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THE COWARD.

A NOVEL OF

SOCIETY AND THE FIELD

IN

1863.

BY HENRY MORFORD.

AUTHOR OF "SHOULDER-STRAPS," "THE DAYS OF SHODDY," ETC.

PHILADELPHIA:
T. B. PETERSON & BROTHERS,
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TO
THE PATRIOT PRINTERS OF AMERICA—
THE MEN WHO
HAVE FURNISHED MORE SOLDIERS
THAN ANY OTHER CLASS
IN COMPARISON WITH THE WHOLE NUMBER OF THEIR CRAFT,
TO
THE DEAD HEROES OF THE WAR FOR THE UNION
AND
THE LIVING ARMIES THAT YET BULWARK ITS HOPE,—
THIS
BLENDING OF THE FACTS AND FANCIES
OF
WAR-TIME,
IS
DEDICATED BY THEIR BROTHER-CRAFTSMAN,

THE AUTHOR.

New York City, July, 1864.

PREFACE.

Some persons, taking up this work with expectations more or less elevated, may possibly lay it down with disappointment after perusal, because it does not discuss with sharp personalities, as the title may have led them to suppose, the conduct of some of those well-known men connected with the Union Army, who have disgracefully faltered on the field. But the truth is that the Union Army has mustered very few cowards—so few, that a distinguished artist, not long ago called on to draw an ideal head of one of that class, said: "Really it is so long since I have seen a coward, that I scarcely know how to go about it!" The aim of the writer, eschewing all such tempting personalities, and quite as carefully avoiding all dry didactic discussion of the theme of courage and its opposite,—has principally been to illustrate the tendency of many men to misunderstand their own characters in certain particulars, and the inevitable consequence of their being misunderstood by the world, in one direction or the other. No apology is felt to be necessary for the length at which the scenery of the White Mountains, their actualities of interest and possibilities of danger, have been introduced into the narration; nor is it believed that the chain of connection with the great contest will be found the weaker because the glimpses given of it are somewhat more brief than in preceding publications of the same series. In those portions the writer has again occasion to acknowledge the assistance of the same capable hand which supplied much of the war data for both of his previous volumes.

New York City, *July 1st, 1864.*

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THE COWARD.

CHAPTER I.

A June Morning of Eighteen Hundred and Sixty-three—Glimpses of West Philadelphia—The Days before Gettysburg—the Two on the Piazza—Margaret Hayley and Elsie Brand—An Embrace and a Difference—Foreshadowings of Carlton Brand, Brother and Lover.

A wide piazza, with the columns made of such light tracery in scrolled plank-work that they seemed to be almost unreal and gave an appearance of etheriality to the whole front of the house. The piazza, flecked over with the golden June sunshine that stole down between the branches of the tall trees standing in front and shading the house, and that crept in through the network of twine and climbing roses clambering almost up to the roof from the balustrade below. The house to which the piazza adjoined, large, built of wood in that half Flemish and half Elizabethan style which has of late years been made popular through cheap books on cottage architecture and the illustrations in agricultural newspapers,—two and a half stories in height, with a double gabled front that belonged to the one, elaborate cornices and work over the piazza that belonged to the other, and a turret in the centre that belonged to neither. A wide, tall door opening from the piazza, and windows also opening upon it, sweeping down quite to the floor. Altogether a house which approached more nearly to the "composite" order of architecture so much affected by wealthy Americans, than to any one set down in the books by a particular designation; and yet shapely and imposing, and showing that if the most unimpeachable taste had not presided over the erection, yet wealth had been lavishly expended and all the modern graces and ornaments freely supplied.

In front of the house, and sweeping down to the road that ran within a hundred feet, a grassed lawn lying in the lovely green of early summer, only broken at irregular intervals by the dozen of trees of larger and smaller sizes, round which the earth had been artistically made to swell so as to do away with any appearance of newness and create the impression that the roundness had been caused by the bursting of the trees farther out of the ground through many years of vigorous growth. Beneath one of the largest of the trees—a maple, with the silver sheen almost equally divided between its bark and its glossy leaves, a long wooden bench or settee, with two or three sofa-cushions thrown carelessly upon it, as if it formed at times a favorite lounge for a reader or a smoker. On the piazza a triad of chairs, irregularly placed and all unoccupied. One of the two folding doors leading into the halls from the piazza, wide open, as became the season, and the other half closed as if a single puff of summer breeze coming through the hall had become exhausted before closing it entirely. One of the windows opening from the piazza into what seemed to be the better part of the house, closed entirely; and the other, with the shutters "bowed" or half open, permitting a peep into a large parlor or sitting-room, with rich carpet and

handsome furniture, but kept dusky under the impression (more or less reasonable) that thereby additional coolness would be secured.

