maid that she need not bring up his evening meal till his return, he took what had of late been his frequent way to Dr. Blanchard's hospitable home.

In the bright, daintily furnished drawing-room he sought, there were at that moment assembled three or four persons who were, as it happened, discussing him, and perhaps, like "superior" people in general, he would have been a little surprised at the freedom of some of their remarks. These people were: Mrs. Blanchard, arrayed in one of the first "tea-gowns" that had ever been seen in Minton, whose delicate green set off the warm tints of her hair and complexion; Miss Blanchard, whose quiet afternoon dress, soft and close fitting, contrasted with the more pretentious attire of her sister-in-law, and showed a fine figure to perfection; and two afternoon visitors, who were evidently very much at home. One of these was a young lady, with fair fluffy hair and very fashionable dress, of a peculiarly fresh and delicate prettiness, and a manner that every one called very "taking." The other was a slender, undersized young man, fairly good-looking, with regular features, dark hair and eyes, and an expression of nothing in particular save satisfaction with himself, his surroundings, and his carefully faultless attire. Two children completed the party; a tiny girl in a mass of white embroidery, playing with a pet terrier on the hearth-rug, and a small boy with an aureole of reddish curls, who sat on Miss Blanchard's knee, thoughtfully gazing into the fire.

"Oh!" exclaimed the fair young lady, as she handed her empty cup to the young man who was waiting for it. "*Did* you hear, Nora, about my cousin, Janie Spencer?"

"What about her, Kitty? Is *she* engaged, too?"

"Oh, dear no! nothing, so common! Something *you'll* say is a great deal better! In fact, I call it grand, heroic! Don't you know she's actually made up her mind to be a nurse, and she's gone to the Saint Barnabas hospital for training!"

"Has she, really?" exclaimed Miss Blanchard, with great interest, her cheek flushing a little, and her dark-blue eyes lighting up. "Well, that's good!"

"I knew you would say that," said Kitty, complacently, rejoicing in the effect of her bit of news. "And, do you know, she tells me it was all through Mr. Chillingworth's lovely sermons about self-sacrifice, and—giving up, don't you know. They made her feel so selfish, and as if she had no object in life but enjoying herself, and so, she said, she couldn't rest in her mind till she set to work to do something for other people. And then, she said, they had girls enough at home without her, and she was tired of doing nothing in particular, and she always did have a fancy for nursing. Now, you must be sure and tell Mr. Chillingworth all about it, the first time you see him."

"Why not tell him yourself, Kitty?" was the laughing reply. "You see him oftener than I do."

"Oh, I never can talk to him about such serious things! He looks as if he didn't expect it, or as if it was a sort of liberty; and then he seems to think I'm making fun of him, and I never feel sure that *he* isn't making fun of *me*."

"Well, I shouldn't say that Mr. Chillingworth was overburdened with 'fun,'" said the young man, smiling at Kitty. "He wouldn't make his fortune as a humorist; his views of life are too serious, and it seems he is making other people's views serious, too."

"A good thing, too, if he were to do a little for you in that way," she replied.

"Yes, I'm sadly aware that I am far behind you in that respect, Miss Farrell," he retorted, with mock gravity.

"Don't be impertinent, Mr. Pomeroy!" replied the young lady.

Here a diversion was made by the curly-haired Eddie, from his post on Miss Blanchard's lap. His long and serious contemplation of the fire ended with a sigh, and the subject of it came out in the remark:

"I like the Crusaders a great deal better than the Giant-killers, Auntie! Don't you think they were the best?"

"I don't know, Eddie," replied Miss Blanchard, truthfully. "I never thought about it, I am afraid."

"Well, think! Auntie, *think*!" persisted the child, hugging her neck very tightly, while the others laughed.

"I think some of the Crusaders *were* Giant-killers, Eddie," said the young man, not sorry to air his historical knowledge. "Saladin gets the credit of being a pretty fairish giant, doesn't he, Miss Blanchard? or so I think my school-books used to say. By the way, wouldn't Chillingworth have made a first-class Crusader, a Crusader *chaplain*, you know?"

"Why, it was only the other Sunday he was telling us what mistaken views the Crusaders had, and how they often left real duties for visionary enterprises. See how well I have remembered *that*!" exclaimed Kitty.

"I doubt if *he* would have seen it, *then*," replied Mr. Pomeroy, chuckling over a happy thought.

"Oh, Nora, are you going to help in the oratorio, the 'Messiah,' you know? Mr. Chillingworth is taking such an interest in it! All we girls in the choir are to sing in the choruses. Hasn't he asked you?"

"Yes," said Nora, quietly.

"Why, he's been here three times within the last fort-night," said Mrs. Blanchard; "he's just set on getting Nora to sing; and she's got some sort of idea in her head about it, I don't know what. There's another ring, Nora; look if there's any tea left, there's a dear!"

CHAPTER III.

AN UNEXPECTED INTERRUPTION.

As Nora rose, and set down Eddie, a leisurely masculine tread sounded in the hall. When the door opened and revealed Mr. Chillingworth's tall figure, young Pomeroy turned to Miss Farrell, theatrically whispering:

"Speak of angels and you hear the rustle of their wings!"

"Good evening, Mr. Chillingworth," said Mrs. Blanchard, effusively; "here are these young people all talking about you."

"I hope they haven't found anything very bad to say," said Mr. Chillingworth, smiling graciously, as he greeted the party, yet unable to conceal altogether the sensitiveness to being "talked about," natural to most reserved and dignified people.

"No! I should hope not!" replied his hostess. "Do you think they would dare to say anything bad of you here? On the contrary, Miss Farrell has just been telling us how her cousin, Janie Spencer, has been led, by your preaching, to make up her mind to be a hospital nurse. I think it's splendid of her!"

"Yes, it's very fine," replied Mr. Chillingworth. "I am glad she has decided so. Her mother spoke to me of it some time ago, and I begged her to say nothing to dissuade her, but to leave her to follow, unbiased, her own convictions of duty. She has set a noble example."

"Well, I should think you would feel yourself rewarded," Mrs. Blanchard said, as she poured out a cup of tea, and handed it to her dignified guest; while Miss Farrell exclaimed:

"I hope you don't expect us all to follow it, Mr. Chillingworth, and go to be hospital nurses right away!"

"Not in the least," he replied, his dark eyes glancing up at the young lady from under his strongly marked eyebrows. "I don't think that is likely to be your vocation, Miss Kitty, at any rate. But there are other ways of doing good. Life is, indeed, full of opportunities. The pity is, we let so many of them slip," he added, rather sententiously.

"It would be a pity to let this one slip," remarked Mr. Pomeroy, handing the clergyman a plate of macaroons, and helping himself at the same time. "Miss Blanchard, I believe you made these macaroons. They are first-class."

The young man rather resented the clergyman's intrusion, as he considered it. He preferred to have both young ladies to himself, just then.

"The macaroons are excellent," said Mr. Chillingworth, "but I want you to do something better than that for me. I hope you have been trying over those choruses, and the air I wanted you to take as a solo."

Miss Blanchard's bright look clouded a little, and her broad white brow contracted slightly with an expression of perplexity.

"I have tried them," she said; "but I haven't quite made up my mind about the choruses. I don't altogether like the idea of it yet! And I am quite sure that my voice isn't equal to a solo of that kind, in such circumstances."

"Well, you will try it for me, *now*, at least?" he said.

Nora Blanchard was not given to affectations of any kind, so she rose and complied, quite simply, at once. The clergyman could not but feel that she was right after all, in her estimate of her voice. Her rendering of the air "He Shall Feed His Flock Like a Shepherd," was very rich and sweet, for a drawing-room, but lacked the power and compass sufficient to fill a concert hall. At his request, she went on with one or two of the choruses, in which he and Miss Farrell joined her; the three

voices blending very harmoniously in the grand music. Mr. Chillingworth noticed a new arrangement of the hymn, "Lead, Kindly Light," on the piano, and asked Miss Blanchard to sing that to him, which she did with great feeling and expression. As the closing lines came out in solemn hopefulness—

> "And, with the morn, those angel-faces smile
> Which I have loved long since, and lost awhile—"

the clergyman's gaze, as the observant Mr. Pomeroy noticed, grew strangely dreamy, as if he were absorbed by the influences of the song. He seemed to be seeing some inward vision, with pain in it as well as pleasure; and on the cessation of the music, he started as if awakened from a spell. Just then, the door opened, and a maid looked in to know if Mrs. Blanchard could tell when the doctor would be home.

"No, I'm sure I don't know," was the reply. "I thought he was back in the surgery by this time. Is it any one in a hurry?"

"Yes, it's a young gentleman wid a note, as wants him right off," said the girl, a new servant, unaccustomed as yet to the exigencies of a doctor's household.

"Oh," said Miss Blanchard, rising hastily from the piano, "I suppose it's some one from Mr. Easton's, for the medicine that Will told me about. I was to see him and give him a particular message. Excuse me, Mr. Chillingworth, I won't be long."

The clergyman seemed still preoccupied, and did not join in the talk of the others while she was gone. In a few minutes she returned, her cheek glowing and her eye bright with some new interest.

"What's the matter, Nora?" said Mrs. Blanchard, looking at her with some surprise.

"Oh," she replied, hurriedly, "it's a messenger from Mr. Alden, wanting Will at once, for a very sad case—a poor young woman who seems dying of bronchitis and exhaustion. And she has no one with her but a child. I think I must go myself, for I know quite well what to do. I didn't nurse Auntie through bronchitis last winter for nothing! I can take some fluid-beef and make her a little beef-tea, at any rate. And I know where there is some of the medicine Will prescribed for Auntie."

"Oh, dear! I *wish* you weren't *quite* so philanthropic. I don't like to let you go, but—I suppose you must, now you've taken up the idea. And if Mr. Alden knows about it, it must be all right. Will can go as soon as he's had dinner, and bring you back. I'll keep some dinner for you. I hope it isn't far, though."

"Oh, no, not very," replied Miss Blanchard. "I'm sorry to seem rude in leaving you all," she added, smiling, "but you see, if one doesn't go out to be a nurse, one must not let slip the opportunities Mr. Chillingworth was talking of just now."

"Certainly! It is most praiseworthy," said that gentleman, "and if you'll allow me, I shall be most happy to be your escort."

Mr. Pomeroy had come forward at the same moment with a similar request. But Miss Blanchard courteously declined both, saying that Mr. Alden's messenger would be escort enough.

"And I shall leave the address, as well as I can, on the surgery-slate," she added, "and Will can drive down when he's ready. I've no doubt the poor thing needs nourishment more than medicine. Of course I'll take some spirits with me, too," she added. "I believe it was that saved Auntie, little as she likes to admit it."

"Well, don't go taking bronchitis yourself," said her sister-in-law. "Mind you wrap up well, for it's raw and cold, as Mr. Pomeroy says."

"Oh, yes, don't be afraid!" said Nora brightly, as, with many regrets on the part of her friends, she left the pleasant, luxurious apartment.

"I believe," said Mrs. Blanchard, as the door closed after her and Eddie, who went to see her off, "that Nora wouldn't feel at home here, without some sick people to visit and look after. You see she always goes about everywhere with Aunt Margaret, in Rockland. Aunt Margaret's a regular Sister of Mercy, without a uniform, and Nora has always taken to going with her quite naturally. You know, Rockland's such a quiet little place, that there's hardly anything else to do in winter. That's one reason why I wanted Nora to spend the winter with us, for once, and see something different. She has been with Aunt Margaret so long that she has taken up all her ideas and ways."

"Then, Aunt Margaret must be a darling," said the enthusiastic Kitty, "for I am sure Nora is, if there ever was one! She and Janie Spencer are the best girls I know."

"It's nice to be one of Miss Farrell's friends," said Mr. Pomeroy. "I hope you do as well by me when I'm not there."

"*You*, indeed!" laughed Kitty, though she colored a little, or so thought Mr. Chillingworth, whose critical eye rested admiringly on the charming *piquante* face with its delicate bloom, and the very fair hair, "thrown up" by an artistic Gainsborough hat of dark-blue velvet, with a long drooping feather. He was rather disconcerted by Miss Blanchard's sudden departure;—still there was no denying that Miss Kitty Farrell made a very charming picture, and, as Mr. Chillingworth was fond

of saying to himself, "beauty has its uses."

"Well, they're gone!" announced Eddie, coming in presently.

"*They*—who?" asked his mother.

"Why, Aunt Nora, and the—man," said Eddie, slowly. He was going to say "the gentleman," but as he always heard his father talk of "men," he was trying to imitate him.

"Oh! the man Mr. Alden sent, I suppose. I hope he's all right," she added, a little uneasily. "But, of course he came for Doctor Blanchard himself," she continued, reassured.

"Oh, he's a real nice man!" said Eddie. "*I* like him. He talked to me while Auntie was getting the things ready. I hope he'll come here again!"

"Eddie is always taking such funny fancies!" said Mrs. Blanchard. "I'll have to ask Nora about this unknown cavalier."

Mr. Chillingworth's brow contracted—he scarcely knew why. He was sorry, now, that he had not more strongly pressed his escort on Miss Blanchard. He did not like the idea of her traversing the streets after dark, attended by an unknown "man" who had made himself so agreeable to Eddie. But it couldn't be helped now.

It was strange, after all, how much of the life and charm seemed to have gone out of the little party with Nora's departure—for she was not a great talker herself. Meantime she was on her way to her unknown patient, while her guide carried her basket, and, so far as he could, answered her questions about the poor woman in whom her interest had been so suddenly awakened.

CHAPTER IV.

A CONSULTATION.

When Roland Graeme's inquiry regarding the time of the doctor's return was answered by the entrance of a tall and graceful young lady, he naturally supposed her to be the doctor's wife. He met her with his usual frank and ready courtesy, addressing her as "Mrs. Blanchard, I presume?"—apologizing for the trouble he had given her, and describing briefly, but graphically, the condition of the patient on whose behalf he had come, as Mr. Alden's messenger.

Miss Blanchard, on her side, was surprised at encountering, in Roland Graeme's unusual type of face and expression, with the clear, candid, gray-blue eyes, so different an individual from the one she had expected to find waiting in the surgery. She expressed no surprise, however, but quietly corrected his mistake in addressing her, and, after listening attentively to his statement, added, after a moment or two of thought:

"As we don't know just when my brother will be in, I think I had better go with you myself, in the meantime; not that I pretend to any medical skill, but I have nursed a relative through an attack of bronchitis, and could take some things with me that I know would do her good."

Roland thanked her warmly, regarding her more attentively than he had done while absorbed in stating his errand. He could not help noticing the earnest and sympathetic expression of the dark-blue eyes, the fair forehead with its natural curve of dark-brown hair, untortured by "crimps," and the sweetness of the smile that seemed just to hover about the flexible mouth, as she—half-apologetically—made the unexpected offer. She was gone in a moment, and then his attention was monopolized by Eddie, who, with childish curiosity had followed his "Auntie," and with whom he had a delightful talk while awaiting the return of the doctor's volunteered substitute. For, to Roland Graeme, children were always delightful, doubtless because of the childlike element in his own nature.

But Miss Blanchard soon returned, ready for her expedition, with a small basket on her arm, of which Roland speedily relieved her, as they passed on through the now lighted streets, full of work-people returning from their daily toil. Roland, with the old-fashioned courtesy in which he had been trained, offered the young lady his arm—an offer which she courteously declined, with a touch of somewhat stately dignity. It was clear, indeed, that the firm elastic step needed no support. They walked on rapidly, Miss Blanchard asking more questions about their patient than Roland could answer, only explaining briefly that he and Mr. Alden had found her out, accidentally, through the child's appeal.

"Is it not sad," she said, taking a long breath, "how many such cases there must be around us that we never know? It puzzles me often to understand how such things can be."

"It's positively maddening, sometimes!" said Roland, irrepressibly breaking into the subject that was generally nearest his heart; "especially when one sees the cool, selfish indifference, with which so many people actually shut their eyes to these things; how they even help, so far as they are able, to crush their fellows down and to keep them down!"

"Why, how?—who would do that?" she asked.

"Employers are doing it all the time, and the rich employers are the worst. I suppose that is one reason why they *are* rich! But if they did not generally keep their rates of payment down to the minimum they can get men and women to take, there could not be such hard, grinding poverty. The truth is, a large proportion of our laboring classes are always living next door to starvation, and if sickness or want of work comes, it is next door no longer!"

"That seems very strange to me," said Miss Blanchard, thoughtfully. "I have lived all my life in Rockland, a quiet little place among the hills;—where everybody knows everybody else, and where our one or two employers think it their duty to know all the circumstances of all their workers, and are always ready to help them on, and to tide them over a difficulty."

"Yes, that's beautiful!" said Roland. "I know there are such noble exceptions—and they are especially likely to occur in small places, where the fierce tide of competition for wealth and luxury isn't so irresistible, and people seem to have some humanity left! Here, in Minton, where I haven't been so very long, I know numbers of cases where people are living on what I call starvation wages—especially women. You see, operatives are so apt to leave everything to selfish managers, whose main object is to please the firm, and these managers are often guilty of positive inhumanity. There now," he said, as they passed a large building gleaming with long rows of lighted windows, from whose entrance a stream of young women was pouring forth; "there's a place where too many things are done, contrary to all sound principles of justice and humanity. The operatives are made simply working-machines, obliged to work more hours than any young woman should be allowed to do; miserably paid, and exposed to petty tyrannies enough to take out of their life any little comfort they might have in it."

"Whose place is it?" she asked.

"Pomeroy & Company's silk and woolen mills."

"Why, I know young Mr. Pomeroy very well!" exclaimed Miss Blanchard; "and his mother, Mrs. Pomeroy, is a very good woman! I'm sure they can't know about such things!"

"They probably then don't try to know," he replied. "That's the great trouble. The heads of such places are so fully occupied with the business part of their concerns, that they have no time to think of the people by whom the business is made."

As they passed the building, they came up with two of the girls who were standing engrossed in earnest conversation.

"Don't go, Nelly!" they heard one say to the other. "It won't come to no good, any way, and Jim would be that vexed, if he knew!"

"Oh, I guess he'd live to get over it," laughed the other. "Don't *you* bother about it, Liz!" And she turned toward them, as they passed, a pretty, pert face, beneath a mass of elaborately frizzed hair, and a very tawdry hat.

"Those poor girls!" Miss Blanchard remarked, as soon as they were out of hearing. "How little real interest or pleasure there must be in their lives! How it makes one wish that we, who have so many pleasant things in ours, could do something to brighten theirs!"

"Yes, indeed," replied Roland. "I've often thought about that, and people do try more than they did—in that way. But so long as the work hours are so protracted and so exhausting, you can't make life much brighter for them, do what you will. It's one of my ambitions to do something toward securing shorter hours all round. I believe every one would gain by it in the end."

"Yes, I suppose it is pretty hard to have such a long day of steady work at one thing—especially for girls. I am afraid I shouldn't like to have to do it," said Miss Blanchard, with a sigh.

"But, then, it doesn't do to judge altogether by the outside," rejoined her companion, in a more cheery tone. "I suppose, after all, 'Ilka blade o' grass has its ain drap o' dew.' The greater wickedness is," he added, "when heartless fools try to squeeze the one 'drap o' dew' out of it! But here's our destination."

They found Mr. Alden seated on the one broken chair, near the miserable pallet. The child lay curled up beside her mother, fast asleep. The invalid seemed somewhat revived, and able to talk a little. She fixed her eyes on Miss Blanchard, as she entered, with a strange, wild, almost hunted expression, which rather startled her visitor. Miss Blanchard's gentle, kindly greeting, with Mr. Alden's introduction, seemed to reassure her a little, however, and she swallowed a portion of the soothing medicine that Miss Blanchard had brought for relieving her harassing cough. Then the young lady produced a tiny spirit-lamp from her basket, and soon had prepared a little cup of hot beef-tea, doing it all with a quick and ready lightness that showed her to be quite at home in work of this kind. Mr. Alden and Roland felt themselves to be supernumeraries at once. The latter, indeed, after offering the young lady some scarcely needed assistance in her arrangements, began to think that it was time for him to retire, when a step was heard on the stairs, and a young girl entered, carrying a cup of tea. She hesitated a moment in surprise at the unexpected sight of the strangers, dimly seen by the light of the one poor lamp. Miss Blanchard thought she recognized the pale, eager face of the girl who had begged "Nelly" "not to go," as they had passed the two standing under the lamp-post. She was sure of it, when the girl approached the invalid, scarcely looking at the visitors, and said, in the same deaf penetrating tone:

"Well, Mrs. Travers, how do you feel yourself to-night?"

"A little better now, thank you, Lizzie, but I have been so ill to-day! I thought I was dying a while ago, and Cissy went out and brought back this gentleman, and he has been so kind!"

She spoke in a soft musical English voice, decidedly the voice of a lady, Mr. Alden thought. Then turning to him, she said, with some energy:

"This is my best friend! She has been so good to me—sat up with me at night after working all day! I'd have been dead before now, if it hadn't been for her."

Miss Blanchard, as she bent over the patient, with a cup of beef-tea which she was administering by teaspoonfuls, looked up at the new-comer, with a light of softened admiration in her expressive eyes, which recalled to Roland Graeme, as he chanced to catch it, the memory of his enjoyment of the Sistine Madonna, at Dresden, on a brief visit he had made to Europe. He had not thought of calling Miss Blanchard beautiful, nor did he now; still there was something, either in feature, or expression, or both, that reminded him of the most beautiful and spiritual of Raffaelle's Madonnas. He looked at the poor working-girl, however, with scarcely less of admiration in his honest eyes—little as there was of beauty in the pale, thin face, without any advantage of dress to make up for the defects of contour and coloring.

The invalid, with the wilfulness of illness, insisted on putting aside the broth for the cup of tea that Lizzie had brought her.

"You see, she's used to it," Lizzie said, apologetically. "I always bring her a cup of tea and a bit of toast before I take my own supper, and she likes it."

"Well," said Mr. Alden, "I ought to be going home, if I can't do anything more here; but I don't like leaving you alone till your brother comes, Miss Blanchard. Perhaps this good friend of Mrs. Travers wouldn't mind coming back when she has had her supper, and staying with you till your brother comes, or I return, which I shall do, in any case."

"I am going to stay here all night, Mr. Alden," said Miss Blanchard, decidedly.—"I shall be only too glad to relieve you," she said to Lizzie, who was looking at her in surprise. "It's too much for you, when you can't rest in the daytime, as I can easily do; and I don't mind being alone, Mr. Alden! However, if you will be more satisfied——"

"Indeed, miss," Lizzie eagerly interposed, "I'll be back in ten minutes, and stay with you as long as you like. It's so good of you to say you'll stay all night! I don't mind it generally, but to-night I am dead tired."

And she looked it.

Mr. Alden insisted on Roland's going home with him to tea, as he was so far from his own quarters; and, as soon as Lizzie had returned, they took their departure. Miss Blanchard begged that Mr. Alden would not return that evening, as her brother would soon be there to give her all necessary directions, and Mr. Alden could see him later as to what it would be best to do for the patient. She bade Roland, also, a cordial good-night, which he as cordially returned; thinking, with some regret, how little likely it was that he should have any opportunity of improving an acquaintance which, brief as it had been, had already strongly interested him.

"Miss Blanchard is one of my special admirations," said Mr. Alden, smiling, as they walked on together. "She's an uncommon type, and has been brought up in a very different atmosphere from Minton society. A quiet, refined country home, time and training for thought and study, good literature to grow up among, a wide-minded, philosophical father of the old school, and an aunt with the soul of a saint and the active benevolence of a Sister of Charity; it is no wonder that Nora Blanchard is a sort of *rara avis* among girls."

"You believe in heredity then, sir, and in environment?" said Roland.

The clergyman looked at him keenly, but with a genial smile. "Certainly," he said; "I believe in both, but I believe also in something else, that is not either; and in this lies the difference between my philosophy and that of the people who are so bent on making *automata* of us all. They always seem to me to give, in their own persons, a most apt illustration of the lines,

> "'Unless above himself he can
> Erect himself, how poor a thing is man!'"

"Yes," replied Roland, "I believe we were meant to aspire. '*Excelsior*' seems the motto of the universe."

"And a good motto, too! But here we are." And stopping at his own door, he admitted Roland and himself with his latch-key.

CHAPTER V.

A FAMILY PARTY.

The light and warmth of Mr. Alden's hospitable home, with the rippling laughter of children's merry voices, seemed to Roland in delightful contrast with the raw, cold December evening without, as well as with the depressing influence of the miserable apartment they had just left. The father's return was greeted with joyous shouts from the little ones, and Roland was speedily included in the warm welcome. A bounteously spread tea-table, with its pretty pot of ferns in the centre, was awaiting Mr. Alden's arrival, and looked inviting enough to a young man who had been out in the chill air during most of the afternoon. The happy children's faces, the delicate and sweet-looking little mother, the freedom and unaffected gladness of the family life, strongly impressed Roland, and vividly recalled the associations of his own childhood. Grace, the helpful, eldest daughter, had, Roland thought, the sweetest, purest, sunniest face he had ever seen. The clear, frank eyes, with the light of a happy heart sparkling through their peaceful blue, the smile so sweet and sincere, the sunny, golden hair, and silvery, gleeful laugh, so childlike in its ring, fascinated him like a spell. No wonder, he thought, that the shadows cleared from Mr. Alden's thoughtful brow as soon as he crossed his own threshold. Yet, much of the family sunshine there was a reflection from Mr. Alden's own spirit. And, however the shadows of the world without might sometimes weigh on his own heart, he never allowed them to sadden his children, if he could help it. He was fond of exhorting his people to keep their children's childhood as happy as they could, without letting them grow selfish and heartless. And he would often quote Victor Hugo's expressive lines:

> "Grief is a fruit God will not let grow
> On boughs too feeble to sustain its weight."

"Cultivate sympathy in your children," he would say, "but not so as to burden them prematurely"; and what he preached he practised. Meal-times were, for the children's sake, always bright and cheerful. Mr. Alden had the precious gift of humor, and it served him in good stead to balance a nature acutely sensitive to the pain, the ills and the discords of human life. He seldom failed to catch and bring home some little quaint or amusing experience, which, told as he could tell it, would provoke the good-natured laughter in which he believed, as one of the safety-valves of our nature. Frank, his eldest boy, Roland's first acquaintance in the family, inherited his father's tendency to see the humorous side of things, without, as yet, his counterbalancing depth of feeling; and so it often happened that the father and son together would set the little ones in a small uproar of laughter, which Mrs. Alden's love of propriety would often constrain her to try to keep in some sort of check. But it was no wonder that these children enjoyed their father's presence at meals, and missed it when he was absent.

After tea, the whole party adjourned to the parlor, which was purposely kept not too fine for the frequent incursions of the children. The younger ones rapidly improved their acquaintance with Roland, gathering close about him, reciting to him some of their pet rhymes, and examining him as to his acquaintance with their favorite stories. Fortunately he had read Grimm and Hans Andersen, and knew most of the stories that they had heard, over and over, from their father and Grace, who had caught up his knack of telling a story so as to be an acceptable substitute when "father" was too busy. Roland and they were *en rapport* at once on the strength of his familiar acquaintance with "The Little Match Girl," "The Snow Maiden," "The Ugly Duckling," and "Prudent Elsie."

"Grace may be sorry they ever heard that," declared Frank, "for now she hears nothing but 'Prudent Elsie!' whenever she calls them back to put on their mufflers or overshoes."

"Oh, I don't mind!" said Grace, laughing. "I think "Prudent Elsie" a very nice name, isn't it, father, dear?"

Her father drew her close to him as she sat on the arm of his chair, with one hand resting caressingly on his shoulder.

"'Simple Susan' would suit you better, my dear; but 'what's in a name?'" he said, looking smilingly up into her bright face. "'A rose by any other name would smell as sweet!'"

"Come now, John," interposed Mrs. Alden, looking up from the little sock she was busily knitting; "I can't have you passing on to your daughter any of your old fine speeches to me."

"Infringing on your copyright, little mother?" he playfully returned, glancing fondly at the wife, who, Roland thought, must at Grace's age have looked a good deal like what *she* did, now.

Half an hour passed so quickly that Roland scarcely realized it. He was just beginning to fear that he might be inflicting his presence too long on the family circle, when Mr. Alden said:

"Now, Gracie, go to the piano! and you, youngsters, get your hymn-books. Mr. Graeme will excuse us, I know, if we go on with our little evening service." Then turning to Roland, he added: "We always have it at this hour, before the children grow sleepy."

Grace sat down at the piano, and in a clear young voice led the little choir, who had clustered around her, each eager to take part in the singing. Mr. Alden followed the hymn with a brief reading, and very simple prayer; and then the younger portion of the family said "Good-night," in due form. Roland, to whom these simple vespers had brought back vivid recollections from his own childhood, now thought it was time for him, also, to say "good-night" and take his departure.

"I will walk part of your way with you," said Mr. Alden. "I want to see Blanchard about what it is best to do for that poor young woman. He will be back by this time, I think. I hope he will advise

her going to the hospital, where she will have proper care. She seems to have no one belonging to her but that poor child."

They walked together to Dr. Blanchard's, which was not very far from Roland's own quarters. Before they parted, Mr. Alden took down the young man's address. Then, holding his hand kindly, he said, "I should be glad to have you for a member of a certain little society for social reform, that I have lately started on a broadly Christian basis."

Roland hesitated a little. "I mustn't allow you to misconceive my position," he said. "I am not what *you* would call a Christian; that is, I cannot at present see my way to accept what is called orthodox Christianity."

"Never mind that just now," said Mr. Alden. "And don't suppose that I can't appreciate honest difficulties of belief. But this society of mine is purposely made wider than Church lines. It is meant to include any one who loves the Christian ideal, and is willing to promote the practical influence of the Christian spirit in this selfish world. From what I have seen of you, I think you are one of that number."

The tone was kind, sympathetic, appreciative—something between that of a father and of an elder brother. Roland's responsive heart was touched.

"If you will take me in on that understanding, you can count on my willing service!" he said.

And with a cordial leave taking, they parted, Mr Alden taking his way to Dr Blanchard's house, Roland walking off to his lodging at his usual rapid pace. He had hours of work before him, and must be at it. When he reached the house in which he boarded, he let himself in with his latch-key, and bounded lightly up the stairs to his own apartment. It was not a large room, and certainly not luxurious, and its confusion of books and papers would have been the despair of any tidy housekeeper. Books, pamphlets, newspapers, were piled on shelves, tables and chairs, in a manner that to any eye but Roland's would have seemed hopeless confusion. Volumes of philosophy and poetry, ancient and modern, were scattered among piles of blue-books and reports of all kinds. On his writing-table, amidst loose sheets of manuscript and newspaper clippings, lay a well worn Bible, Thoreau's "Walden," Carlyle's "Sartor Resartus," Whittier's and Browning's poems, Emerson's Essays, and Henry George's "Progress and Poverty." Evidently the occupant of the room had somewhat varied tastes. And, while Roland is industriously looking over his clippings, sorting his manuscripts, and making a fair copy of his rough draft of a leader for the first number of *The Brotherhood*, let us take a retrospective glance over the history of the young man himself.

CHAPTER VI.

LOOKING BACKWARD.

Roland Graeme was, by birth, a Canadian. His father had been a Scottish clergyman who had emigrated to Canada in early life; a man of poetical and dreamy temperament, of large and loving nature, which yet, by force of education and habit, had been somehow forced into the compress of an intricate and somewhat narrow creed; or at least had been led, like many others, by an intense veneration for ancient authority, to submit without chafing even to some articles against which his heart and moral intelligence would have strongly protested had he allowed them any voice in the matter. As it was, he worked on tranquilly, scorning worldly delights and living laborious days, troubling himself little about formal theology, and seeking to inspire his flock to love and practice the Christian graces, "against which there is no law." In temporal matters, he was as unpractical as he was unworldly, and, but for his wife's calm, judicious judgment and practical common-sense, would have been in perpetual financial straits. She, poor woman, had found it, indeed, no easy task to steer the family bark clear of the rocks on which the good minister's easy-going benevolence and trustful generosity were continually on the verge of wrecking it.

Roland was this good man's only son, and on him his father had concentrated all the ideality of his nature. Living in a remote country place, where no good grammar school was easily accessible, he had himself prepared his boy for college. Roland had absorbed eagerly all that his father had to teach him, of classic lore, of poetry, of nature, as well as the rudimentary, informal theology, that was, so to speak, filtered through the spectroscope of a mind which unconsciously rejected all that was harsh and narrow, allowing free passage only to what was akin to his own loving spirit. Under such paternal influences, intensified by his mother's strong religious nature, Roland had grown up with his whole being inspired and colored by the great principles of Christianity. The teachings of Christ himself, household words from his earliest infancy, had taken a firm hold of his plastic young soul. Principles of action seemed to him matters of course, which, as he too often afterward found, were, to the average Christian people with whom he came in contact, as an unknown tongue. Till he left his home, the boy supposed all the nominal Christian world to be only an extension of the little circle in his childhood's abode, and his fervid nature looked forward to something like a repetition of his father's life under new circumstances, possibly, with wider scope and under more congenial and hopeful surroundings.

But, when he went to college, his sanguine nature was painfully disenchanted by his first dip into the cold, commonplace reality. Many of his comrades seemed to him little better than baptized heathen. He saw things done, heard things said every day, by people who would have been indignant had any one denied them the name of Christian, that seemed to him in direct opposition to the spirit and teachings of the Master they professed to own. Many, even of the religious students he met, repelled him. Their religion for the most part seemed so shallow and conventional, their creed so hard and narrow, their ideals so worldly, that their conversation jarred and revolted him. He sought some refuge from his perplexities in writing to his mother, who sensibly reminded him that as he had had special privileges, he must not expect the same degree of religious culture from lads brought up under very different influences; that his own duty was, to hold fast by the truth he knew, and, in so far as he could by his example and influence, help others to see it, too. So the boy staunchly adhered to his principles, and was thought "an odd sort of fellow," but "with no harm in him," who could always be depended upon for a good turn, though a sort of "crank" on certain points, especially as regarded poetry and religion. He found no difficulty, with his natural talent and thorough preparation, in taking a high place in his classes, though his love of literature and general knowledge, combined with a natural dreaminess, kept him from taking the highest honors of his course. This was, perhaps, a slight disappointment to the good father, who cherished for his bright, enthusiastic boy, ambitions he had never entertained for himself. But, just at the close of Roland's undergraduate course, when he was already looking forward to beginning his theological studies, his father suddenly died.

It was a terrible blow to the lad, in more ways than one. His father had been so much to him, a centre of such passionate love and reverence, that life did not seem the same to him now that his father was no longer there to guide and advise his still immature mind, and to sympathize with his enthusiasms and aspirations. Moreover, this sad event seriously affected his own prospects. He could no longer, for the present at least, continue his professional studies. He must "buckle to" the task of providing for his mother and two younger sisters, whom it was necessary for him, in great measure, to support and educate. Teaching was the work readiest to hand, and he soon secured a fairly remunerative position, entailing, however, work which absorbed the greater portion of his time and strength. He toiled on, steadily, faithfully; finding, as time passed, much satisfaction in knowing that he was so well fulfilling the responsibilities bequeathed to him by his father. He still read omnivorously, seizing eagerly every fresh vein of thought, or view of life and nature that came in his way. Of course, modern science threw over him the glamour of its fascination, and he rapidly assimilated its leading facts and theories, with an avidity characteristic of his active and unresting mind, while, after the manner of young men, he did not always stop to discriminate between fact and theory. Nor did he always discern just whither the theory was leading him.

As he had by no means given up the hope of eventually prosecuting his theological studies, he began, as he could spare the time from his daily duties and the more secular reading that so fascinated him, to take up some of the old text-books which had been in his father's library. One of these was the intricate and elaborate compendium of doctrine which formed the standard creed of the ministry of his Church—an able synopsis of a certain rigid, scholastic, one-sided theology, having, for most thoughtful minds nowadays, the great fault that it attempts to compress into a series of logical propositions, mysteries far transcending human thought, and never thrown into this dogmatic form by the original teachers of Christianity. He found there, not only statements that seemed to conflict with the teachings of science, but also declarations concerning the deepest mysteries of Divine purpose, against which his heart and his sense of justice alike rose in passionate revolt, and which he could never have dreamed it possible to conjure out of the love-lighted pages of his New Testament. Was this, he thought, what his father had believed? Looking back on all he had ever heard from that father, he could not think so. At all events, he knew that *he* could never believe it or profess to do so. His mother could give him little help in his perplexities. She had never troubled herself about abstruse theological questions. Her Bible was enough for her, and she did not think his father had felt himself bound to believe everything the theologians taught. Yet there was confronting him, this long series of definite propositions, subscription to which was the only entrance-gate to the ministry of the Church which was so dear to his imagination through a thousand traditions and tender associations. He felt that, for him, that gate was firmly barred.

But this was by no means all. The questioning and disintegrating process, once begun, did not stop here. The mystery of life and being seemed to have opened an abyss before him which he now seemed unable to bridge by the old simple faith that had hitherto been enough for him. Sceptical friends, by plausible arguments, increased this difficulty, and the attacks on the Divine origin of Christianity, which were constantly coming in his way, found a ready entrance into his perplexed mind, unarmed to repel them. A "horror of great darkness" seemed to have swallowed up the very foundations of his faith. Life and death—the present and the future—seemed shrouded in the cloud of unfathomable mystery which his baffled vision vainly strove to penetrate. Much thought about it became too heavy a burden to bear; and he practically gave up the struggle for light, making up his mind, for the present, to follow the one compass in his possession—the Christian ideal and conscience that had been developed and educated with his own growth, till it had become an inseparable part of his moral being. He was at least happy in having his life founded on this rock, even though his eyes might be for a time blinded as to the true source of his strength.

Some busy years had passed, lighted at least by the consciousness of practical duty honestly followed and of being the trusted prop and consolation of his mother's life; while for his sisters he

did his best to secure as careful an education as had been bestowed on him. The interest that he had felt compelled to withdraw from speculative thought, he had thrown, all the more strongly, into some of the great practical questions of the day, unconscious that much of his early faith still survived in the enthusiasm with which he caught at every new plan or measure for lightening the load of the more burdened portion of humanity. Altruistic by inherited temperament, the "enthusiasm of humanity" gradually possessed him like a passion. It seemed as if the wrongs and woe of oppressed multitudes lay like an actual weight on his heart. He devoured the works of Henry George, as they came out, till these "Problems" absorbed his own mind, and the remedies proposed by George and others seemed to bring up the vision of a fair Utopia which might become the noble aim of a modern crusade. To devote himself and his life in some way to such an object, seemed to him the aim most worthy to set before himself. But, of course, his first duty was to provide for his mother and sisters.

An unexpected event, however, set him free from this obligation in a very agreeable way. The elder of his two sisters had been gradually and imperceptibly developing into a very charming and attractive young woman; and, much to Roland's surprise, he one day discovered in a wealthy young friend of his own a prospective brother-in-law, who was generously ready to provide a home for the mother of the bride he was eager to claim. And as his younger sister was almost ready for her own chosen vocation of teaching, Roland could now begin to think of a career for himself.

One of his most promising and congenial classmates at college, with whom he had always kept up a steady correspondence, had, some years before, gone to the United States, to engage in journalistic work, and had become the editor of the Minton *Minerva*. He had frequently urged Roland to join him there, setting before him the inducements of a wider sphere and a more active and busy life. Roland had always had strong republican sentiments and sympathies, and humanitarian instincts were still stronger in him than were local or traditional attachments and associations. There was the attraction, too, of possibly helping on a great "movement" in which he thoroughly believed, and then there was the fascination of new scenes and surroundings to one whose life for years had been so monotonous. He stuck to his post, however, till he had saved enough to supply his own simple needs for a year or two, and then set off on a rapid trip to those portions of the Old World which, from his childhood, he had most longed to see.

There, besides the old quaint cities and ruins, around which a thousand literary and historical associations clustered like the ivy which clothed them, and the glorious mountain scenery of which as a boy he had so often dreamed, he had found in his wanderings another subject of deep interest. This was the condition of those "forgotten millions," of which he had read so much of late. Here, as in other cases, he found all his conceptions fall far short of what he actually beheld —men, women and children, pent up in rank and wretched slums, fighting with gaunt famine for a miserable existence. He saw them, at early morning, searching heaps of rubbish for a few crusts, only too eagerly devoured. He saw young girls, forced to still more revolting means of procuring daily bread—means that dragged them rapidly down to worse than physical death. He saw young children, with haggard unchildlike faces, and most unchildlike sharpness and callous greed, born of the premature "struggle for existence" that was written on their pinched young features. He saw human beings who had not, literally, "where to lay their heads," glad to throw themselves down on the damp grass of city parks, yet driven from thence, and from every other resting-place, by the relentless order to "move on!" He knew that, of these multitudes, fighting hand to hand with starvation, many could not, by any effort, secure remunerative work. For these, there seemed nothing but despair and death, on an earth which could no longer make good for them the promise—"In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread." For them there was neither work nor bread. The sights he then saw burned themselves into his heart and brain forever. And, side by side with all this misery, he saw gorgeous displays of wealth and luxury, such as he had scarcely thought possible, outside of the "Arabian Nights;" evidences of idle *abandon* to voluptuous pleasure—of unblushing and reckless extravagance—until he wondered how it could be that a just and over-ruling Providence should not interfere; how it was that the earth did not open to swallow up these selfish cumberers of the ground. It was the old problem which perplexed the righteous soul of Job in the dawn of history—which has perplexed many a moralist and driven to despair many a bewildered enthusiast in all the ages. But if anything had been needed to intensify in him the "enthusiasm of humanity," the passion for reform; to grave on his heart the resolve to "open his mouth for the dumb, in the cause of all such as are left desolate," it was what he then saw of that hopeless, inarticulate hardship and misery, which rarely finds expression in speeches or pamphlets, but sometimes does find it, at last, in strikes and catastrophes! A little, too, he saw, of *that* underlying social dynamite, and felt to his heart's core the gravity of the situation.

It was, therefore, with no room in his mind for trifling, and little for selfish aims, that Roland Graeme returned from abroad to take up the work of his life. He first, of course, paid a brief visit to his mother and sisters, to satisfy himself as to their happiness and comfort; and then, with his few belongings—chiefly books—he betook himself to his friend at Minton. Dick Burnett received him cordially, and at once gave him some light work, in the way of reporting and editorial writing, which would at least keep his purse moderately supplied, while he was also studying law in a lawyer's office, with the view of eventually entering that profession. To him, among other things, fell the work of reporting sermons for the *Minerva*, a task for which, of course, he was well fitted by his early training; and this was the reason why, for some months past, Mr. Chillingworth had wondered at the skill and accuracy with which his sermons had been synopsized for the benefit of the readers of the *Minerva*. In fact, he sometimes could not help

admitting to himself, that, in clearness of thought and felicitous condensation, the abstract was almost an improvement on the sermon. Had he been aware that Roland Graeme was his unknown reporter, he would doubtless have been more affable in his greeting on the occasion of the young man's visit.

Minton was largely a manufacturing town, and Roland soon found that there were many wrongs around him calling for redress. His investigations speedily brought him into contact with leaders of the "Knights of Labor," and sympathy with their aims very soon led him to enroll himself in their ranks. He could not, indeed, remain a member after he should become a legal practitioner, as the rules of the order do not admit lawyers; but he could and would work with heart and soul for its objects, both in the ranks and outside them. He found the leaders cordially grateful for his aid and counsel, and in the sympathy and coöperation of some of the more intelligent workingmen he found much of the pleasure and stimulus of his new life. Of course, his efforts on their behalf sometimes evoked, from the "party of the other part," sentiments of a very different character; but Roland was happily so constituted as to care little for that; and, so long as he could carry a point for the benefit of his friends, the *employés*, he could bear hard names with great equanimity. So absorbed was he, indeed, in his ideals and enthusiasms, that the "personal equation" had become very insignificant.

He found, however, that, in order to rouse the public mind on certain points, he wanted an opportunity for stronger expression than he could venture to use in his editorials in the *Minerva*, which, of course would not risk irretrievably offending its wealthy patrons. The editor, who was in part proprietor, was by no means uninterested in the "labor question," and was quite willing to go as far as he thought "safe" in its interests. But Roland wanted more liberty of speech for the burning thoughts that filled his breast; and the idea gradually took shape, in the course of their discussions in the *sanctum*, of issuing a small weekly journal to be devoted entirely to the object nearest to Roland's heart, his friend the editor being willing to afford all the facilities of the printing-office to the new journal, and even to bear part of the expense, which was also to be shared by an eccentric old Scotchman who boarded in the same house with Roland, and with whom he had struck up an odd sort of friendship.

Roland was determined to call his paper *The Brotherhood*, so that it would bear in its very title the imprint of the truth which his Christian training had interwoven with every fibre of his being, and which, he also expressed in the motto, "*All ye are brethren*." In the simplicity of his heart, Roland imagined that every Christian minister must be as profoundly impressed with this great truth as he himself was, and that he could count on the warm sympathy which they, at least, would accord to his paper—intended, as the prospectus stated, "to bring this fundamental principle and its corollary, the Golden Rule, to bear on all social questions," including business arrangements and the relations of employer and employed. So obvious an application of practical Christianity must, he thought, enlist the cordial coöperation of those whose vocation was to teach it.

As we have seen, however, he sometimes found himself disappointed in this very natural expectation.

CHAPTER VII.

A MIDNIGHT MEETING.

Roland was writing busily on, scarcely conscious of the lateness of the hour, absorbed in the pleasant task of pouring out on paper without restraint the passionate pleas and arguments with which his mind was filled, when he was roused by a rather peremptory knock at his door, immediately followed by the apparition of a rugged old face with gray shaggy locks and beard, surmounted by a picturesque red *toque*.

"Weel, lad, hard at work? Have ye got yer firebrands all ready for the wee foxes' tails, that ye're gaun to send in amang the Philistines' corn? There's a bit o' yer' 'modern interpretation' for ye!" The voice was deep and guttural, and the accent a broad Doric.

"I hope you don't mean to compare me with that grim practical joker!" said Roland, pleasantly. "I'm sure I don't want to do anything destructive. My line is all *con*structive."

"Aye, that's weel enough! But sometimes the t'ane can't be done without the t'ither. And ye'll soon be gettin' credit for that 'ither, or my name's no' Sandy Dunlop!"

"Sandy Dunlop," as he called himself, and as his friends called him, did not always indulge in broad Scotch; that, in his own estimation, would have been "throwing pearls before swine." He reserved it for his moments of expansion, for the seasons of unrestrained talk with the few in whose company he did expand; especially when, like Roland, they were of Scottish lineage, and could appreciate the beloved old Doric, his affection for which was one of the soft spots in a somewhat hard and caustic nature. Doubtless this point of sympathy was one of the attractions that drew him to Roland. But "Sandy Dunlop" was a shrewd judge of character.

Roland willingly threw down his pen, and settled himself back in his chair, for one of the rambling talks which offered a little recreation to his rather high-strung temperament.

"D'ye ken?" pursued the old man, "yon was a grand, simple kind o' way they used to have o' settlin' their disputes! nane o' yer vile newspaper calumniations or underhan' plottin's, but just a good honest tussle, and done wi' it."

"But you don't suppose I'm going to calumniate anybody, I hope!" said Roland, opening his eyes.

"*You*, laddie, deed na'! Weel I ken that," replied the old man, with a sort of chuckling grunt. "It's just some o' thae poleetical articles I've been readin', till I'm sick o' it all! When will ye get yer *Brotherhood* ideas into party politics? Tell me that, lad, if ye can!"

Roland smiled and sighed.

"Aye, aye! the warld'll tak' a wheen o' makin' over yet, an' it'll no be you nor me that'll do it. However, ye might read me some o' yer screeds," he added, looking at the young man with much the same air of grim patronage with which a sagacious old mastiff might regard a well-meaning but rash young terrier, attempting impossibilities.

As he spoke, the door below closed with a bang, and a snatch of an operatic air, hummed *sotto voce*, was borne to their ears, as rapid footsteps sounded lightly on the stairs.

"Here's that harum-scarum callant," said Mr. Dunlop, looking somewhat glum. A light tap at the door was scarcely answered by Roland's "Come in," when it was followed by the entrance of a young man of blonde complexion and rather slight figure, dressed much more fashionably than Roland. His blue eyes, fair hair, and Teutonic accent plainly bespoke his origin, and his greeting showed him to be on the most unceremonious terms with Roland, as he jauntily entered, nodding familiarly to the old Scot.

"A midnight meeting in the interests of the *Brotherhood*!" he exclaimed, theatrically, glancing at the sheets of manuscripts on Roland's desk, and at the expectant attitude of the old Scotchman. "I may come in for the rehearsal, too, *nicht wahr*?"

"Yes, if you will be quiet, and listen, and not interrupt too much," returned Roland.

"Quiet? Ah yes!—I will listen to the words of wisdom." And, throwing down his hat, he seated himself on one corner of Roland's writing-table, looking down at him with smiling expectancy. Mr. Dunlop, with both hands resting on the table before him, listened with head bent forward, and keen attention in his shrewd, observant eyes.

Roland read with rapid utterance, but feeling intonation, one sheet after another; first the leading article, setting forth the scope and objects of the paper, then one or two minor ones, touching on matters of detail. Mr. Dunlop occasionally interposed a criticism or a suggestion, which Roland noted for consideration, while the fair-haired young Teuton fired off a stray shot, now and then, at Roland's sometimes too florid periods, which the latter took good-humoredly—sensible that there was some ground for the strictures.

"He lets himself be run away with sometimes," said this critic, turning to Dunlop. "Keep cool, *mein lieber*, keep cool! Keep thy head and bridle-hand!"

"All very fine, Waldberg," said Roland. "See you practice what you preach. Of course, these last are only rough drafts. The first article I went over carefully with Burnett, and he thinks it will do well enough now, though I think that little modification of yours, Mr. Dunlop, is a decided improvement."

"Aye, lad—ye maun be canny! Nae guid in runnin' yer heid against stone walls, for *they* tak' nae ill frae it, an' yer heid does. Now, guid-night to ye baith, an' remember it's time ye were in yer beds."

Waldberg threw himself into the chair the old man had left.

"Well, how did you find your parsons?" he asked. "Did they hail you as a brother, and promise to read and support the *Brotherhood*?"

Roland smiled somewhat grimly. "One of them did, at any rate—at least he promised to read it; and some of the others promised to give the subject their best consideration."

"Well, you did better than I expected," the young man replied, "but this one who promised to read it—this wonderful man—he wasn't the Reverend Cecil Chillingworth? I'd bet my head against that!"

"Why, what do *you* know about it?" asked Roland, in surprise.

"Oh, I've been having a sort of musical evening with him!" returned Waldberg, smiling. "I went in to make some arrangements about the practice for his oratorio—he's going to have the "Messiah" given for the benefit of his church, you know, and I'm to be accompanist, of course. So he got me to go over some of the tenor airs with him on his parlor-organ, while he sang them. He has really a good voice, and he is enthusiastic in music, if he is not in social reform."

"But how do you know about that last?" inquired Roland, who found it difficult to imagine Mr. Chillingworth talking freely to Waldberg. And what had become of the "important work" that prevented his having a few minutes to bestow on *him*, and on these grave questions?

"Oh, very easily, indeed. He began to talk about some of the passages we were going over, for my

benefit, of course. And we were discussing the question of a soprano for the air 'Come Unto Him, All Ye That Labor And Are Heavy-laden,' for which he said he specially wanted an effective rendering. He grew quite eloquent; I think he must have been rehearsing a bit of his Sunday sermon. He said the world was 'laboring and heavy-laden,' (thought I, '*That's* true enough') and 'that it was because men would not take upon them the right yoke. There was no end of nostrums, nowadays,' he said, (and I felt quite sure he was thinking of you and the *Brotherhood*,) 'but the only radical cure was the self-surrender of each individual heart to the yoke which is easy and the burden which is light.' There, you see how well I've got my lesson off by heart! You are welcome to that, for your report of his next sermon, in advance. It'll be there, sure enough!"

Roland could not help smiling at Waldberg's close imitation of Mr. Chillingworth's measured and impressive manner. But he sighed the next moment, a little impatient sigh, as he broke forth:

"That's the stereotyped way they all talk. But, how much 'self-surrender' does he get from his own 'prominent man,' Mr. Pomeroy, for instance? *He* could make a good many people's yoke easier and their burdens lighter if he chose! When men like that show the cure, we'll begin to believe in it. Yet he listens to Mr. Chillingworth, Sunday after Sunday, and I don't suppose he ever hears a word to wake him up to the fact that he's actually a murderer, in 'wearing out human creatures' lives.' But, in the name of all that's honest, Waldberg, how can you go through such a thing as the 'Messiah' with a man like Mr. Chillingworth, when you know you don't believe either in the theme or the treatment of it."

"Ah, but then, you don't understand Art, *mein Roland*; dramatically, you see, I can feel the very spirit of the music; as for the words, what matters? I rather suspect Mr. Chillingworth has a pretty good idea that I don't believe very much, and no doubt he thinks he is doing a good work in giving me some light, as we go along."

"Well, of course, you don't sing, only accompany," said Roland, meditatively.

"Oh, that's nothing," said Waldberg, coolly. "Professionals simply go in for art in all these things. I know one of the soloists, at any rate, that I am getting for him, believes even less than I do—an atheist out and out."

"Well, I know *I* could not stand up and sing parts of that oratorio, knowing how other people believe it," said Roland, "and I'm no atheist."

"No," said the other, "that's just where your scruple comes in. If you an were atheist, you wouldn't think it mattered much what you sang, so long as the music was good. As for the girls who sing the choruses, I don't think they know half the time what they're singing."

Roland thought of his father's old-fashioned veneration for the sacred words, and wondered how he would have borne what seemed to his own fastidious taste a profanation of them, even while he maintained his own negative position.

"There will be some pretty good voices in the choruses," continued Waldberg, critically. "Miss Farrell's is sweet and clear like a bell, though it is not very strong—wants compass. And another young lady I had the honor of accompanying at Miss Farrell's last *soirée musi-cale*—Miss Blanchard—has a very good voice too, plenty of feeling and expression, as far as she goes, and wonderfully distinct enunciation."

Roland had begun to listen with more interest. It was curious, as he had noticed before, that you no sooner met persons for the first time, than you were almost sure to hear of them very soon again.

Waldberg went on, not expecting a reply, simply talking because he liked it.

"Mr. Chillingworth hopes to get her into the choruses. He was quite set on putting her in for a solo, but she declined, and I think she's right. She could never fill a hall, but Chillingworth, *entre nous*, seems to admire her immensely."

"I have seen her," said Roland, carelessly. "She has a fine face, whatever her voice may be." And the Madonna-like vision rose again before him.

"Yes, she has a noble air, 'presence,' as you say, but she can't compare with Miss Farrell for looks. *She* is an exquisite creature, *herrlich schöne* she looked that evening."

"Take care of yourself, Waldberg," said Roland, looking up with a smile, at his animated face. "She is not fair for *you*."

"Oh, I am not selfish, like that!" retorted the other, but with a heightened color. "I can admire, where I can do no more; and Miss Farrell likes me to find her fair, if I mistake not."

"Oh, I suppose she can flirt!" replied Graeme. "Most of the young ladies here seem to be able to do that. Only 'beware,' she may be 'fooling thee.'"

"Thou art growing cynical, *mein Roland*! Thou thinkest too much! I shall bid thee good-night. *Schlafe wohl!*"

"*Du auch!*" returned Roland, who liked to keep up with Waldberg the German colloquialisms he had learned abroad. "Poor fellow," he said to himself, as he listened to the retreating footsteps, "I am afraid she *is* 'fooling' him." He had heard a great deal, of late, about Miss Farrell, who was one of "Herr Waldberg's" most promising pupils as a pianist, and from whom Roland believed

that the young man was taking lessons of a more dangerous kind. However, after all, it was no business of his, and Waldberg ought to be able to take care of himself.

But he pondered a little over what seemed to him the strangeness of Mr. Chillingworth's finding it so easy to spend an hour or two enjoyably, talking music with a completely irreligious young man like Waldberg, while he could not spare *him* a few minutes for the discussion of matters which affected the well-being, higher and lower, of so many thousands, and which concerned the practical diffusion of principles of action which he had supposed must be at least as dear to the clergyman as they were to himself. Roland did not yet know how easily some men can absorb themselves in beautiful ideals and vague generalities, till the practical side of life, with its tiresome details and rude collisions, becomes for them almost non-existent.

And so Mr. Chillingworth "admired Miss Blanchard immensely"! Roland felt interest enough in the young lady to wish her a better fate than a man whom he had begun mentally to sum up as "an egoistic iceberg." However, his business in life was not to settle the destinies of either Mr. Chillingworth or Miss Blanchard, or even of Miss Farrell and Hermann Waldberg. So he presently forgot them all in finishing the article in which he had been interrupted, and then went to bed to sleep that sleep of the laborer, which is "sweet" only when neither brain nor muscles have been overstrained to exhaustion.

CHAPTER VIII.

NORA'S DREAM.

Mr. Alden found that Dr. Blanchard quite agreed with him as to the importance of getting their patient removed to the hospital. The doctor thought that her case was by no means hopeless, provided she could be supplied with the constant care and nourishment she so urgently needed, and this could scarcely be secured for her except in the hospital. Dr. Blanchard, who had all the ready, practical kindness which usually marks members of the medical profession, added to that of a naturally kind heart, willingly undertook to make the arrangements for the invalid's removal.

Miss Blanchard returned next morning with an encouraging report. The care and nourishing food given frequently during the night had produced a decided improvement; and though the disease was deeply seated, and the patient was reduced to extreme weakness, she had youth and strong vitality on her side, notwithstanding all the privations and misery she had evidently endured. From Lizzie Mason, who had sat with her for an hour or two of her vigil, Nora had heard, while the patient lay unconscious in a heavy slumber, some details about her past life which had gone to her heart, and had made her realize, with a sickening sensation, something of that struggle for life which a poor friendless woman, cast adrift in a busy world, must often endure.

Miss Blanchard felt herself strongly drawn toward the pale, wistful young girl, who had been so ready to sacrifice her own sorely-needed rest in order to care for the invalid, and had drawn from her many particulars of her hard-working life. It was a simple story, told in a very matter-of-fact, uncomplaining way; but involuntary tears of indignant sympathy started to the listener's thoughtful eyes at the unconscious revelation of hard, unremitting, monotonous toil for eleven, twelve, and sometimes thirteen hours a day, as the pressure of work required, and that under conditions unhealthy enough to depress the most vigorous young life.

"But cannot you find something better than that?" Nora asked; "some healthier as well as pleasanter work? Would it not be better to take to domestic service? Every one says it is so difficult to find girls qualified to do it faithfully and well, and I am sure you would do both. You know there is nothing in serving others to lower any right self-respect," she added, quietly; "and who it was who said that He came not to be ministered to but to minister."

"Yes," said Lizzie, "I heard Mr. Alden preach beautifully about that! I often go to his church, Sunday evenings, for it's the nearest, and he speaks so plain-like, I do admire to hear him. But it's not *that* indeed, miss! I'd love, myself, to be in a good, quiet house, where one could sit down when one was tired, and not have to go out in the dark, all sorts of mornings, and have to be on the go all day! But, you see, if I live at home I can give mother my board, an' that's such a help to her. An' if I was in a place, I'd have to wear good clothes, an' that would eat up all my earnin's, an' mother needs all I can do to help her and the children. An' then my brother Jim's a little wild, and if I'm at home, I can look after him a bit."

Nora, interested in getting for herself a definite idea of this girl's daily life, drew her out a little more about this brother, the eldest of the family. He worked in the mill, too, and would be a great help to the family if it were not for his unsteadiness, which had run away with a good deal of his earnings, and he had once or twice been on the point of being discharged.

"He has never been the same boy," Lizzie said, sadly, "since he has taken up with Nelly Grove."

"That was the girl you were talking to this evening when I passed you, was it not?" asked Miss Blanchard.

"Yes, that was Nelly. She's not a bad-hearted little thing, but she's awful flighty and fond of pleasure. She's an orphan, too, an' her friends live in the country, so she hasn't any one to look

after her here. I think she'd be good enough to Jim, if she was let alone, but there's a gentleman"—and Lizzie lowered her voice still further—"as turns her head with compliments an' attentions, an' it makes Jim so jealous that he just goes off on a tear, whenever he finds out about it, unless I can manage to coax him and stop him."

"I see," said Miss Blanchard, thoughtfully; "but what a shame it is!" And so, by force of cruel fate, as it seemed, this girl was as truly chained by invisible fetters to her daily toil among those relentless wheels and pulleys, as if she were a galley-slave. The plantation slaves, on the whole, were not so badly off. They had their regular hours of toil, but their hours of relaxation were free from care, and full of fun and frolic, and—which was another great relief—they had frequent change of labor. Roland Graeme's words occurred to her mind with a new force and significance. But how was it? Did not the Heavenly Father in whom she had been taught to believe, care for the sparrows, and did He not much more care for helpless girls? Was His care not for Lizzie as well as for her, in her pleasant, protected life? It was too deep a problem, and she remembered a saying of Goethe, which she had lately read that "Man is not born to solve the problem of the universe, but to find out what he has to do, and then to do that." And if she could hereafter do anything to help her less favored sisters, she then and there registered an unspoken vow that she would do what she could.

The following being as mild a day as was likely to occur that season, Dr. Blanchard recommended that Mrs. Travers should be at once removed to the St. Barnabas Hospital. But it was a task of some difficulty to gain her consent. She seemed to cling tenaciously to the privacy of her wretched little room, and to shrink nervously from the idea of a common hospital ward. She so clearly bore the impress of refinement and culture, that Nora felt as if it were inflicting an indignity on her to ask her to endure the trial; and she offered to bear, herself, the expense of a private room for a month, if the patient would consent to the removal. But what then was to be done with the little girl? She could not go to the hospital, and there seemed to be no room for her in Lizzie's overcrowded home.

"I'll take her in," said Mr. Alden, with his good-humored smile, as they were consulting over the difficulties in the way. But Nora demurred. He had enough of his own, and she did not want to put one more care on Mrs. Alden or Gracie. She took her sister-in-law aside for consultation, and presently returned triumphant. "Sophy says I may have her here," she said to her brother. "She's such a dear little grave creature, I don't think she'll give any trouble, and she will help to amuse Eddie and Daisy. They are almost too much for nurse, now baby's growing so lively."

"Trust Nora for finding the bright side of everything," said Dr. Blanchard, laughing. "She's a born optimist."

"Indeed, I thought I was growing pessimistic last night," said Nora. "It's horrible to find out, really, how so many people have to live!" she added, looking at Mr. Alden, with a perplexed look in her eyes, and a shadow over her usually bright face.

"And you've had no rest yet!" interposed her brother. "You must go and lie down at once. I'll see the poor woman transferred to her new quarters as safely as may be, and bring the child here; and you can go to see the mother another time."

Nora went to her dainty, quiet room—such a contrast to the one in which she had spent the night!—and, lying down on the soft luxurious bed, she tried to close her tired eyes in sleep; but it was rather a failure. A healthy young *physique*, accustomed to sleep only at regular hours, does not readily adapt itself to irregular rest; and heart and brain were still too much excited to encourage sleep. The aspect of the miserable little room seemed photographed on her inner sight; the oppressed breathing of the invalid, the sad glimpses into other people's lives, haunted her whenever she closed her eyes. As she lay there on her soft couch in the daintily-appointed room, with the pretty things about her with which girls like to surround themselves, and the light softly shaded to make an artificial twilight, visions rose before her of droning wheels and flashing shuttles, of long arrays of frames, such as she had seen in the factory some time before; and the thought of the girls with feelings and nerves like her own, tending, through so many weary hours, these senseless and relentless machines, oppressed her quick sensibilities like a nightmare. Then, when at last she fell into a brief, troubled slumber, she dreamed that she was following some one through mile after mile of endless corridors, all lined with that inexorable, never-ceasing machinery, tended by armies of pale, slender girls, many of them children. And whenever she desired to sit down to rest, her conductor kept beckoning her onward, and she seemed compelled to follow, on—on—would it never end! And as her companion looked round impatiently to urge her advance, she saw for the first time that it was the young man who had been her guide and escort the preceding evening. And, just then, Eddie, stealing on tip-toe into the room to see if "Auntie were awake yet," dispersed the illusion, and she awoke to a glad consciousness of liberty and restfulness, yet with a strange sense of latent pain behind it.

Nora lay still a little longer, thinking with some interest of the curious way in which the sights and sounds of waking hours interweave themselves into new and absurd combinations, when the guiding will is for the time off duty. She was naturally introspective, and had a special turn for psychological studies, in which her brother's line of thought harmonized with her own. But suddenly she was startled by sounds that stole into the quietude—sounds of a child's unrestrained, sobbing grief, intermingled with unsuccessful attempts at consolation.

CHAPTER IX.

IN THE HOSPITAL.

"Why, Eddie, is that Daisy crying? What is the matter?" she asked, starting up.

"Oh, it's the new little girl that's come," replied Eddie, with cheerful unconcern. "And she won't stop crying. I've showed her Tatters and my Noah's Ark and the gray kitten; and 'tisn't any use—she's such a silly!"

"Oh! dear!" exclaimed Nora. "I must go down at once." And, hurriedly re-arranging her hair and dress, she ran down-stairs, followed by Eddie.

On the rug outside the drawing-room door crouched the little girl, shaken by a storm of passionate sobs. She had borne the separation from her weak and passive mother, with a quiet resignation mainly produced by the doctor's assurance that if she were good and did not worry her mother, who was going where she would be made better, she should soon see her again. The grave quietude which the child had maintained with a great effort had not given way, until Dr. Blanchard, in haste to reach an urgent "case," had put her inside his own door in charge of a servant. Then, the strangeness of everything about her, and the blank loneliness of the situation, from *her* point of view, had apparently so oppressed her, that the unnatural composure gave way before a tornado of passionate abandonment. Mrs. Blanchard was out, but the nurse had tried her best to console and divert her, and so had Eddie and Daisy; but so far without avail. Nora could hardly help smiling, as she remembered her programme for the children's relation to each other, and saw how it had been reversed.

The plump little Daisy stood over her, looking concerned, but holding out her gray kitten as if it were the olive-branch of peace, while the neglected inhabitants of Noah's Ark lay in picturesque confusion in the background.

When Miss Blanchard appeared, however, matters changed a little, as she bent over the sobbing child with loving words and gestures, pushed aside the old hood and shawl, and smoothed the tangled mass of dark, curly hair, till the sobs grew fainter and the child allowed herself to be raised from the floor. Under the uncouth disguise of her outer raiment, now removed, she wore a neatly-made, though faded, print frock; which, though evidently outgrown, was whole and clean; and, for the first time, Miss Blanchard realized her unusual beauty of face and form, with the pleasure of one keenly sensitive to beauty of all kinds.

She had heard from Lizzie that "Cissy" was passionately fond of music, and the happy thought occurred to her of taking her into the drawing-room, and playing to her some sweet and simple melodies that were favorites of her own. The experiment succeeded beyond her hopes. The child listened like one entranced. Her large, soft, lustrous eyes dilated, and her whole face seemed lighted with a new expression, as she followed with evident appreciation every change of the music. It was as if the delight of listening absorbed her whole being. Then, as Nora began to sing to her, her delight seemed to increase. A dawning smile relaxed the sad curves of her lips, a dewy moisture suffused the lovely dark-gray eyes. It was clear, Miss Blanchard thought, that she had discovered here a musical soul.

"Does your mother sing to you sometimes?" she asked.

"Not much," said the child. "She likes *me* to sing to her, best."

"Sing to me now, then," replied Nora.

But the child was too shy. That evening, however, when she was alone with the other children in the nursery, Nora heard her trying to hum over the airs of the songs she had sung to her, with wonderful accuracy and sweetness of tone. This discovery set her castle-building at once. There was no knowing what musical talent this little one might develop! And if she could aid her to develop it, she would thus help one girl, at least, out of the weary monotony of poorly paid and unremitting toil.

The following day was Sunday, and Nora had a headache, as was hardly surprising, after her unusual fatigue and excitement, so that it was only on the day following, that she and the little Cecilia, for whom some garments had meantime been remodelled out of old ones of Mrs. Blanchard's, were set down by the doctor at the door of the hospital.

It was a new experience for her, and she walked with some nervous dread along the whitewashed corridors, oppressed by the feeling that behind those white walls were being fought, unseen, many battles between disease and death on the one hand, and medical care and skill on the other. As she passed on, guided by the porter, she could catch glimpses, through partially open doors, of wards filled with "heavy cases"—every bed, apparently, tenanted; of others where convalescents were sitting among neat beds with snowy coverlets—pictures and plants giving an air of comfort to the place. At the end of a long passage, she found herself in a cheerful little room, with an open fire burning brightly in the grate, and her old acquaintance, Miss Spencer, Kitty Farrell's cousin, in her pretty nurse's uniform, sitting beside the bed on which lay the invalid she had come to see. The latter looked pale and weak, indeed, but seemed so different in her new surroundings and fresh white draperies, that Miss Blanchard would scarcely have recognized her. The little Cecilia threw herself upon her mother in a close, clinging embrace,

which the nurse presently loosened gently, lifting her to a seat on the bed, where she could look at her mother without tiring her. The latter was evidently very weak, and scarcely cared to talk; but she looked gratefully, if shyly, at Miss Blanchard, and then lay with her beautiful dark-gray eyes, so like the child's, and half-screened by the long dark lashes, fixed on the little one beside her. The dusky hair that lay in a mass about her pale face, on the white pillow, seemed to make it paler by comparison, but also made her look even younger than Miss Blanchard had supposed her. The latter purposely made her visit very brief, but suggested that she and Miss Spencer should leave the mother and child alone, with the almost unnecessary caution "not to talk," to which neither seemed disposed. Miss Spencer led the way to the little sitting-room used by the nurses, which was then empty.

"How nice and neat it all is!" said Nora, as they sat down, her eyes coming back from their survey to rest admiringly on the serene, happy face of the young nurse. Janet or "Janie" Spencer, as her friends called her, had interested her very much in their occasional meetings. There was something about her, not easy to define, which attracted most people. She was a rather large, well-developed young woman, with her cousin Kitty's fairness of coloring, but not Kitty's exquisite delicacy of complexion and moulding. An expression of kindly good sense and good-humored benevolence seemed to shine in her clear eyes and to hover about the curves of her red lips; her calm, even manner was soothing in itself, and in her fresh picturesque uniform, Nora thought she looked like an impersonation of the divine art of healing.

"Well, how do you like your work?" asked Nora, eagerly.

"'*Like*' isn't the word!" was the reply. "It's intensely interesting. You get so absorbed in the interest of it that you never take time to think whether you like it or not! Of course, there are things you can't like in themselves, but you forget that, when you know that you are doing what is of real consequence. And then I think I always was cut out for a nurse. Ever since I was a child, I liked nothing so well as caring for sick people."

"We all thought it was very lovely of you to make up your mind to do it, though."

"Well, I simply couldn't go on as I was. You know there were some things I could never forget ——"

Nora touched caressingly the soft hand that looked so strong and helpful, with all its softness. She had heard of the young lover whose sudden death had altered Janie Spencer's life. Presently she went on:

"That ordinary, humdrum, easy existence—so many of us girls at home, and no interests but calls and parties and novels and fancy-work—it seemed just trifling away life; and I thought if ever I could save any one who was ill as *he* was, how sweet it would be!—almost as if I did it for him!"

"Then it wasn't Mr. Chillingworth's preaching, after all," said Nora, vaguely disappointed.

"Oh, I think that did decide me," she said. "It was one of his strongest sermons, I think, and it came just when I was feeling so sick of doing nothing in particular. He was speaking, you know, of the beauty of the Christian ideal of living for the good of others; and he gave as an example, the life of a hospital nurse, and how happy she might always be in realizing the truth of the words, 'Inasmuch as ye have done it to one or the least of these, ye have done it unto Me.' I think it was *that* that decided me."

"But now," said Miss Spencer, after a short silence, "I suppose you don't know much about this poor young woman?"

"No," said Nora; "but I'm sure she has a history."

"So am I! One or two things she said made me suspect a romance of some kind. I notice that her wedding ring is very massive, and she has a habit of fingering it in a caressing sort of way."

"Poor thing! I suppose she's a widow."

"She wouldn't say, and I couldn't press her. It seemed to pain her to talk about it. My impression is that she is *not*; but of course that is merely an impression."

"The child is passionately fond of music," said Nora. "I shouldn't wonder if she turned out to be a musical genius."

"Possibly, then, her father may have been one of those professionals who seem so lax in their matrimonial ideas, and desert their wives so easily.—At least, I've heard of such cases," she added. "I suppose the 'artistic temperament' as they call it, has a tendency to forsake ordinary lines."

"It's queer," said Nora, thoughtfully. "One would think music should always be an elevating influence."

"I'm sure it is, at its best," said Janet. "But it has another side, like most things."

"Oh dear!" said Nora, "this is a very puzzling world. Well, it's nice to be you, and to have found out just the work you are fitted for, and how you can best help other people."

And this thought clung to her as she walked home with the still silent Cecilia, through the damp, foggy December afternoon, the child bravely keeping down her strong inclination to cry, lest she

should forfeit the privilege of going again. The world seemed, to Nora's imagination, to have taken the dull, cheerless aspect of the day, seen from the under side, from which she had lately been looking at it. And it seemed to her that they alone could be counted happy who knew how to lighten a little the cheerlessness and gloom. If she only knew *how*!

CHAPTER X.

A FIRESIDE TALK.

The fog and moisture had turned to snow, and the cold grayness of the early winter dusk emphasized the cheeriness that lighted up Mrs. Blanchard's drawing-room with its warm glow. Nora was practising, perseveringly, the choruses that were to be sung that evening at the first general practice for the oratorio, whither Mr. Chillingworth was to escort her, after dinner, to which he had been invited. Mrs. Blanchard reclined luxuriously in an easy-chair in front of the fire, half-lulled to sleep by the combined influence of the heat and the music, undisturbed by the prattle of the children, who, in the absence of visitors, were in full possession. Cecilia held "Tatters," the pet terrier, cuddled close to her with one hand, while with the other she helped Eddie and Daisy to set up the animals from their Noah's Ark, in a "'nagery percession" between two lines of stiff, conical trees taken from Eddie's "village," and supposed to represent an "avenue," with occasional little painted wooden houses behind it. As several of the animals had lost some of their legs, the setting up was a task of some difficulty, and presented some curious situations, the maimed wolf having to lean for support against his neighbor the lamb, while a hen that had lost one of her stout pedestals had to be similarly propped up against a fox of equal size. The long procession having been finally completed, Nora was called to come and admire.

"See, Auntie, it isn't a Noah's Ark percession," said Eddie, "it's a 'nagery percession. And those ar'n't Noah and his sons either. They're Barnum and the keepers."

"Oh, young America!" said Nora, laughing, in a semi-soliloquy. "You must remodel everything, even Noah's Ark."

"Well, Noah's Ark was a sort of 'nagery," replied Eddie, answering the tone rather than the words, "and I guess Noah was about as clever as Mr. Barnum."

Nora walked back to the piano, concealing an irresistible laugh. After all, she thought, children had to interpret those old stories of the past through present-day experiences—but her own childish conceptions had never been quite so realistic.

Cecilia followed her to the piano, and stood by her in her usual attitude of absorbed attention, while Miss Blanchard went through the passage, "He Shall Feed His Flock Like a Shepherd." Neither heard the doorbell ring, and Mr. Chillingworth had quietly opened the door some time before his presence was noticed.

"Thank you," he said, advancing, with a smile, "I wanted to hear that to the end before you knew you had an audience of even one—though I should say *two*," he added, glancing at the child, whom in her altered dress and surroundings, he did not in the least recognize.

"*I* was listening, too," said Mrs. Blanchard, rousing herself to greet him, and continuing to her sister-in-law: "Oh, you needn't laugh, Nora, I could hear the music quite well, if my eyes were shut. There's nothing that soothes one so."

"Yes, I know you find it soothing, Sophy, dear," replied Nora, demurely, while Mr. Chillingworth discreetly held his peace. Meantime Cecilia had stolen away, back to the other children, whom the nurse had come to summon to tea. She recognized the clergyman at once, and she instinctively shrank from another encounter with him.

"You have a visitor there, I see," remarked Mr. Chillingworth, as the children disappeared. "What a pretty child she is! She has such lovely eyes. Who is she? Somehow her face seems familiar to me, or else she is like some one I know."

"Oh, I don't think you can have seen her before," said Nora. "She's the child of a poor young woman Will sent to the hospital—the young woman he was sent for to go to see that evening, you know."

"Oh, the one to whom you went to act the Good Samaritan? I meant to ask you how you found her."

"She was very ill indeed," replied Miss Blanchard, gravely; then turning fully round, she looked up at him and exclaimed: "Oh, Mr. Chillingworth, I never could have imagined any one living in such a wretched place! Scarcely any furniture, and the poor thing lying on such a miserable bed on the floor! And she seemed so refined and pretty! It is horrible to think that such things can be!"

Mr. Chillingworth half closed his eyes for a moment, as if to shut out the picture she conjured up. Such scenes always jarred terribly on his æsthetic sense, and on principle, he avoided them as much as possible. They always upset him so, and he could do so little to help!

"Yes, my dear Miss Blanchard, this fleeting life of ours has many mysteries about it, sad and strange enough, but we should only be making ourselves perpetually miserable, if we were always looking at them and trying to solve them. And then you must remember that things often look worse, when we see them from the outside. Human nature has a wonderful way of adapting itself to circumstances, and this life is only a fleeting one, you know. The great thing is—to lead the sufferers to look beyond!"

"Yes, I know," said Nora, somewhat impatiently. "But then, I do think it would be better, for *us* as well as for them, if we were to try to make it better for them now! That was what the Good Samaritan did—you spoke of just now, wasn't it, when the priest and the Levite passed by on the other side?"

"Undoubtedly, as you say, that *is* best for us, as it is for them," he replied. "Yes, the life for others is the true life.

> "'The quality of mercy is not strained,
> It blesses him that gives and him that takes.'"

Mr. Chillingworth always rendered the quotation so as to convey the impression that the "giver" was a good deal more to be considered than the "taker."

"Well, Nora did her duty as a Good Samaritan," interposed Mrs. Blanchard, tired of being left out of the conversation. "She stayed in that wretched room all night, and sat up with the poor woman. I only wonder she didn't catch something dreadful, herself."

"Is it possible!" the clergyman exclaimed. "But that seems too great a sacrifice on your part. Was there no one else at hand?"

"Yes," said Nora, with a touch of satire in her tone. "There was a poor girl, a mill hand, who had been working all day, and sitting up at night with this poor sick woman. I thought that *was* too great a sacrifice!"

Mr. Chillingworth's dark eyes lighted up. "Ah," he said, "such scenes transfigure the dark places of life, do they not?"

Nora sighed—a little impatient sigh. She could not, it seemed, convey to the mind of any one else the intolerance she felt of a social state in which such hard conditions of life could prevail, for any portion of humanity. Every one about her seemed to acquiesce resignedly in the inevitable.

"And so you have added to your kindness, that of taking in the poor woman's child?" he continued.

"Yes," again interposed Mrs. Blanchard. "There seemed to be no one else to take care of her, so Nora begged to be allowed to take her in, and you know we are all her abject slaves!"

Nora laughed. "I'd like to see you an abject slave to any one," she said.

"Indeed, I feel abject enough just now," she replied, yawning slightly. "Mr. Chillingworth, how many visits do you think Nora and I paid this afternoon?"

"I shouldn't venture to guess," he said, smiling.

"Fifteen! not one less. Haven't I a right to feel tired after such a day's work? Just think of all the talking I've done."

"But then several of the people weren't at home, so we only had to leave the cards and come away," explained the severely truthful Nora.

"Well, eight visits, with all the talking that means, is a very good afternoon's work."

And having successfully diverted the conversation from such unpleasant topics, Mrs. Blanchard kept up a little skirmishing small-talk till dinner was announced.

Kitty Farrell came in to join them after dinner, as had been arranged. She was looking particularly bright and pretty in her soft white wraps. She had brought her father's neat little brougham, in which they drove down to the hall, where the practice would be held.

"I suppose you're both going to Mrs. Pomeroy's dinner-party, on Saturday evening?" said Mr. Chillingworth, on the way.

"I am," Nora replied, "and it is scarcely necessary to ask if Miss Farrell is."

"Indeed, I don't see any reason for taking it for granted," said Kitty, coquettishly; "but if you really want to know, I believe we're all going. It will be quite large for a dinner-party; so, Nora, mind you are to look your best!"

Just as they got out of the brougham, and stood full in the light of the lamp at the entrance, a young man, passing hurriedly, looked up and took a rapid survey of the trio. Nora caught the glance, and recognized the young man who had walked with her through the lamp-lighted streets a few evenings before. She was sorry that she had not had time to show that she recognized him, for he had interested her almost as much as the new trains of thought he had started.

The practice went on very much as all practices do. The choruses had to be gone over again and

again, till the time and harmony were, in the conductor's estimation at least, approximately correct. Nora could not help wishing that some other words could have been used for the practice, than those carrying such sacred meanings and associations. She began to see why her Aunt Margaret did not care for oratorios, when she noticed some of the girls tittering over mistakes in the rendering of some of the most solemn and touching passages. Mr. Chillingworth watched it all carefully from the artistic point of view—which, for the time at least, he seemed to have disassociated from the religious. At last it was over, for that evening, and Kitty and Nora were resuming their wraps, while Mr. Chillingworth was holding an animated talk with the conductor and the accompanist, Herr Waldberg, on points connected with the rendering of some of the passages. Waldberg, his handsome face lighted up with the glow and sparkle of musical enthusiasm, came up with Mr. Chillingworth, and, courteously bowing to the young ladies, exchanged a few words with Kitty in an undertone. She lingered a moment, as Nora waited for her at the entrance.

"I needn't take you and Mr. Chillingworth out of your way to walk round with me," she said. "You know I didn't order the carriage to come back, as I didn't know just when it would be over, and father does not like to have the horses standing at night. But Mr. Waldberg has kindly offered to see me home, so you won't have to come all that way round, and it's snowing quite fast, isn't it?"

Nora felt vaguely dissatisfied, she hardly knew why, at the proposed arrangement. But of course she could offer no objection, and Mr. Chillingworth was by no means sorry to be permitted to walk home with Miss Blanchard, *tête-à-tête*. They were both enthusiasts in music, and could talk about it, the oratorio and its rendering, with more freedom from distraction than when Kitty, with her butterfly nature was at hand, ready at any moment to strike off on some other tack. And again, as they walked on, Nora observed that her unknown friend passed them at a rapid pace, but this time he was going the same way, and she did not know whether he observed her or not.

CHAPTER XI.

THORNS AND ROSES.

"What are you going to wear to-night, Nora?" asked Mrs. Blanchard, as the two still lingered in company over the breakfast-table, which the busy doctor had, as usual, quitted before them. This was always the most important question in Mrs. Blanchard's mind, when they were going to any entertainment.

"I suppose my black velvet will do, won't it?" said Nora, looking up from the newspaper in which she was, at the moment, reading a paragraph describing the miseries of poor sewing-women, and the pittance for which they are often compelled to give their long hours of toil.

"Well, I suppose so," said her sister-in-law, discontentedly, "though that black velvet certainly does seem too old for you. Why not wear that pretty *écru* and black lace costume?"

"But then," objected Nora, "I wore it at Mrs. Farrell's musical-party, and I don't want to wear it quite so soon again. Besides, this won't be a very big party."

"Not big, certainly, but awfully swell. Mrs. Pomeroy's dinner-parties always are. Just wait till you see! However, your black velvet does look quite elegant, and that old lace of Aunt Margaret's and her pearl cross look just lovely with it! They suit you, somehow; so perhaps you couldn't do better. But I wish you would get a new dress; crushed-strawberry satin would be so becoming, and you'll want it, for you will be going out a good deal this winter."

"No," said Nora, "I couldn't think of getting anything more now; I have all I really need, and it seems horrible to think of getting more than one needs, when some people have to live like this!" and she read aloud the paragraph that had caught her eye.

"Oh, dear!" said Mrs. Blanchard, "I wish you weren't always seeing such things. There always was and there always will be misery in the world, but what good does it do any one to make yourself miserable about it? And if you get a new dress made, doesn't that help somebody?"

Nora was always perplexed when other people's notions of political economy were arrayed on the side of selfish expenditure. Was the world built up on *selfishness* after all? If so, where was the place of self-sacrifice? But it did not seem as if it "helped people" very much "to wear out their lives" in return for the barest subsistence.

That afternoon, she took little Cecilia on a second visit to her mother. It was very cold, and the snow lay white on the hard, frozen streets; but Nora, well wrapped in her furs, felt the cold, keen air as exhilarating as a tonic, as they walked briskly on to the hospital, the child also wrapped warmly in the mufflings that Nora's care had provided. She had begun to be a little more communicative, but was evidently a fitful, uncertain child; in general reserved and quiet, though subject to fits of extreme excitability, in which it seemed as if nothing but music could soothe her. Both Dr. Blanchard and Nora had been studying her with much interest, the doctor declaring that under-feeding and a life of unnatural confinement and solitude must be responsible for many of her peculiarities. At the hospital, Miss Blanchard found Mrs. Travers getting on favorably. She showed more pleasure at seeing her child than on the previous occasion, and, in reply to Nora's

inquiries, expressed herself as very comfortable there. "It would be strange if I were not," she added, "every one is so kind, Miss Spencer especially. She couldn't be kinder, if I were her sister."

And again Miss Blanchard was struck with her unusual refinement of tone and manner as well as of language. But she seemed rather shy and ill at ease, Nora thought, and she was about to turn aside to look up at Miss Spencer, when a gentle knock sounded, and Lizzie Mason entered. The invalid was evidently genuinely glad to see her, and held her hand, as if she could not let it go. Nora, as she watched them for a few moments, was pained to see that Lizzie looked as if she had been crying, and seemed particularly sad and depressed.

"I did not think of seeing you here," said Nora; "I thought you were engaged at this hour."

"It's Saturday, you know, miss. There's always a sort of a half-holiday on Saturday."

"Well, you look as if you needed a little fresh air," replied Nora, gently. "I'm afraid you have had some trouble."

Her kind voice and gentle words seemed too much for poor Lizzie. She bent down her head, as she sat by the bed, holding the invalid's hand, and sobbed quietly.

By degrees, Nora drew from her the cause of her grief. "Jim" had been going on badly, had been off on another "tear," incited thereto by jealousy of Nelly's flightiness, and of her mysterious admirer. He had been "run in" for drinking and disorderly conduct, and Lizzie had had to take most of the money she had been saving up for warm winter clothing, in order to pay his fine.

"Oh, Lizzie, why did you do that?" asked Miss Blanchard.

"Indeed, miss, how could I let Jim go to jail, and have mother fretting to break her heart? I'd rather starve!"

And Nora knew, in her heart, that the girl could not have done otherwise.

But that was not all. The manager had threatened to dismiss "Jim" unless he should behave better, and meantime had put him at lower work for lower wages.

"Perhaps I might ask young Mr. Pomeroy to speak a good word for him," Nora said. "I know him very well."

"Oh, no, miss, don't!" cried Lizzie, nervously; "it wouldn't do no good! The manager does as he thinks best, and they never interfere with him. Why, he cut down nearly all the girls' wages lately, and they knew they durstn't say a word! He'd discharge the first one that did! An' all that makes it so much harder now to get on."

Nora did all she could to console the poor girl, talked of "trust" and "patience," till the words, coming from one in her position, to one in Lizzie's, seemed almost to die on her tongue, and she wondered they were not thrown back in her face.

But Lizzie had learned her lesson of "patience" better, and when Mrs. Travers said, rather bitterly, "Ah, yes, it's a poor world for us poor women," Lizzie only said, wiping away her tears:

"Oh, well, we must make the best of it! Tain't no good frettin'!"

Nora offered, rather hesitatingly, to go to see Lizzie next afternoon, if she liked, and the offer was gratefully accepted.

"And maybe you could say a good word to Jim; he'll be at home then, and though I never can get Jim to go to church, I guess he would listen to you!—and p'raps Nelly might be there, too. I do wish you could get to know Nelly! She'd mind what you would say, a sight better than anything I can tell her."

Nora walked silently homeward, with a new sorrowful image before her. As she dressed for the dinner-party, the pale tear-stained face seemed still before her, and she was calculating how much it would cost to buy a good warm winter jacket for the half-clad girl.

Little Cecilia had begged to be allowed to help her to dress, and eagerly did all she was permitted to do, admiring with silent intentness the rich soft folds of the velvet that showed to such advantage the straight, graceful, rounded figure, and the white neck and arms that gleamed out of the fine old lace; and, what seemed to the child the most beautiful of all, the cross of pure, translucent pearls which so fitly adorned the white throat above the square-cut corsage. This old pearl cross, Aunt Margaret's parting gift, and a prized relic of her long-past girlhood, was Nora's favorite ornament. Its form was symbolical of a thousand tender, sacred associations, and the purity of the pearls seemed emblematic of a higher purity, divine and human. She liked to wear it as a reminder to herself of many things that she desired never to forget, even in the gladdest and most festive moment. And to-night it seemed connected in her thoughts with Lizzie's pale pathetic face, and her life of perpetual self-sacrifice.

"Well, you look very nice!" said Mrs. Blanchard, approvingly, as she came in to make an inspection—"only you're pale—you want some roses."