Near the house, on both sides, other houses of corresponding pretension though displaying great variety in style of architecture; and in front, across the wide road, still others showing to the right and left, and the whole appearance of the immediate neighborhood evidencing that it was neither country nor city, but a blending of both, suburban, and a chosen spot for the residences of those who did business in the great city and wished to be near it, and who possessed means and taste to make so pleasant a selection. Still farther away in front, as seen between the other houses and shrubbery, and stretching off southward in a long rolling sweep, rich agricultural country, with some of the hay-crop yet ungathered, broad fields of grain receiving the last ripening kiss of the sun before yielding to the sickle or the reaping-machine, and fruit-trees already beginning to be golden with the apples, pears and peaches glimmering amid the leaves. A quiet, gentle scene, with evident wealth to gild it and perfect repose to lend it character; and over all the warm sun of a June morning resting like a benediction, and a slight shadow of golden haze in the air softening every object in the perspective. Occasionally a pedestrian figure moving slowly along one of the foot-paths that bordered the wide road; and anon a farm-wagon loaded with early produce and on its way to market, rumbling by with such a sleepy expression on the face of the driver and such lollings of the ears of the full-fed and lazy horses, that the episode of its passage rather added to than detracted from the slumberous quiet of the prospect.

Then another passage, very different and not at all in keeping with any of the points that have before been noted. An officer in full uniform, with the front of his chasseur cap thrown high in defiance of the glare of the sunshine, spurring by on a high-stepping and fast-trotting horse, eastward towards the city, with such life and haste in every movement of himself and the animal he bestrode as to momentarily dash the whole view with unquiet. Then the equestrian figure out of sight and the beat of his horse's hoofs heard no longer; and the scene relapsing into that languor born of the June morning verging rapidly towards noon.

Then a sudden sound, still more discordant with the drowsy peace of the hour than the sight of the spurring soldier, and still more painfully suggestive of war in the land of peace. The quick, sharp rattle of a snare-drum, but a little space removed, and apparently passing down one of the lateral roads in the neighborhood, dying away with a light tap into the distance a moment after, and quiet coming back again yet more markedly after so incongruous an interruption.

The place, West Philadelphia, half a mile or more beyond the Schuylkill, not far from the line traversed beyond the bridge by the Market Street cars, and near the intersection of that branch of the main artery known as the Darby Road,—in the outer edge of that beautiful little section with its tall trees and plats of natural green, out of and into which the shrieking monsters of the Pennsylvania Central Railroad dart every hour in the day with freight and passengers to and from the Great West. The time, late in June, 1863, a few days before Gettysburg, when the long-threatened invasion of the North by the rebels had become for the moment an accomplished fact, when Lee and Ewell had crossed the Potomac, swept on through Upper Maryland, entered Pennsylvania, devastated the farms and carried away the stock of the farmers on the border, laid York under a contribution, burned the barracks at Carlisle, and threatened every hour to capture Harrisburgh and force the passage of the Susquehanna. When women and children, and by far too many of the able-bodied inhabitants who should have shown more pride if they indeed possessed no courage, had fled away from the Seat of Government of the Keystone State, and the public records were following them to prevent their falling into the hands of an enemy known to be destructive and revengeful, and for the moment believed to be irresistible. When the rebels themselves boasted that they were about to teach the North all the horrors of war that had fallen upon the South in the long contest,—and that in a few days they would water their cavalry-horses in the Delaware, if they did not achieve the same success at the very banks of the Hudson; and when the newspapers of New York and Philadelphia, for the moment completely discouraged, gave up the line of defence of the Susquehanna, and gravely debated, whether a check could indeed be made at the Delaware, with the loss of the Quaker City, or whether the great struggle must at last be transferred to the Hudson hills of New Jersey. When the Reserves were mustering in Philadelphia, and the Coal Regiments forming in the haunts of the sturdy miners. When the Pennsylvania coal-mines were to be set on fire by the invader, and left to burn on until all the fuel of the nation was destroyed, if the "great conflagration" of the whole earth did not follow as a result. When more placards calling for the defence of the State, were exhibited in the neighborhood of old Independence Hall, than had ever shown there, inviting the idle to amusement, in the most prosperous seasons of opera, theatre and concert-saloon—drums beating at every corner, brass bands blowing on every square, patriotic appeals and efforts to recruit on every hand, and yet the people apparently lying under bodily apathy or mental paralysis. When Governor Seymour, of New York, and Governor Parker, of New Jersey, waiving the political question for the moment, were calling out the troops of those States to the defence of Pennsylvania; and when the militia of the city of New York and the returned nine-months volunteers of New Jersey were showing themselves equally ready to respond to the call. When the Army of the Potomac seemed for the moment to be nothing, even for the defence of the North, Hooker discredited, no successor discovered, public confidence lost, the very darkest day of the struggle at hand, and no man able or willing to predict what might be the extent of disaster reached before the rolling back of the tide of invasion from the homes of the loyal States.