And as she spoke, she produced a lovely cluster of pink and blush roses, which she fastened on the creamy lace of Nora's corsage; while deftly twisting an opening bud among her silky coils of

hair, to Cecilia's manifest delight.

"There," she said, "that lights it up a good deal!" and she walked back, casting critical glances at the general effect. "The severe style does suit you—that can't be denied!" she added.

"Oh, what lovely roses!" exclaimed Nora, bending her graceful head, to inhale their delicate fragrance. "It was so good of you to get them for me!"

"Well, I didn't get them, to tell the truth! I meant to get some, though; but this morning I got a little box from Mr. Chillingworth, with a note, begging that you and I would oblige him by wearing the contents. See, here are mine," pointing to a cluster of tea-roses on her own blue satin. "So you see I kept them for a surprise, sort of *coup de grâce*; now, I think that was quite a clever idea."

"But ought I really to wear them?" asked Nora, doubtfully. The "roses" had come to her face, now, as well as her dress, giving just the one touch which her sister-in-law had thought she lacked.

"Why, of course you can," replied Mrs. Blanchard, quickly. "Just as well as I can wear mine! It was so nice of the dear man to think of us *both*!"

"It was *very* kind, and there's nothing I like so well as roses," said Nora, again breathing in their fragrance; "and these made me think so much of summer and Rockland."

But it is doubtful whether it would have given her so much pleasure to wear them, in her present mood, had she known just what they cost!

CHAPTER XII.

TABLE-TALK.

When the little party reached Mrs. Pomeroy's sumptuous drawing-room—a blaze of light and color—most of the guests had already arrived. Mr. Pomeroy, a large, important looking man, who seemed to be on excellent terms with himself and with the world in general, greeted them with a rather pompous cordiality, and then retired to the background to continue his conversation with an old gentleman of somewhat grim and shaggy aspect, whose old-fashioned frock-coat contrasted somewhat oddly with his host's expansive shirt-front and irreproachable dress-suit. Mrs. Pomeroy was a rather small, dark-eyed woman, with a good deal of character and energy in her face, and a dress of sober richness, almost suggestive of Quakerism in its hue. Miss Pomeroy, rather tall, and dark, and good-looking, though with a slight hardness and discontent about the curves of her face, was engaged in an animated conversation with Mr. Chillingworth. Kitty Farrell—looking exquisite and radiant in some diaphanous, pink, silky texture, was appropriated, of course, by young Pomeroy. Her father, with a thin careworn face, quick and restless in his movements, was talking with Mr. Pomeroy and the old gentleman, while Mrs. Farrell, fair, languid, and most tastefully attired, reclined on a sofa beside Mrs. Pomeroy. There were some other people, including a banker and his wife—a Mr. and Mrs. Cheever, accompanied by a Miss Harley, an English lady with an English complexion and roundness of figure, who was paying them a visit, and on whose account, mainly, the party was given. Nora was speedily introduced to a young man who arrived almost simultaneously with themselves—fresh and good-looking, with dark-brown hair and full moustache, which parted in a frequent smile over very white teeth. He was introduced as "Mr. Archer," and Nora was trying to make up her mind whether she liked his face or not, when dinner was announced, and her new acquaintance offered his arm.

The dinner-table seemed like a miniature garden of exquisite flowers, amid which gleamed the silver, crystal, and costly Haviland china—a recent acquisition. Mr. Pomeroy was a man who always liked to be sure that he had "the best" of everything, and who regarded it as a duty to gratify his desire to the utmost. As Nora sat down and involuntarily took in the impression of beauty, brilliancy and costliness afforded by the whole, her thoughts went back once more to poor Lizzie's struggling life, with its sordid surroundings, and the winter jacket she couldn't buy. But Mr. Archer's amusing flow of talk, and the interest of finding out the ideas and tastes of a new acquaintance, soon diverted her thoughts. Mr. Chillingworth, who had taken in his hostess, was seated on her other side, and claimed a large share of her attention. A certain Mr. Wharton, of literary proclivities, and the old gentleman aforesaid, were nearly opposite.

"So good of you to come this evening," said Mrs. Pomeroy. "We shouldn't have fixed on Saturday, but it seemed the only evening we could have Miss Harley, who will be here only for a few days. But we thought you wouldn't mind, for once."

"Oh, I happened to be pretty well up with my work this week; so I could allow myself the pleasure, with a clear conscience," replied the clergyman.

The talk drifted about in the usual inconsequential manner of dinner-parties. The courses, *entrées, et cætera*, were many and elaborate, and were evidently thoroughly appreciated, by the gentlemen, at least. Mr. Archer smilingly noticed that Miss Blanchard declined wine, as indeed did the hostess, also, who had pronounced views on the subject of total abstinence, it appeared,

although yielding to her husband's wish to have wine at his table. Mrs Pomeroy was indeed a "prominent worker," as the *Minerva* would have put it, on various philanthropic and mission boards So she hastened to reinforce Miss Blanchard in a playful skirmish as to the merits of total abstinence societies and of Prohibition, of which she was a strenuous advocate. Mr Pomeroy presently, however, shut off the discussion by telling his friends that they had better enjoy their champagne while they could, as Mrs Pomeroy was determined to take it from them altogether, and there was no knowing how soon she might succeed. And then he struck at once into a fresh subject.

"By the way, Wharton, that was a capital letter of yours in the *Minerva* the other day, on that last book of Henry George's."

"Glad you thought so," replied Mr Wharton, complacently. "I thought the *Minerva* was growing quite too enthusiastic over it, so I just touched them up a little on the subject."

"And you did to some purpose," said his host. "That was a good point you made, anyway—when you showed up the fallacy of that absurd assertion that the poor are growing poorer. I haven't read the book myself, but if that's how he talks, I should say it's great stuff!"

"Oh, that point's the thing!" rejoined Mr Wharton, pleased to dilate a little on a favorite subject. "If you grant him that, you have to grant him a great deal more. But of course it's absurd."

"Well," said Mr. Archer, his moustache parting over his white teeth, with his cynical smile—"I suppose we don't any of us live just as our ancestors did in Queen Elizabeth's time. I doubt if her majesty ever saw such a charmingly arranged dinner-table in her life!" Here he bowed toward the hostess. "But I happened to see something of the tenements of New York lately, in connection with a case which involved the proprietorship of some of them. I really think I'd rather have the Elizabethan style, so far as the laborer is concerned. But of course, all laborers don't live in rooms that would hardly be fit for a dog-kennel."

Nora's thoughts went off to the wretched apartment in which she had so lately spent the night, but she was too shy to join in a general conversation. Her brother, however, remarked tersely, that he saw some wretched enough kennels, even in Minton, and that, "if some quarters of the city were not soon looked after, they would be hearing of an outbreak of typhoid fever or diphtheria, the first thing."

"Oh, Doctor!" exclaimed Mrs. Farrell, in alarm. "You don't say so. I do hope it *will* be looked after soon!"

Mrs. Pomeroy, however, remarked that, for her part, she thought the poor people seemed very happy and comfortable, so far as she came in contact with them, in connection with the Clothing Club.

Mr. Archer smiled again. "By the way, Mr. Pomeroy," he remarked, "have you seen the new paper?"

"What new paper?" inquired the host.

"*The Brotherhood*, the new champion of the oppressed and down-trodden workmen! I tell you, you manufacturers will have to look out. You'll be brought to book for all your iniquities."

"Yes, I believe I did see a wretched little sheet of that name somewhere, started by some crank. But of course, I haven't time to look at such things."

"Ah," said Mr. Chillingworth, "I suppose that is the paper a young man came to canvass me for! I don't know whether he wanted me to take it or to write for it. But I see he has sent it to me."

"Oh, *both*, Mr. Chillingworth!" retorted Mr. Archer, smiling with mock persuasiveness. "The editor of it, Mr. Roland Graeme, is well known to me; in fact, I have the honor of having him at present in my office, and I can answer for him that he would be delighted to accept any contributions from your pen."

"Or from mine, say," remarked Mr. Wharton.

"I'm not so sure about *you*! You are too much on the philosophical tack! You wouldn't have enough sympathy. *The Brotherhood*, you know, is founded on the idea of Christian fellow-feeling."

"Thanks, very much, for your good opinion!" retorted the other.

"I've heard a good deal about that fellow, Roland Graeme," remarked Mr. Pomeroy, in his tone of bland patronage. "I should say he hadn't enough to do! He's been aiding and abetting the 'Knights of Labor,' in every way he can; in fact, they say he's one, himself: and they're troublesome enough, without having better educated people, who ought to know better, putting their oars in!"

"'Knights,' indeed!" echoed Mrs. Pomeroy, sarcastically, "Precious *knights*!"

"Why, they actually had the cheek to come and interview *me*, lately," said Mr. Pomeroy. "They had a whole list of grievances that they wanted remedied. Willett wouldn't have anything to say to them, so they came on to me. And I believe this Roland Graeme was at the bottom of it."

"Well, he isn't half a bad fellow," said Mr. Archer, "but he's awfully soft in some ways. A child

could get round him, quicker indeed than a grown-up person," he added, half to himself. "But what did you do? Did you grant their requests?"

"Not I! There were far too many. They wanted shorter hours, and bigger pay, and half-holidays, and all the rest of it. Oh, by the way, there *was* one thing, Willett had been negligent about, some shafting that had been left uncovered; I had that inquired into and put right."

"Then the interview wasn't absolutely without results," remarked the elderly gentleman in the frock-coat, joining in the discussion for the first time, and speaking in a deep, guttural, Scotch voice and accent.

"Oh, I've no doubt we'd have put that all right in due time, without their interference," said the host, somewhat superciliously.

"Aye! After an accident, and an inquest, and a suit for damages," returned the Scotchman, with a dry smile and twinkle of the eye.

"Come! come! Mr. Dunlop, you have a rather bad opinion of us, I know; but for our own sakes, you know, we want to have everything right about the mills. And as for all these other things—why, if we went to pampering and coddling those people to that extent, they would think so much of themselves, that by and by they wouldn't want to work at all. Why now, if we were to do as they ask, increase their pay and shorten their hours, how could we compete with firms that went in the old way? The thing is preposterous. As it is, those people who get their pay regularly and have no care, are better off, this minute, if they only knew it, than we who have all the care and responsibility, that they know nothing about. Let me help you to a bit of partridge; you'll find it just right, I think."

"And would you be caring to exchange with one of them?" persisted Mr. Dunlop, as he accepted the slice of partridge.

"Why, no, of course, it wouldn't suit me any more than my work would suit them."

"That's a very fallacious test of yours, Mr. Dunlop," interposed the sagacious Mr. Wharton. "As Mr. Pomeroy says, what would suit one wouldn't suit another. And then, the environment we are accustomed to counts for something. Our friend here, accustomed to his charming surroundings, as a matter of course, could not lose them without real deprivation. But a man unused to them would find them only a burden. Depend upon it, things in this world find their own level after all."

"Of course they do," rejoined Mr. Pomeroy; "as for all this talk about 'Fraternity and Equality,' the stuff such people as this Graeme are so fond of spouting—poisonous trash!—it's simply making people discontented with the inevitable conditions of life, and doing them no possible good. It's so much rank poison, morally speaking, is it not, Mr. Chillingworth?"

The clergyman had been listening silently, but he now readily responded. "Oh, there is no doubt in my mind that all the evils complained of—and no doubt there are some hardships—can be remedied in only one way, in the spread of the Christian spirit of love and service which must eventually prevail over selfish and partial views."

"And that would probably have been your verdict, in the last generation, as against abolitionists like Garrison and Phillips and Whittier, would it not?" remarked Mr. Archer, in his even, cool, slightly satirical tones. "Slavery would die out gradually, as the Christian spirit spread among the planters. But then, the question would have been, again, Who should *begin*? Slave-holder number one wouldn't want to begin till slave-holder number two did; so it would be difficult to see how the reformation would get started."

"Come now, Philip!" said Mrs. Pomeroy. The young man was a distant relation of hers, and took liberties accordingly. "You don't mean to put us all on a level with slave-holders, surely! This is a free country, I should hope; and no one is called on to do more for his *employés* than he conveniently can."

"Ah, now, my dear cousin, that's a delightful sort of philosophy! Do you know, I've sometimes found it inconvenient to pay my clerks, when I had been going in heavily for opera-tickets—I'm glad to think I'm not called on to do more than I conveniently can."

Philip Archer could always turn the most serious argument into a joke when he pleased—and he always pleased at a certain point—but Mr. Wharton was not going to let him off so easily.

"Of course you were not serious in that analogy of yours," he said. "There can be no parallel between a distinct wrong to humanity, and purely relative matters like wages and hours."

"And are ye sure ye have a clear comprehension of what *are* the *rights* of humanity?" struck in the deep Scotch voice. Mr. Dunlop had finished his partridge, and, having laid down his knife and fork, seemed ready to begin hostilities in earnest.

"I tell ye what it is," he went on, without waiting for a reply, "it would pay all you capitalists and employers just to take a look into things a little, to see what your men are doing and thinking—what the 'Knights' and 'Unions' are after—and consider if ye couldn't arrive at some rational understanding. There's nothing would propitiate them quicker than that. This thing's going to grow! It's young yet, and only totters on its feet; but by and by it will be as we say in Scotland, 'neither to haud nor to bind!' Awhile ago, ye were speaking of 'Fraternity and Equality,' Mr. Pomeroy. There was a third thing that went wi' them in the old days, that ye didna' mention!

We're supposed to have got *Liberty*, and it's bound to work out its own salvation. I tell ye there's a big, silent army, marshalling without fife or drum, and if ye persist in ignoring it, as the grandees of France did before *their* Revolution, *ye'll* maybe have a revolution, too. What if the men were growing nae poorer? They see you all growing richer, the style of living rising on all hands. Can they be o' the same stock with you, and no want to rise too? And then wi' your 'protection' an' your 'combines,' ye're loading them down wi' a greater weight o' taxation than it took to make your ancestors rise and fight, shoulder to shoulder, for their independence! But ye won't see it! It's been aye the way, 'Whom the gods would destroy they first make mad'!"

"Why, Mr. Dunlop, I had no idea you were such a pessimist! You must have been taking an extra dose of Carlyle!" said Mr. Pomeroy, evidently trying to smooth out a frown, and retain his usual bland exterior.

"Aye! I've read my 'French Revolution' to some purpose, an' human nature's the same in all places and ages," was the grim reply.

"And what would you have us poor blinded creatures do?" inquired his host; "take all our men into partnership? A nice muddle they'd soon make of it!"

Miss Harley had been listening with deep interest to the little skirmish, her cheek flushing slightly, and her clear eyes shining with some vivid emotion. Now she spoke, with a soft clearness of tone that seemed to give every word additional weight.

"I think," she said, "that we, in England, have got so much accustomed now to the word *coöperation*, that it begins to sound quite natural to us. Mr. Ruskin, of course, did a great deal to drive it into us, and a good many others have caught it up. And I can tell you something of the success of one experiment. My father had extensive works in Wiltshire. He had been reading Ruskin's *Fors Clavigera*, mainly on social matters, you know, and, being a Quaker, and having strict ideas as to duty, he began to think he wasn't using his men quite fairly. He knew, too, that there were some socialists among them, trying to breed mischief, and he thought he would try an experiment. So he invited a large number of the more intelligent of the men to meet him and hear his report of the state of the business. He laid it all before them, in the most precise and business-like way, explained the assets and debts—cost of working, annual proceeds, and all. He tried to give them an idea of the risks run, the capital needed, the fluctuations of trade, and so on, and then he told them that he would give to each man who proved his steadiness, and who chose to accept it, instead of wages, a certain share in the profits, graduated according to the value of his work. Of course it was only the picked men who accepted. The more shiftless and less intelligent preferred to take their ordinary wage, which was always a generous one, thinking 'a bird in the hand was worth two in the bush'. But the others made, my father used to say, 'capital partners'—they took such an interest in the business, were constantly suggesting little improvements and ways of saving waste, and were always on the lookout for all carelessness or 'scamped work' among the other men. And when a tight time came, they were able to convince the others that if they were kept on at all, it must be at a reduction. 'You see *we* can't afford more,' I've heard one man say to another, going home from work. And when there were 'strikes' and failures all around, his business continued to live on, like an organic creature, as he used to say, drawing itself in or letting itself out according to circumstances. And sometimes the generosity of the men in a slack time used to bring tears to his eyes, as he would tell us about it with pleasure and pride."

Every one had listened with interest to the pleasant little episode. Mr. Chillingworth's dark eyes had lighted up with enthusiasm.

"Ah, that was beautiful, indeed!" he said, with a warmer spontaneity than usual. "Thank you, indeed, Miss Harley, for telling us about it. That is how things should stand between master and men. We have some noble men in the old land yet!"

"Now, Mr. Chillingworth," broke in his hostess, "you're not going to go back on *us*, surely!"

"By no means! but you must pardon an Englishman his pride in the old stock."

"I should quite imagine," remarked Mr. Pomeroy, "that in such an old country as England, so conservative in all social matters, and so tenacious of vested rights, such a plan of coöperation would answer very well. But it would be quite a different thing, in a more democratic community, to let workmen get in any degree a hand on the reins. Business is too complex here—financiering too delicate. It would be like letting a bull into a china shop."

A lady has one great advantage in an argument, that she cannot be abruptly choked off, especially by her host, no matter how distasteful her arguments may be. Perhaps Miss Harley was conscious of this advantage, for she forthwith proceeded to describe, at some length, a most successful profit-sharing enterprise which her father had taken her to see, at Guise, in French Flanders; a great foundry which owed its prosperity, mainly, to the zeal, and enterprise of Monsieur Godin, a disciple of Fourrier's, who had consecrated his life to elevate the condition of workingmen. The capital, she said, was gradually being transferred to the workmen, who already owned more than half a million dollars worth of stock; and the success, so far, was most encouraging. She then described enthusiastically the great *Familistère*, or residence establishment, begun by Godin about 1859—the large quadrangular buildings with courts covered in with glass, the coöperative shops and schools, the arrangements even for coöperative char-women, till it seemed as if she were quoting from some dreamer's Utopian fable. Mr. Archer took a mischievous delight in drawing her out on the subject, as Mr. Pomeroy subsided into silent

endurance till, at length, to the host's evident relief, the ladies rose to leave the table, when he quickly switched the conversation off on a political track.

CHAPTER XIII.

PIPPA PASSES.

When the ladies adjourned to the drawing-room, which was so littered with costly knick-knacks that, as Nora afterwards averred, "it looked like a bazaar," that young lady gravitated by a natural attraction to Miss Harley's side, eager to ask her more questions about matters which had begun to interest her deeply. From Flanders, their talk soon drifted onwards to Germany and Italy. Nora, strange to say, had never yet been abroad, and cherished a most fresh and unsophisticated interest about those far countries which she had as yet seen only in books, pictures and dreams. Then they went on to talk of art; and, as a book of illustrations of Italian art lay conveniently at hand, they looked over a number of the engravings of old pictures together. They were lingering over the tragic face of Beatrice Cenci, with the mystic sorrow-laden eyes, which so attract and haunt the beholder; and Miss Harley was giving Nora an outline of her story, as you hear it in Rome, when the door opened, and Mr. Chillingworth entered, speedily finding his way to Miss Blanchard's side.

"I got tired of the politics in there," he said, smiling slightly, "so I thought I would set a good example. Ah! you're looking at the Cenci. What a tragedy lies sealed up in those dark eyes! What a type of the thousand tragedies that lie sealed up in many a ruin of those terrible old days!"

"And do you think we have no tragedies about us now?" asked Miss Harley, looking up at the tall figure above her.

"Oh yes, undoubtedly! But not so many, or so grim, I hope! And then, you know, we don't see present things quite so effectively, or in such good perspective as we do the past! We need a little distance, you see, in order to take things in as a whole."

"I suppose you are right, artistically speaking," replied Miss Harley, doubtfully. "But for myself, I must say, the sorrows of the real people about me always interest me more than the most romantic stories of the past."

"Now, don't try to persuade me that you are quite such a realist, Miss Harley, when you have shown what an idealist you are on social topics. What a noble man that father of yours must have been! I should like to know more of him. But come, Miss Blanchard, I see you are trying to make up your mind whether you're on Miss Harley's side or mine, and I don't want you to give judgment against me! Suppose you give us a little music, you and Miss Farrell. Can't we have a few airs from the *Messiah*, now? It would be such a good finish to the week's work—just what I need to put me in tune for to-morrow's duty!"

Nora colored a little at his thought-reading, but at once rose to comply with the request, which Miss Harley warmly endorsed. She had heard of Miss Blanchard's singing, and would be charmed to hear it for herself. There was a parlor-organ in a corner of the large room, in addition to the piano, and as they all agreed that this accompaniment would be much the more suitable for the music, Mr. Chillingworth gave his services as accompanist, playing with great taste and feeling. Nora sang the air, "He Shall Feed His Flock Like a Shepherd," and the other "He Was Despised and Rejected," with clear sweetness and pathetic expression, while a subdued stillness gradually stole over the little group of talkers at the other end of the room. Then, to check the little buzz of admiring comment, she insisted on Kitty's following at once with the air, "Come Unto Him All Ye That Are Weary and Heavy Laden:" Mr. Chillingworth took his turn in rendering, "Every Valley Shall Be Exalted," playing the beautiful undulating accompaniment for himself. Miss Pomeroy wanted to hear some of the choruses they had been practising, and they were just trying the angel's song, "Peace on Earth and Good Will to Men," when the other gentlemen entered the room.

The old gentleman, whose appearance and words had interested Nora a good deal, did not appear with the others, and she presently asked Mr. Archer, who came up to join her at the piano, what had become of him, and who and what he was.

"Oh, Dunlop always likes to slip away early," he said. "He's a queer old party! He's made a good deal of money in one way or other, so he's considered worth cultivating, and he knows it. He lives very quietly, they say; he's been a widower for years. He goes across the sea now and then, but always comes back 'to look after things.' He's got some ideas of his own, too, and he seems to take a great interest in this new paper of Graeme's—that 'crank' they were talking about. Now, I hope, since I have so amiably gratified your curiosity, you will gratify me by a song. I could catch distant echoes, tantalizingly remote, and now I want to hear the reality."

But Nora would sing only in the chorus they were just about to begin. She would not sing songs after the oratorio music.

When the chorus was over, Mrs. Pomeroy suggested that Mr. Chillingworth should give them a short poetical reading before the party broke up. "I know," she said, "that you'll give us

something very nice, to dream on. Suppose you give us something from Browning. I just love to hear you read him! Clara, dear, won't you bring Mr. Chillingworth a volume of Browning?"

Miss Pomeroy, who belonged to a "Browning Club," speedily produced a volume which she knew contained a favorite reading of Mr. Chillingworth's. That gentleman seated himself where the soft light of a silver reading-lamp could fall most pleasantly on the book, while the rest of the company disposed themselves in various attitudes of luxurious repose, as people are apt to do after a sumptuous repast. Young Pomeroy threw himself on a sofa beside Kitty, where he could make whispered comments *ad libitum*. Nora found a place near Miss Harley, while Mr. Wharton lay back in an easy-chair with an expression of complaisant and critical expectancy.

It was the beautiful opening of the poem "Pippa Passes," that Mr. Chillingworth read, in a voice of musical quality and with a finished elocution, for he had paid special attention to that art. Perhaps it might have been objected that the reading suggested too much of the artist, and too little of the man. But Nora listened with keen and absorbed pleasure, as, through the music of the poet's lines and the reader's voice, one scene after another rose before her "inward eye." The glorious Italian morning just breaking over a sleeping country; the sunrise reddening, flickering, then "pure gold overflowing the world"; the little mill girl springing up, eager to lose not one minute of the long, lovely day, appealing to it, with its "long, blue solemn hours, serenely flowing" to "treat her well," and not spoil her one precious holiday by such gloom or showers as would not mar the pleasure of people richer in holidays and joys—the haughty beauty, the happy bride and groom, the boy and his mother, or Monsignore, in his dead brother's palace, the grandees of her little world:

> "But Pippa—just one such mischance would spoil
> Her day that lightens the next twelve months' toil
> At wearisome silk-winding, coil on coil!"

Nora's thoughts went back with a bound to poor Lizzie Mason, her sad, tired face and shabby dress, and wondered if such thoughts and fancies ever flitted vaguely through her brain on a holiday. But the little girl is dreaming now of what or whom she shall please to be to-day:

> "To-morrow I must be Pippa who winds silk,
> The whole year round, to earn just bread and milk:
> But, this one day, I have leave to go,
> And to play out my fancy's fullest games."

Ah, poor Lizzie! far too heavily weighed down by serious and pressing cares, to have any wish to "play out fancy's games!" She glanced at Mrs. Pomeroy, who sat with clasped hands and attitude all attent, and at Miss Pomeroy, reclining with her cheek resting on her hand and an unusually softened expression in the lines of the somewhat hard face. She wondered if it occurred to them, how many *real* dramas might be going on about them, as worthy of their sympathy as this one, idealized by the power of the poet. She began to think how it would be, if she were, there and then, to go to Mr. Pomeroy with a petition to restore to his toiling maidens their full measure of wages. Strange that people should feel so much more for a girl in a book, than for the real flesh-and-blood ones, in daily life! But Mr. Pomeroy had apparently gone to sleep, and his son was whispering to Kitty, instead of listening. Ah, what was that? Was not this Kitty—to the life!

> "For are not such
> Used to be tended, flower-like, every feature,
> As if one's breath would fray the lily of a creature?
> A soft and easy life these ladies lead:
> Whiteness in us were wonderful indeed."

Was that how their protected happy life looked to those who saw them *de bas en haut*? Was it any wonder that girls like Nelly were pert and discontented? With such thoughts drifting through her mind, she listened, swayed by the magic power of poetry over the souls that are open to its charm, to Pippa's pathetic yearning for the love which, after all, is the blessing of blessings—the warm, cherishing love of the brooding bird, the love of the mother for the child, ending in the cry,

> "If I only knew
> What was my mother's face—my father's, too!"

But what are these lines that follow? Nora listens with caught breath to the passage which closes the reading, given in Mr. Chillingworth's most impressive manner.

> "Nay, if you come to that, best love of all
> Is God's; then why not have God's love befall
> Myself as, in the palace by the Dome,
> Monsignor?—who to-night will bless the home
> Of his dead brother; and God bless in turn
> That heart which beats, those eyes which mildly burn
> With love for all men! I, to-night at least,
> Would be that holy and beloved priest.
>
> "Now wait!—even I already seem to share
> In God's love; what does New-year's hymn declare?

What other meaning do these verses bear?

"All service ranks the same with God:
If now, as formerly he trod
Paradise, his presence fills
Our earth, each only as God wills
Can work—God's puppets, best and worst,
Are we; there is no last nor first.

"Say not 'a small event.' Why 'small'?
Costs it more pain that this, ye call
A 'great event,' should come to pass,
Than that? Untwine me from the mass
Of deeds which make up life, one deed
Power shall fall short in or exceed!"

And so poor Pippa passes on, consoled for the wearisome silk-winding, the scant food, scant raiment, scant human love.

"Oh yes—
I will pass each, and see their happiness,
And envy none—being just as great, no doubt,
Useful to men, and dear to God, as they!"

Yes, that was the best thing after all. Surely poor self-denying Lizzie had this best blessing of loving service. Nora scarcely heard the finishing lines of the passage, so engrossed was she with that thought. Mr. Chillingworth closed the volume, and a chorus of thanks and admiration followed.

It was Nora's first introduction to Pippa. She was familiar with most of the poets of the century—Tennyson, Whittier, Wordsworth, Longfellow; but with Browning she had scarcely got beyond the outer husk which repels so many, and really knew only one or two of his minor Lyrics. But the new, strenuous, heart-searching note took her captive. And often as she afterwards read the poem, she never did so without seeming to see the pathetic picture of Lizzie Mason, side by side with the little dreaming Italian silk-winder.

After the guests took leave, Kitty asked her if she would not come to church with her on the following evening, to hear Mr. Chillingworth preach, as she was occasionally in the habit of doing—Mr. Alden's church being the one her brother regularly attended. Nora willingly promised, and a little meaning smile passed between Kitty and her *fiancé*, as well-informed people now considered Harold Pomeroy to be.

CHAPTER XIV.

A REPORTER AT CHURCH.

The Blanchards were an old Puritan family, and Dr. Blanchard, who inherited a good deal of the Puritan steadiness of temperament, held staunchly by the old ways, notwithstanding the fact of his having married an Episcopalian wife. Mrs. Blanchard's family were parishioners of Mr. Chillingworth, she herself having married shortly after he had entered on his present charge, and he had always been treated as a friend and welcome guest. But Mr. Alden had been Dr. Blanchard's minister since he had first come to Minton. He had owed much, as a young physician, to Mr. Alden's kind brotherly counsels and warm Christian influence; and his preaching just suited men like the doctor, to whom plain, downright, unpretentious, practical teaching was most acceptable.

Nobody ever heard Mr. Alden dealing with any abstract "plans" or "systems," or with purely commercial considerations of future "rewards and punishments"; or with a so-called "salvation," uncomprehended as to its real nature, to be procured by a certain vague assent to an equally uncomprehended formula. He gave his people, not scholastic theology, but *religion*, as he found it in the Bible, warm, concrete, throbbing with the human heart. He showed them the Infinite as he saw Him in every page of his Bible, but especially in the Man of Nazareth; not as the cold, stern Law-giver, ready to make His creatures suffer for even intellectual shortcomings and mistakes, but as the infinitely loving—infinitely righteous Father, seeking to raise all His children to their highest possibilities; while, at the same time, he laid down the irreversible laws of spiritual and moral life and health, with the faithful candor of a true physician. And he was perpetually seeking, first to call out in the hearts of his people a grateful and loving response to that Infinite Love, so divine yet so human; and, next, to show how the truth of that response lay in real turning from sin, a willing and faithful obedience to the voice of God in duty, in every relation of life, and that duty nothing less than that of "loving our neighbor as ourselves." No one ever left his church without feeling more strongly impressed with some point of his duty to his brother man—without having had another lesson in the truth that "love is the fulfilling of the law." Some critics, especially clerical ones, who missed a certain familiar terminology, and a well-worn

conventional way of putting things, shook their heads over what seemed to them "superficial" and "latitudinarian," but Mr. Alden only smiled quietly to himself. He knew that he was not superficial; that what he taught people went to the very root of the matter; that, if he sought to be "broad as God's love," he sought also to show, in its divine distinctness, the sharp line of demarcation between good and evil, love and selfishness. And he knew that, in the real and quickened life of many, his ministry was not without its fruit.

But Roland Graeme, with the best will in the world, could not find much material for a striking "report," as he sat next morning, note-book in hand, anxious to do Mr. Alden some justice in the *Minerva*. There were no high imaginative flights, like those in which Mr. Chillingworth indulged; though now and then there would be a burst of real eloquence, struck out of the tense emotion of a tender heart, yet almost impossible to summarize in a sentence. All Roland could do was to give the outline of the clear, practical teaching addressed to the heart and conscience, the appeals to do battle with the demon of selfishness, the close analysis of the base substratum of so many current usages and maxims, and the condemnation of them by a simple comparison of them with the teachings and example of Christ.

Miss Blanchard's quick eye soon noticed the young man, though he sat at some distance on the opposite side of the church. She recognized, at once, the slightly upward poise of the head, the clear candid eyes, the earnest, kindling look, as the preacher warmed to his subject. She observed, also, his pencil and note-book, and wondered if he were taking notes for his own benefit. For no one ever thought of "reporters" in Mr. Alden's church. Once Roland's eye caught the graceful figure and *spirituelle* face that he had by no means forgotten, and saw by its expression, that he too was recognized. Nora fancied that his glance wandered frequently, from the preacher to the sweet childlike face of Grace Alden, sitting with a troop of little ones in the minister's pew near the pulpit. She did not wonder at it, for she, herself, loved to look at Gracie, of whom she had grown very fond. There was in her fair face, such a heavenly purity, combined with a sunny brightness, of which the golden wavy hair seemed the natural outward expression, that she attracted Nora's eyes as if by a magnetic influence. And Nora knew, too, that the outward beauty was only a symbol of the genuine goodness and sweetness of a nature of rare gentleness and purity. Kitty was as fair in all external points—more exquisite and finished indeed; but her face could never "hold" Nora as did that of this child of sixteen.

As Miss Blanchard passed out, Grace pressed up to her as she usually did, for the affectionate greeting they always exchanged.

"Father wants you to come, to-morrow evening, to a private meeting of the 'Helping Hands,'" she said. "He's going to make arrangements for a Christmas festival. He wants you on the programme for a song or two, and you are to come to tea, of course, he says."

"You can depend on my coming, then," was Nora's ready reply. Few people lingered when Mr. Alden said "Come!"

That afternoon, Nora prepared for a visit to Lizzie Mason, with a little nervous trepidation. She had been accustomed from childhood to visiting among her poor friends in Rockland, and loved to do it. But, much as she was interested in Lizzie, she felt shy about going in among a set of strange faces, and into such a home as she could but dimly picture, with the formidable figure of "Jim" in it, too, as a subject for her exhortations. However, the thing must be done, and she braced herself to do it, accordingly.

It was not so hard, after all as she found when she reached the poor street, with the dingy unattractive houses, and stopped at the door to which Roland Graeme had guided her. Lizzie was on the lookout for her, and showed her into a little family sitting-room, where everything was poor and shabby enough, but yet clean and tidy. No one was there but "Jim," a rather good-looking young fellow, with a somewhat sullen brow and weak mouth and chin, who sat reading a newspaper, quite unconscious of the various little wiles whereby Lizzie had managed to detain him indoors till her expected visitor should arrive. He rose and saluted Miss Blanchard awkwardly, with evident surprise at her appearance, and then retreated into the background, where he could look at her at leisure without being observed. The children were out at Sunday-school, Lizzie explained, "and mother had gone in to see a neighbor." She herself looked rather better and much brighter than she had done the day before.

"After you were gone, yesterday afternoon," she said, "the nurse came in, and thought I wanted a tonic, so she went and got me one from the dispensary, and I declare I feel quite set up by it already; and she talked a good deal to us, too. My! it was just beautiful! it brightened me up ever so much to see her and you!"

Of course, thought Nora, the poor girl needed a tonic; she wondered she had not thought of it. Certainly Janie Spencer *was* cut out for a nurse. But it was not the tonic alone which had done Lizzie good; the kind sympathy and cheering talk had been quite as effectual.

Nora tried to draw "Jim" out a little, but it was hard work. He replied by monosyllables, chiefly negatives. He didn't care for reading; he didn't go to church, he didn't think it would do him any good if he did. As for approaching the special subject of Lizzie's dread, it would, of course, have been impossible without something to lead up to it. Nora was rather relieved when the door opened, and Nelly stepped in, very much "got up" for a Sunday walk, and looking prettier and more pert than ever. She was really a good deal taken aback at seeing Miss Blanchard seated there, but she nodded familiarly, and answered in a tone meant to assert the dignity and

independence of one who felt herself "as good as anybody."

Nora did her best to try to get at the girl's real self—talked to her patiently and gently, overlooking the pertness that offended her fastidious sense of the fitness of things. At last she asked her if she ever went to church with her friend Lizzie.

"No," said Nelly, "I guess I've got enough of big stuffy rooms full of people, all the week! I want some gayer kind of a picnic than that!"

Jim laughed, and even Lizzie smiled a little. They evidently thought this a clever speech of Nelly's. Nora made no reply, indeed she was at a loss what to say; and presently Nelly rose, remarking that she must go on for her walk, as the afternoon was nearly over. Jim, of course, accompanied her. Nora could not help thinking of the tender-hearted, dreamy Pippa of the poem; and wondered what could be done with such a hard and frivolous specimen as this. Yet, had she only known it, her grace and gentleness and culture had had their effect on this girl, under all her *insouciance*; had set her vaguely longing for something that as yet she only dimly felt, something better and nobler than anything she yet knew. We are not, as a rule, ready to show outwardly when our self-satisfaction has been upset, and more than half of the elevating influences of life arise out of mere contact of the higher with the lower; far more out of what we *are*, than out of what we say.

Nora remained a little longer with Lizzie, gently trying to raise her mind to the ideal that had so cheered herself in thinking about the poor overweighted life. The girl did, evidently, lay hold of it to some extent. She had that in her already, which prepared her for it, even if she could not yet comprehend the words in which the poet had put the truth, that:

> "All service ranks the same with God."

But the anxious, loving little heart could at least grasp and hold something of the "best love of all."

After waiting to see and greet the mother—a tired-looking woman, prematurely broken down by ceaseless toil, Nora bade Lizzie good-by, putting into her hand Ruskin's touching little "Story of Ida," of which she herself was very fond, and which she thought Lizzie might be able to appreciate. Later, she was thankful that she had followed the impulse to do it—one of those instincts that are quicker and often truer than reason.

Mr. Chillingworth's evening sermon was the one on which he was wont to "lay himself out." Strangers often came to hear it, and it was frequently reported. Roland Graeme was there as usual, as reporter; and Miss Blanchard again, from her seat in the gallery, caught a glimpse of the young man scribbling away in his note-book. It was odd, she thought, how often he had seemed to cross her path since their accidental meeting. The sermon was one of Mr. Chillingworth's most eloquent ones, full of grand ideals, with no lack of fine and forcible expressions; here and there, Roland thought, somewhat too rhetorical for a thoroughly cultivated taste. There were touches in which Nora could recognize traces of the Browning reading, the evening before, for Mr. Chillingworth could hardly refrain from bringing into his sermons anything which had strongly impressed him. But, however fine Mr. Chillingworth's ideals might be, there was always a gap between these and the realities of common life, which he seemed unable to fill up. Their uplifting influence did not, in general, last longer than the concluding words, except in the case of the few who could supply what he failed to give them. In that of most of his audience, there was a period of transient exaltation, followed by a collapse of the artificial wings, and a sudden descent to the commonplace flats of average life and feeling. Neither did his hearers, in general, connect these ideals with the humble details of daily life; especially as his presentation of good and evil was often drawn with such melodramatic intensity of light and shade, that his hearers failed utterly to connect either with themselves. It never occurred to Mr. Pomeroy, for instance, that the "self-surrender" so glowingly advocated implied that he should devote time, thought and sacrifice to the interests of his work-people. To Mrs. Pomeroy the idea meant only increased devotion and generosity to her favorite "missionary enterprise." It never occurred to her that it might mean, also, a loving, motherly interest in the many comparatively friendless girls, whose toil was helping to gather in for her the wealth she had to bestow, but for which *she* "neither toiled nor spun." As for young Pomeroy, he never once even thought of any reason why he should ever put himself out for anybody. Miss Pomeroy was perhaps beginning to think a little, though she was naturally neither responsive nor expansive; but it was not Mr. Chillingworth who had made her begin.

As the seat occupied by the Pomeroy family was not far from that occupied by the Farrells, Harold Pomeroy joined Nora and Kitty *as* they moved out. When they reached the foot of the stair, they encountered, in the full light of the vestibule, Roland Graeme, coming from the opposite side. Not being of the order of girls who can carelessly pass, without sign of recognition, a person with whom they have conversed, because they may not have been formally introduced, or because he or she may not be in "their set," Nora was glad of the opportunity of giving him a courteous salutation, and a pleasant "Good-evening," which was as courteously returned.

"Why, how on earth did you come to know that fellow?" exclaimed young Pomeroy in surprise, after Roland had passed on.

"Why should there be anything surprising in it?" returned Nora, rather stiffly. She cordially detested Mr. Pomeroy's "airs."

"Only I shouldn't have supposed you were likely to have met Graeme," he said, in a somewhat apologetic tone.

"Is that Roland Graeme!" she exclaimed, too much surprised to think of anything else for a moment. Kitty laughed heartily.

"So Nora, you didn't even know who it was that you were bowing to? That *is* funny!"

"No, I didn't know his name, certainly, but I know *him*. That was the young man who escorted me to see the sick woman I went to help that evening, don't you remember? I had a good deal of talk with him on the way, and I liked him very much. So that is the Roland Graeme they were talking about last night. Well, I don't think he's a 'crank' in the least."

"Oh, even a crank can be sensible sometimes, you know," said young Pomeroy. "But I hope he isn't going to make a disciple of you."

"I shall certainly read *The Brotherhood* now," replied Nora, maliciously. "I believe there's a copy in my brother's surgery."

"And I certainly shall *not*" returned the young man, as he and Kitty bade her good-night at Dr. Blanchard's door.

CHAPTER XV.

HELPING HANDS.

When Miss Blanchard reached Mr. Alden's house the next evening, she met with the usual warm welcome from the whole family,—Grace as usual constituting herself her special attendant, and claiming a song from her friend before tea.

"For we shan't have any time, you know, after, on account of the meeting," she said, coaxingly.

But just as they were looking over the music, and deciding what song it should be, the door opened to admit Mr. Alden's cheery presence. And with him came in, to Nora's amused surprise, Mr. Roland Graeme.

"I met Mr. Graeme down town," Mr. Alden explained, "and we got so interested in the things we were talking about, that he walked nearly all the way up with me before we knew it, so I wouldn't let him go back. I told him he must come in and have tea with us, as I want him to come to our meeting. So now, my dear Miss Blanchard, please go on. I'm glad I came just in time. You know my favorites—give me one of them, please."

And he threw himself back in his easy chair, his face lighted up with its most genial smile. Miss Blanchard thought for a minute or two; then, with a significant smile, both at him and at Roland Graeme, she took a well-worn song that lay at hand, and sang with great spirit, "A Man's a Man for a' That." Mr. Alden listened with evident delight, his deep bass occasionally breaking into the chorus, till, when the last verse was reached, he turned to Roland:

"Come Mr. Graeme, I know you can join in that song. Gracie, let us all give that last verse in a ringing chorus." And they did—the four voices blending in very pleasant unison in the words:

> "For a' that and a' that;
> It's coming, yet, for a' that;
> That man to man, the warld o'er,
> Shall brothers be for a' that!"

"Now, Miss Blanchard, I presume you gave us that as a delicate compliment to my likings and to my young friend's new venture—*The Brotherhood*!" Nora smiled and bowed. "But of course that song doesn't do your singing justice, for any tyro like me can sing it, in a way, if he only has the heart. Now, I want you to give us my favorite love-song, "Robin Adair," my mother's old-time lullaby. *That* does bring out her voice," he added, turning to Roland.

"It's a song I'm very fond of," Roland replied.

Nora sang the old, tender, Scotch love-song with a simple pathos that suited it as well as did her fine contralto. Roland, who like most emotional people, was exceedingly sensitive to the power of music, felt it float through his whole being—soothing the nervous system which had been on the strain all day, and taking him, for a moment, into that world of romance among whose bowery walks it is so pleasant, for even the most practical-minded, occasionally to wander. But the dream of romance was abruptly ended by the summons to tea. And Nora could not help noticing, all through that meal, how Roland's eyes followed every motion of Grace Alden with a quite unconscious devotion. It recalled to her Tennyson's line:

> "And her eyes on all my motions with a mute observance hung."

But Grace, she was sure, would never be the "shallow-hearted cousin Amy" in any event. Was she too much of a child, still, to be touched by this unspoken, though evident admiration on the part

of a young man so attractive as Roland Graeme? Nora could not, at any rate, detect, in the frank ingenuous face, any trace of consciousness. And the father and mother seemed equally unconscious; which was scarcely to be wondered at, for they regarded Grace, at sixteen, as only a child still. Fathers and mothers are often the last to see that the nestlings are fledged.

Nora, as most people will have discerned, was a rather romantic young woman, and it did not take many minutes for this little possible romance to flash through her brain. Roland sat near her at tea, and his first remark was, naturally, an interested inquiry for the poor invalid to whom he had guided her.

"And how is the little girl getting on?" asked Mr. Alden, when Nora had given her report of the mother.

"Oh, she seems tolerably contented, now," was the reply. "But she is a strange child—rather; very variable in her moods, though very concentrated and self-contained. Under all her quietness, she seems nervous and excitable, with a passionate and self-willed nature—I can see very well—though her very shyness seems to keep it down."

"I have no doubt her mother must have a history," said Mr. Alden, thoughtfully. "I wish we could know what it is."

"Cecilia has a wonderfully good ear," Nora went on, "and a perfect passion for music. I shouldn't wonder if she were to turn out a *prima-donna* yet."

"And so you have taken charge of the child, yourself," said Roland, his eye lighting up with ready sympathy. "That was truly kind!"

The words were said with so much feeling, that Nora felt slightly embarrassed, but turned the matter off by declaring that, notwithstanding her peculiarities, she was a very interesting child, and they were all growing quite fond of her. She would be sorry when her mother could claim her again.

"Gracie must go and bring her here, some day soon. It would do her good to be with these noisy youngsters for a while," said Mr. Alden.

"She's a remarkably refined child," said Nora. "Her mother must have kept her very much to herself."

"Well, we mustn't lose sight of her. There's no knowing what may be made of her yet." And then Mr. Alden turned to Roland, and they resumed the discussion they had begun before. It was on some rather abstruse questions as to the relations of capital and labor; but Nora—with her intelligence on such matters quickened by the argument she had so recently heard—listened with attention enough to grasp, at least, the general position involved. Mr. Alden had taken a great interest in the enthusiastic and generous young reformer, and was genuinely anxious to keep him, if he could, from rushing into extreme or ill-considered views, however plausible they might at first sight appear. And though he had not the advantage of Roland's special reading on these subjects, his sound, common-sense experience and insight into human nature gave him a quick perception of the fallacy of any extreme position, such as Roland, in his inexperienced enthusiasm, was often too ready to embrace.

"The 'Knights' want me to give them a lecture by and by. I'm thinking of taking up the subject of 'Modern Miracles,'" said Roland, with a smile.

"Meaning, I suppose, the wonders science is perpetually astonishing us with?"

"Yes, especially as an agency at work in consolidating the human race into one organism; having common interests and common dangers, so that a famine in one quarter of the globe means scarcity in another. I don't want to take up the labor question directly, just now; I should get the name of an 'incendiary' or an 'agitator' at once, and I don't want to make the men any more discontented than they are. It's the employers we want to get at. But such a subject as the 'Miracles of Science' would afford plenty of opportunity for pointing out the benefits of coöperation, as being necessary for guiding these tremendous new forces for the good, not the ill, of humanity."

"Will any one besides 'Knights of Labor' be allowed to go?" asked Nora.

Mr. Alden looked at her with one of his broad, genial smiles. "Are *you* taking an interest in such matters, then?" he asked.

"I have been, lately," Nora said. "The subject seems to be 'in the air.' Everything I've heard or read lately seems to bring it up. And I know so little about it, really, that I want to learn."

"—The best possible frame of mind for getting wisdom," replied Mr. Alden. "I wish my people would only come to church in it! Well, I hope Mr. Graeme is not going to shut the public out; and then you and I can go together to hear him."

Roland's face had again lighted up with pleasure. "I believe it's to be an open meeting," he said. "Of course there's no reason for excluding the public, and I think they want to make a little by it. I'll ask 'Brother' Dunning, and let you know."

"You all call each other 'Brother,' in the order, do you?" asked Mr. Alden.

"Yes, 'Brother' or 'Sister,' as the case may be," he replied smiling. "It seems to be quite a matter of course, when you get used to it."

"Mr. Graeme," said Nora, as they walked together to the place of meeting, "would you mind telling me just why you became a 'Knight of Labor'?"

"Not in the least," he said. "It is very simple. I felt, as I think no entirely unprejudiced person can help feeling nowadays, that our working-classes do not get fair play in the great struggle going on about us; that here the 'battle' is emphatically 'to the strong,' and that the weaker are being, perforce, driven to the wall,—crushed beneath the great iron wheels of Progress, Capital, Combination, and Protection. And I always had an instinctive sympathy with the 'under dog in the fight.' Ever since, as a boy, I read Spenser's 'Faërie Queen,' it seemed to me the noblest task a man could devote himself to,—the fighting the battles of the weak against selfish tyrants,

'To ride abroad redressing human wrongs,'

or whatever corresponds to that in our prosaic age."

"Yes," said Nora, warmly, "but why, for that end, did you need to become a 'Knight' of that description?"

"For two reasons," he replied. "First, because the only way to thoroughly understand their position seemed to me to become one of them, as it were; to comprehend their feelings, aspirations, aims. And, secondly, because I think they need, above all things, some intelligent help and guidance from within. They are so apt to grow wrong-headed and unjust, simply from the perpetual pressure of the hardships of their position. Although I can honestly say, too, that I have often been deeply impressed by the patience and moderation that they show in very trying circumstances. I seldom attend one of their mass-meetings without feeling deeply touched by the vague, wistful sense of the possibilities toward which they are groping, burdened with a sense of tremendous difficulties in the way, and of their own inability to cope with them. And I often wish I could only inspire a whole army of intelligent, energetic, educated young men to take up their cross and help them to win the day. It would be the salvation, it seems to me, not only of this country, but, in a great measure, of the human race!"

Roland spoke with all the warmth of his intensely altruistic nature, and his voice thrilled with irrepressible feeling. Nora felt her own pulse quicken with the contagion of his enthusiasm. Mr. Alden, who overheard the last words, turned back to add:—

"Yes, Graeme, I believe it will be all that; *if* only you can, at the same time, raise this great mass of toiling humanity in the moral and spiritual scale, as well as in the material and intellectual one. However, do all you can for both!"

They had, by this time, arrived at the place where the "Helping Hands Society" usually held its meetings. The place had a history of its own. It had originally been a much frequented saloon, which had stood like a dragon in the way of Mr. Alden's mission work, in a very unpromising portion of his field of labor. It was the place, also, where many days' wages were sunk in ruinous indulgence, instead of being spent in comforts for hungry families. There men lured each other to destructive excesses that besotted them till there was apparently nothing of their better nature left to which to appeal. Mr. Alden conceived the idea of out-flanking the dragon, and carried out his design, with the aid of a few generous members of his congregation. At a time when the place was about to change hands, through the necessities of an owner, ruined by his own merchandise, the building was secured for a comparatively low price, and forthwith turned into a mission-centre of a peculiar kind. Mr. Alden had too much shrewdness to turn the old "Good-fellows' Hall" into anything like a church or mission-hall—the idea of some of his zealous helpers. He knew that this would only frighten away the old *habitués*, and that a successor to the extinct saloon would speedily spring up. So the "Good-fellows' Hall," it remained, with the same external attractions as before, apparently changed in only one respect—that coffee, lemonade, and other temperance beverages were the only things sold there. A respectable temperance man was installed as keeper, and conducted this part of it on his own responsibility. Men might come there and smoke, talk, or read the papers. They were not even prohibited from bringing their own ale with them, so long as they used it in moderation. But, as a matter of fact, they hardly ever chose to do so, feeling an unwritten law; and if they did bring it, the slightest tendency to excess was sternly repressed. But in all else they were free to do as they pleased. Care was, of course, taken that all the papers and other reading matter on the table should be of the best and most elevating character adapted to their taste and calibre. So most of the old *habitués* continued to frequent it; and if they grumbled at first, at the loss of the wonted dram, they gradually forgot to miss it, and met, and smoked, and told old yarns as readily as ever.

But behind this expurgated saloon—and divided from it by double doors—were two large rooms devoted to very different purposes. One was a reading-room, with shelves tolerably well filled with interesting books, history, travels, tales, and modern books relating to various industrial occupations. This room was furnished with comfortable chairs, and any one might enter and read to his heart's content, provided he would leave his pipe outside. The other was fitted with seats, and served as a lecture-room or a preaching hall. Here a Sunday-school was held weekly, and here Mr. Alden or some one of his helpers frequently held simple, short services which were generally well attended by the people of the neighborhood. Here it was, that the Christmas festival was to be given by the "Helping Hands Society," and a small committee-room adjoining was the place of the present meeting.

Its components were rather a heterogeneous group. There were two or three young business men, a shop-keeper and his wife, two or three mechanics and artisans who were "Knights" and acquaintances of Roland, and several girls in different occupations, two of them teachers, and almost all self-supporting. The festival was, of course, to be held for the benefit of the poor people of the neighborhood, who were not included in any other Christmas-keeping arrangements. Some of those present were representative of the people to be entertained, and to these Mr. Alden, as chairman, gave considerable heed in the preparation of the programme; but all could, in some way, assist in carrying it out. Finally it was arranged as follows:—

First, of course, there was to be a "Tree," laden with little gifts for the children; after that, Christmas music, including a violin solo from one of the young men; then a magic-lantern exhibition of Oriental views, followed by one of Mr. Alden's common-sense "Talks"; and last, but not least, a reading from Dickens' "Christmas Carol," by Roland Graeme.

The latter undertook to escort Miss Blanchard home, after the meeting was over. As they walked together under the clear, cold, winter starlight, Nora told the young man something of poor Lizzie Mason's story, and her anxiety for the brother, about whom she had also spoken to Mr. Alden.

"I'll look him up," said Roland, heartily, "and see if anything can be done with him. As for the girls whose wages have been 'cut,' that matter has been up before the 'Knights' and a deputation is to interview the manager."

"Oh, do you think it will do any good?" she exclaimed.

"That I can't say," he replied. "We can only try."

"Do you know, Mr. Graeme, if I were a man, I think I should be a 'Knight' too!"

He laughed. "But you know our modern 'Knights' are not always *men*!" he replied.

CHAPTER XVI.

A LUNCHEON-PARTY.

It need scarcely be said that, after this, Miss Blanchard always looked out for *The Brotherhood*, and scanned its contents with much interest. She was pleased—even a little surprised—by the temperate and moderate tone in which it set forth existing wrongs and grievances, and appealed to the sense of justice and humanity of those with whom it lay to remedy them. She was not, of course, a very critical reader, and was happily ignorant of the practical difficulties that lie in the way of great reforms; and it seemed to her that such a cause, so advocated, must be sure to win the day. In particular, trained as she had been to look upon Christian practice as an essential part of Christianity, she could not believe that any professing Christian could withhold sympathy from pleadings which carried her own, as a matter of course. She had, from her childhood, been given to wondering how it was, that the very poor could bear the hardships of their lot as contentedly as they did; and now that, from the statistics and details which Roland Graeme industriously collected for his paper, she realized how much greater these hardships were, for many, than she had ever before imagined, she thought, in her simplicity, that every one who knew of them must desire to do something to lighten them. Her imagination was fired, too, by the idea, now presented to her for the first time, that hard, grinding poverty need not always prevail on the scale on which it now exists; that it is within the right and the duty of man to remove much of it. Such a hope, she thought, might well inspire to a new Crusade, far more truly Christian in its aims and methods than were those half-heathen wars of old, which took that sacred name.

But, except from her brother, whose experiences as a medical man had prepared him to agree with her on most of these questions, Nora found that she could secure little sympathy, or even toleration, for such "new-fangled notions." Most people would agree that, of course, there were many hard cases, just as there was misery of all kinds in the world, which could not be helped; but they would shake their heads discouragingly over each proposed remedy, which "was sure" to involve new evils greater than the disease, till she wondered if there must always be "a lion in the way" of every undertaking for the good of humanity.

She found she had not even Mr. Chillingworth on her side, when she somewhat timidly ventured to express herself to him on the subject of *The Brotherhood*, at a grand luncheon-party at Mrs. Farrell's, a few days after the dinner at Mr. Pomeroy's. It was chiefly a "ladies' luncheon," also given in honor of Miss Harley; but two or three gentlemen were especially privileged, including Mr. Chillingworth and Mr. Wharton, who were not supposed to be engaged at that early hour.

Mr. Chillingworth was a good deal surprised when he found that Miss Blanchard actually claimed Mr. Graeme as an acquaintance; and, furthermore, that she entered with so much sympathy into his views of social questions. Somehow, Mr. Chillingworth did not find it easy to reconcile his sense of her grace, refinement and culture, with a "movement" that he vaguely associated with vulgar "strikes," violence, and other democratic developments, from which his æsthetic sensitiveness shrank with utter repugnance.

"Undoubtedly, my dear Miss Blanchard," he said, "there are many directions in which reform is needed. The poverty about us is but one, and reform cannot come by any sudden or artificial means; the only cure for this, as for all evils, is the radical cure from within—the spirit of Christ acting on individual hearts. Much of the poverty, also, arises from the faults of the poor themselves. Many of them would be miserable in any case. And, you know, even our divine Master said, 'The poor ye have always with you.'"

"But He could never have meant that other people were to *keep* them poor," replied Nora, her cheek flushing. "And you know He told the young man 'to sell all his goods and give to the poor.'"

"Ah, but that was only in one case! He wanted to try him,—test whether he really loved his neighbor as himself, as he thought he did."

"And don't you think there are many people who need the same test, now?" Nora could not help replying.

"Oh, certainly, certainly;" he replied, dreamily; "but it seems to me you are forgetting to enjoy your luncheon. Let me help you to some of this delicious cream."

Nora could see very well that the subject they had been discussing only bored the clergyman, so she dropped it; listening, however, as well as she could, through intervening droppings of talk, to a discussion that Mr. Wharton and Miss Harley were carrying on, as to the differences of aspect presented by the labor question in England and in America. And she could not help wondering again and again, as she surveyed the luncheon-table, profusely supplied with expensive delicacies, whether that same Lord who had bidden the rich young man "sell all that he had and give to the poor," might not have had something to say to people who "had fared sumptuously every day," while Lazarus starved at their gates. And then, with a fastidious sense of honor, she checked a thought that seemed like ungenerous treachery to her hospitable entertainers. Only,—if poor Lizzie Mason could have had a share of the superfluous luxury, how good it would have been for *her*!

Mr. Chillingworth, too, both puzzled and disappointed her. His eloquent altruistic appeals—his exaltation of the high Christian ideal—so stirred her enthusiastic nature that she felt herself irresistibly drawn toward the man who could so well express the idealism of Christianity. But, out of the pulpit—when it came to the practical application of his own principles—he often brought her up short in wonder at what she felt to be the inconsistency of his remarks about the details of ordinary life. There seemed to her a strange gap between the glowing enthusiasm on the one side, and a chilling narrowness and lack of sympathy on the other. Like an electrical influence under different conditions, he sometimes attracted and sometimes repelled her. When she compared him with Mr. Alden, she felt the great difference, though she could not analyze it. Briefly put, however, the main differences were these: it was not that Mr. Chillingworth was insincere; he was as sincere, in his own way, as Mr. Alden. But to his conception, religion consisted mainly in emotion—in a high-strung ideality, and in adoration of the supreme, Infinite Love. To Mr. Alden on the other hand, religion, though winged by emotion, must have its solid basis in obedience—*righteousness*—the service of God manifesting itself in the service of *man*. To Mr. Chillingworth—a natural egoist—a clergyman was primarily a "ruler" of the flock, though its shepherd as well. To Mr. Alden, long sitting at his Master's feet had taught the lesson that the minister must be—if the leader—also the "servant of all." Mr. Chillingworth could sympathize only with what harmonized with his own ideals and opinions. Mr. Alden, though himself a man of strong convictions, could adopt the heathen poet's declaration, that nothing that concerned humanity was alien to him. In a word, Mr. Chillingworth was an ecclesiastic; Mr. Alden was, or sought to be, in all things, a simple follower of Christ. Which view was the more in accordance with the New Testament ideal, each must decide for himself.

Nora was feeling these differences dimly in her own mind, with a vague sense of pain and disappointment that she scarcely cared to admit, when Mr. Chillingworth turned to her with his most persuasive air, saying that he had a great favor to ask. "But I know your generosity," he added, "so I don't think you will refuse!" Nora, smiling, waited to hear what it was.

"One of the members of our quartette has been laid up with a severe cold, and I fear it is out of the question that she can take her part at our Christmas evening Service of Song. I don't very well see how we are to replace her, unless—a certain kind friend of mine will come to my help!"

His voice was soft and low, as he could make it when he chose, and his eyes sought Miss Blanchard's with even more persuasive earnestness than the occasion seemed to call for. She colored, turned her eyes away, and replied, in a tone as low as his, that she was very sorry—but it was impossible. She had promised to sing at Mr. Alden's "Helping Hands" entertainment, on Christmas evening.

Mr. Chillingworth looked more annoyed than she had ever seen him look before.

"I really think," He said, "that Mr. Alden might spare you to us for that evening. It can't make much difference to those people what sort of singing they have. They can't appreciate anything very good, so you will be quite thrown away on them. And your voice is just what we want. I think you might beg off, for our sake!"

"I have promised," replied Nora gently, and with real regret in her tone.

"Ah, you hold to the good old Puritan rules, I see. Well, it does seem too bad! We shall have to put

up with some very inferior voice that could have pleased that sort of audience just as well. Alden's very good and zealous, I know, and I quite understand his desire to give people like that some rational enjoyment, to keep them out of mischief; still, I think he would do better to keep to old-established ways. And that 'Helping Hands Society' of his is a curious *omnium gatherum* affair. I am told he's got all sorts and conditions of people in it, Unitarians, Socialists, Knights of Labor, Agnostics!"

"I don't think-it's quite so bad as *that*!" Nora exclaimed, in amaze.

"Well, I'm told that this agitator, this Roland Graeme, actually belongs to it, and I believe he's a rank agnostic, if not an atheist."

"Oh, I am sure he can't be an atheist!" said Nora.

"An agnostic then, at any rate! Archer told me so. After all, there isn't much to choose between them. The atheist will tell you there's no God—the agnostic, that he doesn't know of one. Practically, there's no difference."

Nora was a good deal shocked. To her, as to the large majority of earnest, reverent Christians, the position of an "agnostic" implied something very terrible—a wilful throwing away of truth and walking in darkness. To think of the gentle, generous, enthusiastic Roland as such a one, seemed to her impossible. Presently she said, rather timidly:

"Mr. Graeme seems to me to have a large share of the Christian spirit."

"Oh, no doubt—no doubt," said Mr Chillingworth, impatiently, "thanks to his Christian education! 'Train up a child in the way he should go'—you know. But there is no class so dangerous as these half Christian agnostics, regular wolves in sheep's clothing! They go about, putting people off their guard by plausible talk, and then ensnare them unawares. I consider that young man's influence most dangerous to this community I beg you to listen to him as little as possible!"

Nora had a tolerably quick sense of humor, and, notwithstanding the shock it gave her to hear such things of Mr. Graeme, she could hardly resist a smile at what seemed to her the curiously inappropriate epithet of "a wolf in sheep's clothing," applied to the altruistic young reformer. It occurred to her that the metaphor might, in his case, be reversed—that "a sheep in wolf's clothing" would surely be more appropriate.

"What are you two looking so serious about?" asked Kitty, teasingly, as they all rose to adjourn into the drawing room. Then, as she linked her arm into Nora's, and drew her away into a quiet corner, she added, "I've been watching you both for some time, and I really thought Mr Chillingworth must be proposing! He was talking in such a low voice, and looking so irresistible. Only I suppose people don't usually propose at luncheons."

"Kitty!" exclaimed Nora, with reproachful severity.

"Well, you know very well he likes you, one always does!" she added, somewhat obscurely.

"I should be sorry to think he *dis*liked me," replied Nora. "But he was only proposing—that I should sing in the quartette, at his Service of Song on Christmas evening, in some one else's place."

"Which, of course, you promised to do, like a dear."

"Which I can't possibly do, as I have promised to be elsewhere."

"Oh, poor Mr. Chillingworth! No wonder he looked so sad and serious! Oh, don't you know, I've always thought his eyes had a sort of melancholy look, as if he had had some great sorrow in his life? Well, Miss Harley says she is almost sure that she once heard him preach in England, and that she heard some tragic story about him, she couldn't remember exactly what, only she knew it was very sad!"

"Really!" exclaimed Nora, looking much interested.

"Yes, and do you know, I've always had an idea—a sort of instinct you know—that he may be a widower. He has that sort of look, some way!"

"*What* sort of look? I didn't know you could tell widowers by looking at them."

"Well, I can't exactly describe it, but I know it when I see it. And you know he might easily have been married in England, and *we* shouldn't know it. Lots of men have been—like *that* you know—and they don't think it necessary to talk about it."

Nora disliked the idea, she scarcely knew why, but set it down as one of Kitty's fancies. There might be many kinds of tragedy in a man's life. If Mr. Chillingworth had suffered, it seemed to give him a stronger claim on her sympathy.

But Kitty wanted to know where she was going on Christmas evening.

"Oh, I've heard about that," she said, when Nora had told her. "Mr. Waldberg told me about it. He says that Mr. Graeme—you know—was to read at it; he lives in the same house with him, and they are great friends. Hermann says he's the best fellow he ever knew."

Nora had no very high estimate of Waldberg's judgment; still, after Mr. Chillingworth's

condemnation, even this tribute was pleasant to hear. But she caught up Kitty at once.

"I didn't know you had got on quite so far as to call Mr. Waldberg, *Hermann*." she remarked.

"Well, you see the poor fellow is away from home and everybody belonging to him, so he likes to have some one to call him by his old home name. You know Germans have such nice romantic ideas!"

"Kitty, Kitty! You ought really to take care! You don't know what mischief you may do!"

"Oh, he knows all about *that*!" she said, laughing and coloring, but holding out her finger, on which flashed and sparkled a *solitaire* diamond. "And look here," she added, holding out, for Nora's inspection, a new acquisition, a ring set with sapphire and pearls. "Isn't this lovely? It was a birthday gift from Harold this morning."

Nora looked "serious," as Kitty called it. She had been afraid about Kitty of late, and still more afraid for young Waldberg. "Well, be sure you know your own mind, and stick to it," she said, gravely. "Remember, Kitty dear, it really isn't worth while to be a Lady Clara Vere de Vere, even if you could; and flirting is a dangerous amusement!"

"Never fear," laughed Kitty, "I'm not going to hurt anybody, that I know of. But do look at Mr. Wharton and Miss Harley—at it still! I declare it looks as if there was going to be——"

"'An International Episode'!" suggested Nora, smiling.

CHAPTER XVII.

A CHRISTMAS ENTERTAINMENT.

The weather was growing colder and more wintry, as Christmas drew near. The usual bustle of Christmas preparations had begun, and the shop windows were gayer and more tempting than ever to people who had any money to spend, as well as—alas!—to those who had none. Nora had not forgotten Lizzie Mason and her needs, though the jacket was supplied in an unexpected way. Mrs. Blanchard, easy-going as she was, was really kind-hearted when her sympathy was awakened. So, when Nora told her the sad little story, she dived into her limbo of slightly old-fashioned wearing-apparel, and produced a jacket, which with a little remodelling and a good deal of contraction, to which Nora's expert band was quite equal, turned out just the thing Lizzie needed. It was gratefully accepted, and Nora was gratified by seeing her at church in it on the next Sunday evening, and, to her surprise, Nelly too. The interest Miss Blanchard had already aroused in the girl's untrained mind had called forth a vague curiosity to see the inside of the church she attended.

Grace Alden had come and carried off little Cecilia for a day, and the latter had at once become her devoted worshipper. Her sunny face and voice, as well as her beauty, seemed to attract the child like a magnet. She shyly begged Grace to take her that day to see her mother, who seemed as much captivated by her visitor as Cecilia had been. Grace sang hymns to her, in her joyous, bird like voice, Cecilia now and then joining in, till the invalid, turning her head away, buried her face in the pillow and burst into tears.

"I suppose it reminded her too strongly of old times," said Janet Spencer, as she told Nora about it. "She says, perhaps she will tell me her story by and by, when she is stronger. I'm sure it's a sad one. But I was glad when Grace asked her if she wouldn't like to see her father again, and she said 'Yes!' for, when I wanted her to let me ask Mr Chillingworth to come and see her, she wouldn't hear of it. The very idea of seeing a clergyman seemed to upset her."

"But you think she is really gaining, don't you?" asked Nora.

"Oh yes! I think she will get round, though it will be a good while before she is strong again. But I wish she could get on without the brandy."

"Oh, do you think—" Nora asked, and she stopped.

"Yes, I am almost sure that that's been at the root of all her troubles. I shouldn't wonder if it were a case of dipsomania. I've seen such a case here, already. Some times she seems to have a nervous dread of it—to shrink from taking it—and then again she will take it so greedily that I have to be very careful not to leave it about, lest she might help herself when I am not looking."

"Oh dear, how dreadful!" Nora exclaimed.

"Yes, it is dreadful! God help such poor creatures, for *man* can do little! Still, good care and nourishment will do something for her. She's safe in here, for the present."

But the thought haunted Nora, and she watched little Cecilia more closely than ever. Dr. Blanchard told her that this malady was hereditary, and she found herself often wondering whether this child could have been born to such a fatal inheritance. Meantime she was teaching her at home, finding her a very apt pupil, and she also gave her a short music lesson daily, and was much pleased with her progress. There was no doubt as to *this* inheritance, at any rate, and

Nora could only hope that, in the worst event, the higher passion might overpower the lower.

Christmas-day came, as it always does, before people are quite ready for it. Nora had planned several little Christmas surprises and pleasures for the people in whom she was most interested —such as a new dress for Lizzie Mason, to "go with" the jacket she did not need to buy. Then there was a pretty and comfortable invalid's wrapper lying on Mrs. Travers' bed, when she awoke from a tranquil sleep on Christmas morning, ready to be put on as soon as the doctor should pronounce her able to try sitting up. It was long since the poor woman had had anything pretty to wear—longer still since she had had anything supplied by tender and thoughtful care—and the tears that rose to her eyes at the sight, were tears that seemed to refresh and moisten a parched life and a thirsting heart.

There were appropriate little gifts, too, ready for Mrs. Alden and Grace, as well as for the home-circle; and not least for the children, who were jubilant over the usual Christmas offertory of toys, picture-books and pictures, that were scattered about the nursery in the confusion they delighted in. Cecilia, of course, had not been forgotten. For her, Nora had provided a little accordion, on which she could play, to her heart's content, all the tunes she had already picked up; accompanying them with her voice whenever she thought herself unnoticed. Instigated by Eddie's eager persuasions, the three children organized a little "minstrel band," he and Daisy accompanying the accordion with drum and bugle, and producing an amount of noise which vastly delighted themselves, if not other people. As Nora, unseen, caught a glimpse of them, marching along the passages, she thought Cecilia, with her graceful poise of head and figure, and absorbed, serious eyes, would make a picturesque study for a painter who wanted a model for a little strolling musician. Every step and motion seemed to express the child's strong artistic instinct and impulse. Nora had her own private pleasures, too, besides the great one of contributing to the happiness of other people. She had her own Christmas letters from Rockland, from her father and Aunt Margaret, sympathizing with her interests and pleasures, and rejoicing that so large a portion of the time of her absence was now over. And, among her own gifts—each one expressive of the love she prized for itself—there was a small box, most neatly put up, and addressed in Mr. Chillingworth's characteristic handwriting, which, on being opened, disclosed a charmingly arranged bouquet of mingled roses and lilies. It brought the color to her cheek, and made her feel almost remorseful for the disappointment she had been obliged to give him, about his Christmas evening music. She had, however, taken the edge off the disappointment, by volunteering to assist in the morning music, when she and Kitty took their share in the Christmas anthem assigned to the quartette. Roland Graeme was present in his capacity of reporter, and his rendering of the sermon gratified Mr. Chillingworth so much, when he saw it next day, that he ordered a number of copies of the paper to send to his English friends. Waldberg was in his place as organist, a post to which he had been recently appointed through the influence of Mr. Chillingworth, who did not seem particular about religious qualifications in the matter of musicians, at any rate. Nora noticed that the young man was waiting at the door of the church, to exchange a Christmas greeting with Kitty, who was unattended, her *fiancé* not having "put in an appearance," as he himself would have expressed it And she saw, too, with some uneasiness, that as soon as Kitty had disengaged herself from a lively group of saluting friends, the two strolled off together in a leisurely, *insouciant* fashion. Roland Graeme, taking his solitary way homeward, noticed the same thing with much the same feeling. And yet, he thought, in the dreamy poetic vein into which he often relapsed, when not spurred on by his dominant philanthropic impulse, if Kitty had only been some simple rustic Phyllis, and Hermann a corresponding Corydon, what a charming bright pair of Arcadian lovers they would have made to figure in a pretty poetic idyl. What a pity, he thought, that we cannot always live in Arcadia!

The lecture-room of the "Good-fellows' Hall" that evening was anything but an Arcadian scene. The bare whitewashed walls, relieved only by the ubiquitous portraits of Washington and Lincoln, Jefferson and Garfield, the flaring gas-jets, the straight-backed rows of benches filled with what Kitty would have relentlessly styled "very common-looking people," in the "common looking" finery which many of them affected, did not seem a particularly inspiring assemblage. Nevertheless, Nora scanned the benches eagerly, till she espied Lizzie and Nellie and Jim, and then the gathering was interesting to *her*, at least. As for Roland, wherever men and women with human hearts were gathered, there was interest for him, and to Mr. Alden each meeting here was part of an intensely interesting experiment, freighted, in his mind, with wider, more weighty issues than were present to the minds of any one else present—even of his own Grace, who, with her instinctive divination, could, in her simple way, sympathize with him more fully than any one else there.

The programme seemed to be fully appreciated by almost all the audience, though here and there a hard-looking "tough" would occasionally grow tired of sitting still, and would accordingly retire, with scant ceremony and carelessness as to making a somewhat noisy exit, that would have set all Mr. Chillingworth's nerves on edge. But Mr. Alden took no notice. It was understood that no compulsion of any kind was exercised; and, generally speaking, the absentees would return after a while; having, in the meantime, had a smoke, which restored them to better humor. There were one or two comic recitations, in the earlier part of the entertainment, by young workingmen like Jim, given with great spirit and some dramatic effect. Nora's music, and the magic-lantern slides led up gradually to Mr. Alden's simple colloquial address, setting before the audience, as vividly as possible, the great event which *made* Christmas, and some of its chief bearings on human life. And then bringing his talk to a close, before any one had had time to grow tired of it, he introduced the reading of "My friend, Mr. Roland Graeme."

Roland took his place on the platform, with the quick, energetic motion habitual with him, yet with the dreamy remoteness of eye of a man absorbed in the pictures he is going to present. His fine, well-proportioned *physique*, and his candid, open face, enlisted the sympathy of the audience in the reading, in the preparation of which he had taken as much pains as if it were to be given before the most select and fashionable audience in Minton. He had taken the "Christmas Carol" of Dickens, and arranged it for a reading which should bring out the episodes and scenes most likely to carry the sympathy of his readers, bridging the gaps by a slender thread of narrative. He kept the audience alternately amused and touched by the mingled humor and pathos of the earlier scenes. He introduced them to the lonely boy at school, in whom early neglect was sowing the seeds of future churlishness; then to the youth, in whom the canker of worldliness was already beginning to work; then carried them on to the home of the Cratchits, their famous Christmas dinner, and the pathetic picture of "Tiny Tim." He kept the younger portion of his audience, at least, convulsed over his spirited rendering of the anxiety of the Cratchits as to the success of their Christmas goose and Christmas pudding, and the final satisfaction of everybody, even the "ubiquitous young Cratchits," at the result. Then he put all the tense feeling of his own nature into the satirical reply of the "Spirit" to the miser's agonized inquiry whether Tiny Tim would live:—

"'What then? If he be like to die, he had better do it, and decrease the surplus population!'"

Roland ought, in the exercise of a judicious discretion, to have stopped here; but he was a young man with a young man's heat of impulse, and he let himself be carried on into the words that follow, giving them with a stirring emphasis that vibrated through every chord in Nora's sensitive heart.

"'Man,' said the ghost, 'if man you be in heart, not adamant, forbear that wicked cant till you have discovered what that surplus is, and where it is. Will you decide what men shall live, what men shall die? It may be, that, in the sight of Heaven you are more worthless and less fit to live than millions like this poor man's child! O God! to hear the insect on the leaf pronouncing on the too much life among his hungry brothers in the dust!'"

Nora could not help glancing about her, to see whether such words might not have too much effect on that particular audience. She was reassured, however, by the discovery that it did not seem to produce much effect of any kind. The audience was not reflective enough to take in the satire. A little farther on, Roland introduced the lean, gaunt, wretched boy and girl who appear at the edge of the robe of the Spirit of Christmas Presents, "yellow, meagre, ragged, scowling, wolfish, but prostrate, too, in their humility. Where graceful Youth should have filled their features out, and touched them with its freshest tints, a stale and shrivelled hand, like that of Age, had pinched and twisted them, and pulled them into shreds. Where angels might have sat enthroned, devils lurked and jibed out menacing. No change, no degradation, no perversion of humanity in any guise, through all the mysteries of wonderful creation, has monsters half so horrible and dread!"

"'Spirit, are they yours?' Scrooge could say no more. 'They are *man's*,' said the Spirit, looking down upon them, 'and they cling to me, appealing from their fathers. This boy is Ignorance. This girl is Want. Beware of them both, and all of their degree; but, most of all beware this boy, for on his brow I see that written which is Doom, unless the writing be erased. Deny it!' cried the Spirit, stretching out its hand to the city. 'Slander those who tell it ye! Admit it for your factious purposes and make it worse! and bide the end!'"

There was no mistaking the genuine emotion in Roland's voice as these words rang out in tones of indignant warning. Just such children had he seen, and the very fact of their existence seemed to him a wrong, not to man only, but to the God who gave their grand possibilities, abased, stunted and thwarted by man's sin and neglect. Something of this he stopped to say, in a few strenuous, burning words, ending with a strong appeal to the fathers and mothers, "by all the holy memories of the day," to guard their children from evil, and ignorance, and do for them at least the best they could!

"It is clear, then, he can't be an agnostic!" thought Nora to herself, unaware of how indefinite is the term, and how indefinite too—as well as inconsistent—a position can be which has no basis but "*I don't know*." She looked around her again to see what the effect might have been, but again she saw that it counted for very little. The high-wrought, poetical description and the invective had gone over the heads of most of the listeners. One pale-faced, slender man, with dark, deep-set eyes riveted in breathless attention on the speaker, caught her eye and her interest. But in general, little more than the stirring tones and dramatic gestures had been taken in by ears unaccustomed to intelligent listening, and chiefly on the watch for something "funny."

Roland, knowing something of the taste of his hearers, passed lightly and rapidly over the sadder scenes of the last part of the story, touching them a little, however, by the fate of "Tiny Tim," in whom he centred the interest of the story. Then, after a glance at the gloomy churchyard, where the remorseful miser beholds his own grave, he hastened to the cheerful reality of Christmas Present, of the delight of Scrooge as he sees himself once more possessed of the possibilities of life, and of the heart to generously use them. And then, after depicting the altered fortunes of the Cratchit family, under the auspices of a regenerated master, he threw all his heart into bringing out the meaning of the closing sentences:

"'Some people laughed to see the alteration in him, but he let them laugh, and little heeded them, for he was wise enough to know that nothing ever happened in this globe, for good, at which

some people did not have their fill of laughter at the outset; and knowing that such as these would be blind any way, he thought it quite as well that they should wrinkle up their eyes in grins, as have the malady in less attractive form. His own heart laughed, and that was quite enough for him.

"'He had no further intercourse with Spirits, but lived upon the Total Abstinence principle, ever afterwards; and it was always said of him that he knew how to keep Christmas well, if any man alive possessed the knowledge. May that be truly said of us and all of us! And so, as Tiny Tim observed, God bless us, every one!'"

There was a great deal of applause, as the reader concluded, made his bow and left the platform, and there was more, again, when Mr. Alden in due form put a vote of thanks to Mr. Graeme for the pleasure he had given them, adding a few words on true Christmas-keeping, in his own terse and characteristic way.

Nora found her particular trio as the assemblage broke up. "Oh, wasn't it splendid!" was Lizzie's enthusiastic verdict, as Miss Blanchard asked how they had enjoyed it. "My! doesn't Mr. Graeme read beautiful! It was just like as if we could see it all!"

And Lizzie's eyes were glistening still, with the pleasure caused by the new mental pictures called up by the reading that had carried her, for a brief space, out of the ruts and grooves of her monotonous life. Nelly, too, looked as if she had, for once, been interested in something outside of herself, and even Jim admitted, in a sort of reluctant, awkward way, that the entertainment was "first-class."

"Yes, indeed, miss," added Lizzie, who thought Jim was hardly effusive enough in his appreciation, "Jim was real tickled at that Christmas dinner Mr. Graeme read about—and all the rest of it."

"I was afraid you were giving us a little too much of what was intended for a different class of readers," said Mr. Alden to Roland, as they all walked home together, while Grace, arm in arm with Nora, was artlessly expressing her enjoyment of Mr. Graeme's reading.

"I suppose it mightn't have been a good thing if we had had a more thoughtful audience; as it was, it didn't hurt them, and it pleased me to do it!" replied Roland, laughing. "But, anyhow, if we can't wake up the rich, why mayn't we wake up the poor?"

"Let the horrors of the French Revolution answer that question, once for all!" returned Mr. Alden. "'That boy Ignorance,' you know, can be a real devil when he is roused, and though a thunder-storm may sometimes have to come, we don't want to play tricks to bring it down. There is enough to wake up the poor to, in regard to their own shortcomings. Let us try to wake each class up as to what lies in its own power to reform!"

Roland again undertook to escort Miss Blanchard from Mr. Alden's house to her own door.

"I've been trying to get hold of your friend Jim," he remarked, "but he isn't a very promising specimen, unless it be of 'that boy, Ignorance'! He's never had any education to speak of, been at work ever since he was old enough to make a few cents a day, has got into a bad set of companions, and, besides, seems to have a rather sulky disposition. However, I'm going to try to get him into the 'Knights of Labor'; that will wake him up a little bit, besides keeping him in order, for he's rather of the turbulent kind."

Nora laughed a little. "One is generally led to suppose that 'The Knights of Labor' are generally disposed to encourage turbulence, rather than to repress it!" she said.

"A complete mistake!" exclaimed Roland, eagerly. "It is one of the principles of the Order to do everything 'decently and in order'! Its aims are to remedy wrong by peaceful means, if possible. Every method of doing so is tried, before such an extreme measure as a strike—say—is resorted to. Why, there is no counting the number of strikes that have been prevented through its agency."

"It's too bad people don't know that," Nora replied.

"They don't want to know it," he said. "Mr. Pomeroy for instance should know, that but for the amicable negotiations of the 'Knights,' he might have had a strike before now. And I am not at all sure that he may not have it yet! Such surly, dissatisfied young fellows as Jim are just the stuff to make mischief. However, if he joins us, we may do something with him. One of our fundamental positions is the dignity of all honest labor. This teaches the men to respect themselves, and that is one step toward respecting others. And then, too, the Assembly meetings afford a place where all grievances can be ventilated—a sort of safety-valve, so to speak, where a good deal of gas can be got off, at any rate."

"I see," said Nora. "How often do they meet?"

"Once a week. By the way, I'm sorry that we haven't succeeded in getting redress for the girls. Mr. Pomeroy wouldn't interfere with his manager;—did not dare, perhaps, for fear he should leave: and Willett is hopeless!"

"Oh, I am sorry!" exclaimed Nora.

"I'm not going to give it up, though," he added, cheerfully. "Of course we'll keep driving away at the matter in *The Brotherhood*. And how is my little friend, 'Miss Travers,' and her mother?"

"Oh, Cecilia promises to live up to her *name*! I've been trying to teach her to read, at which she was very awkward, but she takes much more readily to music," Miss Blanchard replied. "She's trying very hard to play a little on the piano, with her small fingers, and you should see her using a little accordion I gave her. It is quite a picture!"

"Yes, she's a beautiful child! She seemed to me like a disguised princess in a fairy-tale, that day I saw her first. And is the mother getting on well?"

"Yes, she's getting better fast," said Nora, somewhat doubtfully. "But, poor thing, what will she do when she is well?"

"Oh, something must be done for her," Roland replied. "And surely she must have friends somewhere!"

"Miss Spencer, the nurse who attends her, is going to try to find out, if she can only get her to tell her," replied Miss Blanchard.

"Will you permit me to come some day to see the child?" asked Roland. "I should like to see her again."

"Oh, come whenever you like," Nora responded cordially, as she bade him good-night, "come and see her—and me!"

CHAPTER XVIII.

AFTERNOON VISITORS.

The days seem to go on faster after the winter solstice is turned, and so, too, often do the life and work of men. Roland Graeme, at all events, found the days fly past with an increasing rapidity. He had, indeed, no idle time on his hands. His law-studies and office-work absorbed the best part of his day. His reporting and journalizing filled in all the intervals, and several evenings. The meetings of the "Knights of Labor" always occupied one evening in the week, and sometimes more; for besides his regular attendance at the Assembly to which he belonged, his intelligence and ability were frequently called into requisition, either in getting new assemblies into working order, or in helping to settle difficult matters that came up for consideration. Roland's influence had already made itself felt among the men, with whom a combination of honest enthusiasm, energy and ability like his, speedily becomes a power. Dunning, the head of the Minton organization, himself a shrewd, intelligent man, had soon recognized Graeme's value, and frequently sought his counsel. And with the men generally, his ready sympathy, genial address, and persuasive eloquence had gained an influence that often surprised him, almost as much as did the fair and moderate views and temperate and sensible speeches that he often heard from them. He would laughingly remark to Mr. Alden, that, if the masters, generally, were only as fair and reasonable in their attitude as were most of the men, there need never be a "strike" or a "lock-out." To which Mr. Alden would reply, that, as it had been from the beginning, so it was still, most difficult for "a rich man to enter the Kingdom of Heaven."

Then, in addition to all his other work, Roland had his editorials for *The Brotherhood* to write, as well as all the rest of its editorial management on his hands; and though it was only a small weekly sheet, this work often kept his lamp burning till far into the night. With all these things on his mind, it is no wonder if he began sometimes to feel the pressure—if his color was somewhat less fresh and his face more lined and worn than on his first arrival in Minton. Both Sandy Dunlop and his friend Dick Burnet sometimes warned him that he was "burning the candle at both ends," but his own enthusiasm was like a spirited steed that will carry its rider on, at full gallop, almost in spite of himself.

As for *The Brotherhood*, it could not be called a very brilliant success, financially at least. This, however, had not been expected by any one concerned, and was a matter of least concern to Sandy Dunlop, who supplied most of the funds, with a grim satisfaction in feeling that he was thereby doing a little toward "the keeping in order" of bland autocrats like Mr. Pomeroy, for whom the rugged Scotchman had little love. Dick Burnet helped his friend materially, by printing the paper as economically as possible, at the office of the *Minerva*; though this was, for obvious reasons, kept very quiet. The new paper found, of course, its largest circulation among the workingmen, being a sort of recognized "Organ" in their interests; and a good many business men, who wanted their patronage, used it as an advertising medium, its principal source of profit. But, of the people Roland most desired to reach, few read it, or cared to do so. Burnet, however, went as far as he thought he safely could, in reprinting portions of Roland's best articles on general subjects, as well as some of his selections; and the very fact of the existence of such a paper with such a title and such principles, was not without its effect in the community. Managers became somewhat more pliant; concessions were somewhat more readily gained; negligence of precautions was less common, now that the employers knew, at least, that there

was "a chiel amang them, takin' notes," though it need scarcely be said that the "note-taking" individual was not particularly agreeable to the subjects of his notes. For this, however, Roland cared little. His own affairs and the estimation in which he was held, did not, happily, weigh heavily on his mind. He had too many other people to think about, and, as yet, he had no engrossing personal interests; moreover, he could now always find a haven of rest and refreshment in Mr. Alden's pleasant home. The sight of Grace, indeed, always refreshed him, in itself, as did a fine poem or picture. He was content simply to sit and watch her acting "little mother" to the other children, while he talked with Mr. Alden, and his boyish friend, Frank. Mr. Alden smiled a little to himself, as he began to notice the magnetic attraction that drew Roland's eyes constantly in the direction of Grace's girlish figure. It reminded him of his own young days; and he knew that Roland was as romantic as any young troubadour. He, however, had too much real faith to be a fussy or fidgety man, and he could see that Grace was as unconscious of Roland's silent devotion as any prudent father could desire. He knew that, in some things, she was even younger than her years, owing, in part, to her quiet and healthy up-bringing; and he was not afraid of a premature love affair. Nor, indeed, was Roland's the kind of devotion that easily finds expression in "love-making"—though among his papers there were scattered various fragments of verse which sometimes came to him, even in his busy life, and which owed their inspiration to Grace Alden. He would have felt it a desecration of the reverent emotion with which he regarded her, to say a word which would have broken or disturbed the childlike unconsciousness, the calm, even current of her life. Grace was used to having people love her. She could not have fancied what it would be to live without what was to her the very breath of life, but it never occurred to her to think of it, or about herself in connection with it.

So Mr. Alden reassured the slight uneasiness of his wife, and took no notice; but continued to give Roland the benefit of his kindly sympathy and friendly counsel. He was, indeed, with the exception of Sandy Dunlop, the only man Roland knew in Minton to whom he could talk with perfect freedom and confidence in his honest impartiality. And, though Mr. Alden never forced on his young friend his own strong religious convictions, the latter often *felt* them; and, without his knowing it, they helped him to keep up heart and hope even in his discouragements, by the recognition of the "Divinity that shapes the ends" of men to other issues than they themselves have designed. Roland's faith in this respect had never quite given way; and the influence of Mr. Alden's strong and happy realization of it very much helped his own.