Such were the place, the time, the surroundings, and the atmosphere (so to speak) of the house of the blended Flemish and Elizabethan styles of architecture, at West Philadelphia, of which,

thus far, only the outward aspects have been presented. Yet there may be an inexcusable neglect of the proprieties, in presenting a house, its green lawn, shady trees, and even the pleasant landscape stretching away in front of it, before those living figures which would certainly have attracted the attention of an observer in advance of any of the inanimate beauties of art or nature.

Those figures were two in number, both standing on the piazza, very near the trellis of climbing roses, and where the flecks of sunshine fell through the leaves upon them and dashed them with little dots and lines of moving light, as well as the floor upon which they stood. Both were girls—both young—both beautiful; at least each possessed that combination of features, form and manner, making her very pleasing to the casual observer, and certain to be reckoned beautiful by some one admitted to a closer knowledge of the spirit enshrined within. They were evidently dear friends; for as they stood near the trellis, and the hand of the taller of the two plucked a half-open rose from one of the clusters, and she playfully tried to coax it to a fuller opening by breathing caressingly upon it and separating its clinging leaves with her dainty fingers,—the arm of the other was around her waist, and both the trim and graceful forms were slightly swaying backward and forward in that pleasant, idle, school-girl motion which the grown woman does not easily forget until it has given the "fidgets" to half her elder acquaintances.

The taller and perhaps by a year the elder—she of the rose—was the daughter of the mistress of that pleasant summer paradise, born to wealth and position, and her birth registered some two-and-twenty years before in the predecessor of the heavy family Bible with its golden clasps, which lay in state in the parlor so near her, as Margaret Hayley. She was a little above the average height of womanhood, and might have seemed too tall for grace but for the exquisite rounding of the lithe form, the matchless fall of a pair of sloping shoulders that could not probably be matched within a radius of an hundred miles, the graceful carriage of a neck that would have been long if less elegantly poised, the beauty in shape and spring in motion of the Arab foot under which the water would have run as easily as beneath a bridge, and the supple delicacy of the long taper fingers with their rose-tinted nails, which seemed perfect and high-blooded enough to have a mission of playing among heart-strings as the fingers of others might do among the chords of a harp.

In feature the young girl had quite as many claims to attention. The hair was very dark and very profuse—so near to black that it needed the sunlight before the golden shadows in the dark brown became fully apparent—swept plainly down on either side, in the madonna fashion, from a brow that was very pure, high and clear. The face was handsomely moulded, rather long than broad, as beseemed the figure, rather pale than ruddy, though with a dash of healthy color in each cheek that belied any momentary suspicion of ill health; the nose a little long and somewhat decided, but very classic in outline and finely cut at the nostril; the eyes dark—so dark that a careless observer would have lost their brown and called them black, and their expression a little reserved if not sad and even sometimes severe; the mouth small and well-shaped, with the lips as delicately tinted as the faintest blush-rose in the cluster near her, but a shade too thin for the exhibition of exuberant passion, and showing a slight curl of pride at the corners of the upper; the chin rounded, full, and forming a pleasant point for the eye to rest upon as it descended from the face to study the contour of neck and shoulders. The first appreciative glance at her was certain to be followed by the suppressed exclamation: "How very handsome!" and the second by a thought that the lips did not syllable: "How very proud and queenly!" It might have needed many more than a third, before the gazer could go to the full depth of a very marked character, and say how much of that queenly bearing might be ready to bend at last to the magic touch of the softer passions, and how much of that evident goodness and firmness might be employed in conveying happiness to others than herself. Among her peculiarities, she seemed to despise stripes, plaids, sprigs, spots, and the other endless varieties of color in material; and the lawn which swept that morning around her erect figure was of a neutral tint and as devoid of spot as were arms, ears and neck of any ornament in jewelry except a small cameo at the throat, a slight gold chain around the neck and descending to the bosom, and a single cluster diamond sparkling on the forefinger of the right-hand that was dallying with the spirit hidden among the rose-leaves.