Roland was not likely, however, to forget his promise of calling to see Miss Blanchard and the little girl whom he had first befriended. Early in the new year, he called, late one snowy afternoon, when he thought he would be pretty sure of finding Miss Blanchard at home. She was alone in the drawing-room, reading by the window. She expressed great pleasure at seeing him again, and sent at once for the three children; having noticed Roland's predilection for the society of the little Aldens. Eddie, who had by no means forgotten him, rushed at him with a familiar "Hallo!" which rather shocked Nora's ideas of propriety. But Roland responded in the same fashion, and Eddie and he were soon in a merry flow of talk, while Daisy, on his knee, was trying to introduce "Tatters" and give a catalogue of his accomplishments. Cecilia, shy and grave as usual, recognized Roland with evident pleasure, and soon seemed so much at home with him, that she willingly went, at his suggestion, to get her accordion and play him a tune on it.

"She is really quite useful, now," said Miss Blanchard, in Cecilia's absence. "She has great influence over these two, who think her the most wonderful musician that ever was."

"The little Aldens seemed greatly taken with her, too," said Roland, laughing. "Mrs. Alden says she has made quite a conquest of Frank."

"Well, Grace has certainly made a conquest of her," replied Nora; "the child has taken the greatest fancy to her, and I don't wonder. She is such a lovely girl, isn't she, Mr. Graeme?" and as she spoke she looked up, a half mischievous smile hovering about her lips and in her eyes.

"She is, indeed!" replied Roland, with straightforward warmth. He never had any self-conscious impulse to conceal his admiration for Grace. But Cecilia had returned with her accordion, and surprised him a good deal by her correct rendering of a number of airs which she had picked up entirely by ear.

"Why, you are going to be a modern St. Cecilia!" he said. "Do you know who she was?" he added.

"Yes," said the child, smiling, and looking up at Miss Blanchard comprehendingly.

"She says her mother told her she was named after her father," remarked Nora; "of course his name must have been Cecil."

"Does she speak as if he were dead?" he asked, in a low tone, as the child began playing another air.

"She doesn't seem to know anything about him," she replied, in the same tone. "Miss Spencer has an idea her mother may be a deserted wife," she added.

"Poor thing!" said Roland; then turning to another subject, one of the objects of his visit: "I am going to give that lecture of mine that I was talking of, on 'Modern Miracles,' next week," he said, smilingly. "You said you would like to hear it, so I've brought you two or three tickets for yourself and any friends of yours who might do me the honor of coming. The price of admission is a merely nominal one," he added, disclaiming thanks, "simply to keep out 'roughs,' as the lecture is designed mainly for the men themselves. There will be a few seats reserved, for admission to

which these tickets are intended; but I don't know that they will have many occupants. Mr. Alden and Miss Grace are going, so in any case you will have them for company, if you care to come."

"Oh, indeed, I want very much to go," replied Nora, eagerly, "and I think my brother will go, too, if he possibly can. He reads your paper regularly, and is much interested in your work."

"I am glad to hear it," he said. "I wish he could influence Mr. Pomeroy a little to be reasonable in meeting the reasonable requests of the men. I am afraid there may be trouble if he does not. We have been doing our best to stave off a strike, but it may have to come. By the way, that young fellow, Mason, seems to have a desperate grudge against young Pomeroy. One of our men says that there's a girl in the case,—that it's jealousy that makes him so set on mischief."

"Oh, impossible!" exclaimed Nora. "Mr. Harold Pomeroy is engaged to Miss Farrell, an intimate friend of mine."

"So I've heard," said he. "But that hardly proves the contrary. Young men do all sorts of silly and wicked things for a little amusement, I'm sorry to say," he continued, gravely. "And sometimes young ladies do so, too! However, there may be nothing in it. I only give it as I heard it."

Nora's mind had been going back to the things that Lizzie Mason had told her, in the beginning of their acquaintance. Was it possible that Harold Pomeroy could be the unknown "gentleman" who "turned Nelly's head with compliments and attention",—who had so upset Jim and poisoned poor Lizzie's piece of mind? The thought made her cheek burn with intense indignation. This would be worse than anything else.

Meantime Roland's thoughts had been taking a different direction; and he presently remarked:

"Waldberg's going to relieve the dryness of the lecture with a little music. He offered, and I thought it a good idea."

"Mr. Waldberg is a friend of yours, isn't he?" remarked Nora.

"Yes, Waldberg and I started a friendship when I first met him, along with a party of jolly students, while I was taking a walking-tour in Germany. He and I spent some happy days, roaming about the Black Forest together; and as I found that he was just about to start for the New World to seek his fortune, I gave him a note to my friend Burnet, the editor of the *Minerva*, you know. So when I arrived here, I found he had cast anchor in Minton; and we have kept together ever since. He and I recall to each other a good many pleasant associations, as we often talk over the 'Fatherland;' and I keep my German a little in practice. He likes to talk it now and then, of course, though he speaks English so well. He and I and my old friend, Mr. Dunlop, get on very comfortably together. Dunlop has rather a fancy for Waldberg, though he thinks him a little reckless. I sometimes wish he had a little more of Dunlop's sound Scotch principle."

"Oh, I suppose that Mr. Dunlop is the old gentleman I took such a fancy to," said Nora.

"Where did you meet him?" he asked.

"At Mr. Pomeroy's; there happened a discussion there about these labor questions, and he spoke out so strongly!"

"Oh, yes, Dunlop's sound enough on that head, and he's by no means afraid of saying what he thinks. You see, he's rich enough to be able to take liberties, though he likes to live quietly in his own old-fashioned way. He has plenty of time on his hands, and it has been a great interest to him to read this thing up. I should not have been able to start *The Brotherhood* without his help, and he's as much interested in this lecture of mine as I am."

"Is he all alone in the world, then?" asked Nora.

"Yes—he seems so. His wife and only child died long ago, and he doesn't care to live by himself. He has his own two comfortable rooms, and he sometimes has Waldberg and me in to dine with him. He has taken up some idea that I must be a distant relation of his, a Scotch cousin of some remote degree, because my mother's name was Dunlop. He has been writing to her about it, to see if he can establish some link of relationship."

Evidently Mr. Graeme must be a great favorite of this old gentleman, Nora thought.

Presently she took up another subject that had been occupying her mind. "Do you know, Mr. Graeme, an idea has come to me about something we might do for some of these poor girls. I was asking Mr. Alden if we couldn't start some sort of club for them, such as I've read about—a place where they could spend the evenings when they chose, where they could have books or music, or anything else they liked. Don't you think that would brighten up their lives a little?"

"Yes, if you could get them to use it," he replied.

"Mr. Alden thinks we might manage it," she said. "And he said he would let us have that committee-room where the 'Helping Hands' meet, and they could use it always, except when there are meetings. So I am going to get it nicely fitted up by some of the young ladies I know here. Miss Farrell's going to help, and I think Miss Pomeroy will, too, if I ask her."

"It would be a capital thing, if you could only bring these young ladies into direct contact with the working-girls, so that they might know something of their lives, and realize their circumstances. That's what people really need, most of all."

"Well, I'm going to *try*," said Nora, decidedly.

Roland rose as if he thought it time for him to go. He took up the volume of Lowell's poems that Miss Blanchard had laid down on his entrance, and opened it where she had laid a geranium leaf to keep her place.

"Ah, I see, you are reading 'The Vision of Sir Launfal'! That is one of my favorites," he said.

"Yes, I think it is a lovely poem," she said.

He glanced at the open page, then out of the window, where, as the daylight was fading, the soft falling snow, clinging to the trees, was conjuring up a ghostly, spectral white forest without.

"We might alter these lines just a little," he said, "to describe that fairy scene:

> "'Down through a frost-leaved forest crypt,
> Long gleaming aisles of snow-clad trees,
> Bending to simulate a breeze.'"

They were still talking over the poem, when the door opened, and Mrs. Blanchard entered, fresh from an afternoon *siesta*, in her pale-green "tea-gown." Nora introduced "Mr. Graeme," whom Mrs. Blanchard expressed herself as much pleased to meet, having heard so much about him of late.

"But why haven't you lights?" she asked. "You're almost in the dark!"

"That's what I like, you know, at this hour, and it seemed a pity to shut out that white world!" said Nora.

"That dreary world!" said Mrs. Blanchard, turning up the gas, while Roland courteously lighted it for her. He declined the offered cup of tea, and was just about to take leave, when the door opened again, admitting Mr. Chillingworth. The clergyman looked surprised at seeing Roland there, though not by any means discomposed by his recollection of the previous meeting. He only remarked, as Mrs. Blanchard was about to introduce him, "I have met Mr. Graeme before," greeting him with something of his former stiffness, as Roland, bidding the ladies a courteous good-evening, took his leave.

"I wish he wouldn't have gone quite so soon," said Mrs. Blanchard. "I'd really have liked to hear him talk a little. He seems quite a mild young man, doesn't he now, Mr. Chillingworth?"

"What did you expect, Sophy?" said Nora, laughing.

"Oh, I expected a beard, at least, and he has only a moustache, and doesn't look a bit fierce or revolutionary! And what has he been talking to you about, all this time, Nora, for Eddie told me he had been here a good while?"

"He kindly brought us some tickets for a lecture he's going to give next week. Will you have one, Mr. Chillingworth?" she asked, audaciously. "If you'll go, I'll give you one."

"Thanks very much, Mrs. Blanchard," said the clergyman, taking the offered cup of tea. "I'm afraid I must decline the pleasure," he said, returning the ticket. "I see he calls his lecture 'Modern Miracles.' Very possibly it is just a pretext for bringing out some of his sceptical views."

"Oh no!" replied Nora. "It's nothing of that kind. I heard him talking to Mr. Alden about it. He only means to give a sketch of the scientific wonders of the age, and show how human ingenuity has almost annihilated space and time. It is chiefly for workingmen, but I had said I should like to go."

"Ah well, you never can tell," Mr. Chillingworth replied, doubtfully. "People bring in their attacks on Christianity under cover of all sorts of things."

"Well, we'll go to the lecture, and give you a full report," said Mrs. Blanchard, lightly.

"By the way," said Mr. Chillingworth, glad to get away from the subject of Mr. Graeme and his lecture, "you'll be happy to hear that Mr. Pomeroy sent me, the other day, a cheque for five thousand dollars, for our new church."

"Oh, isn't that splendid!" said Mrs. Blanchard. "It was very handsome of him! And I've no doubt he'll give more, by and by."

Nora said nothing, but thought of poor Lizzie Mason, and her overworked, starved life, and wondered whether, after all, it had been his *own* money that Mr. Pomeroy had bestowed.

"Now Nora, let us have some music," said Mrs. Blanchard. "I know that's what Mr. Chillingworth wants."

"You always comprehend my wishes, Mrs. Blanchard," he replied, moving at once toward the piano.

"Oh, Cecilia," said Mrs. Blanchard, "it's time to take the children away for their tea."

The little girl proceeded to comply, rather reluctantly, for she wanted to stay for the music. Mr. Chillingworth had never happened to hear her name before; since, mindful of her first encounter

with him, she had generally kept out of his way. He looked round at her now, and said, smiling graciously, as he held out his hand:

"So your name is Cecilia! Why, you are almost a namesake of mine!"

The little girl did not seem to find this a very interesting circumstance, however, and only seemed glad to escape further notice by a speedy retreat, while Mr. Chillingworth luxuriously resigned himself to the enjoyment of the softly flowing "Songs without Words" which Miss Blanchard played so well. By and by, he asked her to sing for him a song with words, naming one of his favorites, "My Queen." And, as he listened to her rich, clear voice, and watched, with æsthetic pleasure, the graceful poise of her head and figure, he thought that she seemed no inapt illustration of "that sweet calm" which was just his own ideal.

CHAPTER XIX.

"MODERN MIRACLES."

Nora found that she and her brother and sister would have several of their friends for companions at Roland Graeme's lecture. Kitty Farrell was bent on going, though Nora, of course, suspected that it was much more for the sake of Waldberg's part in it, than of Roland's. Mr. Archer, despite his somewhat cynical indifference, had some curiosity to see how Roland would acquit himself as a lecturer, and had actually proposed that Miss Pomeroy should accompany him. She, moreover, had very willingly assented. She was a girl of some mind and character, who had grown heartily sick of the inane and monotonously luxurious life she lived, and did not feel much interest in the meetings her mother was perpetually attending. She was glad, therefore, of any new sensation that seemed to offer a little unusual excitement. And the more she heard her father's irritated remarks on Roland's "dangerous doctrines," the more her curiosity was aroused to hear these "dangerous doctrines" for herself. And Mr. Wharton—who had been led, by his discussions with Miss Harley, to reconsider the labor question in some of its aspects—wished to hear all that Roland had to say, as a contribution to the material he was collecting for a contemplated magazine article on the character and prospects of the "movement." Mr. Wharton and Mr. Archer had offered their services to escort Miss Pomeroy and Miss Farrell; as young Pomeroy, who did not care for "any such stuff," had some more attractive engagement for that evening. The party stopped at Dr. Blanchard's, *en route* for the lecture-hall, and took up the two ladies, leaving the busy doctor to look in when he could. It was a glorious moonlight night, the silvery radiance reflected back from the pure, white snow, making the night as clear as the day, while the pure, exhilarating air made it a delight to be out.

"What a perfect night!" exclaimed Mr. Archer. "Really it seems a shame to go to sit in a stuffy hall, instead of enjoying it out of doors."

"Well, we don't think of that, you know, when we go to a party," laughed Kitty, who was walking with Nora and Mr. Archer.

"There are some other folks out on a tramp," said Mr. Archer, as a little procession of men and women, singing a rousing hymn, filed along a street not far off. "There goes the Salvation Army, trying to improve the world in its way, as Graeme is trying in his. But what does it all amount to?"

"To something, I should hope!" exclaimed Nora. "And in any case, it's something to *try*! Surely you are not so faithless as to progress, Mr. Archer?"

"Well, so far as I can see, it seems very like rolling a stone up hill, just to have it roll down again. Things seem to go on, as a rule, much the same, whatever you do," he answered.

"But what might it be if people were *not* doing something all the time?" she asked. "Don't you think it would be a good deal worse?"

"Oh, well, if people like to slave away on that principle—" he said, with a shrug and smile which Nora had learned to detest. "You see I'm not fond of slaving. Perhaps because I have enough of it in my office."

"But then, willing service *isn't* slaving. It's the greatest pleasure."

"So I've heard," he answered, drily. "But then, one must have the will. You see I haven't."

"Stuff and nonsense!" exclaimed Kitty. "You're not half so bad as you pretend to be, Mr. Archer. If you were, you wouldn't be taking us to this lecture."

"*I*—taking *you*!" he exclaimed. "I thought it was you who were taking me! Well, anyhow, we've got here. And it looks as if there was to be a fair audience, of men, at any rate. I expect you'll be the only ladies."

This expectation, however, was not realized, as there were a few others, some drawn by curiosity, some by genuine interest. There were evidently, some few wives of mechanics who had come with their husbands, and who looked really interested in the lecture as it proceeded. Some, Nora thought, must be young working-girls. There was a large gathering of men, evidently

workingmen, who nearly filled the body of the hall. In the side seats, to which Mr. Archer led his party, were already seated Mr. Alden and Grace, with Mr. Dunlop, and two or three friends of his whom he had brought to hear his young friend's *début* as an orator.

At the precise hour appointed, Roland Graeme, and his friend Mr. Burnet, a slender, fair-haired, energetic looking man with spectacles, walked quickly up the platform, and the latter briefly introduced the lecturer. As it was Roland's first attempt of the kind, and as he spoke extemporaneously, from brief notes, he naturally felt somewhat nervous; not, however, so much on his own account, as lest he might not be able to do justice to his subject, and carry the interest of his auditors. Nora watched with sympathetic anxiety the evident effort, in the beginning of his lecture, to keep down his own nervousness, and fix the attention of his hearers on the points which he desired to make, in giving a brief survey of the marvellous achievements of science since the present century began. But soon she saw, with pleasure, that it was no longer an effort; that, as he warmed up to his subject, thought and expression seemed to flow more freely; till, when he reached the second part of his lecture, it seemed to carry him on, like a rapid stream, without conscious exertion. He had lost all thought, it seemed, of himself; and was conscious only of the enthusiasm of his subject. At the end of this first division of the lecture, he sat down for a brief rest to himself and the audience, while Waldberg, who had come in late, played a pretty *fantasia*, introducing a number of characteristic national airs, which greatly pleased the audience, and helped Roland to a little inspiration for the rest of the lecture.

The second part of the lecture was devoted to pointing out the reality of that great truth of the Brotherhood of Man, which underlies all human history. This principle, he said, was but another name for the inter-dependence, coöperation, mutual trust, which had been the root of all real human progress—without which human beings must have remained a race of selfish and warring savages, little better than beasts of prey. He showed how it had originated and bound together the community; how it had been the basis of commerce; how it had led up to all the discoveries and inventions which had, in turn, supplied it with the means of wider development; how it had practically transformed the whole globe into one great market—glut or famine in one quarter of it meaning low or high prices in another. The market was not yet as open as would be for the true interests of mankind, but he believed the day was not far distant, when protection-fences and custom-houses, with all their expensive machinery, would be things of the past.

Then he traced the working of the same great principle in the field of labor, in the long line of progress,—from the first rude work of the solitary artisan, making even his own tools, through the gradual evolution of machinery and division of labor, through the immense impulse given to this by the application of steam, and, latterly, of electricity; then through the massing of joint-stock capital for the use of this new power on a far grander scale; and, finally, to those gigantic profit-sharing combinations, or so-called "Trusts," which to-day seriously threaten the public interest, but which are only the abuse, by the few, in favor of monopoly, of the great and true principle of brotherly trust and coöperation.

For the abuse, he went on to say, there was only one radical remedy, and that was a fuller extension and wider use of the principle of brotherly trust or coöperation. It must govern all through. It must be extended to the laborer, as well as to the capitalist. The main secret of the success of the latter was his use of this principle. The laborer must learn the lesson, as well as the capitalist. Even at the beginning of the present century, the rich returns awaiting coöperation had been easily seen. How was it that men, generally, had largely failed to enter into coöperative labor? Was it not evident that moral as well as material progress was needed? that the mass of men must more and more learn the value and enter into the spirit of Brotherhood, of brotherly trust?

Having, by means of careful simplifying and appropriate illustration, endeavored to make this position clear to the minds of his audience, Roland went on to the practical application of his text.

Their organization, as Knights of Labor, was, he said, founded on this principle of brotherly trust and coöperation, in order to protect their rights and interests from the encroachments of selfish organizations. He thought they *had* rights to protect, but their success in protecting them would be mainly dependent on the spirit in which they should defend them. They had a right to insist on the shorter hours of work, which their own welfare, under the increased pressure of working to unresting machinery, imperatively demanded. They had a right, too, he thought, to insist that productive labor should receive a larger share of the wealth it produced. But, to make good their claims, they must act, not in a factious, selfish spirit, but in that of brotherly fairness and generous trust. They must be true to themselves, true to their employers, true also to the great outside body of unorganized labor. If they acted selfishly toward these, they would show themselves unworthy of the benefits of coöperation. One of their motives in seeking shorter hours should be the greater chances for employment which would thereby open up to the great army of the unemployed. They must cultivate a spirit of brotherly faithfulness to all men, and of regard for each other's interest. They must teach this to their children, for whom they must secure the best education within their power. They must think not only of rights, but of *duty*, of helping others as well as themselves. With thrift, steadiness, mutual confidence and the franchise, the workingmen of America could be masters of the position. If they would refuse to sell their votes to partisan politicians, their intelligence to liquor-sellers, their children to those who would set them to premature drudgery;—if they would be true to the interests of coöperative labor generally, true to the grand ideal of human brotherhood and faith in its realization, they need despair of nothing they could reasonably desire. For this life of ours was not ruled by mere chance, or blind force—whatever some may say. It was under the guidance of a Power of which

one of their own poets had said

"Who counts his brother's welfare
As sacred as his own;—
Who loves, forgives, and pities;—
He serveth Me alone."

But he would give them the picture of what might yet be, when classes and churches had ceased to waste their strength in war, and men had truly learned to help each other,—in the stirring words of Henry George, words that he could not improve upon:

"It is not the Almighty, but we, who are responsible for the vice and misery that fester amid our civilization. The Creator showers upon us His gifts—more than enough for all. But like swine scrambling for food, we tread them in the mire—tread them in the mire, while we tear and rend each other!

"The fiat has gone forth! With steam and electricity, and the new powers born of progress, forces have entered the world that will either compel us to a higher plane or overwhelm us, as nation after nation, as civilization after civilization, have been overwhelmed before. It is the delusion which precedes destruction, that sees in the popular unrest with which the civilized world is feverishly pulsing, only the passing effect of ephemeral causes. Even now, in old bottles, the new wine begins to ferment, and elemental forces gather for the strife!

"But if, while there is yet time, we turn to Justice and obey Her, if we trust Liberty and follow Her, the changes that now threaten must disappear, the forces that now menace will turn to agencies of elevation. Think of the powers now wasted; of the infinite fields of knowledge yet to be explored; of the possibilities of which the wonderful inventions of this century give us but a hint. With want destroyed, with greed changed to a noble passion, with the fraternity that is born of equality taking the place of jealousy and fear that now array men against each other, with mental power loosed by conditions that give to the humblest comfort and leisure—who shall measure the heights to which our civilization may soar? Words fail the thought! It is the Golden Age of which poets have sung, and high-raised seers have told in metaphor! It is the glorious vision which has always haunted man with gleams of fitful splendor. It is the reign of the Prince of Peace!"

As Roland ended his concluding quotation with all the enthusiasm that it stirred in himself, a burst of applause rose from the audience, which had followed his lecture with riveted attention—only two or three men having gone out during its earlier portion. He had arranged with Waldberg to follow the close of the lecture with another "piano recital," and the young musician immediately broke in with a spirited rendering of the "*Marseillaise*," followed by the "*Wacht am Rhein*."

Nora could not help being secretly amused at the choice with which Waldberg, in his desire to make his music cosmopolitan, had followed the peaceful peroration; but of course few of the audience recognized what the airs were, and Roland was far too much absorbed by his interest in his subject, even to notice what his friend was playing. Mr. Archer, evidently, however, was, like herself, amused by the little inappropriateness, as she could see by the slight curl of his moustache.

Roland's good intention of shutting off conventional votes of thanks was, however, baffled by his friend, Mr. Alden, who rose at once to express the thanks of the audience to Mr. Graeme for his clear and forcible lecture. People might and did differ as to the practical solution of the great problems of the day, but there could be no doubt that the spirit of brotherhood advocated by the lecturer was the only one in which they could ever be solved, the only line in which real progress, material, moral or spiritual, could ever be made. He hoped that every one of the audience would carry away with him the inference of the lecturer's plea for the spirit of brotherhood and would try to work it out in the details of daily life.

Mr. Archer listened to Mr. Alden with evident interest, and, with a scarcely perceptible hesitation, was just rising to his feet to second the vote of thanks, when he was forestalled by the slender, pale-faced man with the earnest eyes, whom Nora had observed at the Christmas festival. He, briefly, but in well-chosen words, seconded the vote of thanks, expressing, on behalf of the Knights of Labor, much gratitude to Mr. Graeme for the present lecture, and for his many other services in their behalf. The motion was briefly put by Mr. Burnet, and of course carried with another burst of applause.

As the party in the reserved seats waited for the crowd to pass out, Roland Graeme was warmly congratulated on his forcible address. Mr. Alden shook his hand heartily, and Mr. Archer exclaimed:

"Well, Graeme, I think you'd better take to lecturing, instead of law. You'd make your fortune quicker. But who would have thought that a lecture on 'Modern Miracles' was going to turn out a plea for coöperation! You ought to throw that lecture into the form of an article for the *Forum*. Mr. Wharton here will give you a wrinkle."

"Thanks," said Roland, "for your good opinion; but my lecture wasn't meant for such an enlightened public. Mr. Jeffrey is going to lecture here soon, however, on 'Capital and Labor.' That, I have no doubt, will be fit for any audience. I hope it will draw a good one."

Mr. Wharton looked surprised. Mr. Jeffrey was a well-known writer on the labor question, and he had no idea that Roland Graeme could have been in correspondence with him. As a matter of fact, the correspondence had originated through some articles of Roland's in *The Brotherhood*, which Mr. Jeffrey had seen, and which led to the arrangements for this lecture.

Mr. Dunlop had turned to Miss Blanchard, whom he recognized as having been his *vis-à-vis* at the dinner-party. He had been much taken with her appearance, and seemed pleased to meet her again; and Nora, on her part, was glad to exchange a few words with the honest old Scot. He asked her how she liked his friend Graeme's "new-fangled notions," and nodded approvingly at her warm commendation of the lecture.

"Ay! ay!" he said, "he's going to be a credit to us yet! I believe he's a sort o' Scotch cousin o' mine. Come, Roland, give me your arm home."

Roland had been exchanging a few words with Grace Alden, who was looking charming, Nora thought; but he turned at once to assist the old man. As he bade Miss Blanchard good-night, she exclaimed—"Thank you so much for showing us that the world isn't built upon selfishness, after all!"

Waldberg managed to take Kitty in charge, and Nora and Miss Pomeroy walked on together with Mr. Archer. Miss Pomeroy had been one of the most attentive listeners to the lecture, which had suggested many new ideas to a mind that was craving some new and strong interest. Miss Pomeroy was decidedly clever—had had every advantage of education that wealth could supply—had been abroad, "everywhere," and could talk French and German, as well as Browning. But she wanted *purpose* in her life, and was discontented, and a little *blasée* for lack of it. "Self-culture," for no definite end, had palled upon her, as generally happens. But this lecture had set her thinking, and Nora found a ready response to her proposal to fit up the room she wanted to furnish for a cosy meeting-place for working-girls, especially for those of her father's works.

"Indeed, I'll do all I can to help!" she said, emphatically, when Nora had unfolded her plans. "I'm just *sick* of having nothing useful to do! I don't care for the meetings mother likes. There seems too much *talk* for all they *do*. But if I could do something to make any *one* person a little better or happier, I really should be glad to do it."

"Well," said Nora, "let you and Kitty and any other girls you like to bring, come over to-morrow morning, and we'll talk it over and see what is to be done. Or perhaps we'd better go to the room itself—the day after to-morrow. I'll see Mr. Alden and arrange with him just when we can go and make our plans."

And so it was settled, Mr. Archer declaring that they could call on him for any services they needed in the way of picture-hanging or putting up curtains, these things having been already discussed during the homeward walk.

"Only I'm afraid you're going to be quite too æsthetic for your constituency," he said, laughing, to Miss Pomeroy, as he listened to her suggestions for the little library they were going to include among the furnishings.

"If you'll only get any sort of piano," he said, "and sing them songs, Miss Blanchard, they'll like that better than anything else!"

CHAPTER XX.

BREAKERS AHEAD.

The proposed meeting speedily took place. Miss Pomeroy mustered six or seven other young ladies who had not very much to do, and were glad to hit on some new occupation; and, after much animated discussion, the furnishing of the room went on in earnest. A pretty rug for the floor, a few bright pictures on the walls, some cosy easy-chairs and a wide sofa, bright curtains for the windows, a neat bookcase filled, for the most part, with story-books for which their former owners had no further use, were contributed by the young ladies, and soon transformed the bare little apartment into a comfortable and pleasant sitting-room. A little parlor-organ, to complete its outfit, was contributed by an unexpected donor, Mr. Archer.

"There, now," said Kitty, triumphantly, when this gift arrived, "I told you he wasn't half as bad as he makes himself out!"

And Miss Pomeroy, who had, by natural selection, taken the place of head of their little committee, was deputed to write a note of cordial thanks for the gift.

It was proposed to inaugurate the new use of the room by a little tea-party, given to as many of the mill-girls as should care to accompany Lizzie and Nellie, who were to be asked to act as envoys. Nora went to see Lizzie on the following Sunday, and explained the plan. She listened without brightening very perceptibly.

"It's very kind indeed, Miss Blanchard," said Lizzie, "and I'm sure we'll be glad to come. But I'm afraid you'll be disappointed if you expect the girls to go there a great deal. You see, we're so

tired out, often, we don't care to go anywheres, and them as do, likes to go to something lively. But maybe they'll get into the way of going, after a while."

"Oh well, we're going to have it there, so they can use it if they like. We only want to make sure of their having one pleasant, quiet place where they *can* go, when they please."

"And have you been to see Mrs. Travers lately?" asked Lizzie, before Miss Blanchard took leave.

"Not very lately," she replied, "I suppose she's continuing to grow stronger."

"She didn't seem very well, yesterday, miss. I think it would be a good thing for you to see her soon."

Lizzie spoke as if more was meant than met the ear, and Miss Blanchard at once said she would go next day.

The invalid had been recovering very slowly. The month that she was to remain in the hospital had been extended to two, partly owing to her weakness, partly to the impossibility of her having care or comfort if she left it. When Nora went next day, she met Miss Spencer at the door of the room.

"Come with me," she said. "Mrs. Travers is asleep, and we can talk better in the sitting-room."

They went into the little sitting-room, and sat down. "I am sorry to say," said Miss Spencer, in a voice of grave concern, "that Mrs. Travers got at some brandy one day when I was asleep, and another nurse was on duty. She had just gone out for a few minutes, leaving it, meantime, in an adjoining room, and Mrs. Travers must have seized the moment to satisfy her craving. She was quite overcome by it, when Lizzie Mason came to see her. But Lizzie did not seem at all surprised at it. And the poor thing has been in a restless fit ever since."

"Oh," said Nora, "there was something in Lizzie's manner that made me so uneasy when she spoke to me yesterday, that I felt anxious to come at once. But what a dreadful thing it is!"

"It makes it so much harder to know what to do for her," said Miss Spencer. "Of course we must keep her here as long as we can. I think she is one of the cases that really are uncontrollable by the sufferers themselves,—their will-power being almost gone. For such unfortunates an inebriate asylum is the only hope. I see she is very nervous and excitable. Of course she will be treated here as much as possible for *this*, now that we know it."

When Nora related the circumstances to her brother, he was not at all surprised. He had known other cases of the kind, and regarded the pathological state of such people as a kind of semi-lunacy produced by physical causes, and curable only by constant watchfulness and unremitting medical treatment.

"Half the world doesn't understand it, and the other half doesn't realize it, or there would be more sympathy for such unhappy sufferers. We're in a great measure brutal, still, in our treatment of them."

Nora was somewhat consoled by this view of the subject, and tried to make pity for the misfortune overcome her repugnance to the results. More than ever, she felt what a terrible thing it was for the poor child, whose peculiarities she could so much better understand. Dr. Blanchard, too, looked very grave over poor little Cecilia.

The tea-party at the new "Girls' Club," as its founders styled it, took place in due time, and was a fair success. The room was filled with as many young girls as it could comfortably accommodate. There was tea, cake and fruit in abundance, to which full justice was done. Nora and Kitty each sang some simple songs; Miss Pomeroy, who was something of an elocutionist, read "The May Queen;" some others played and read; and one or two of the guests, on being invited to do so, gave recitations of their own, learned at school, in the usual school-elocution style. On the whole, notwithstanding a little awkwardness in the attempts of entertainers and entertained to be friendly and sociable, the evening passed off very pleasantly; even Nelly, for once, seeming a little subdued, but evidently very well entertained. At the close, Miss Pomeroy, to whom this task had been assigned, told the girls they were cordially welcome to use the room whenever they pleased. It would be open on several evenings each week, and they could read, write or talk as they liked.

"And may we use the organ?" eagerly asked one, as they were leaving.

"Certainly, if you will use it carefully," Nora replied at once, an answer that evidently gave general satisfaction.

Miss Pomeroy was rather discouraged, when Nora repeated to her what Lizzie had said during her visit of invitation. The difficulty she had expressed was one that had never occurred to a young lady so differently situated, and she was genuinely surprised, when she at last realized their long hours of steady, monotonous work. She had never before thought about it, or inquired into such matters. And her own life had always been such an easy, self-indulgent one, that this unremitting toil seemed the more formidable to her, in comparison.

"Dear, dear!" she said. "I don't know what papa can be thinking of to permit it! I know he lets Willett do just as he likes. He's so valuable, papa says. Perhaps he doesn't know about it. Why, mamma and he are forever fidgetting about me—so afraid of my over-walking myself or over-

exerting myself in any way! And I'm sure *I'm* strong enough. I must talk to him about it."

Mr. Pomeroy was rather surprised when his daughter challenged him on the subject. He had never, so to speak, thought of his daughter and his *employés*, "on the same day." He laughed a little at her earnestness, told her somewhat irrelevantly that she was growing fanciful, that she didn't understand these matters, or comprehend differing conditions of life. However, seeing that this matter was a real trouble to her, he promised her that he would see what he could do about it. And it was not very long before Nora heard from Lizzie, with great pleasure, that half an hour had been taken off their time, without any further reduction in their pay. So now, she said, she did not mind the lower wages so much, "that one half-hour did make such a difference!"

Nora was full of this news when Roland called to bring her tickets for Mr. Jeffrey's lecture.

"I'm delighted to hear it," he said. "I believe the young women of America could do more in this matter than any other agency, if they were only thoroughly waked up about it. But," he added, gravely, "I wish Mr. Pomeroy would do something for his men as well as for his girls, and save us the worry and odium of a 'strike' there! I don't want to see one started, if we can possibly help it."

"Oh, I hope it won't come to that," said Nora; "especially when Mr. Pomeroy has done this for the girls!"

"If he would only go a little farther, it would be all right. The mistake is in half-measures. Oh, well, we needn't borrow trouble. It may not come; only—I am somewhat afraid!"

CHAPTER XXI.

WORK AND WAGES.

The lecture Mr. Jeffrey was to deliver was well advertised, and excited a great deal of interest in Minton. The name and character of the lecturer were so well known that people were anxious to hear him, on the score of his personality, apart from the special interest of his lecture. That, however, was interesting in different ways to many, and those who took the side of Capital, as well as those who took the side of Labor, were, from their different points of view, equally desirous of hearing what a man regarded as an authority on the subject would say about it. And a still greater interest was excited when it was announced in the *Minerva* that Mr. Jeffrey, in the course of his lecture, would discuss and meet some opinions which Mr. Wharton had lately expressed in that paper, in opposition to positions Roland Graeme had advanced in *The Brotherhood*. Now that so redoubtable a champion had entered the lists, the contest appeared a more respectable one. Even Mr. Pomeroy would scarcely have ventured to call Mr. Jeffrey a "crank," and Mr. Wharton went to the lecture, expecting some intellectual pleasure, at least, despite the promised criticism of his own views.

The Pomeroy family was, this time, represented by two members. Harold Pomeroy had actually braced himself to the exertion of sitting through it, which, with Kitty for company, "would not be so bad after all." His father would not go, but wished that his son should, for decency's sake. Miss Pomeroy was naturally eager to hear more of a subject that had begun to interest her very strongly. The Blanchards were there, of course, and so was Philip Archer. And Mr. Chillingworth, on this occasion departing from his usual indifferent attitude, condescended to show some interest in one of the most important questions of the day. The hall was crowded, for the most part, with a very different audience from that which had been collected to hear Roland's lecture; but a part of it had, by Roland's care, been specially reserved for the workingmen, of the more intelligent of whom there was a good representation; so that "Capital" and "Labor" might have been said pretty fairly to divide the audience between them. Mr. Jeffrey was a tall, spare man, of striking and manly presence, with a slight stoop. His fine broad forehead was shaded by waves of iron-gray hair. His dark eyes and firm mouth carried out an impression of earnestness and decision. He entered the hall, accompanied by Roland Graeme, who briefly introduced him, and listened to his lecture with the combined earnestness of a reporter and a sympathetic auditor.

The lecturer began by expressing the pleasure it had given him to come to Minton, to reinforce the good work begun by his esteemed friend, Mr. Roland Graeme; the pleasure of whose acquaintance he owed to their common interest in the grand movement, in favor of which he had the honor to speak to-night.

This prologue caused a distinct sensation in some quarters. Harold Pomeroy opened his eyes, and glanced at Mr. Archer, whose moustache curled as usual, though with what expression, it would have been hard to define. Nora gave a slightly triumphant look at both, and Kitty stole a mischievous glance at Mr. Chillingworth's somewhat contracted brow. As for Roland himself, however, though naturally gratified by the recognition, which he did not report, he was quite unconscious of any implied compliment; regarding it quite as a matter of course, that community of interest in any great movement should draw together those who were engaged in it. Mr. Jeffrey, in entering on his subject, remarked that he could not possibly prevent his subject from appearing somewhat dry; but that, notwithstanding its dryness, it was fraught with the deepest interest and importance to human welfare. He began by referring to the unquestionable fact, that "the laboring classes of all civilized nations have been and still are, as a body, *poor*," while

another fact, "that nearly all wealth is the production of labor," would seem to make it natural that all should have possessed some of it, had not something intervened to prevent this result. What that was—that "something," that cause or causes—and whether this seemingly unnatural result could be changed, or modified, he now proposed to inquire.

He then explained the nature of property, as being almost entirely in some way the product of labor. As this, then, was the means of procuring property, and in a healthy state of society the only means of doing so, it followed that "to obtain labor without rendering a fair equivalent, is a violation of the rights of property." No one could deny this. The only difference of opinion would be as to what was a fair equivalent. Do the workingmen of America, for instance, receive for their labor a fair proportion of the wealth they produce?

Following somewhat in the line of Roland's lecture, Mr. Jeffrey then traced the causes that led to more and more unequal distribution of wealth, the great discoveries that have made expensive machinery, division of labor and production on a large scale, essential features of our complex civilization. He sketched the processes by which large concerns have gradually swallowed small ones, by which small mechanics and traders have been gradually driven from the field; while "the master-workmen and journeymen of a hundred years ago are to be found at the bench or lathe of the mammoth workshops of the day, not as independent workmen but as mere *automata*, to pull the levers which release the cranks, gears and pulleys of the machinery that performs the former labor of their hands."

This state of things, however, was an inevitable accompaniment of scientific and material progress. If it had this unquestionable disadvantage, we have to take the evil with the good. We could not enjoy our railways and telegraphs, our cheap papers and books, and a thousand other comforts and luxuries of life, without such drawbacks. And while there was truth in the contention of Mr. Ruskin that the minute subdivision of labor tended to destroy the artistic feeling of pride and pleasure in finished work, still this might be more than counterbalanced by the growth of the spirit of coöperation, of brotherhood, in labor. Men might learn to take pride in combined work as well as in individual work, as the soldiers of a regiment take pride in gallant achievements of the whole body. The artistic spirit in work might be called forth, and men might cease to work as *automata*, if they felt that they were sharers in an enterprise, not mere "*hands*." But the increasing inequality of the distribution of wealth utterly prevented this feeling of proprietorship in work, and placed employer and employed in a position of selfish antagonism. How could this be remedied? At this point the lecturer took up a clipping from the *Minerva*, containing one of Mr. Wharton's articles. That gentleman moved uneasily, and settled himself into an attitude of critical attention.

"Look at Wharton!" whispered Mr. Archer to Miss Blanchard. "He knows he's going to catch it, now!"

It was maintained, he said, by the writer of this article—published in one of their leading journals —that the poor were *not* growing poorer, that the average laborer of to-day was not more poorly but better paid than the average laborer of the past. The able writer of this article had submitted a formidable array of statistics to prove his position. Well, he was not going to question the accuracy of the statistics. But there is much force in the saying, notwithstanding all that we hear of "mathematical truth," that "nothing lies like figures," that is, when they are called in to prove more than *sums*. Aside from the great difference in the value of money, which was somewhat set off by the greater cheapness of many articles to-day, there were many other considerations that must not be left out of sight in determining whether the laborer was even *as well* paid now, as, for instance, in England, two or three hundred years ago. For it must be remembered that comfort, after all, was largely a relative term, depending on our ideas and requirements. A savage would find comfort in a life which to a civilized man would be intolerable. Our growing complex civilization had developed many artificial needs, many of them an integral part of progress, the non-gratification of which involved real privation. He would ask them to hear the description of the interior of an English manor-house, about the time of Queen Elizabeth. They had all heard about the old English manor-houses, with the mention of which they were always ready to associate the most refined and graceful life of the day—the manor-houses of Trollope, for instance, through whom most of us know them. Well, this is what they were like in those days; he quoted from Thorold Rogers:—

"As might be expected, the furniture of the manor-house was scanty. Glass, though by no means excessively dear, appears to have been rarely used. A table, put on tressels, and laid aside when out of use; a few forms and stools, a long bench stuffed with straw or wool covered with a straw cushion worked like a bee-hive, with one or two chairs of wood or straw, and a chest or two for linen, formed the hall furniture. A brass pot or two for boiling, and two or three brass dishes; a few wooden platters and trenchers, or, more rarely, of pewter; an iron or latten candlestick, a kitchen knife or two, a box or barrel for salt, a brass ewer and basin, formed the movables of the ordinary house. The walls were garnished with mattocks, scythes, reaping-hooks, buckets, corn-measures and empty sacks. The dormitory contained a rude bed, and but rarely sheets or blankets; for the gown of the day was generally the coverlet at night."

"Now, then," he said, [1]"compare this 'interior,' with what we see to-day in the home of the average manufacturer, the beauty and luxury, the thousand costly superfluities;—and would any one say that the condition of the laborer had improved in anything like the same ratio? It might even be gravely questioned, in many cases, whether it had improved absolutely. For, although there were many additional comforts within the reach of all but the poorest, still, the unhealthy

conditions of life resulting from massing families together, in close and unwholesome houses, more than neutralized the advantages. But if any one wanted to know more of the actual state of things in this free and independent America, let him read in Henry George's 'Social Problems,' certain statements by commissioners of labor statistics. Let him read of the intelligent workingmen of Illinois, that 'the one half are not even able to earn enough for their daily bread, and have to depend upon the labor of women and children to eke out their miserable existence.' Let him read that, in cultured Massachusetts, the earnings of adult laborers are generally less than the cost of living; that—in the majority of cases—workingmen do not support their families on their individual earnings alone, and that fathers are forced to depend upon their children for from one-quarter to one-third of the family earnings—children under fifteen supplying from one-eighth to one-sixth of the whole earnings. Was it any wonder if such children died prematurely, worn out by unnatural labor?" and here he quoted, with telling effect, Carlyle's famous description of the sad fate of the murdered little Dauphin of France, ending with the strong, touching words—"as only poor factory children, and the like, are wont to perish, *and not be lamented*!" And, to quote Henry George again, let them think of "the thousands who swelter all summer in swarming tenement houses and dirty streets teeming with squalid life! Draggled women will be striving to soothe pining babies, sobbing and wailing away their little lives for the want of wholesome nourishment and fresh air; and degradation and misery that hide through the winter will be seen on every hand." It was pictures like these, he said, that brought home the facts of the case, whether the position of the workers was better or worse. Even Minton, he doubted not, could supply them with some such scenes.

At this point Mr. Wharton took his note-book and pencilled an entry.

"Wharton's getting ready for a reply!" whispered Mr. Archer. "He thinks he's got a point for his answer." But Nora scarcely heard him, so riveted was she in painful interest on the lecturer's words. He went on to another point.

"He knew," he said, "that the laborer was said to be extravagant. Doubtless neither laborers nor their wives were always economical, judged by the standard of the New England housewife. But that required special training—ages of training—and what chance had they to acquire it? But, after all, what opportunity had the laborer to be extravagant, when the price of the day's work would hardly pay the day's board and lodging in a comfortable house in our cities? Do the factory operatives in most countries live extravagantly, or the seamstresses in London or New York? Yet they earn three, four or five times more products than they actually consume, and these go into the possession of the class of persons who live comfortably or luxuriously, without performing much, if any, productive labor, or advancing the moral and intellectual well-being of society. Might not the laborer, on his side, in such circumstances, say that his earnings are swallowed up by the extravagance of employers?"

He next touched the question of "over-production." "There were periods," he said, "when one house is filled with families, one to each room, from cellar to garret, and the adjoining house stands empty for want of tenants able to pay the rent. Goods are piled up in store without sale, while great numbers of the laboring community are ragged, and are begging from door to door for old clothes to shield themselves and their families from the piercing cold; and for the crumbs that fall from the tables of the rich, to keep them from starving! Was such a state of things really the result of over-production? If this be indeed the case, public measures should be taken to avert such disasters by preventing the excess of labor. Is it not strange that, at the time when the amount of surplus production is the subject of national lamentation, the people who produce by their labor the very things which they need for their own use and comfort, are the ones that are often destitute of them, while a few capitalists who do little or nothing toward the production or distribution, are supplied with all the comforts and luxuries of life, at half or less than half their usual price? But a surplus of cotton has never remained because no one needed it! The evil," he went on to say, "does not arise from over-production, but from *under-consumption* by the great masses, the natural result of the unequal, and, I would add, frequently unjust distribution of wealth, keeping, from the toiling multitudes, what they needed for health and comfort, while the wealthy minority could not possibly use their surplus for their own needs. And so the underpayment of Labor reacted on the profits of Capital." He would not, he said, dwell on the other causes that aggravated the discomforts of the workingman's lot—the unduly long hours of toil that wore him out prematurely, and made him almost a stranger to his children, the long and close confinement of the week; what wonder if, exhausted and weary, he kept out of their churches on the one day of rest! Would not most of his hearers, in similar circumstances, do the same?

Mr. Chillingworth, who had been listening attentively, began to pull his long dark beard thoughtfully, a habit of his, when thinking about a perplexing subject.

"But now," the lecturer said, "having explained the evils, I am going to turn to a possible remedy. Would it not add, *should* it not add to the happiness of every one," he asked, "if we could secure the removal of the grinding poverty and wretchedness, that was not caused by pure misfortune or misconduct? The residuum would be very easily grappled with. If," as he fully believed, "the produce of labor constitutes the natural recompense of labor, why then do not laborers get all they are justly entitled to receive? The laboring classes make their own bargains with capitalists, and one another, and all are equally protected in the property which they lawfully acquire. Undoubtedly, both parties are governed by their own interests, in making their agreements; but the circumstances under which contracts are made often render them very unjust toward laborers. Suppose one of the contracting parties to be in deep water, where he must drown,

unless he receive assistance from the other party who is on the land. Although the drowning man might be well aware that his friend on the shore was practising a very grievous extortion, yet, under the circumstances, he would be glad to make any possible agreement to be rescued."

Now, as governments are established to protect the just rights of the governed, he believed that legislation was needed to regulate both the minimum of wages and the maximum of hours. He had faith enough to believe in the ultimate triumph of righteous principles of action, and in the future general fulfilment of the command to every man to "love his neighbor as himself." But, in the meantime, we need legislation in many ways, to protect society from the injustice of those who love their neighbor not at all; and he believed such legislation was needed in this direction, otherwise the selfish and unscrupulous employer would frequently crowd out the humane and just one. Railway companies and joint-stock companies especially require regulation, since corporations, as we all know, have no souls! He thought that joint-stock companies should be prohibited from contracting liabilities beyond their actual capital, since the power of doing so immensely exaggerated their already too great advantages. He believed that the government should, by all possible precautions, preserve unappropriated land for the use of the community, as opposed to selfish schemes of individual aggrandizement. And he was glad that the Knights of Labor took the attitude of opposition to all further grants of land for speculative purposes.

In conclusion, the lecturer hoped that the Knights of Labor would be true to the principles laid down by their public spirited founder. He trusted that they would maintain an unselfish policy. They were committed by their constitution to demand for women equal wages for equal work, and that was well. But they must be generous to unorganized labor also. Their cause must be the cause of labor as a whole. If they were to discriminate selfishly between the organized men and the unorganized, to try to crowd out the tramp or even the criminal who needs the remedial influences of work, they would simply be repeating and perpetuating the injustice against which they desired to protect themselves. Mercy, as well as justice, must be their watchword. For, "there is no justice without mercy, *it is just to be merciful*!". In such a combination they would find their true policy, their true success. The lecture closed with a peroration similar to Roland's quotation, describing the ideal possibilities of a state of society in which justice and mercy should prevail, and, in the words of the old Hebrew poet, "Righteousness and Peace should kiss each other."

The charm of the lecturer's voice and manner, combined with his clear presentation of his subject, had held the close attention of almost the whole audience, with a few such exceptions as Kitty Farrell chiefly occupied in watching her friend Waldberg, who as usual came in late, and whose services were not, this time, called into requisition. Neither did he approach Kitty after the lecture, leaving her to the sole attendance of Harold Pomeroy.

It was Dr. Blanchard who moved the vote of thanks to the lecturer, saying, that in opposition to the interests of his profession, he was, nevertheless, moved, by the spirit of the lecture, to thank Mr. Jeffrey for his clear exposition of evils which included in their result the production of more disease than any other cause. Mr. Archer, this time, was equal to the occasion, and gracefully seconded the motion. While Dr. Blanchard, Mr. Alden, Mr. Chillingworth and Mr. Wharton were engaged in conversation with Mr. Jeffrey after the conclusion of the lecture, Roland Graeme accosted Nora, with an expression of half-amused concern.

"I am sorry to say," he said, in a low tone, "that strike we have been dreading seems inevitable, after all! and, the worst of it is, they will be crediting this lecture with it, though it really had nothing to do with it. Turner, that man over there," he explained, pointing out the man who had seconded the vote of thanks at his own lecture, "tells me the men have determined to interview Mr. Pomeroy to-morrow, and if he won't make the concessions they want, to strike at once. I suspect your friend, Jim Mason, has had a good deal to do with it. He's very bitter and obstinate. I only hope it will be all quietly done and that the rough element won't be guilty of any violence."

"Oh," said Nora, in dismay, "what a pity! A strike is such a dreadful sort of thing, isn't it?"

"Well, there are strikes and strikes," said Roland, smiling a little. "I rather think this won't last long. And you know there's nothing in a strike contrary to the laws of God or man, however inconvenient it may sometimes be for an employer. A workman has just the same right to demand a just price for his labor, that a merchant has for his goods; and what he has the right to do singly, he has the right to do in combination with others. When there is combination to oppress, there must sometimes be combination to resist oppression. And I think the men ask only what is right."

"I suppose so," said Nora, thoughtfully. "But I do hope there won't be any trouble, if it's only for Lizzie's sake."

"I trust so too," replied Roland, as he bade her good-night.

CHAPTER XXII.

NORA'S STRATEGY.

Roland Graeme's full report of Mr. Jeffrey's lecture appeared the following evening in the

Minerva. It was not strange, all things considered, that Mr. Pomeroy threw down the paper with disgust, declaring that if such stuff was scattered broadcast among the men, it was no wonder that he had so much trouble.

"What's the matter?" asked his daughter, looking up anxiously.

He did not answer at once, and her brother, who was examining the contents of his gold-mounted cigar-case, replied nonchalantly:

"Oh, only what might have been expected, after last night! The men have been making another row about higher pay, and when father told them that he proposed to run his works himself, they had the impudence to tell him that he could run them by himself. So I suppose that means that they won't put in an appearance to-morrow; and just when there's a lot of work on hand to finish, too!"

"Oh," exclaimed Mrs. Pomeroy, "how disgraceful! And after what you did for them a little while ago!"

"That wasn't for the men, mamma!" said Miss Pomeroy.

"Oh, I knew no good would come of doing anything to please them!" said the young man. "I consider you're responsible for it, Clara, for coaxing father into it."

"Well," said Miss Pomeroy, "I wonder, Harold, after all you heard last night, you can talk like that! Why should we have so much *more* than we need, and all these people so much less?"

Young Pomeroy whistled. "Well, I declare!" he exclaimed. "Do you hear that, father! Here's Clara out on the 'Rights of Labor'! The reason we have so much more, is because father had so much more to begin with,—the money to buy the machinery, and the head to use it!"

"But that's no reason why the men who help him to use it mightn't be better paid! *You* like a good salary for what you do to help, and I don't suppose that's worth a great deal!" she retorted, coolly.

"Much you know about it! But if all these people get only a little more every week, it would make a big difference to father, don't you see? And, you know, even Mr. Jeffrey said that single firms couldn't afford to raise the wages, or they'd be crowded out. And you like as well as anybody to have your trips to Europe and Newport, and all the rest of it."

"I am sick of Newport," she replied. "And I'd rather never see Europe again, than think I was going at the expense of keeping other people drudging for a pittance! But you know very well father can afford a good deal of extra pay, end never feel it. You know you can—papa?"

Mr. Pomeroy had been listening to the discussion in silence. It rather amused him that his daughter should come out in such distinct opposition to her own interests; and, as she was decidedly his favorite, he did not care to take sides with Harold against her. Moreover, it always gratified his purse-pride to have his wealth put at a high estimate. So he only stretched himself out in his easy-chair, remarking, drily:

"It's well you haven't the business to manage, my dear. However, I am going to have a long talk with Willett to-morrow, and if it seems to me that the concern can stand it, I don't mind a little extra pay. Only don't complain if you can't get quite so many new dresses."

"I don't care for that," she said. "I've always had more than I could wear, and lots of people have to go without enough to keep them warm. It makes one feel mean, just to think of it."

Mrs. Pomeroy looked annoyed. She always wore grave colors, having some vague idea that these were more "consistent" than bright ones, but she loved rich and handsome materials, and as she "took an interest" in the Clothing Club, she did not see any reason for "feeling mean." And was she not at that moment embroidering an expensive cushion for a charitable bazaar—intended to coax a few dollars out of some one who had no idea of "*giving*, hoping for nothing again"?

"I wish you wouldn't take up these socialistic ideas, Clara," she said. "I do hope you haven't been talking to that young Graeme that Philip talks about! Why, Harold tells me Nora Blanchard actually bows to him, and that he's been at the house. I think it's very queer! I told Philip he mustn't think of bringing him *here*."

"Oh, you needn't be alarmed, mamma," the young lady replied. "I haven't the honor of even a bowing acquaintance with Mr. Graeme, and I don't suppose he's in the least anxious to visit here!"

Miss Pomeroy knew very well, from Roland's lecture, that he was better bred, better read, more thoughtful, and better worth knowing than half the people who did visit them; but where would be the use of trying to convey this impression to her mother, in whose eyes Roland was little better than a "communist" and therefore "worse than an infidel"?

"If you're going out, Harold," said Miss Pomeroy, "will you call a cab for me?"

"Where are you going to-night, then?" asked her mother.

"Oh, only to the Girls' Club," she replied, carelessly. "We're having a little informal sort of concert for them to-night, and I promised to go."

"Well," said Mrs. Pomeroy, "I wonder what we shall have next. When I was young, girls thought tract distribution and collecting for missions good enough for them. Now, they must have all sorts of new-fangled ideas! Where's the use of taking these girls out of their homes at night, when they've been out all day?"

"If you saw some of their homes!" Miss Pomeroy replied. "And some of them have *none*!"

"I say, Clara," said her brother, lingering a little, "suppose you take me with you to help! I don't mind sacrificing myself to that extent. I'll read them the "Bad Little Boy," or anything else you like."

"Thank you for nothing! We don't have *any* boys there," she replied, severely.

"Well, that's gratitude, I must say. But still, I'll come for you if you like. What time? Ten? or half-past nine?"

"Half-past nine will do," she replied. "Really, Harold is in a wonderfully obliging mood, to-night!" she remarked, as she left the room to get ready.

"You don't half do your brother justice," said the fond mother.

At the concert, the girls were whispering among themselves about the rumored strike, but of course nothing reached Miss Pomeroy's ears. Neither did she observe a little stolen talk between her brother, as he waited for her at the door, and Nellie Grove, as she went out alone, avoiding Lizzie, who looked very sad and downcast.

"May I come to see you to-morrow, Miss Blanchard?" said Lizzie, watching her opportunity. "You know there isn't going to be any work at the mill, and there's something I want to speak to you about."

"Why, are *you* all going to strike too?" asked Nora, who had heard that the crisis was imminent.

"Oh no, miss! but there's no use our going when there's no one to work the machinery. So we'll have a whole holiday, and that is splendid!"

"Oh, I see," said Nora. "Well, come whenever you like. I shall be in all the morning."

The next day was one of those exquisite winter days that are most apt to come in February, when the sun rises softly through a light haze that idealizes the commonest objects. Even Pomeroy & Company's mill looked almost poetical in the early morning sunshine; but it stood still and silent, no whirr of machinery breaking the morning stillness, no troops of workers hastening toward it from their hurried breakfast.

A few girls who had not heard of the strike arrived; but turned away again, as they knew, by the unwonted stillness, that there was no work going on. Willett, the manager, himself once a workingman, now turned into a petty tyrant, very willing to mete to others the measure he had himself received, walked about grumbling, or scolding the little message-boys, who lingered about the place. He read the letters that came in, and then grumbled again, because some of them contained large orders for a particular kind of mixed silk and woolen goods, of which a large quantity was wanted immediately. Finally, on receipt of a note from Mr. Pomeroy, he settled down with a frown to a series of elaborate calculations, made from the pages of the great folios of accounts that lay on the office table. Meantime, the men at their homes enjoyed their unusual holiday, slept in, or lounged about aimlessly, discussing the prospects of speedy success, while they wondered wistfully, at times, how long this unproductive idleness was likely to last.

Lizzie, however, did not arrive till pretty late in the afternoon; just as Nora, despairing of her coming, was going out for a long walk, to enjoy the unusual beauty of the exquisite winter day.

"I'm so sorry, miss," she said, "that I couldn't come sooner. But I've been awful worried all day—about Jim! He's been out drinkin' with some roughs; an' they've been puttin' him up to all sorts of mischief. An' he's been hearin' about Nelly bein' out walkin' the other night—with young Mr. Pomeroy—and it's just set him crazy; he's vowin' he'll do him a mischief *sure*!"

"Was it Mr. Pomeroy, then, that you told me about before?" asked Nora, dismayed at this proof of what she had hoped was mere talk.

"Yes. But indeed I wouldn't have told you now, only I'm dreadful 'fraid there'll be a row! My little brother's an errand-boy in the mill, an' he happened to tell Jim that young Mr. Pomeroy was in the office, goin' over accounts with Mr. Willett; an' now Jim has got a plan in his head of goin' with two or three of his comrades, to wait for him, when he goes home at dusk, and give him an awful thrashin', you know there's one place that's pretty lonely on the road. An' there's no knowin' what Jim will do when his blood's up—an' the drink in his head! I seen him, lately, foolin' with a revolver, though where he got it, I don't know."

"And why can't you go and warn the police to look out?" asked Nora, hastily, too much shocked at this unexpected turn of things to consider it calmly.

"Oh, Miss Blanchard! how could I do that, an' have Jim 'run in' again the first thing? If he knew I came an' told *you*, even, he'd half kill me, the way he's in now! I've been thinkin' an' thinkin', an' there's only one way I can see to stop mischief, and that is, if you could only manage to walk home with Mr. Pomeroy this evenin'."

"I?" asked Nora, much startled at such a proposition.

"Yes, miss, if you were there, I *know* Jim wouldn't lay a hand on him. He thinks an awful lot of you mostly for the notice you've took of Nelly—for all he's so mad at her just now. If you were walkin' with Mr. Pomeroy he'd never think of makin' any row. You could keep talkin' with him all the way, so they'd know you were there. And then no one need ever know anything about it. And when Jim's sober to-morrow, you might come and talk to him a bit. But if you could only get Mr. Pomeroy to stop hangin' round Nelly, it would be best of all. That was what I wanted to ask you, any way. For I do think he would, if you spoke to him."

Nora had been rapidly thinking the matter over, as Lizzie spoke. At least, she thought, she could *try*. And the crisis, such as it was, appealed to a natural, chivalrous love of adventure, that she doubtless inherited from her brave pioneer ancestors.

"Well, Lizzie," she said, "I'll do what you ask, and I only hope it will prove effectual."

And then she stopped Lizzie's torrent of warm gratitude by making some inquiries about Mrs. Travers. Lizzie was evidently unwilling to say anything about her friend's weakness, but Nora drew from her enough to show that the poor young woman was subject to fits of restless excitability, when it seemed as if she *must* have the stimulus she craved.

"She's told me she could jump over a ten-barred gate to get it, at such times," Lizzie said, sorrowfully. "And then she'd be down in the depths of misery afterwards. An' the poor little thing would look so scared, when her mother took these turns! She wouldn't know what to make of it, though she did get kind of used to it, too."

Nora had not, just then, much time to think of Mrs. Travers, however. As soon as Lizzie left her, she began to arrange her plan of operation. She would have to do something that would surprise Mr. Harold Pomeroy a little, but that could not be helped. Had her brother been there, she would have solved the problem by asking *him* to call for Mr. Pomeroy and drive him home, giving him a hint of her reason; but he was out on his rounds, and there was no knowing how long he might be away. And Nora knew that it would not do to risk anything; for, independently of the consequences to those chiefly concerned, any lawless act of violence of this kind would seriously complicate matters, and, moreover, bring additional odium on Mr. Graeme and on the cause in which she had become so strongly interested.

She took a long walk alone, in the dreamy slanting sunshine of the mild winter afternoon, the genial balmy air, and the soft purplish haze seeming like a presage of the coming spring. The calm beauty of the approaching evening, the rose and amber tints of the western sky as the sun set red through the haze, soothed the slight nervous excitement that her errand naturally produced. She walked a long way past the Pomeroy mill, noting, in her walk, how many wretched-looking houses there were, just like Lizzie's, in its close vicinity; and thinking that these were, doubtless, the places where her brother apprehended an outbreak of some epidemic, as soon as the warm weather of spring should have set in.

She took good care, however, to be back at the mill, before Harold Pomeroy should be likely to think of returning. It was getting near dusk, and the office windows alone were lighted, the rest of the building looming up, dark and blank—a contrast to its usual effect at this hour. Nora walked up, unhesitatingly, and knocked at the office door.

"I should like to speak to Mr. Harold Pomeroy, if he is here," she said to the manager, who opened the door and looked much surprised at seeing his visitor.

"Miss Blanchard!" exclaimed young Pomeroy, as he recognized her? "Why, what——"

Nora did not give him time to go on. "I've been taking a long walk," she said, "and am rather late in getting home. I was told you were here, and thought I would ask for your escort back."

"I shall be only too happy," he said, though not without some natural surprise at the direction she had chosen for her walk. But Miss Blanchard was evidently a young lady of peculiar fancies, and, no doubt, she had been looking up some of her queer acquaintances.

"We'll do the rest of these to-morrow, Willett, and I'll report progress, so far," he said, with an air of satisfaction. "Now, Miss Blanchard, I'm at your service. Will you take my arm?"

Nora accepted it, a thing she had never done before, and they walked on together through the still, clear twilight, while bells were chiming and lights gleaming out through the winter dusk.

"What a lovely evening, and how it makes one begin to think of spring!" said Miss Blanchard, as they came out.

And then she went on talking in a somewhat louder tone than usual, about everything she could think of, making young Pomeroy wonder no less at her very unusual loquacity, than he had done at her unexpected appearance. He never knew the reason of either, nor did he notice the strained attention of his companion during the whole walk; how she scrutinized every corner and archway they passed, till she began to be afraid lest her companion should notice her anxiety and hear the loud beating of her heart. They had come about a third of the way, when Nora's quick eye caught sight of some dark figures hovering in the shadow of a line of warehouses with open gateways, and her strained ear caught something like a muttered consultation. She talked on in a still louder tone, not allowing her companion time to put in a word, lest he might, by any chance, say

something that might aggravate or enrage the men. As they drew near, she saw that they seemed to move back a little, then edged off to a corner near; and, as Nora and her companion reached it, they saw them clattering heavily away, growling out oaths, all but *one*, who stood still in the shadow, and whom Nora's quick ear could hear, as he hissed out, between his teeth:

"You —— white-livered coward! You must get a woman to take care of you!"

"There go some of Graeme's amiable 'Knights'!" sneered Harold Pomeroy, who had not caught the words, but knew that something abusive had been said. "That's what comes of strikes. The men loaf about and get drunk and then they get into rows and riots! That's making things better, I suppose!"

Nora had suddenly collapsed into silence in the middle of a sentence. The nervous strain had been too much for her, and she could not think of anything more to say, just at that moment.

She only replied to her companion's remark, in a dreamy way—"Yes, it's a pity when such things have to be."

Harold Pomeroy went on talking, but she scarcely listened to him. She was bracing herself for the latter part of her task, not less difficult than the first. If her companion was puzzled by her sudden change of manner, he was still more surprised at her next speech.

"Mr. Pomeroy," she began, in a voice low, and somewhat tremulous, from the effort it cost her to speak at all; "do you remember an old Bible story about a rich man who had great flocks and herds, yet sent and took away a poor man's lamb that he prized very much; and what was said about him?"

"Yes, I believe I have some such vague recollection," he replied.

"Well, then," she continued, "suppose that you were a poor young man who had to work at some steady, monotonous, uninteresting labor from early morning till late at night. And suppose Kitty were a poor girl slaving away for so many long hours a day——"

"What a horrible supposition!" he broke in; but she went on without noticing the interruption.

"And, suppose that some rich young man, like *you*, for instance, who was engaged to a rich and beautiful young lady, were to try to come between you and Kitty, and flatter her into thinking she was too good for you——"

"Perhaps she'd be about right!" he muttered.

"And break up, perhaps, her and your happiness for life. How do you think you'd like it?"

"Oh, I see what you're hinting at," he replied, having by this time got over his momentary discomposure. "I see some one's been gossiping, making much ado about nothing! What harm is there in a little fun and nonsense with a pretty girl, even if she *is* silly?"

"Mr. Pomeroy," exclaimed Nora, in a voice unsteady with indignation, "did you ever read the fable of the boys and the frogs?"

"Miss Blanchard," he replied, now in a tone half apologetic, "you high-strung young ladies are always making mistakes, when you try to judge about other people who don't feel like you. That girl hasn't any heart at all; all she cares about is to have a good time; so what amuses me doesn't hurt her; and if it did set her against marrying a lout like that surly young Mason, so much the better for her, and for him, too! She can do better for herself if she likes, and if she ever marries him she'll lead him a dance, I can tell you!"

"Mr. Pomeroy," said Nora, severely, "you know in your heart better than that. I want you to promise me to have nothing more to do with Nelly Grove."

He began to whistle, then checked himself. "And what if I don't?" he asked.

"Then I shall have to tell Kitty," she said, decidedly.

"And if I do promise, you'll promise to say nothing about it, will you? I suppose *some* women can keep a secret!"

"Yes, I am quite willing to promise that," she said.

"Well then—honor bright—I hereby promise to renounce Nelly and all her works; will that satisfy you?"

"Yes," said Nora, shortly.

"And Kitty is never to hear a word about it! I don't want to give her a good excuse, or what she might think a good excuse, for her flirtation with Waldberg. You might reverse your story on my behalf; for it seems to me that a poor young man is trying to poach on my preserves. You'd better give him and Kitty a little of the admonition you've been good enough to bestow on me!"

Through Nora's mind there had been running, since Lizzie's visit, that afternoon, some lines she had long ago learned by heart, in one of Macaulay's Lays. They were from "Virginia," and she just remembered snatches of them.

"Our very hearts that were so high sank down beneath your will;

Riches, and lands and power and state—ye have them;—keep them still;
But leave the poor Plebeian his single tie to life—
The sweet, sweet love of daughter, of sister, and of wife.
Spare us the inexpiable wrong, the unutterable shame,
That turns the coward's heart to steel—the sluggard's blood to flame
Lest, when our latest hope is fled, ye taste of our despair,
And learn by proof, in some wild hour, how much the wretched dare!"

But her cheek burned a little as she felt that it would be "casting pearls before swine" to appeal further to Harold Pomeroy's sensibilities, hardened—almost atrophied—as these were, by a life of unrestrained self-indulgence. A young man, who had never learned to consider the feelings of an animal, but regarded it merely as an instrument for his own amusement, who "went in" for pigeon-matches when he had the chance, and docked his horse's tail, and tortured him with a cruel check rein, without an atom of compunction for the creature's suffering, was not likely to be over-particular when he came to deal with human beings whom he also looked upon as an inferior order of beings at that. To Nora, he was a puzzle, and she gave him up in despair.

Yet the young man was, after all, a little impressed by her earnest appeal. "She really does seem to take an awful lot of trouble about other people!" he thought, wonderingly, as he walked homeward, after leaving Miss Blanchard at her brother's door. "I really believe she walked out all that way to-night, just to have the chance of giving me that lecture. Too bad I can't tell Kitty about it!" and he laughed a little over the adventure.

He never knew the real meaning of Miss Blanchard's unusual procedure. It had the effect, however, of preventing an act of violence which would have seriously imperilled the success of the strike and even of the labor movement in Minton, as well as what Mr. Harold Pomeroy would have thought of much more consequence,—his own preservation of a whole skin.

CHAPTER XXIII.

UNEXPECTED DENOUEMENTS.

That night, it happened that Roland Graeme, harassed by a natural anxiety as to the results of the strike, with which he well knew public opinion would be sure to connect his efforts after reform, felt unusually wakeful, and, fearing a sleepless night unless he took some means to quiet his nervous excitement, set out for a long walk after his evening's work had been completed. This was a favorite expedient of his for securing sleep when wakeful, and sometimes it succeeded.

By a natural sort of fascination, he involuntarily took the direction of Mr. Pomeroy's mill, which at present occupied so much of his thoughts, and walked some distance past it, into the open country, till he felt as if the physical exercise had sufficiently quieted his nerves, and turned to retrace his steps under the light of a late, waning moon, which seemed, as such moons are apt to do, to give a sombre and ghostly aspect to the familiar features of the scene. As he approached the mill, in doing which he had to pass a long alley that led to a rear entrance close to a small canal, he heard the thick voices of men, evidently intoxicated, who seemed engaged in a noisy altercation. He was almost sure, even in the distance, that one of the voices was Jim Mason's, which he had often noticed as somewhat peculiar.

"I suppose they have been making a night of it at 'The Haven,' and are going home 'full,' as they call it," he thought to himself in disgust.

"The Haven" was a drinking saloon, close to the alley which ran to the rear of the works, and was also a part of Mr. Pomeroy's property; and, at a distance, he could not be sure whether they had come out of the saloon, or out of the alley. Just as he reached the alley, however, he stopped short, as the penetrating odor of burning wood made itself distinctly perceptible. With a flash, a possibility that had often occurred to him rushed to his mind, and he turned down the alley in order to find out its cause. As he proceeded, it grew more and more distinct. He came at last to a gate leading into the courtyard, and found that it yielded at once to his strong push, but whether this was due to its having been previously forced open, or to the unconscious force he had himself exerted, he did not stop to think, and could never afterwards be sure. But, once inside, he saw what made his heart stand still with dismay. An already strong jet of flame was licking its greedy way along the base of an out-building used for the deposit of rubbish from the mill, and, as he could see, evidently full of inflammable material. Just beyond it was a storehouse, which he felt sure must in all probability contain oil and other combustibles used in the works. There was not a moment to be lost, and he, single-handed, could do nothing. He rushed up the alley at full speed—shouting "*Fire!*" as he ran; smashed in the office windows, till he had fully roused the sleepy watchman, and sent him off to give the alarm, and then made his way, breathless, to a street in the near vicinity, in which lived his friend Turner and many more of the operatives. In less time than he could have believed possible, he was making his way back, at the head of a half-clad band of men who flocked after him, more from the irresistible impulse which draws men to a scene of excitement and danger, than from any definite purpose of saving Mr. Pomeroy's mill. There must still intervene some minutes, at least, before the fire-engines could reach the spot; and they were fateful minutes, for the fire was making rapid headway, and its lurid glare now

overpowered the pallid moonlight.

"Now, Turner, you know all the ropes. Tell us what's best to do," said Roland.

"That storehouse is full of oil-barrels," said the man, gasping with breathless excitement. "If the boys would turn to and get them out into the water,—and there are axes here to tear up the roof and other connections!"

"Come on, boys!" Roland shouted, tearing off his coat. "Let's get at it at once! Some of you go and help Turner with the barrels, and I'll help with the chopping!"

But the men sullenly held back; and Roland, looking round, saw, in the bright glare of the leaping flames, that Jim and his friends, who must have heard the alarm and hurried back, were already there, and were evidently rousing the worst passions of their comrades, by their oaths and invectives against the owners of the mill. Roland fairly rushed at the surly, irresolute group of men who stood divided between the instinctive impulse to save their workshops, and the grudge they had so long silently nourished against the proprietor, and the "boss." Why should they toil to save a place in which they might never do another day's work? For there had been already floating rumors, spread by the manager, that Mr. Pomeroy intended to send away for non-union men.

But Roland felt the gravity of the crisis, and felt that he *must* get them to work, for he could easily see the disastrous consequences that would result, if it should be represented and believed —as it would certainly be—that the strike had resulted in an incendiary fire. For the next few moments, it seemed to him rather as if he were listening to some one else, than speaking in his own proper person,—that the strong, burning words, the voice of stern authority, came from some other personality, so little seemed his conscious volition to be concerned in it. In ringing tones he commanded them to follow. Were they going to sacrifice their very livelihood to a childish impulse of vindictive malice? Had they no concern for the valuable machines they had tended so long? Would they let the mill become a mass of ruin, ruin to *themselves*, not to the owner, who, of course, would have his insurance, and could easily bear any trifling loss?

His tone even more than his words had a prompt effect, and the reference to the machinery touched a chord of feeling of which they had been previously unconscious. Roland's words called up a picture of the wrecked and twisted bars and coils which they had seen, some months before, in the ruins of a burned mill. Should the familiar machinery, which had so long been like a part of their daily life, be wrecked like that? No! they must try to save it! And so the scale turned. That incalculable element, on which the action of a crowd depends, was swayed round to Roland's side, as he shouldered his axe, calling the men again to follow either Turner or himself. And presently, he had the satisfaction of seeing at work a sufficient force to hack and tear away the roof of the burning building, so as to prevent the fire from spreading to the main part of the factory on the one side or to the store house on the other. "Don't go at it so hard," he heard one and another exclaim, "you'll hurt yourself, Mr. Graeme!" as he wielded his axe with the unnatural force of a white-heat of excitement. And, though he could feel the hot breath of the flames as they rolled up their red tongues, amid the dense clouds of smoke that now began to rise from the oil-soaked ruins below that fed the conflagration, Roland felt himself thrilled with a keener, more passionate sense of delight than he remembered ever feeling in his whole life before, in the sensation of encounter with some deadly monster, calling forth all the reserve force of his being into a hand-to-hand struggle with the fiery foe.

Meantime Turner, with his following, was equally hard at work, rolling out the oil-barrels, till they were all safely turned over, out of harm's way, into the little canal in the rear, where Roland could see them bobbing about, as he came down from the roof with his improvised body of sappers, to give place to the play of the fire-engine, which had by this time arrived. Scarcely a moment had been lost from the time when the fire had been discovered, and, thanks to the preventive efforts of Roland and the men, the fire was confined to the building in which it had begun, and was speedily under control. As Roland stood, at length, relieved from his self-imposed task, and, panting with unaccustomed toil, watched the hissing stream of water which seemed to meet in mortal combat the cruel flames that turned, under its charge, into white clouds of harmless steam, he felt a fierce exultation that surprised himself, as if in watching the death-throes of some ruthless destroyer. He could, ever after, better understand the fascination which draws the brave firemen to their arduous task, or even—what it had previously been difficult for him to take in—the fierce joy of victory in battle.

"It's well you went for them as you did, Mr. Graeme," said the voice of Turner, startling him out of his absorption. "If they hadn't set to work to fight the fire, it would have been all over town by morning that the strikers had started it!"

"Of course, Turner, I felt that!" replied Roland, who did not feel at all sure himself, however, that some of them had *not* done it. "Did you see Jim Mason helping at all?"

"Oh, yes," he rejoined, "he took a hand at the barrels, in his surly way, muttering oaths all the time. But he couldn't keep still, if he wanted to, when there's anything going on—for all his sulkiness."

Roland said nothing more, but thought a good deal, as at last, tired, and smoked and grimy, he made his way homeward, after all further danger was over. He could not divest himself of the idea that Jim, in his present vindictive temper, had had a hand in the business. Still he had no positive evidence, and it would be most unjust to associate the young man's name with a grave

crime, without any proof. He was heartily glad that he had none, and that his conscience relieved him of the burden of what, had he felt it a duty, he would have done so reluctantly. He talked the matter over with Miss Blanchard, one day when he met her at Mr. Alden's and walked home with her, after receiving warm congratulations on his action at the fire. He knew that she could be trusted to keep as rigid a silence as himself; and it was some relief to himself to unburden his mind of suspicions, though he carefully pointed out that they were no more.

"But how do you suppose the fire could have originated, if it was not an incendiary one?" asked Nora, anxiously.

"Oh, that is not difficult to imagine," he replied. "It might easily have started from spontaneous combustion. Turner tells me it is by no means uncommon for fire to originate spontaneously from rubbish of that kind, soaked with oil and dust, especially when the sun begins to have more power. He says that there had been gross carelessness on Willett's part, in not having had that accumulation disposed of long ago."

"Well, I'm glad to know it can be accounted for without Jim's intervention!" she said. "So, we'll give him the benefit of the doubt."

"Certainly," said Roland; but in his own mind he could not get over the painful impression, nor, to say truth, could Nora herself.

Of course there was a rumor that the fire had had an incendiary origin;—favored by Willett, to cover his own carelessness. But there was no shadow of proof, and the fact that the men had worked so well to save the property had great weight in preventing the rumor from gaining any general credence.

Mr. Pomeroy had tranquilly slept through that night, knowing nothing of the fire till next morning; for Willett, who had not arrived on the scene till the fire was almost subdued, did not think it worth while to disturb him about what seemed so trifling an affair, particularly as even the small damage sustained was covered by insurance. And as the firemen gave full publicity to the prompt turn-out of *employés*, and their successful efforts, with Roland at their head, to arrest the spread of the fire, Mr. Pomeroy could not avoid a certain grudging recognition of the fact that he owed to their promptness, in all probability, the prevention of a great deal more inconvenience than any that the strike itself could have caused. This consideration had, of course, its effect in bringing the contest to a speedy termination. It turned out, after all, that the examination of the books, and a consultation thereupon, satisfied Mr. Pomeroy that the firm could, without any real inconvenience, afford to pay its operatives at a higher rate. No doubt his daughter's remarks, taken in connection with Mr. Jeffrey's lecture, had their effect in bringing him to act on this knowledge. And another very weighty consideration, of course, had been the reception of the large orders, already referred to, and the difficulty and inconvenience of having, on short notice, to import a sufficient number of skilled workmen from a distance. And thus it came about that, two or three days after the fire, the leader of the strike received notice that, if the men would return to work at once, they should receive both the increase of wages and the Saturday half-holiday they had asked for. The girls, also, through Miss Pomeroy's urgent intercession, received a small increase of pay. And the fact that the firm could well afford to do this, without embarrassment, proved that the strike had justice on its side.

But, for all that, "public opinion," that is, the opinion of the upper stratum of Minton intelligence, was decidedly "down" on Roland Graeme and his troublesome organ. He was generally considered as the arch-conspirator against the peace and profits of the wealthy manufacturer, against the "good old ways," in which things had run so long without any of this tiresome fuss and friction, that over-zealous champions, false friends of the laborer, were so busy in creating.

The Minton *Eagle*, the most formidable rival of the *Minerva*, began to see a chance of making capital out of the evident sympathy of the latter paper with many of the views ascribed to Roland Graeme; and Dick Burnet soon received strong hints from the other joint-proprietors of the *Minerva*, that he had better take in sail in that direction, and steer a safer course, for, naturally, to the proprietors, it was a *sine quâ non* that the paper should *pay*.

Dick Burnet had much more of the professional journalist than of the pure philanthropist in his composition, and though interested in labor-reform, he was by no means prepared to become a martyr in its cause. He told Roland, therefore, with regret, that he must not only discontinue the noticing and reprinting of articles from *The Brotherhood*, but that he feared it would be necessary to make arrangements for having it printed elsewhere, as the reputed connection was considered damaging to the *Minerva's* interests. This was, of course, a cause of no little worry and anxiety to Roland, as he had enough on his hands, without the charge of the mechanical arrangements; but it was a still greater pain to him to see his friend Burnet, as it seemed to him, deserting the cause of principle for that of expediency. However, his genial spirit of charity made allowances for his friend that he would not have made for himself, could such a descent on his own part have been conceivable. He talked the matter over with Mr. Dunlop, and the old Scotchman's practical shrewdness as well as his purse came to Roland's aid, in devising new arrangements.

This was not, however, the only matter pressing on Roland's mind, as February passed into March, and the first mild spring-like days came with their physically relaxing influence. He was sharing the fate of every idealist in reform, meeting with unlooked for discouragements and perplexities, pained by frequently encountering precisely the same spirit of selfishness in the

employed that had so disgusted him in the employers; and when, occasionally, his friends, the "Knights," had a social entertainment of their own, his taste was jarred by the tone of the comic songs and recitations which seemed most to tickle the audience. The material enjoyed by audiences of greater pretension to "culture" might not, in general, be much more elevated, but at least the humor was not quite so broad, the wit not quite so coarse; and yet, while Roland felt jarred and dissatisfied, he admitted that he was unreasonable, that it was useless to expect fine fruit from ungrafted trees, and that the low tone of taste which he regretted was a natural result of lack of opportunity for true cultivation. It only intensified his desire for a better state of things; but, at the same time, these experiences often tended to depress and dishearten him. And the long strain of high pressure was telling on him, also.

He was uneasy, too, about Waldberg, who had of late developed a feverish anxiety to "make a fortune," quite alien to his former happy, easy-going, romantic disposition. Roland rightly guessed that a growing attachment to Miss Farrell was at the root of it, combined with the too evident fact that she greatly preferred him to her much less interesting *fiancé*; and that, if he only had money enough, he might easily carry the day, yet. Mr. Farrell was a broker, who had made his large fortune mainly by speculation; and young Waldberg had heard from him stories of "lucky ventures," till he had been inspired with a strong desire to try the experiment himself. This desire was encouraged and promoted by one of Mr. Farrell's clerks, and with him for counselor, Waldberg had begun to gamble in stocks and "margins" to such small extent as he was able, notwithstanding Roland's strong disapproval and remonstrances.

Roland would, however, seek some respite from these various subjects of disquietude by a visit to Mr. Alden's house, or by a long walk, in the bright, lengthening afternoons. One charming and unusually mild afternoon, the day before the public performance of the oratorio which had been in preparation so long, he had prolonged his walk by the river, past even the suburbs of the city, and was returning about sunset. He had reached the gateway leading to Mr. Pomeroy's handsome residence, which stood at a little distance from the street, when he noticed, just inside it, a sight that always made him sick at heart, and seemed like a dark blot on the brightness of the day. It was the sight of a woman, apparently young, who had been seated on the ground in the shelter of a cluster of trees, and whom two policemen were endeavoring to raise to her feet. Mr. Pomeroy, returning home a few minutes before, had discovered her sitting there, evidently in a state of intoxication, and, in his usual bland manner, had handed her over to the first policeman he espied. As she came out, assisted by the policemen, Roland got a glimpse of her face, and heard a word or two, in a soft English voice. He was horrified, as the conviction flashed on him that it was the woman he had gone to succor, on the December evening when we first made his acquaintance,—Miss Blanchard's *protégée*, Mrs. Travers.

He hastened up to the policemen, and begged them to let him call a cab and take her to the hospital. But the men only looked at him sneeringly, as they remarked:

"Oh, yes, no doubt you'd like to get her off! Expect she's an old friend. But she's got to go with *us*, now."

Roland drew back, disgusted and shocked, seeing the futility of further interference. But how could he tell Miss Blanchard of such a catastrophe!

As he stood watching their departure, something bright on the ground, glittering in the yellow, slanting sunlight, caught his eye. He picked it up. It was a small locket, apparently gold, though worn and dim, with a monogram on one side. It must, he thought, have been dropped by the poor woman as she came out. He put it into his pocket, to keep it safe for her, and went home to dinner, considering, as he walked on slowly, for once, which it would be better to do, to tell Miss Blanchard or to send word to the hospital. At any rate he would go to the police-station next day, and endeavor to procure her release.

But, after dinner, as he sat in his room, still undecided, he chanced to think again of the locket, and, taking it out, examined it more closely. It opened easily, disclosing two miniature photographs, and a lock of dark hair enclosed with one of them. He saw that one of the portraits was that of a lovely girl in whom he easily recognized "Mrs. Travers." But when he looked at the other he nearly dropped the locket in his amazement. For, despite the changes that ten years will make in a man's appearance, he could not doubt that the original of the portrait was—*Mr. Chillingworth*!

CHAPTER XXIV.

A REVELATION.

Nora had been, that afternoon, practising industriously, with a view to having her part in the coming oratorio as perfect as possible; when she was interrupted by a very unexpected visitor, Miss Spencer.

"I'm so glad to see you," she said, warmly. "So you've actually come to see me at last!"

"I *had* to come, unfortunately;" said Miss Spencer, her usually serene face looking anxious and distressed. "I am sorry to say, I have some bad news for you."

"About Mrs. Travers?" asked Nora, with prompt divination.

"Yes. She has had one of her restless fits lately. You know I've been giving her some light work to do about the wards, just to keep her employed, and I hoped the fit would wear off. But to-day, she slipped out, and has never come back. We've sent in various directions, but have got no news of her. Lizzie Mason's people have seen nothing of her. I knew she didn't know your address, but still I thought it was just possible she might have found her way here."

"No," replied Nora. "But what can have happened to her?"

"I suppose it's the old story," said Miss Spencer, with a sigh; then, lowering her voice, she said:

"I know a good deal about her now, and I think I ought to tell you her story, as she told it to me a few days ago. I meant to tell you about it, the first time I had a good opportunity. But it is rather private. She wanted me to promise not to tell any one, but, I didn't promise, absolutely.

"There's no one else in," said Nora. "Sophy's out, and Will's away attending some medical convention, and Cecilia's gone out for a walk with the other children."

"Then, I'll try to tell it to you, as she told it to *me*—by snatches. Part of it, of course, I had to guess at, putting things together as I best could."

"Yes, I understand," replied Nora.

"Well, as you know already, she's English, and only came out a few years ago, under very distressing circumstances. It's a very long story, but I'll tell it as briefly as I can.

"It seems that her father died from the effects of drinking;—probably *he* was a 'dipsomaniac,' too; and—her own mother having died during her infancy—she had to live with a step-mother who was by no means kind to her. She got a situation when only sixteen, as a nursery-governess with a lady who pitied her, and treated her most kindly. About a year after she went there, a young clergyman came to stay at the house. She must have been a most lovely girl, and he seems at once to have fallen desperately in love. She was, evidently, easily won. She says he was very handsome, and, I suppose, otherwise attractive. The lady she was with, must, I think, have promoted the match. I suppose she thought it was an excellent thing for her. So, after a very short engagement, they were married from the house of this lady, who wouldn't let her go back to her step-mother. She had only one aunt, the wife of her father's brother, a good and kind woman; who, however, was in straitened circumstances, and lived in a distant village. And I suppose her husband didn't care to have much to do with her relations.

"His curacy—for he was only a curate—was in a small town not far from London. At first she seems to have been very happy, but, by and by she began to feel lonely. I fancy her husband began to find that she wasn't much of a companion for him, for she hadn't had the chance of much education, though she has quite a taste for painting flowers. So, I suppose, when his affection began to cool down a little, he began to tire a little of her constant society and of the quiet life they led. He was passionately fond of music, and used to go up to London frequently, for concerts and lectures, leaving her often alone for a day or two at a time. She must always have been excitable, and she began to have fits of crying when she was alone, and by and by she was attacked by neuralgia, to which she had previously been subject. The doctor unhappily recommended stimulants, and her hereditary taste for them rapidly developed. The habit grew stronger and stronger, and at last her husband discovered that she was sometimes not quite herself. She seems to have had false friends, too, who tempted her. He, of course, was terribly shocked and angry when he found it out. Probably it broke the spell that her beauty had exerted to hold his affection. He declared that if she continued the practice, he would not keep her with him. But when the fit came upon her, she seemed to have no power to resist it, so she passed some miserable weeks, trying to keep from it, and, when she could not resist, in terror lest he should find it out.

"At last the crisis came. One warm day she went to visit one of these 'friends'—drank to excess—tried to get home—but, between the heat and the effect of the stimulant, sank down, unable to walk, and was brought home in that condition, insensible. Her husband left the house half frantic, I suppose, leaving a note for her to read when she came to herself, in which he told her they must part, at least until she was thoroughly reformed; that he could not risk the consequences to his usefulness in his profession, of having such a scandal in his house, and that he would pay for her maintenance in her aunt's house, if she would receive her; but, for the present, he would see her no more."

"Oh, how cruel!" exclaimed Nora, who had listened in silent dismay to the tragic tale.

"Well, I'm afraid nine out of ten men of his temperament would have done the same," replied Miss Spencer. "But, the poor thing was stunned when she realized it all. She had no choice, however, except to do what he directed. She went to live with her aunt in the country village, while her husband, too miserable, probably, to go on with his work, got leave of absence and came for a trip to America.

"A few months later, her child was born; but she was so terrified lest the husband should take the little one from her, that she would not let him be told of its existence. He did not write to her, directly, only sending the remittances to her aunt. And he did not return from America, but resigned his charge in England, and accepted one out here, glad, doubtless, not to be exposed to meet the curious or pitying looks of old acquaintances.

"When her child was a few months old, her aunt died, and her only cousin, a woman some years older than herself, received an invitation to come out here, to take a sort of housekeeper's place with a friend of hers who had settled on a Western farm, and was in bad health. This poor girl, who still loved her husband devotedly, was seized with a great desire to come out with her, thinking that she too, could get a situation, and then she would no longer need his money, which it hurt her to receive, thinking that he could regard her only as a burden. She of the sea, she would see him sometimes, and she would be near him in case he were ill. Unhappily she could not subdue the fatal craving, and she had no hope of her husband's taking her back; indeed, she seems to have believed that his affection for her was utterly dead.

"So she set out, with her cousin and her child, for New York. They had nearly reached land, when a collision occurred at night, and their steamer was so injured that it speedily sank. In the hurry and confusion, Mrs. Travers and her cousin were put into different boats, and the one the cousin was in, was lost. She and her baby were saved, but she lay in a half-unconscious condition for days afterwards, from the fright and exposure. It happened that her cousin and she had accidentally exchanged handkerchiefs, and hers, marked with her name, was found on the body, when it was picked up, next day. And so, in the newspaper accounts of the accident, her name was given in the list of the lost. Her cousin's name was Travers, which had been her own maiden name. When she recovered and saw her own name in the list of the lost passengers, a strange idea took hold of her. She would leave it so, she thought, and if her husband should see the name, he would cease to think of her as a burden, and perhaps come to think more kindly of her, as we generally do of the dead. And she felt that, with a different name, she could make a new beginning in the new land. She went on to the destination for which they were bound, and, having explained the death of her cousin, she was accepted in her place, notwithstanding the drawback of her child. As her cousin's name was Travers, *she* was naturally called Mrs. Travers, and she encouraged the mistake.

"What was her real name?" asked Nora, very quietly. A strange idea had occurred to her, which she would not entertain, yet could not quite reject.

"I don't know, I can only guess," replied Janet. "Well," she continued, "she seems to have been tolerably comfortable there for three or four years. Her cousin's friend knew her weakness, and was most careful not to let her be exposed to temptation; and when, at times, she did, notwithstanding, go wrong—it was overlooked, partly for her own sake and partly for that of her dead cousin, and also of the little child, whom every one was fond of.

"At last, this good friend died, and then she had to look for a new home, the husband's mother coming to take charge. She kept track of her husband's movements, and, as he had left his first parish for a large city charge, she thought she would try to get a situation somewhere near him, so that she might see him occasionally, taking care to do so unobserved by him. Her old enemy still kept its hold on her; and again and again deprived her of a home. She had been very much embittered against religion, through her husband's throwing her off, for she thought that had something to do with it; and had absolutely nothing to hold by except her affection for her child, for whose sake she would have kept straight, if she could. When she couldn't get a place, she tried to maintain herself by taking in sewing, or by selling her little paintings of flowers on cards, which I suppose people bought more out of charity than anything else, in these days of chromos. She says she doesn't know what she would have done, for some time past, but for poor Lizzie Mason, who was always ready to share with her what little she had."

"And all this time her husband thought her dead! Is he still alive?" asked Nora, in a scarcely audible tone. She had grown very pale.

"Yes, he is alive, and he still thinks her dead."

"And suppose he were to have married again?"

"I think she never thought of that, till lately. If that had been likely, I suppose she would have spoken. She did try to send for him, when she thought herself dying, on the child's account; but the attempt failed."

Both were silent for a few minutes. Nora, with a throbbing heart, and bewildered mind, was going back in thought to the story, trying to piece things together; remembering, with a pang, Miss Harley's remarks, and trying to fight down a conviction that was too strong to resist. Miss Spencer, who had divined the truth without being actually told by "Mrs. Travers," sat full of silent sympathy for the shock she feared it would be to Miss Blanchard,—yet not venturing to say a word. She had purposely left the conclusion of her story somewhat vague, so as not to let the disclosure come too suddenly.

"Well," said Nora, after a short silence, in the same low tone, "you suspect something—what is it?"

"Everything points to one conclusion only—I am afraid," she replied.

"Yes, but it seems incredible. If one could only *know*, for sure!"

They heard the children coming and the sound of their merry voices—Cecilia's lower tones mingling with the others. Nora rang the bell, and told the maid not to let them come to the drawing-room, and to bring some tea there for Miss Spencer and herself.

"Sophy is not coming back till late," she said, "and I had dinner with the children, so I don't want

anything but a cup of tea; and you will stay, won't you? There are so many things I want to ask, yet. But I couldn't talk to poor little Cecilia, just after hearing all this!"

They sat together in low-toned consultation, with long silences between; till the evening light had faded out, and only the firelight shed its fitful gleams about them. At last, however, Miss Spencer declared she must go, as her turn for duty would come on before long.

"And they may have heard some news of her by this time," she said.

Just then there was a ring at the door. Nora started up with nervous dread lest the visitor might, by any chance, prove to be one whom, just then, she felt she could hardly bear to meet. As she listened to catch the voice at the door, she heard Roland Graeme's clear, low tones, asking whether Miss Blanchard were at home, as he wished particularly to see her. Instantly it flashed upon her mind that he brought some news of the lost one, for it must be something very special that brought him at this unusual hour.

As he entered, Nora saw that he looked much agitated, and, as she introduced him to Miss Spencer, she said:

"I believe, Mr. Graeme, you have come to tell us where Mrs. Travers is!"

He looked surprised at her guess; then, recollecting that Miss Spencer had been the poor woman's nurse, he replied:

"You know, then, that she is out of the hospital?"

Nora assented, and Miss Spencer explained the anxiety her departure had caused; and then Roland, as briefly and gently as possible, told what he had seen. The two girls listened in silence, inexpressibly shocked; tears of pain and pity starting to Nora's eyes, as she fixed them on the firelight and called up the mental image of the poor young woman, dragged away, and locked into a police-cell. Miss Spencer, with her nurse's practical instinct, was thinking what could be done next.

"We must try to get her out as soon as possible, Mr. Graeme," she said.

"Yes," he said, "I will go round in the morning and do what I can. I suppose they'll let her off with a fine—at worst."

"Oh, I should hope so!" exclaimed Nora. "Only do get her out and send her back to the hospital! We must keep her there, till something definite can be done for her."

"There's something else," he said, with an effort. "I found *this* lying on the road after she was gone, and I think it must be hers. Will you take charge of it, Miss Spencer?"

He hoped she would not think of examining it then, but both girls looked at it with eager scrutiny.

"Oh, I've often noticed it!" said Miss Spencer. "She always wore it round her neck, and seemed afraid of any one's touching it."

As they examined it, they noticed the peculiar monogram, three "C's" intertwined together on one side, and the word, "*Celia*," engraved on the other. Nora took it and pressed the spring. One look at the two portraits was enough to settle the question they had been discussing, beyond a doubt.

No one spoke Mr. Chillingworth's name, but all felt that they knew his sad secret; and knew, too, that of which he himself had not the slightest idea.

CHAPTER XXV.

BEWILDERMENT.

When her visitors were gone, Nora sat for a long time gazing into the flickering firelight, thankful that she could be alone and undisturbed. She wanted to try to think quietly; to calm, if possible, the tumult of conflicting feelings that contended for the mastery, intense pity for the poor woman, in whose lot she had been led to feel so strong an interest; bitter disappointment and indignation with the man of whom she had thought so highly, who had so heartlessly thrown aside the duties he owed, as a man and a minister of Christ, to the woman whom he had taken "for better or worse," in her weakness and misery; and yet, also, mingled with a sorrowful sense of "the pity of it" all, and with something of that divine quality of compassionate charity, which is always ready to believe that, "*Tout comprendre, c'est tout pardonner*."

To Nora, indeed, with her own simple directness, staunch loyalty, and passionate impulse to help and sympathize, it was almost impossible to understand the workings of a self-centred, coldly fastidious nature like Mr. Chillingworth's. Yet she dimly felt that he, too, must have suffered, and must suffer much more; and suffering always, to some extent, enlisted her sympathy. But he had shattered her ideal, and that was indeed hard to get over and forgive. His eloquent expositions and high standard of moral duty, his glowing appeals to live the nobler life, had so captivated her imagination, as to attract her irresistibly to the *man*, whom she in her inexperience identified with the ideals he preached. If he himself had so failed, how could he teach others? And bitter

tears rose to her eyes as she thought of the contrast between the mental image she had cherished and the poor and pitiable reality. And as, moreover, there rose before her the picture of Mr. Pomeroy, a man Mr. Chillingworth treated with special consideration, handing over this poor woman to the police with bland unconcern, she could not refrain from one of those sweeping conclusions in which an enthusiastic nature is so apt to indulge, in a moment of bitter disappointment. Was it all mere talk, then? Did no one try to live out the spirit of the Master they all professed to honor? Was there no one who aimed at being really Christ-like, at "loving his neighbor as himself"? Was there *no one*? But almost at once—with a sharp pang of self-reproach—came the recollection of Mr. Alden's earnest life of love and labor, of Grace's sweet loving nature, of her own brother, never talking about grand ideals, but living and working from hour to hour; of Miss Spencer's happy and tender ministry in the laborious service of suffering humanity; of poor Lizzie Mason's life of humble self-sacrifice; and, last but not least, of Roland Graeme, with his self-forgetful enthusiasm and his passion for helping and raising the down-trodden and oppressed. Yes, she was glad to think of such examples. And yet, as far as she knew, Lizzie Mason was not a "professing Christian;" and Roland Graeme—did they not call him an "unbeliever"? It was a bewildering puzzle to her, with her *a priori* conceptions. Might it then be true that, while some people—so-called believers—only "*believed* they believed," others, so-called unbelievers, only believed that they did *not* believe? And she remembered the Master's own grieved expostulation:—

> "Why call ye me Lord! Lord! and do not the things which I say?"

But, beneath all the heart-sickness produced by this miserable story, she was dimly conscious of an involuntary relief from a conflict which had been going on in her mind, for some time, between what she wished to think about Mr. Chillingworth, and the disappointing conviction that was being forced in upon that underlying consciousness which will not be hoodwinked even by strong inclination. Of whatever kind had been the attraction that had biassed her in Mr. Chillingworth's favor, it was broken now, forever; and her present temptation was, perhaps, in her youthful intolerance, to think too hardly of him, to forget what most people would call the "extenuating circumstances," and his blindness and limitations. But, in a nature like Nora's, a long-cherished ideal dies hard. And at last, retreating to the seclusion of her own room, she threw herself on her knees—the natural instinct of an oppressed heart—the pain soon finding expression in irresistible tears, which at least brought some relief.

Next morning, Roland was in attendance at the police court, and succeeded in procuring the release of the so-called "Mrs. Travers," by the payment of a fine, thereby saving the poor victim of a hereditary craving from a period of humiliating confinement in gaol, among criminals of the lowest class. His interference called forth sneering and ill-natured comments from some of the low bystanders, of a type whose natural tendency is to put the worst possible construction on every action. But for this he cared little, putting the unhappy young woman into a cab, and sending her to the hospital, while he himself hurried back to his office-work, satisfied with having rescued one sufferer from further degradation.

Miss Spencer was ready to receive her without a reference to this miserable episode. But when, exhausted and miserable, her beauty quite obscured by the effects of the intoxication and of her wretched night, the poor girl, as she still seemed, was led back into the peaceful retreat she had so insanely left, she threw one look around her, and then cast herself at the nurse's feet in a passion of tears and sobs. And in the same spirit in which the Man of Sorrows had comforted and encouraged the repentant Magdalen, did the tender-hearted Christian nurse comfort and encourage this poor penitent. This, at least, was the thought that passed through the mind of Nora, who, having come early to the hospital to inquire whether the wanderer had returned, was an unnoticed but deeply interested spectator of the scene.

Nora never knew how she got through the performance of the oratorio that evening. The brilliancy of the scene, the dress-display, the crowded audience, distasteful as they were in her present mood, were powerless to banish oppressive thoughts, and that scene in the hospital, which stood before her, as the touching chorus rose in all the tender beauty of the music:—

> "Surely He hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; He was wounded for our transgressions; He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and with His stripes we are healed."

As she stood singing these words with her heart in her voice, and that sad scene before her, she caught Roland's earnest absorbed eyes, lighted with a softened emotion that made her for the moment wonder whether he, too, had the same thought in his mind. But she carefully avoided looking at Mr. Chillingworth, who, with an unusually bright and animated expression, was enjoying to the full both the music and the "success" which every one declared the oratorio to be. The soloists were admirable both in voice and manner, the choruses had been carefully practised and were remarkably well rendered, the "Halellujah Chorus" in particular, bursting forth with great effect, and, as the Minton *Minerva* expressed it, "taking the house by storm." It seemed to thrill through every nerve of Roland Graeme, as he caught the grand old words:

> "The kingdom of this world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ; and He shall reign for ever and ever!"

In his own sense he could profoundly sympathize with the glorious hope.

Mr. Chillingworth sang in this and some other choruses, though he preferred to be a listener and spectator through the greater part of it. He naturally sought Miss Blanchard at the close, to exchange congratulations on the result of the long preparation. But her response was not the natural, enthusiastic one he expected, and he noticed her unusual paleness, attributing it to over-fatigue, a plea she was very ready to adopt, as an excuse for getting off to her cab, with her sister-in-law, as soon as possible.

It often happens, when we are thinking with dread and anxiety how some particular crisis is to be passed, that the "logic of events" settles it for us in a totally unexpected manner. While Nora was perplexing herself as to what was to be done with this secret, of which Mr. Chillingworth ought to be told, circumstances arose that gave her thoughts a new direction, and took matters for the present entirely out of her hands.

CHAPTER XXVI.

AN EMPTY PLACE.

Nora did not feel inclined to tell, even to her brother, had he been at home, the sad story she had heard; yet she felt she must take some one into her confidence, as to what ought to be done. Mr. Alden seemed to be her only resource. So, after much thought, she went to his house on the morning after the oratorio, intending to see him alone, and tell him the whole story. But, as often happens, she found her intentions completely and unexpectedly thwarted. Mr. Alden had been called away from home, on some ministerial duty, and Mrs. Alden and Grace were nursing two sick children through what seemed to be feverish colds.

"I wish Doctor Blanchard were at home again," said Mrs. Alden, who looked much exhausted. "I should like very much to have him come to see these children!"

Nora saw how much both she and Grace needed rest, and, with her usual impulse to help, she volunteered to stay all night and relieve them as far as possible. It was just what she wanted, too, to take her mind off more painful thoughts. And if it had been more of a sacrifice than it was, she would have been more than rewarded by the gratitude with which her offer was accepted, and by the soothing influence of Grace's society and innocent childlike talk about matters completely dissociated from the things which had been oppressing her like a nightmare.

Dr. Blanchard returned next day; and, apprised by Nora's message, of the illness of the children, came, as soon as possible, to see them. But he looked very grave, as he scrutinized them with his keen professional eye. He called Nora aside, and told her that they were undoubtedly sickening with scarlet fever. Nora was startled, but immediately replied:

"Well, you know I've had that, so I'm pretty safe; and I think the best thing I can do is to stay to help to nurse them."

Dr. Blanchard felt that it was the only thing to be done, under the circumstances. It would scarcely do for Nora to return to his own house, as, even if there were no real danger of infection just then, his wife could scarcely have been persuaded of this, on the children's account.

"I knew we should have an unhealthy spring," he said, "if people *wouldn't* take precautions to have the sources of disease removed. It's disgraceful for men like Mr. Pomeroy to own such hovels as that in which you found Mrs. Travers. I hear there's one case of diphtheria in that region already, and there are sure to be more. If it spreads to their own houses, perhaps they'll wake up."

"Mr. Pomeroy's! Are those *his* houses?" asked Nora, and then she thought of his own luxurious mansion, his magnificent dinner, and the five-thousand-dollar-subscription—all in one rapid flash. Next moment, her mind was recalled to present considerations, as her brother observed, very seriously:

"I wish you could manage to keep Grace, as well as the other children, as much as possible out of the sick-room. Hers isn't a constitution to stand an attack of fever, and she would have it more severely than they."

Nora's heart sank. She was depressed at any rate, and she remembered the old, too true proverb that "misfortunes never come single."

Mr. Alden returned that day, to her great relief; and he at once undertook a large share of the nursing, which the strong, tender-hearted man could so well perform. Anxious as he naturally was, as to the result of this inroad of dangerous disease among his happy little flock, his faith would not allow him to indulge in useless worry; and the influence of his cheerful spirit cheered not only the little patients, in the natural fretfulness of sick children, but also the nurses themselves. The other children were sent away to the house of a relative, but Grace would not be persuaded to leave her post as eldest daughter, though kept, as the doctor had directed, as much as possible out of the sick-room. The little patients' cases proved light, and it was not long before Dr. Blanchard pronounced them out of danger. But, just as they seemed fairly convalescent, Grace was prostrated by the same disease, in a much severer form.

Dr. Blanchard's fears were only too soon verified. The fever ran its course very rapidly—exhausting her small strength in a few days. There was a short period of delirium in which all her talk was of fair and pleasant things,—woodland wanderings,—spring flowers,—intermingled with snatches of childish fairy-tales, and Christian hymns. Nora could always soothe the delirium a little, by singing Grace's favorite, "He Leadeth Me," or her own, "Lead Kindly Light." But when the delirium passed away, it was evident that the quiet which followed was the quiet of approaching death; and, before they could realize the impending calamity, the *real* Grace was gone. Only the fair form that had enshrined her happy spirit lay there, cold and inanimate as a beautiful statue.

The blow was to them all a stunning one. Nora could scarcely bring herself to believe that their bright little Grace was really *dead*! She had hoped to the last, doing everything that love and anxiety could suggest. Even when she stood by the still and rigid form in the "white raiment" that loving hands had covered with flowers, she could not get rid of the feeling that the living Grace was somewhere at hand, or cease expecting every moment to hear her familiar voice. It was almost the first time that death had come very near to her, and opened its unfathomable mystery at her feet. And, apart from her deep sorrow for her little friend, the new experience stirred in her heart the haunting questionings that come to us all, at such times of irretrievable loss.

Mrs. Alden was, very naturally, prostrated with grief and watching, and Mr. Alden had been shut up, either with his wife, or alone in his study, most of the time since Grace had quietly drawn her last breath; so that Nora had much to do and to think of, though one or two other friends came in to help. To her, however, was assigned the sad duty of taking in the two or three old friends who, notwithstanding the circumstances, desired to take a last look at the fair unconscious face.

Nora meantime had comparatively little time to think of the subject that had been so engrossing a few days before. It did recur to her again and again, in intervals of quiet;—but of course she had never ventured to intrude the matter on Mr. Alden at such a time. And she had been thinking, now, of Roland Graeme, with profound sympathy. She could easily divine the sorrow that the death of Grace must have brought to him. And she was not surprised, when, on the eve of the funeral, he appeared, looking sad and haggard, with the request that he might look on the sweet face once more.

"Are you sure it's safe for you?" she asked.

"I've had the disease," he replied, "but if I had not, I should still want to do this."

Nora took him to the door of the room, and, with true respect for his sorrow, left him to enter it alone. He stood by the coffin, silently, controlling his emotion, so that he might fix in his memory forever the fair angel-face with its aureole of golden hair, and the happy smile that the last sleep had brought. He could not think it *death*. After a time, the door opened, and Mr. Alden, looking ten years older, came softly in. He grasped Roland's hand in silence, then stood, like him, looking tenderly down on the marble face. At last he spoke in a broken voice:

"She is not dead, but sleepeth." There was another silence, till both turned to go. Then the father spoke again in a low, half-audible tone:

"My lamb—my own sweet, gentle lamb! If I did not know you were safe with the good Shepherd, how could I bear it!"

Roland Graeme left the house without a word; but Nora, who caught a passing glimpse of him—his usually happy eyes filled with tears—felt a stronger personal interest in him than she had ever done before. Somehow, he had always seemed to have so little personal stake in life, to live so completely for others and for the cause he had at heart, that he almost conveyed the idea of a transparency,—of a personality without much color of its own. After all, it is perhaps the faults and weaknesses of others that excite most interest in us; and Roland had seemed almost "faultily faultless." But this personal sorrow of his seemed to have emphasized his personality at last; and Nora, for the first time, began to think of him as an individuality, rather than as simply the champion of a worthy cause.

Of course Roland attended the funeral, walking behind Mr. Alden and Frank, with one of the younger boys. It was a warm and lovely day at the end of March, when the first robin's liquid notes were promising the coming spring, and the swelling buds were just beginning to diffuse a subtle fragrance. The grass in the cemetery was growing green, and nature herself seemed to breathe a soothing balm over the sorrowful hearts. After all was over, Mr. Alden remained a while behind the rest; and Roland, sharing his feeling, lingered too, not far off, unwilling to leave him—unwilling too, in his heart, to leave *her*!

At last, the stricken father raised his head, and, after a gesture that looked like a benediction over the new-made grave, turned slowly and reluctantly away. Roland silently approached him and the two set out on their homeward walk.

"'*I am the resurrection and the life*,'" said Mr. Alden; "if I did not remember that, I think my heart would break, to go and leave her there. But she's not *there*!" And then, as he looked back at the cemetery, lying peaceful in the sunset light, he murmured, half to himself, those beautiful lines of Whittier's, that have expressed the feeling of so many sorrowing hearts:—

> "Yet Love will dream, and Faith will trust,
> (Since He who knows our need is just,)

That somehow, somewhere—meet we must;
Alas for him who never sees
The stars shine through his cypress-trees!
Who, hopeless, lays his dead away,
Nor looks to see the breaking day,
Across the mournful marbles play!
Who hath not learned, in hours of faith,
The truth to flesh and sense unknown,
That Life is ever Lord of Death,
And Love can never lose its own!"

Roland was silent for a while. He did not share Mr. Alden's firm faith; yet, just then, he could not bear to think otherwise. At last, he ventured to say, in his gentlest tone:

"I like the way in which it has been put by a country-man of my own—a young Canadian poet, who has since gone to verify his 'faith':

"'I have a faith—that life and death are one;
That each depends upon the self-same thread;
And that the seen and unseen rivers run
To one calm sea, from one dear fountain-head.'"[2]

"Yes," said Mr. Alden, his sad eye lighting up; "I like that thought. Life *is* continuous, I'm sure. It is sweet to think of my little Gracie's purified life going on, under fairer, purer conditions. There seems to me a touch of truth in the old Greek saying, that 'whom the Gods love die young.' She was a little Christian from her infancy; but I used sometimes to fear for her happiness in this rude life of ours. She had such a tender and gentle spirit; with the moral sensitiveness of generations of Puritans so exquisitely keen in her, that a comparatively small wrong would give her great pain. We always tried to keep the knowledge of evil as far from her as possible. When she was a very little child, she would cry if she fancied that her mother and I had even a trifling disagreement. She was always our little peacemaker. But what she was, she was by the grace of God."

"Would you mind," said Roland, presently,—partly to give Mr. Alden's mind a little diversion, partly to satisfy a wish he had felt for some time,—"would you mind telling me what you think about some things that seem to me to stand in the way of my ever being what most people mean by a 'believer'?"

"Certainly, not!" said Mr. Alden, looking interested at once.

"Well, then," said Roland, "I never could believe that 'God is love,' and that he could create millions of people to be lost forever because they lived and died where they could never hear the story of Christ's life and death, never hear what people call the 'gospel,' or even because they could not receive it as literal truth. So I have felt as if I would rather trust to a vague, indefinite love, of which my own heart tells me, than to any such narrow gospel as that."

"Certainly, my dear fellow, I think you are perfectly right. I couldn't believe any such narrow gospel. It would be no 'good news' to me."

"Then you don't—" began the young man, with a puzzled air. "But I'm sure I've heard you, sir, in the pulpit, emphasize the Scripture declaration, that 'there is no other name given whereby man can be saved'!"

"Certainly! I could emphasize that truth everywhere—die for it, I trust, if need were. To me it is as precious as the love and Fatherhood of God."

"Then if there *is* 'no other name,' what becomes of those who never heard of it, but who are doing all they can—living up to the light they have? What can man do more?"

"I'm afraid most of us do a great deal less!" said Mr. Alden. "But I wish people would only read their Bibles with the intelligent common-sense with which they read other books;—history, for example. We Americans are always talking of our Declaration of Independence, just as Englishmen do of their Magna Charta. It affects the position, the freedom of every man, woman and child in this great country. We talk of George Washington as the deliverer of his country, of his heroism as affecting the destinies of every one in it, even the infant in arms! So we may speak of Lincoln's proclamation as freeing the black race in America. But does any one suppose that no one can benefit by these, except those who know the whole story of these deliverances, of the pain and struggle that led up to them, or of their complex relation with our whole social life and Constitutional history?"

"But then it seems to be presupposed that people are saved *through* hearing and believing the gospel, and you know Paul says that 'Faith cometh by hearing.'"

"Yes, but we are not told that it comes by the mere hearing of the ear! St. Paul was pleading with people whose business and duty it was to tell others what they knew. He was not talking didactic philosophy. And have we no sense of hearing but the outward one? How did Abraham know that he was to go out from the land he knew, to one of which he knew nothing? Just as you and I know that we are bound to help our suffering brothers! Don't we *hear* the voice, in the plea of misery! And don't you suppose that Abraham, of whom we have no reason to believe that he knew

anything definite as to the great Redeemer of the world, was just as much saved by Him as Paul was? People don't let themselves think enough to put two and two together here, as they do in any other matter whatsoever!"

"Then what is your theory of the Atonement?" he asked.

"My dear fellow, I don't attempt a theory. A theory, to my mind, is an attempt to force into a rigid mould of human formulæ, mysteries which, because they belong to the workings of infinite Wisdom and Love, are quite beyond the compass of human thought. Every theory I know fails miserably somewhere. The central doctrine of Christianity is far greater than any human theory, or all of them together;—one proof to me that it never was of human origin! I hold that its essence is greater, even, than the story of Christ's life and death and human character, great as these were, and all-powerful as they are to uplift and strengthen. For it is as old as life itself. *In the beginning* was the 'Word'—the expression of the divine Will to man! 'That was the true light, that lighteth every man that cometh into the world.' The Christ-light and the Christ-life have, I believe, always brooded over poor humanity, to raise it out of the abyss of sin and death. But for that end there had to be, I can only faintly imagine *why*, Divine suffering. 'I believe in the forgiveness of sins'—believe in it as much for my sweet Grace, as for the poor despised outcast. For all that we are learning to-day in the direction of heredity, tends to make us realize the immense natural differences of original constitution. But what is our best, compared with Infinite Purity, Infinite Love, which *is* Goodness?—

> 'As this poor taper's earthly spark
> To yonder argent round'!

And Divine Purity could not pass by moral evil lightly. I feel, as James Hinton said, that 'when I am most a Christian, I am the best man,' but I also feel that when I am the best man, I am most a Christian!"

"But then, the historical and literary arguments! Don't you find any difficulties there?"

"I have never had too much time to think of them," he replied. "I was thoroughly satisfied, on other grounds, before they came much in my way, and I've had my own work to do. I think, however, from what I have read on the subject, that they have been met, in a manner satisfactory to *me*, at least. But to my mind, religion is not a literary or historical question. Neither is it to be founded, as some tell us, on the witness of the intellect, which has neither compass nor rudder on that sea; nor, as others tell us, on emotion, which is variable and evanescent as these sunset hues."

"On what, then?" asked Roland, as he instinctively followed the direction of his eye.

"On something deeper than either; on the sense of *righteousness*, the deepest, truest consciousness of humanity. Speaking for myself, *I want God*—want the Divine Perfection, which is the same thing. I look for Him in Nature, but I cannot find Him there, except in hints and hieroglyphs. Nor can I find in Humanity the perfection I long for. I see imperfection and limitation in all, even the best! But what I want, I find in Jesus of Nazareth; nothing else satisfies me; *that does*. If I cannot see God there, I can see Him nowhere. I find in Him, as I see Him in the gospels, a moral beauty such as I could never of myself have imagined, but which, the more I know of men—even the best—the more I must appreciate and adore! It sometimes seems to me, that this age of ours is saying, like Pilate, and very much in his spirit, 'Behold The Man!' Well, the more it learns to truly behold the *Man*, the more it will be compelled to recognize that Manhood as Divine. I should have to become a different moral being, before I could cease to worship in Him the Christ, the only manifestation of the Divine that we are able to comprehend and grasp."

Mr. Alden had grown deeply moved as he continued to speak. When he ended, there was a thoughtful silence. After a little time he added:

"It is here I find my only rest in all perplexity, in all trouble—even in this one. But it is only he who is in deep and humble earnest for the right, who can understand. Only he 'who will do His will' can know this doctrine. But that is a 'salvation' each must work out *for himself*."

There was little more said during the rest of the walk. Mr. Alden's thoughts had gone back to his own sorrow. As they reached the familiar door, a thousand tender memories and associations rushed over him, and, for the first time in his life, he leaned heavily on his cane, as the father's heart found utterance in the scarcely audible exclamation—"Oh, my gentle child! my tender, loving little Grace!"

CHAPTER XXVII.

A THUNDER-BOLT.

Miss Blanchard felt she must remain with Mr. and Mrs. Alden till the two younger children were quite recovered, and the house had been disinfected. Then, after due precautions, she returned to her brother's house, the children, including Cecilia, being sent away, for a day or two, to one of Mrs. Blanchard's relatives. Nora had seized a favorable opportunity to tell Mr. Alden, in

confidence, the painful story that was burdening her mind. He was, of course, deeply interested, the more so that he knew, as Nora did not, the story of the child's rejected appeal.

He was, though surprised, not so much shocked as Nora had been; for he had formed, from his own observation, a tolerably correct appreciation of Mr. Chillingworth's limitations. He thought, most decidedly, that the man chiefly concerned should know the circumstances, as soon as possible, but he felt that the task of telling him was one which he himself was not the best person to undertake.

"Then who could?" Nora anxiously inquired.

"I think, my dear girl," he said, "that no one can do it so well as yourself!"

"Oh! but I *couldn't*!" she exclaimed.

"I think you could. I am sure you could if you made up your mind to do it. And, if it is right, you will make up your mind."

"But how? I could never begin!"

"Wait for your opportunity," he said. "You will surely get it, and I believe you will find the way, too, when the opportunity comes. There's no fear of *your* doing it cruelly."

Nora did not feel so sure. She feared that the very effort would make the disclosure come out harshly, whatever she might desire. But she accepted Mr. Alden's counsel, without further opposition.

One of her first cares was a visit to the hospital, where she found that "Mrs. Travers" had been in a very quiet and subdued mood, ever since the painful scene of her return. Miss Spencer expressed relief and approval when Nora told her of her determination.

"Only," she said, "unless he means to acknowledge her, it will be best that she should never know that he knows."

Nora assented. But how, she thought, would it ever be possible for *him*, of all men, to "acknowledge" a wife in such circumstances? She was very sad and thoughtful as she walked home.

That evening, it so happened that Mr. Chillingworth called at his usual hour—Mrs. Blanchard being out at a large afternoon reception, to which Nora naturally did not care to accompany her. Possibly Mr. Chillingworth had guessed as much, and hoped to find her alone. It was the first time he had been able to see her since the evening of the oratorio, and he was more effusive in his greeting, more genuinely sympathetic, than she had ever seen him. She found it almost impossible to command her thoughts, so as to keep up conversation. She could not keep them from darting off to the task that lay before her, and, all the time she was trying to reply to him, she was wondering when the "opportunity" would come, and whether she could be equal to it.

They talked of many indifferent things, of the financial success of the oratorio, of the beauty of the spring evenings, of the hyacinths and violets that were filling the room with fragrance, delighting Mr. Chillingworth's sensitive organization. He himself was in an unusually genial and happy mood, utterly unconscious, of course, of the abyss that was yawning at his feet. He had of late been indulging much in a day-dream that was ever taking more tangible shape. He was growing very tired of his solitary life, and he had been dreaming of the sweet companionship of a graceful and cultivated woman, which should refresh and rejuvenate his heart and life. The dream was uppermost in his heart, and very near his lips.

By and by, in spite of Nora's best efforts, the conversation flagged perceptibly. Mr. Chillingworth himself seemed indisposed to talk much. After a short pause he began, however, in a tone that was low, and more tenderly modulated than usual.

"It is curious how this spring weather seems to wake up all sorts of associations and longings in us; just as it wakes the stirring life in the flowers! Years ago, a blight—the result of a great trouble—seemed to come over my life. But it has gradually worn off, and of late I have been cherishing a hope that my life might yet blossom anew."

Nora's heart beat fast with affright. Her instinct warned her of what was coming. It must not come! *That* would be too horrible! She had no time to delay, so she rushed into the subject without daring to pause to think.

"Do you know," she said, surprising him by what seemed the utter irrelevancy of her remark, —"we have always been much interested in the history of little Cecilia's mother. And now it turns out that she is the wife of a man who still supposes her to have been lost at sea!"

The pallor of her face, the suppressed agitation of her manner in forcing in this interruption, must of themselves have explained much more than her words. Well—she had dealt the blow, she hardly knew how; but she would not look to see its effect. She was conscious of a deadly stillness in the room. The faint ticking of the marble clock on the mantel, the occasional fall of a cinder from the fire in the grate, the distant note of a robin, were the only sounds, unless the beating of her heart were audible, as she fancied it must be. The only other sensation she was conscious of was the floating fragrance of the hyacinths, which she ever afterwards associated with this scene.

He spoke at last—but it was only to ask, in a scarcely audible tone:

"What was her name?"

"Her maiden name was—*Celia Travers*," she replied, in a tone as low as his own.

It seemed a long time—it could not have been many minutes—before Mr. Chillingworth rose, and in a hoarse, low tone that he vainly tried to steady, said 'he must go now, as he had many things to think of.' She gave him her hand timidly, without raising her eyes to his face. He held it for a moment, with a pressure that hurt it,—raised it for a moment to his lips—and was gone. She knew it was a silent farewell.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

CONSCIENCE-STRICKEN.

For two or three days after that startling revelation, Mr. Chillingworth remained almost entirely shut up in his own study. He had truly, as he said, "many things to think of"—past, present and future. Miss Blanchard's few and simple words had been enough to reveal to him, with a lightning flash, the whole situation. The child's name, the likeness that had always vaguely troubled him, the associations and memories it suggested, her uncommon delight in music, all pointed too distinctly in one direction. Yet he had never even heard that he had a child! And he had been so sure that the "Celia Chillingworth," whose name he had himself seen among the "lost" in that great steamship disaster which had caused such a widespread sensation, must have been his unfortunate wife, that he had had no more doubt on the subject than if he had seen her laid in her coffin. He had written to his English agent, and had ascertained through his inquiries, that she had taken passage with her cousin, in the ill-fated steamer. What further certainty could he need?

Undoubtedly the intelligence of her death had been, in some sense, a relief to him. Yet another curious result had followed. This tragic event seemed to have obliterated the impatient disgust which had led to his harsh decision. For Mr. Chillingworth's character possessed none of the passionate impulse to *save*—the tender sympathy with the wrong-doer—the infinite patience and compassion that mark the human saviour of his fellows, as they do the Divine One, and that are most frequently found in the feminine nature; though Mr. Alden was a conspicuous proof that they are by no means exclusively found there. But death seemed to have passed a softening and idealizing touch over the harsh lines of the past, and his early romance, by degrees, lost its painful aspect, and retained only the romantic one. He had not been conscious of being harsh, and the sorrow he felt was only the natural ruth that any mind of sensibility must feel at the tragic severance of a life, the premature fate that had overtaken one so young and so beautiful. And he had gradually begun to think only of his "bereavement," not of what had gone before. He had never thought of remarriage till he had met Nora Blanchard.

But now, in the light of the peculiar Nemesis that had overtaken him, he could not feel so sure that he had done right! His own moral perceptions, at least, had grown within the last ten years. Originally, they had been very limited. He had been brought up, a much indulged only child, by a widowed mother, who plumed herself on her "evangelical views" and attached infinite importance to what she called the "saving of the soul," meaning by that much abused term, however, little more than a claim to a fair prospect of safety and happiness in another life. She was especially strong on the "deadliness of doing," the worthlessness of "good works." Accordingly, Cecil Chillingworth, though brought up, of course, to avoid open transgression and hate vice, had never in those early days that do so much to mould a man's mind, taken in the idea of the gospel as a great moral cure and spiritual power, the very essence of which must be love to God and man. He bad never been taught that salvation meant becoming Christ-like, and that to follow Christ was to care for others, to deny himself for his brother's good. He had no gross impulses to resist, and, having a natural devotional tendency, he had drifted on in a refined self-indulgence, of which he was quite unconscious. Notwithstanding his evident musical talent, his mother discouraged his becoming a professional musician, from a vague idea that it was "worldly"—a reason quite sufficient to deter himself. The clerical profession was the next most congenial, and he went through his preparation for it in due course, being, however, much more deeply interested in music than in theology, and never having passed through any crisis that could wake him up to spiritual reality. Soon after his taking orders and settling down in a curacy, he had met Celia Travers, and had fallen passionately in love. His mother had died two or three years before, and, as he had only himself to please, and as Miss Travers' employer encouraged a speedy marriage, it had taken place while the spell of her beauty still blinded him to all other considerations. After a time came disillusion to a great extent, a sense of lack of congenial companionship, and then the shock of the last discovery, the shame, and dread, and final separation, which he justified to himself as the "cutting off of the right hand;" although the consequences it was to avert were temporal, not spiritual.

After he came to America, a gradual change and widening of intellectual and spiritual horizon grew with maturing years. He at least learned to *see* Christianity differently. He caught up the current note of self-sacrifice, self-surrender. He was fascinated with an ideal spiritual beauty which called forth all his natural eloquence, and made him a popular preacher. But he had lived so completely in his ideals, that he had learned to worship *these*, instead of the realities that

inspired them. And his own failure to grasp the practical side of Christianity reacted on his teaching. The beauty of the Christian religion, as he saw it, enchanted his idealistic nature, much as the glory of a distant mountain-top might fascinate the wayfarer, who as yet had but little conception of the long and toilsome journey that lies between. He could, therefore, discourse glowingly on the divine ideal of Christian love, without saying one word which could penetrate the conscience of the most consistently selfish hearer—who will stand calmly a vast amount of generalities, provided, only, that you do not "condescend upon particulars." Moreover, Mr. Chillingworth had lived so completely in a world of his own, so apart from the ordinary human life about him, that he himself did not know the needs of his own people, the points at which their selfishness was strongest, the absolute blank that lay between what they professed to believe and its natural development in the practice of daily life,—a gap, that, as we have seen, unhappily existed in his own life.

In these days of solitary self-communing, conscience, however, began to assert its claims. The fact that other hands had cared for and tended the woman whose chief claim was on *him*, and the knowledge, from all he had seen of Miss Blanchard, in what light the whole affair and his action in it must appear to her who of late had been so much in his thoughts and hopes—all tended to open his eyes. In looking over some old sermons, in order to select a substitute for the one he could not write, he happened to come upon the one he had been writing on the day when Roland Graeme first made his acquaintance, and his eye chanced to fall on the paragraph in which he had been interrupted. Conscience, newly awakened, drove the shaft home. That "battle" he spoke of—how had he fought it? He could see, though dimly as yet, that the "battle with self" had never been fought at all—and, if so, what of the others? Heartsick and depressed, he felt, for the first time in his life, that he was a moral failure. The consciousness almost drowned the other pang—of a cherished hope shattered forever!

What he should do, he could not yet see. The future seemed all dark before him. To do anything, and to do nothing, seemed to him equally impossible. He could not even bring himself to ask questions, to put into tangible shape the nightmare that haunted him. While still in this miserable state of indecision, a stronger hand solved the question for him.

On the evening on which he heard the startling tidings, his trim maid, when she brought in his tea, asked if she might go to spend the night at her own home, on account of the illness of one of her little brothers. He assented,—mechanically—and she did not think it necessary to tell him that it was a case of diphtheria. Two or three days later, he felt sufficiently indisposed to send for Dr. Blanchard; when he found, to his surprise, that what he had thought an ordinary though severe sore throat was an incipient attack of that dreaded malady.

Dr. Blanchard urgently recommended the hospital, as the only place where he could be properly and safely treated; and he passively assented. Nothing seemed to matter much to him, just then. A cab was called, and the move was made without delay. And so, without any prearrangement, the husband and wife, so long and strangely separated, were once more brought together beneath the same roof.

CHAPTER XXIX.

RECONCILIATION.

A few days before Mr. Chillingworth's removal to the hospital, a very different patient had been taken thither, also sent in by Dr. Blanchard. This was poor Lizzie Mason, who had been taken ill during Nora's absence, and of whose illness Nora first heard from Miss Pomeroy, who had been specially active in looking after the "Girls' Club" while Miss Blanchard was on duty elsewhere. The story of Lizzie's illness was a sad one. The needs of the family had made her very anxious to earn a little more, if possible, and she had undertaken a kind of work that commanded higher wages on account of its inconvenience. It was that of spinning silk which had to be kept constantly wet by a spray of water, which, of course, kept the garments of the spinner more or less wet also. The obvious precaution of providing a water-proof suit, for this work, had not been deemed necessary by Mr. Willett; and Lizzie could not think of affording the outlay. So she worked on all day in damp clothes, running home afterwards, as quickly as she could, to exchange them. While the mild spring weather continued, no great harm resulted; but, as often happens in spring, it had suddenly become extremely raw and cold. Lizzie, leaving the overheated room in her damp clothing, had taken a chill, which in her weakened constitution had brought on a attack of pneumonia. Miss Pomeroy had been told of her illness, had gone to see her, and, by dint of cross-examination, had ascertained its origin. She went home in a white-heat of indignation, and told her mother the whole story, which, at first, Mrs. Pomeroy refused to believe. Yet when she was compelled to realize it, she suddenly burst into tears, for she was, after all, a good and well-meaning woman; and intermingled self-reproaches and self-defence in a most incoherent manner.

She wouldn't have believed Willett would have permitted such a thing—but how could she know anything about it? Only to think that such things should happen at her own door! She had been pitying the poor women on the other side of the globe, and here were girls in their own mill sacrificed like this! If she had only thought of looking into things a little more! Well, such a thing

would never happen again, if she could help it!

"And, in the meantime, Clara," she said, "you will go to Doctor Blanchard, and ask him, for me, to see this poor girl at once, and to do the very best he can for her. And she must get everything she needs, or fancies, to set her up again."

The result of which was, that Lizzie, after much persuasion, consented to go to the hospital for care and treatment, one inducement being the promise that she should be placed in the room of her friend, Mrs. Travers, who had been doing her best to assist the tired nurses in the busy time that the great increase of sickness had brought upon them. It need scarcely be said that she at once became Lizzie's devoted attendant—scarcely relaxing her watch for a moment, till Lizzie was pronounced somewhat better, with a tolerable possibility of recovery.

It was well that she had improved before Mr. Chillingworth's arrival. When Miss Spencer had learned that his case was pronounced an extremely severe and dangerous one, she thought it only right to tell his wife, who, from that moment, seemed to have no thought but for him. Indeed, she begged so hard to be allowed to take a share in the constant attendance he required, that Miss Spencer arranged for her doing so, on the express condition that she should keep well out of his sight, till the issue of the attack should be determined. Mr. Chillingworth, indeed, was not likely to notice any one just then. He was very ill, indeed, and lay most of the time with closed eyes, in a state of great suffering and prostration. His wife's whole being seemed absorbed in watching him with intense anxiety, doing everything for him that it was possible for her to do without being observed by him, and evidently availing herself greedily of the opportunity of once more gazing on his face—so changed, in some respects, yet so familiar, and still to her so dear.

"That poor thing is a heroine in her way," said Dr. Blanchard, on his return from one of his visits. "I never knew greater devotion, and after such an experience!"

He was of the three or four people who had heard the sad story, and Nora had to depend on him for all her information about the invalids; for Mrs. Blanchard, nervously afraid of infection, would not hear of her going near the hospital, even to see Lizzie Mason.

"Poor thing," exclaimed Mrs. Blanchard, sympathetically; "well, she has her turn now! How oddly things seem to come round!"

"She took me by surprise to-day," Dr. Blanchard continued, "when I found him so ill that I thought there was no hope for him but in the last resort—trying to suck out the membraneous stuff with an instrument."

"Oh, Will," exclaimed his wife, "I can't bear to have you do such things! You have no right to risk your life in that way—and all our lives!"

"If I had done it, I should not have told you now. I've done it before. Don't you know, we doctors are all under orders to risk life when it's necessary? We couldn't do much, if we weren't ready for that. And I should be a degenerate descendant of the brave Blanchards who fought for freedom, if I couldn't face death as readily to save life, as they did to destroy it. However, I haven't told you yet what surprised me. Just as I was going to do it, this poor woman pressed forward, whispering —"Oh, let *me*! It's *my* place!"—in such an agonized way, that I had not the heart to refuse her. I saw it was a real comfort to her. I hardly know whether I was right or not, but I let her do it."

"Of course you were right!" Mrs. Blanchard said, much relieved. "It *was* her place, as she said. I should have felt just so!"

Nora said nothing; but as she silently listened, the tears started to her eyes, at the thought of the words, "*Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much!*"

Whether or not it was this "last resort" that saved the clergyman's life, he began from that time slightly to improve. The violence of the attack abated, leaving it possible for him to secure the soothing and strengthening rest he so much needed. And, at last, Miss Spencer, who had been watching with deep interest the course of events, told the poor shy watcher that she need not continue to practise such caution in avoiding recognition. It would not hurt him, now, she thought, and it might as well come soon as late. But it happened, after all, in a way entirely accidental and unpremeditated.

With the first light of morning, Mr. Chillingworth awoke, at length, from a long, restful sleep. He had no idea that his wife was in the hospital, for he had not, of course, felt sufficiently interested in Miss Blanchard's *protégée*, to keep track of her history. And, since the disclosure, he had not yet dared to ask any questions.

But very probably, some chance token of a once familiar presence may have stolen into his mind, even through the prostration of disease. It is curious, what slight touches will start the springs of old associations. Mr. Chillingworth, at any rate, had been dreaming a long pleasant dream of the old happy days of his youthful love and marriage, of wanderings in English lanes and saunterings in leafy garden-walks, always with one fair face and graceful figure by his side, that had then seemed to hold the whole charm of life for him. As he awoke, he had been, in his dream, looking down at the familiar upturned face, with its gaze of happy, trustful love.

It seemed to him, when he opened his eyes in the bare hospital room, that he must be dreaming still. For, in a low chair beside the bed, sat, with her head resting on it, in a quiet sleep that had stolen irresistibly over her—the very original of his dreams. In the soft light that penetrated

through the drawn blinds, the traces left by years and suffering on the still lovely face were almost unperceived; the soft rings of dark hair curled low on the forehead just as he so well remembered them—lovely even in their slight disorder. And, even as he looked, the long lashes were raised, and the beautiful gray eyes were opened, in a shy, half-frightened, but fascinated gaze.

Mr. Chillingworth was just in that weak and helpless state, when—if ever in his life—a man yearns for the tender ministrations of a loving woman. Suffering and prostration had broken down the hard coldness of his nature, and it seemed as if he had become like a dependent child. The old love of the former days, stirred up by his vivid dream, seemed to thrill once more through his whole being, sweeping away all the barriers that years and circumstances had interposed. He feebly stretched out his arms, and by the irresistible impulse—strange influence that love can exert over the hardest will!—the long severed husband and wife were reunited in a close, instinctive, passionate embrace.

CHAPTER XXX.

AN EASTER MORNING.

If life is to be measured by happiness, the days that followed should have been reckoned by years for the poor young woman, so long defrauded of the rightful love of her life. To Mr. Chillingworth, they were days of strangely mingled happiness and pain. As, little by little, he learned most of her story, in the long, quiet days when husband and wife were left alone together, he felt, with deep humiliation, how great a wrong his impatient harshness bad done to her, and to himself. When she, poor thing, timidly spoke of "forgiveness," he passionately responded that it was *he*, not she, who needed to be forgiven. But, as yet, he could not, weak and prostrate as he still was, face the problem of the future.

That problem, too, was solved for him in a way he had little dreamed of. As he rapidly recovered, his devoted nurse could no longer conceal the fact that the dangerous malady had attacked herself. This was not, of course, surprising, since, she was as yet by no means strong, and had been so constantly shut up in the infected atmosphere. It did not take long for the disease to work its fatal way in her enfeebled constitution. Indeed, it seemed as if she had not the vitality left for any resistance. She had, evidently, but little desire for life, and she had learned to think of death without fear, much as a tired child thinks of its evening rest. As she lay, prostrated by weakness, scarcely speaking, but watching her husband's face and movements, the expression of the pale but satisfied and peaceful countenance seemed to say, "Now, let me depart in peace."

Mr. Chillingworth tried to speak to her of the hope that it is the minister's privilege to set before dying eyes, but his attempts seemed to himself weak and impotent. He had lived so long in a world of ideals and abstractions, that he had, in a great measure, lost the realizing sense of the simple gospel truths, so familiar to him from infancy. Reality seemed to have gone out of the things he had so long believed, and he sometimes wondered whether he had believed at all—whether he were not himself drifting into the position of an agnostic. He remembered a sermon he had once preached, about the rich young man who had come to the Master, but who, tried by too severe a test, had shrunk back from the required sacrifice, and had "gone away sorrowful." So, he thought, had he shrunk back from the cross laid on him, and, what right had he to call himself a follower of the Master? But, what was impossible to him, had been long ago done by others. Other guidance than his had led the poor wanderer to the Divine and forgiving Helper, in whom alone rests the hope of the true penitent; and she, who had "loved much," felt herself forgiven.

The end came very soon. Her constitution made so little resistance that the suffering seemed the less severe. As the fair spring morning of Easter Sunday dawned, it was clear to the solitary watcher that all was nearly over. He tenderly held his wife supported by his encircling arm, watching her as she looked at him wistfully, with a faint smile of recognition, scarcely able to speak.

"It—is—far—the best thing,—Cecil!" she said, in words disjointed and scarcely audible; "you'll take care of Cecilia—she'll be a comfort to you—by and by!"

Then the eyelids drooped, and her husband, bending low, could only catch faintly the words, "Forgive us our trespasses, as we——"

He repeated the words with her, and finished the sentence. As he did so, he found that he was alone with the dead.

Gently he laid back the lifeless form, kissed the cold brow, and sat for a little while, reluctant to break the spell of the solemn stillness, and absorbed in the thought of the remote past which had now swallowed up the present, and of that unseen future which he vainly tried to grasp, and which seemed to him so shadowy. But, as he knelt in prayer, he registered a silent, passionate vow, that, henceforward, his life should be lived, to the utmost of his power, in the spirit of that unselfish love which he had preached so long and practised so little. The sharpest conflicts are often those which take place in silence and solitude, without any outward sign; and human lives

are shaped and moulded to higher uses as silently as were the Temple stones of old.

As he slowly turned at last, to leave the room, the golden light of the new day broke in upon him from without, and he heard the silvery chimes of the Easter bells ushering in the morning that commemorates the Resurrection.

CHAPTER XXXI.

AN UNEXPECTED PROPOSAL.

Nora Blanchard had remained in Minton longer than she had originally intended, delayed partly by her interest in the events that had been taking place, partly because she would not go till she had made some arrangements for the future of little Cecilia. Of course, it had been impossible that the child could see her mother in those last days, and the task of breaking to her the truth that she should see that mother no more had been to Nora a terribly trying one. She soothed the child's passionate grief, as she best could; but she could not venture, as yet, to intrude upon it what she felt would be the unwelcome intelligence of her relationship to Mr. Chillingworth. When the latter, by Dr. Blanchard's advice, went away for a time to recruit at a noted health-resort, he gladly accepted Miss Blanchard's offer to take Cecilia with her to her home at Rockland for the summer, until he should be able to make up his mind as to his future arrangements. The secret of his sad story was known to very few, and those few were not likely to make it more generally known.

Meantime Lizzie Mason had made a tolerably satisfactory recovery, and had been sent back to her home, but she still had a cough which neither Nora nor Dr. Blanchard liked to hear. Miss Blanchard had formed one of her impulsive plans for transplanting the whole family to Rockland. If she could get employment for Lizzie and Jim under Mr. Foster, the benevolent mill-owner there, they would all be so much better off in the healthy, pleasant country place, and Jim would be away from his bad companions, and, by and by, he and Nelly might settle down. Lizzie's eyes sparkled with pleasure as Miss Blanchard unfolded this project.

"Oh, if it could only all happen, Miss Blanchard, it would be just lovely!" she said.

And Nora made up her mind to try to accomplish it. She was, herself, thinking longingly of the green fields and budding woods of Rockland in these early days of May; and she was growing impatient for the sight of the wild flowers that she knew were blooming fresh and fair in her favorite woodland nooks. And yet, she felt very unwilling to leave her friends in Minton, her little nephews and nieces, the "Girls' Club," and all the other interests that had engaged her thoughts daring the winter. But as the married sister, who had been staying with her family in the old homestead at Rockland was soon to take her departure, Nora's return could not be long delayed.

She bad seen a good deal of Roland Graeme of late. He had called repeatedly to bear the latest report of the progress of the invalids, in whom they were both so deeply interested. His own saddened expression, so different from the bright, eager look natural to him, and what Nora had said about his attachment to Grace, had enlisted Mrs. Blanchard's kindly feeling, and she hospitably urged the young man to come to see them often. With Nora he had always many common objects of interest, but the chief bond of sympathy, now, was the sweet memory of Grace, about whom Roland liked to talk freely when alone with Miss Blanchard, sure of her full comprehension. And he, in turn, felt for her more sympathy than was perhaps needed, on the score of the disappointment he thought she had experienced in Mr. Chillingworth. She, happily, was thoroughly cured of the incipient fancy, which had not been strong enough to seriously affect her happiness, though the moral shock could not but leave its mark—a mark which, but for the solemn experiences she had passed through, immediately after, would have been much deeper.

Roland had need of all the comfort and sympathy she could give him, for he had various troubles just then. The people who delight in inventing or propagating malicious gossip had been making such mischief as they could. Nora's indignation had been roused more than once, lately, by hearing the incident of his appearance at the police-court on behalf of their unfortunate *protégée*, distorted into a story discreditable to Roland on the score of such an acquaintance. And, as she could not possibly give the true history of the affair, her indignant defence was received with somewhat incredulous and significant smiles, excessively annoying to her chivalrous nature. Many people, indeed, were only too glad to catch at a substantial reason for looking askance at Roland Graeme.

But personal annoyances did not, after all, trouble him so much as did his growing anxiety about Waldberg, which also, to some extent, he confided to Miss Blanchard. The "boy" had got fairly into the vortex of speculation, so far as his very limited means would permit. Some fatal successes had greatly intensified his ambition. He was dreaming wild dreams of "making his pile," and carrying off Kitty in triumph; for he had no doubt that "Old Farrell" would "come round" if he could only satisfy him financially. And he knew, too well, that Kitty was thoroughly tired of her engagement, and that, but for her father's strong opposition, it would have been broken long ago. The truth was, Mr. Farrell had lost heavily of late through various causes, and his own affairs were not in nearly such a flourishing condition as was generally supposed.

Mr. Archer had also become a frequent visitor at Dr. Blanchard's, and had been, as Mrs. Blanchard observed, "very polite and attentive." He was fond of riding in the fine spring afternoons, and, as Miss Blanchard was a good horsewoman, he had urged that, since she was looking rather pale and languid, she should have a ride or two with him, Miss Pomeroy's horse and habit being readily placed at her disposal. Her brother warmly seconded the proposal. It was, he said, just the sort of tonic she needed, after all she had been through. Accordingly, they had two delightful rides into the country, during which Mr. Archer exerted himself to be more agreeable than she had ever known him, for he knew by this time what Nora liked, and he could throw off his half-assumed tone of cynicism when it pleased him. He led the way to the prettiest spots in the neighborhood, where they alighted to pick wild flowers. As they were returning from the last of these excursions—Miss Blanchard with a knot of hepaticas on her breast—they met Roland Graeme, who had been giving himself the refreshment of a country walk. He looked somewhat wistfully at the two riders. He was, himself, very fond of the exercise, and Miss Blanchard was looking remarkably well, the rapid exercise having brought the color to her cheek and the sparkle to her eyes. He could not help feeling a pang of envy—a wish, that just then he could be in the place of the prosperous-looking, well-appointed Philip Archer.

"Graeme's looking fagged out, these days!" remarked Mr. Archer. "His philanthropy seems to be too much for him."

Nora made no reply; for she could not talk over Roland's troubles with Mr. Archer, who always patronized "Graeme."

"It's too bad of you, Miss Blanchard," he continued, "to go off and leave all your friends here, just when they've got to depend on you. The Girls' Club will be left desolate. Miss Pomeroy and Miss Farrell will never be able to keep it up without you."

"I think they will do very well," she said, laughing.

"And Mr. Graeme will miss one of his warmest sympathizers," he added, looking at her scrutinizingly. He saw no trace of any consciousness and went on, lightly: "And what will you do with yourself in Rockland? By your account there are no wrongs to right in that happy Arcadia."

"Rest, and be thankful," she retorted, in the same tone.

When he spoke again, there was an undercurrent of real feeling struggling through the lightness of his tone.

"Now, Miss Blanchard, you know philanthropy is decidedly your vocation; you ought to have a subject always at hand. Couldn't you now—" he hesitated, and she looked at him inquiringly, "couldn't you now—take a fellow like *me* in hand, and try what you could do with him? I assure you—you wouldn't find me a bad subject!"

His tone made her begin to comprehend his meaning, but she was too much surprised to have words ready. He spoke again, more pleadingly, "Won't you try, Miss Blanchard? I do think you could make something of me, if you cared enough to try?"

His manner had forced Nora to understand him at last. She was divided between surprise at the unexpected proposal, and involuntary annoyance that it should have been made without the slightest reason to suppose that it would be accepted. However, she managed, she hardly knew how, to convey to him, in a few rather curt words, the fact that such a thing was utterly impossible, that she was sorry he should have thought of it. She regretted, afterwards, that she had been so abrupt in her refusal. But she had no need to trouble herself. Mr. Archer's self-satisfaction was not likely to be permanently disturbed by any such experience; and it is even possible that, on cooler reflection, he did not altogether regret that his rather impulsive offer had been declined; for it would have been, he felt, rather a strain for him to try, for any length of time, to "live up to" such a girl as Nora Blanchard!

In order to break the somewhat awkward silence that followed during the last part of their ride, Mr. Archer remarked that he was afraid "Old Farrell" would be in financial trouble, now.

"Why?" asked Nora, interested on her friend's account, and glad of a diversion from the former subject.

"Oh, I suspect he's been playing high, lately, in stocks. There's been a rapid rise for some days, in B. & B., and I believe he stood fair to make a big score. Every one thought a further rise was sure. But I believe they've come down with a run to-day, and I'm afraid he and a lot of the smaller fry that follow his lead, will get pretty well caught."

"Oh, I hope not—for Kitty's sake!"

"Oh, Miss Kitty's all right, you know! I imagine the old fellow was very glad to get Pomeroy secured for her; for I rather think he's been feeling a little shaky of late."

Nora was very silent during the short remainder of her ride. She was thinking, not only of Kitty, but of Waldberg and Roland Graeme.

CHAPTER XXXII.

A NARROW ESCAPE.

When Roland sat down to dinner that evening with Mr. Dunlop, who generally preferred to dine with the two young men, Waldberg did not make his appearance as usual. After dinner, Roland went up to his room, ostensibly to write. But he did not write much; he was too much concerned about his friend. Mr. Dunlop, who kept himself well informed as to financial matters, had told him of the rumored collapse in certain stocks, the rapid rise of which had been exciting great general interest. Roland knew that Waldberg had been watching them with a feverish; though sanguine eagerness, which it pained him to see. And now he feared for a crushing disappointment.

Two or three hours had passed, and still no Waldberg appeared. Roland was just thinking that he must go out to look for him, little as he knew where to look, when he heard the door below open and close much more softly than usual, and what he recognized as Waldberg's familiar step—though it was strangely soft and slow—mounting the stair, and passing into his own room. Then all was silence for a time. Roland listened,—more anxious than ever, since Waldberg did not, as usual, come in to tell him his news. After a time, he heard him moving about in his room, opening drawers, as if searching for something. Unable any longer to resist the strong impulse of anxiety, he rose, walked softly to Waldberg's room, and entered without knocking. His misgivings were only too well justified. The young German was standing in front of the mirror, with something in his up-lifted hand. Roland made a dash at his hand, not a moment too soon. The next instant, he was conscious of a strange sensation in his own shoulder, which made him stagger back, caught by the bewildered Waldberg.

"Roland! Mein Roland! Why did you that? Now I am done for!"

Roland sat down, feeling somewhat faint, as he tried to pull off his coat, exclaiming, as he did so, "Waldberg! how could you think of such a senseless, cowardly thing?"

"Ah, you know nothing! I am in despair! But first I must see about this. Did the thing go through?"

An examination showed that the bullet had but grazed his shoulder, leaving a somewhat severe flesh-wound which Roland declared a mere trifle. Waldberg, who had had some experience in German students' duels, had set to work to bandage it, when a step in the passage without made Roland rouse himself and go out to see who it was. It turned out to be Mr. Dunlop, who had been awakened by the report, and had come, in some alarm, to discover what was the matter. Roland told him that an accident had happened, which had given him a mere scratch; and he went back to bed, growling a little and only half-satisfied. When he had gone down, Roland was glad to sink down in an easy-chair, while Waldberg completed a temporary dressing, that would serve till morning, as Roland insisted that there must be no fuss made about it that night. When it was done, he insisted on knowing what had tempted Waldberg to such a mad and reckless step, adding:

"I'm only too glad the lead went across my shoulder instead of into your brain!"

"Oh, well, you see, mein Roland, I was desperate! It was mad, I know, but indeed I knew not what to do! However, you shall know all, if you must."

He told the story in German, partly for the sake of privacy, partly because when agitated he generally relapsed into his mother tongue. It was a sad and too common tale. He had been desperately anxious to make all he could, in the venture to which he had been encouraged by the opinion of such an "expert" as Mr.

Farrell and one of his clerks—that it was a "sure thing." He had embarked in it all his own little resources, only regretting that these were not greater, as he had the expectation of at least a ten-fold return.

"Pity you couldn't put in another five hundred!" his adviser had said; "couldn't you borrow it?"

"No," Waldberg had said. He couldn't ask Graeme, and Mr. Dunlop would never lend his money for speculation. "Get him to sign a note—you needn't say what for," said his tempter; "you'll be able to pay twice over before a month's past."

Just when he was most anxious for this additional stake, chance threw a temptation in his way. He found, in a book of Mr. Dunlop's an envelope on which he had written his own name, "Alexander C. Dunlop," with "*Minton*" below, evidently intended to be enclosed in a letter to some stranger, for the purpose of containing a reply. The sight of this put into his mind the idea of writing, above the signature, a joint note with his own signature above Mr. Dunlop's, the word, "Minton" coming in for the date. He cherished the thought, till it proved irresistible. It would only, he thought, be borrowing Mr. Dunlop's endorsement for a loan he would soon be able to repay. Without letting himself realize the wrong of it, the thing was done. And he had been counting on making an additional five thousand out of the five hundred he was now borrowing.

But now, contrary to the most confident expectations, the tide had suddenly turned—quotations had come down with a rush, and Waldberg, with many others, had lost his whole venture. And how was he, thus left penniless for the present, to face Mr. Dunlop when the note should fall due? He had drunk enough to "prime himself," and had come home to seek a rash release from his

troubles.

Roland was terribly shocked. He could not understand how Waldberg could have done such a thing as this. But he saw that he was utterly wretched, and he would not add a straw, by reproach, to the burden he bore. "I shall be disgraced for ever," he said, "and it's all up now, about Kitty!"

"You shall not be disgraced, Hermann!" he said. "I know you will never do such a thing again. I think I can manage it so that no one will know, not even Mr. Dunlop; and *he* wouldn't be hard on you if he did; he's really fond of you!"

"But how, then?" asked Waldberg, bewildered in his turn.

"I can let you have a hundred dollars now, or when the note falls due. And I shall ask Mr. Dunlop to lend me the other four hundred for a time on my own note and yours. He'll do it if I ask him. And you can make it up by degrees."

"Oh, Roland, you're the best friend any fellow ever had! Indeed, you may be sure I'll never try such a thing again! My heart's been like lead, ever since I did it. But *you're* hurt now—and I know it's all up with Kitty!" he groaned.

"And, Hermann, whatever happens, never again try that cowardly plan of shirking the consequences of your own actions. It was only making bad ten times worse. Think of the stain it would have left on your name; and how your friends would have felt!"

Happily no one else slept near, and no one but Mr. Dunlop had been alarmed by the noise. Roland quietly retired to his own apartment, where Waldberg would not leave him, until he had seen him settled for the night as comfortably as possible; and then went to try to sleep off his own excitement: while Roland, now suffering a good deal, lay awake—satisfied, however, with having, in a double sense, saved the life of his friend. He got up and dressed next morning, though unable to move his arm, and, in reply to all inquiries, would vouchsafe no further explanation than that he had given to Mr. Dunlop. And, somehow, the story got about that he had discovered a burglar who was intending to rob the rich old Scotchman, had wrested his pistol from his grasp and frightened him away. Mr. Dunlop, whose shrewdness suspected more than he knew, said nothing, and asked no questions, even when the loan was asked for without explanation. He had learned to trust Roland, absolutely, and he at once granted his request. But he insisted that Roland should have medical treatment for his shoulder, which was now giving him a good deal of trouble, and himself sent for Dr. Blanchard.

"I don't much care whether ye pay me or not, lad," he said, as he handed Roland his cheque for the sum asked for. "I don't expect to need this world's goods very long. I've always thought I should go off suddenly, like the snuff of a candle; or what's happened to Farrell may happen to me, too."

For, on the evening of the "crash," Mr. Farrell had had a paralytic, stroke, evidently the result of his anxiety and disappointment. It did not, however, seem likely to be fatal; but he was completely helpless, and no hope was given of his ever being less so. His losses had been, very heavy, and, as his business would now have to be wound up, he would be left with only a small proportion of the fortune he had been supposed to possess.

Nora, before she left town, paid a visit of condolence to Kitty, whom, to her surprise, she found by no means overwhelmed by the sudden reverse of fortune. Except for her natural sorrow for her father's helpless condition, indeed, Nora would have thought her rather brighter than when she had last seen her. And, by and by, she learned the secret.

"It's all over between Harold Pomeroy and me, Nora. I think he was very glad to get out of it, when I told him he could have his freedom and his rings back. Hermann can't give me a *diamond* ring," she said, holding up her finger, "but this is a signet ring his mother gave him, and I'm to keep it till he can give me a plain gold one."

"Why, Kitty!" exclaimed Nora. "Is that how it is?"

"Yes," said Kitty, "when Hermann heard of papa's misfortune he came to sympathize. And, of course, we've known we've loved each other this long time, only I didn't know how I could break with Harold; it would vex father so, though I knew *he* didn't care very much. But since poor papa's been ill, he doesn't seem to mind about anything.—And so it's all settled. Hermann and I are to be married just as soon as he's able to take a little cottage by the river, and papa and mamma are to live with us. And I'm to sweep and dust, and make my own dresses, and be as happy as the day is long. I'm sick of doing nothing!"

Nora could not help laughing outright at the idea of the petted Kitty, whose forefinger had hardly ever been pricked by a needle, making her own dresses, and finding it delightful. However, she kissed her, and said she hoped she would be as happy as she expected;—forgetting altogether the slighted affections of Mr. Harold Pomeroy.

"And mind," said Kitty, "you're to come to the wedding, whenever it is! I want you for my bridesmaid, and Roland Graeme is to be groomsman."

"Very well!" said Nora, laughing, and so they parted. Roland Graeme, chafing under the temporary imprisonment enforced by his wound and its effects, which had been both painful and

tedious, regretted very much, when he heard of Miss Blanchard's approaching departure, that he should not be able to see her before she went. Something of this regret he had expressed to Dr. Blanchard, who still visited him occasionally. He was sitting by his open window, one warm May morning, thinking longingly of woods just bursting into leaf, and all the country sights and sounds to which he had been accustomed, long ago, when a note was brought to him. He knew that the handwriting was Miss Blanchard's and opened it eagerly. It did not take long to read the few cordial lines:

"DEAR MR. GRAEME,

"I am so sorry I cannot see you before I go, to say Good-bye, and wish you God-speed. I was very sorry, too, to hear of your accident, but I trust you will soon be quite restored. I hope you will come by and by, to visit us at Rockland, which is always lovely in *June*. The change of air will do you so much good, my brother says, and my father bids me say that he will be delighted to make your acquaintance, and I shall be happy to show you all our sights, including Mr. Foster's model mills.

"Meantime, with kindest regards, believe me

"Your sincere friend,

"NORA BLANCHARD."

Roland read this note several times over, before he folded it up and put it carefully away. And the somewhat languid and wistful expression that his face had worn before, was brightened, now, with the pleasure caused by the kindly words and the still more pleasant vista it called up before him. The enforced *rôle* of an invalid had been to him a new and unwelcome experience, and the temporary prostration left by the injury, at a time when his naturally vigorous *physique* had been a good deal run down by overwork, was particularly trying to his energetic spirit. But the mental picture that the note had conjured up, of June and woods and flowers, added to the grateful sense of Miss Blanchard's kind consideration, appealed to the underlying, inextinguishable poetry of his nature, and sent his thoughts off on a refreshing day-dream, far away from the smoky factories, the feverish competitions, the exasperating wrongs, and all the tangles and worries of life in Minton.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

IN ARCADY.

"And what is so rare as a day in June?
Then, if ever, come perfect days;
Then Heaven tries the earth if it be in tune,
And over it softly her warm ear lays."

The familiar lines rose to Roland's lips, as he came out of the quiet little country inn at Rockland, on a charming Sunday morning in that fairest of months. He had arrived late the evening before; and had put up, in the first instance, at the little hotel. As he took a stroll that morning about the outskirts of the pretty village, nestling under the shelter of wooded hills, beside a placid little inland lake reflecting in its liquid mirror the weeds and hills in their first summer verdure, he thought of Thoreau's "Walden," and wished that he could set up a little hermitage of his own, somewhere amid these green recesses. But a hermitage would never have contented Roland Graeme. He was, first and essentially, a lover of man. Even now, his eye rested with strongest interest on the large group of buildings, surrounded by neat white cottages, which he knew by instinct was Mr. Foster's "model mills."

But, this morning, as be whiled away an hour or two before church-time, in leisurely lingering through the "vernal wood," the balmy odors and the birds carolling among the trees seemed of themselves to breathe a refreshing influence—smoothing out, as if by magic, the creases of the winter's toil and worry, and inspiring with new life his somewhat jaded spirits and overtaxed nervous system. And a stranger thing than this happened to him. With the new, marvellous beauty of the summer landscape, that burst on his gladdened eyes like a revelation, there seemed interfused a higher, more subtle influence. How, he knew not—such things pass our knowing—and doubtless many things led up to it; but there and then, it seemed to him that the chilling mists of doubt had almost passed away from his soul He felt that once more the beliefs of his childhood were realities to him, though in an infinitely grander and more spiritual conception of them. He felt the divine Father and Saviour, the brooding Spirit of love and strength, closer and more real than the lovely vision around him. And he felt that he should never lose them more.

After that moment of exaltation, it was pleasant to go into the pretty little church, and sit there, in a remote corner, while the people passed in silently, in little groups. He soon saw Miss Blanchard and Cecilia, the latter, in a pretty white dress and broad straw hat, grown much taller than when he had first seen her, and showing now; he thought, traces of resemblance to her father, as well as to her mother. With them, he easily recognized the tall, portly, white-haired old gentleman to be "Squire Blanchard," as the people called him; and the lady with the silver curls

clustered on a broad forehead, and the calm, loving, earnest eyes, as the "Aunt Margaret" of whom Nora had so often spoken. Only Cecilia, however, looking about her as children do, espied him, with a grave look of recognition, but without drawing the attention of any one else to his presence. It was pleasant too, after the service, and the simple, earnest sermon, to wait at the church door for Nora's bright, glad look of recognition, as she warmly greeted him and introduced him to her father and aunt. Mr. Blanchard pressed him to return with them at once, but he declined this, promising to come over in the afternoon and take up his quarters for a few days in the hospitable old-fashioned house, which could always accommodate half a dozen guests, if need were.

Accordingly, after the early dinner at the hotel, Roland made arrangements to have his traps sent to Mr. Blanchard's next morning, and set out with his satchel for the large white house which had been pointed out to him, on a gentle slope beside the lake. He passed the little rapid, stream that rushed into the lake at the outskirts of the village, affording water-power to the busy mills, and, after a pleasant walk by the lake shore, reached the large old house with its pillared portico and side piazza, standing at some distance from the road, and approached by a pretty drive, winding through a clump of pines and varied shrubbery. As he approached the house, he saw a graceful, white-robed figure, with a white-trimmed garden hat, rise from a shady corner of the lawn and come toward him, book in hand.

"This is our out-door drawing-room," Nora said, as she conducted him to a wide-spreading beech, under whose shade stood some garden-seats, where were seated her father and aunt. Cecilia, hovering about in the distance with a fine mastiff, came up and met his kindly greeting with evident pleasure. Mr. Blanchard, who thoroughly justified Mr. Alden's description, as "a worthy representative of an old Puritan family," entered at once into a conversation with Roland on his favorite subjects, in which the elder Miss Blanchard joined, with a clear insight and breadth of thought that surprised and impressed the guest, who speedily felt thoroughly at home. The lovely June afternoon passed only too quickly under the beech, till they were called in to the hospitable tea-table, tempting in its dainty simplicity, in the large dining-room, where the fragrant evening air came in through open windows which framed charming pictures of the lawn without, and the trees waving in the slanting sunlight.

"You, who have this all the time, can scarcely appreciate the beauty of it," remarked Roland, enthusiastically. "It takes eyes tired of the sights and sounds of a busy city, to enjoy these pictures as they deserve."

"Yes," said Mr. Blanchard; "I suspect contrast is an element that enters into all our enjoyment at present. Yet, I suppose the contrast need not always be between the fair and the ugly, but may be between different kinds of beauty."

"I hope so!" said Nora, eagerly. "I don't want contrasts like those wretched houses of Mr. Pomeroy's to help me to enjoy this. By the way, Mr. Graeme, I must show you to-morrow the cottage I hope to get in a week or two for the Masons. And Mr. Foster will take Jim in, if he will come. Lizzie of course can't work now."

"I think Jim will be glad to come, now," replied Roland. "One of the men told me that Nelly had thrown him over altogether. And I fancy he'll be glad to get out of Minton."

"Well, perhaps it's the best thing for *him*!" said Nora. "But what of Nelly?"

"That I don't know," replied Roland, while Aunt Margaret asked Nora if she couldn't get hold of this poor girl, too; for she had already heard the history of all of Nora's friends.

"You will be glad to hear," said Roland, "that Willett has parted company with the mill. He gave warning because he said he couldn't keep things straight, if Mrs. and Miss Pomeroy *would* come about interfering. And Mr. Pomeroy had the good sense to accept his warning. So, now, my friend Turner has the place. And a very good manager he will make."

"Oh, I am glad of that!" said Nora. "And so Mrs. Pomeroy really does take an interest in the girls generally?"

"Oh, yes! she has quite waked up about it, I hear through Mr. Archer. She has begun to take quite a motherly charge of them. She is very anxious that Lizzie Mason should recover; indeed she feels most unhappy about it."

"Poor Lizzie!" said Nora, with a sigh. "And how is Mr. Farrell?"

"Much the same, I believe. He is very much like a child, and seems to take no interest in money matters now. The smallest things are sufficient to amuse him. Mr. Dunlop goes to see him sometimes. He's got an idea that he may have a similar experience, and he says it's a lesson on the vanity of human things to see Farrell now, after his long struggle for riches which would be nothing to him now if he had them."

"Ah," exclaimed Aunt Margaret, "how true it is, that, as a quaint old poet says, 'We dig in dross, with mattocks made of gold'!"

"And how is Kitty?" asked Nora.

"Oh, I am always hearing her praises sung," said Roland, smiling. "According to Waldberg, there never was such a girl. She is so bright, so contented, so helpful, such a support to her poor, weak

mother, in the necessary retrenchments, the going to a small house, and all that! But I am sure that her own real happiness has a good deal to do with it."

"Dear little Kitty!" said Nora. "I am glad she has come out so well. She is a good-hearted little thing, though she used to seem to me a little frivolous."

"She would have been, I'm afraid," Roland remarked, "if adversity hadn't come in time to save her."

"Ah, I see that you're something of a philosopher," remarked Mr. Blanchard. "You believe that 'Sweet are the uses of adversity.'"

"I've found them so, myself," he replied, simply; "if it were only in enabling me to sympathize more with the troubles of others."

Nora amply fulfilled her promise of showing Roland everything that she thought would interest him about Rockland. He went, with much interest, over Mr. Foster's well-managed establishment, saw with pleasure its well-ventilated work-rooms, its well-stocked reading-rooms, the neat cottages of the *employés*, each with its little garden, and all the arrangements by which economy and convenience were combined. He had some long talks with the public-spirited proprietor, and found that that gentleman fully agreed with him, in all his ideas about hours, remuneration, etc., and put them in practice as far as it was possible to do under the present system.

"But, of course," he said, "there must be either concerted or legislative action, before they can be fully carried out."

Then there were pleasant country expeditions with Miss Blanchard and Cecilia; walks and drives, or rides, and some delightful rows on the beautiful little lake, exploring its rocky shores and picturesque woodland nooks. And in these happy loiterings, the dreamy and poetical side of Roland's nature came out more prominently than Nora had ever seen it, kept down, as it had been, by his philanthropic cares. He was full of little poetical fancies, and many a favorite quotation rose readily to his lips, as they slowly rowed or walked home in the sunset light. Nor did he enjoy less their musical evenings, when Nora sang to him the songs he asked for, and little Cecilia was delighted to exhibit her own attainments, which were certainly very remarkable, considering her age, and the short period of training she had enjoyed.

The days passed all too swiftly for Roland; perhaps for Nora, too. They stood out through the hot busy weeks that followed, like Arcadian days, or rather like an interlude of inexpressible happiness, or flowing streams in a thirsty land. Such similes, at least, Roland's fancy easily found for them in abundance.

One evening, shortly before the too early close of Roland's visit, Mrs. Blanchard arrived with the children, for a lengthened stay. She was expected, but she brought with her an unexpected visitor—Mr. Chillingworth. Both Roland and Nora felt as if the unalloyed pleasure of the preceding days was somewhat shadowed now, but they were sincerely sorry for the pale and altered man. Cecilia, too, shrank shyly away from his awkward efforts to be affectionate to her.

"Mr. Graeme," said Mrs. Blanchard, "my husband wants you to take Mr. Chillingworth in hand, while you're here—to take him out to walk or fish, or anything you can get him to do. He's sunk into such a state of nervous depression, the doctor's quite afraid for him."

And Roland did his best, though at the cost of some self-sacrifice, for this, of course, put an end to the pleasant wanderings with Nora.

The evening before Roland was obliged regretfully to take his departure for Minton, as they all sat enjoying the pleasant summer twilight without—just passing into a glorious moonlight, Mr. Chillingworth was asked to give them a poetical reading, and, at Nora's request, made choice of Lowell's "Vision of Sir Launfal." He read it with heartfelt expression, especially in the stanzas that described the experiences of the returned and awakened Sir Launfal:

> "Sir Launfal turned from his own hard gate,
> For another heir in his earldom sate;
>
> An old, bent man, worn out and frail,
> He came back from seeking the Holy Grail;
> Little he recked of his earldom's loss,
> No more on his surcoat was blazoned the cross,
> But deep in his soul the sign he wore,
> The badge of the suffering and the poor.
>
> The leper no longer crouched at his side,
> But stood before him glorified,
> Shining and tall and fair and straight
> As the pillar that stood by the Beautiful Gate,—
> Himself the Gate, whereby men can
> Enter the temple of God in Man
>
> And the voice that was calmer than silence said,
> 'Lo, it is I, be not afraid
> In many climes, without avail,

Thou hast spent thy life for the Holy Grail;
Behold it is here,—this cup which thou
Didst fill at the streamlet for Me but now;
This crust is my body, broken for thee,
This water His blood that died on the tree;
The Holy Supper is kept, indeed,
In whatso we share with another's need,
Not what we give, but what we share,—
For the gift without the giver is bare;
Who gives himself with his alms feeds three,—
Himself, his hungering neighbor, and Me'

Sir Launfal woke as from a swound—
'The Grail in my castle here is found!
Hang my idle armor up on the wall,
Let it be the spider's banquet hall;
He must be fenced with stronger mail
Who would seek and find the Holy Grail.'"

As he ended, he closed the book, and went silently out to stroll in the moonlight that was flecking the lawn with silvery lights and soft shadows from the spreading trees, while Nora and Roland also stepped out on the piazza, to enjoy the beauty of the night.

"I think Chillingworth has found out *that last* truth for himself," said Roland. "And I know I've found, too, that I needed stronger mail than I once supposed. I too have been seeking for a 'Grail'—a panacea which is to be found only where I had stopped looking for it! But I think, if all Christian teachers were like Mr. Alden, I should have found it sooner."

Nora looked up with an eager look of pleasure. And then she turned away her eyes, glistening with a happy light and a glad emotion she could not quite conceal.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

LOOKING FORWARD.

"Fetters and warder for the Graeme!"
SCOTT. *Lady of the Lake.*

The two months that followed passed very quickly for Nora, more quickly than they did for Roland, in the hot, dusty town. She had her visitors from Minton,—Mr. Alden, who, came down, an ever-welcome guest, for a fortnight's rest, and told her of Roland's unwearied labors and his growing influence in Minton; and Miss Spencer, who came for a few days of refreshing change from her hospital wards. Lizzie Mason and her family were now settled in the cottage that Nora had secured for them. And Lizzie was intensely happy in the possession of a tiny flower-garden; though it was only too evident that she was in a settled decline, and would not, probably, see another summer. But, though quite aware of this, she was full of a serene peace that often recalled to Nora the "Story of Ida," which she had lent to Lizzie, in the days of their first acquaintance, and which had not been without results in a nature so fitted to receive its teaching.

One warm evening, late in August, Nora was slowly returning from a visit to Lizzie, when she heard a rapid step behind her, and, looking back, saw to her surprise, the very person she was at that moment thinking about—Roland Graeme.

"Why," she exclaimed, with astonishment, "I had no idea *you* were so near!"

"I only came down by this evening's train," he said, in a grave tone, as he shook hands, looking earnestly at her with an expression that brought the color to her cheek; "and I was just coming to report myself. There were some things I wanted to be the first to tell you."

They walked on, very slowly, up the drive, and turned aside to the seats under the beech-tree, Roland saying little till then. Both, indeed, seemed to have very little to say.

"I suppose," he began, "you have heard of Mr. Dunlop's sudden death."

"Yes,—Will wrote to us about it," she replied. "I knew it would be a great sorrow to you. You would miss him so much."

"I do,—more than I could have believed," he said, warmly. "He was so honest, so true, so practical, so kind-hearted, under all the seeming roughness. He has been the kindest of friends to me."

And he was silent for a little. Nora was silent, too. The whippoorwill in a neighboring thicket, indefatigably piping away at his interminable refrain, had it all to himself for awhile.

Then Roland spoke with an effort: "I almost hate to say it," he said, "for it seems heartless to speak of such things now; but Mr. Dunlop always said he would rather die suddenly, like that.

And—I must say it some time—he has left the bulk of his property to *me*. Why, I cannot tell."

"Oh," exclaimed Nora, "I am so glad!"

"It is," he said, "in some measure, a *trust*. He left it to me, he said, in his will, because he knew that I should use it as he should wish it used, and could trust me fully. And in this light I mean to regard it. I have made my plans already. But there's one thing that it makes possible for me, that was not possible before,—to ask you for something that would be better than all this world's treasure to me. Can't you guess what it is,—dear?"

The last words were scarcely audible, as he bent to meet her sweet upward glance. Again the whippoorwill had it all to himself, and piped away more cheerily and industriously than ever, as if inspired, in his own love-making, by a human example. What he may have afterwards heard—is not to be repeated here. Philanthropists and reformers are not much wiser than other people, in such circumstances, and it would not be fair to "report" them. Besides, it might get into the "*Minerva*"—a thing, which of course, would be most distasteful to both.

They sat, for a long time, planning for the future, and trying to realize the present. It all seemed so natural, *now*. Their lives had been running so long in the same current of views, feeling, hopes, aspirations, that it seemed inevitable that the two streams should become one. Roland was not afraid, however, to speak of Grace, whose sweet memory, he said, he could never cease to cherish. His life would be the better always, for his reverential affection for her and for the uplifting effect of her death.

"And so," he said, after a long talk, "I shall keep up *The Brotherhood*, of course. By and by it may have a real influence in the country. I shall not go on with law, though I am glad to have learned what I know; it will be so useful to me, hereafter. And a few of us are planning starting a factory in Minton, on the coöperative plan, as an experiment in that direction. I expect to be able to give a lecture, now and then, and I hope, also to do something by writing, outside of *The Brotherhood*. I have had an article accepted already by the *American Review*.

"Oh, have you!" exclaimed Nora, delighted.

It was like Roland not to have said this till now.

"And I am to help Mr. Alden in his 'Good-fellows' Hall'—give them a Sunday afternoon address, sometimes. Perhaps—I don't *know*—but, some time, I might be even 'a preacher,' of Mr. Alden's sort. You would like that, dear, I know." Nora did not speak, but the expression of her glad eyes was enough.

"And how are Kitty and Mr. Waldberg?" asked Nora, by and by, with natural fellow-feeling.

"Oh, as happy as turtle-doves!" said Roland. For lovers can always see something amusing in the devotion of another pair of lovers, serious as is their own. "Waldberg is already looking out for the cottage of the future. He has steadied down, and forsworn speculation forever. Mr. Dunlop left *him* a legacy, too."

"And what of Harold Pomeroy? Has he found consolation yet?"

"I don't imagine he needed any. I don't know much of him. I met that poor Nelly, the other day, very much overdressed. I don't think she works in the mill, now."

"I wonder if he kept his promise to me," said Nora thoughtfully.

"Oh, some men's promises are poor things!" he replied. "By the way, I haven't told you of Miss Pomeroy's engagement to Mr. Archer. It's just been announced. I asked him if I might congratulate him, and he said, in his usual way, he supposed I might if I liked,—it wouldn't do any harm."

Nora laughed outright. But not then, nor for long after, did Roland know all the reason for her amusement.

"And Wharton's gone for a trip to Europe," he continued. "People say he's gone to look up Miss Harley; *he* says it's to inquire into the labor question over there. Whether she or Mr. Jeffrey converted him, I don't know; but he has certainly changed his position very much."

"And have you seen Mr. Chillingworth lately?" asked Nora.

"Yes," he replied, "I see him, now and then. His manner is always wonderfully kind, though I'm sure he can't have the pleasantest associations with me."

"Oh," said Nora, "I think you are wrong, there! He told Aunt Margaret that you had been of the greatest use to him, in helping him to realize, once more, truths that seemed to be drifting from his grasp."

"I'm sure I don't know how!" said Roland, simply, "but I'm glad if it is so. I hope poor little Cecilia will be happy with him. She will be a wonderful comfort and interest to him, by and by."

"I think," said Nora, "that she really is getting to be a little fond of him. She was a great deal with him, while he was here, and he is making all sorts of plans for her education. Oh, I *hope*——"

Roland understood the thought which she did not express.

"I think," he said, quietly, "that she has enough of her father's self-contained nature to help to keep other things in check. We must hope for the best. But Mr. Chillingworth is certainly a greatly changed man. I heard him preach lately, and there was such a new note in him, less 'eloquence,' but much more of human sympathy! Well, we've all our limitations; and I've learned to see that 'The mills of God grind slowly, but they grind exceeding small!' I can see that I've been too much in a hurry for results that *must* take time to bring about."

"Yes; that's a mistake that we are all apt to make, in some way," said Nora, with a sigh. "But some lines of Browning that I read, the other day, were quite a comfort to me, in thinking of our mistakes. Let me give them to you.

> "'God's gift was that man should conceive of truth,
> And yearn to gain it, catching at mistake,
> As midway help till he reach fact indeed.'"

"If we ever do!" replied Roland, sighing, in his turn. "But, even if it be only a 'midway help,' I can't help still hoping to see some reforms, like the 'eight-hours movement' and some other restrictive measures, carried out in my lifetime. The abolition of slavery looked much more hopeless, a generation or two ago!"

"But even these won't bring perfection and happiness, alone," said Nora, thoughtfully. "There must also be a higher moral ideal, and a higher strength in which to attain it."

"Oh, yes, I've learned that lesson," he replied, quickly. "I know that Law is not Love, nor the knowledge of right, alone, the power to reach it. I know, too, that, as Mr. Alden so often says, there's only one thing that can set this poor world really right, and that is, the growth of the *brother-love*! And that must come from the Source of Love. Yet, we must all help on, as far as we can. I take comfort in a thought I found in my Thoreau—'The universe constantly and obediently answers to our conceptions; whether we travel fast or slow, the track is laid for us. Let us spend our lives in conceiving them. The poet or the artist never yet had so fair and noble a design, but some of his posterity at least could accomplish it.'"

"'*And still it moves!*'" quoted Nora, softly; and there was a long silence, once more. And, in the quiet dusk of the August evening, the whippoorwill piped on untiring; as the world, after all, is always singing its old songs over again, if only our ears are not too dull or too tired to hear them.

THE END.

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[1] For several passages in quotation marks in this chapter, the author is indebted to Henry George's works, to "Labor and Capital" by Edward Kellogg, and to articles in the "*Popular Science Monthly*," by George Iles, and Benjamin Reece.

[2] George Cameron.

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