No more telling contrast to the tall, majestic girl could well have been supplied, than her neighbor and dear friend, Elsie Brand (Elspeth, baptismally, for reasons that will hereafter develop themselves, but always called Elsie by those admitted to the least intimacy.) She was at least four inches shorter than Miss Hayley, round and rather plump, though very graceful in figure, with a chubby face, ruddy cheeks, piquant nose, merry blue eyes, pouting red lips, full hair coming low down on the forehead and of that pale gold which the old Scotch poets immortalized as "yellow," in so many of their lays of the bardic era. Pretty, beyond question, but more good and attractive-looking than beautiful; and if a second look at Margaret Hayley would have induced an observation having reference to her pride, a second at Elsie Brand was certain to bring out the thought if not the speech: "What a charming, good little girl!" Perhaps a third, with persons not too severely in training for the great Olympian races of morality, was very likely to create such a sensation as one experiences in gazing at a lusciously ripe peach, having particular reference to the pulpy red lips with their funny pout and kissable look, and ending in a wish that the crimson love-apples of the modern Hesperides were not quite so zealously guarded.

Elsie had not yet passed her twenty-second birthday, though she had been "of age" for a good many twelvemonths, in the estimation of those who had come near enough to her to feel the beating of her warm heart. Doctor James Holton, graduate of the Pennsylvania Medical College, and lately a student with one who had been a student with David Hosack, held his own peculiar

estimation of Elsie Brand, and had almost been driven into rank atheism from the necessity of both holding and proving that the theory of our springing from one common father and mother could not possibly be correct, as the clay of which Elsie was made had been so very different—so much purer, sweeter and better—from that employed in the moulding of ordinary mortals!

For some minutes the two young girls had been standing in silence, Margaret engaged with experiments on her opening rose and Elsie with one arm around her and lazily observing the operation—both apparently full of that indolent enjoyment born of ease, content, and the languid air of the summer morning. Then the little one spoke:

"Margaret, do you know of what I have been thinking for the last two minutes?"

"Haven't any machine by which I could pry into the droll secrets of your brain, Elsie, my dear!" answered the taller, pleasantly, but with no smile upon her lips meanwhile, and apparently with all her attention yet absorbed in her horticultural experiment.

"Shall I tell you?" queried Elsie.

"Certainly, pet, if you like!" was the reply, the tone, as well as the word of endearment, showing indefinably that Margaret Hayley thought of herself as a woman and yet of her companion (of nearly the same age) as little more than a child.

"I was thinking," said the little girl, "how much of character is sometimes shown in the action of a moment, and how very different we are."

"Who thought your little head was so philosophical, Elsie?" answered Margaret, and this time she for a moment deserted her rose and looked around with a pleasant smile. "Well, the application of your thought to yourself and to me?"

"Oh," said the little one. "It was only about the rose. I should have plucked it, if I plucked it at all, and enjoyed it as it was. You are trying to make something else out of it, and yet show no wish to destroy the flower. A cruel woman—different from either of us, I hope—would probably be plucking off the leaves one by one and throwing them away, without caring how much pain she might be inflicting on the life of the flower, hidden away down somewhere in its heart."

"A very pretty idea, upon my word!" said Margaret, ceasing to blow upon and pluck at the leaves, and turning upon her companion a countenance showing something like surprised admiration. "And what do you make of my character, Elsie, as shown by my handling of the rose?"

"You must not be angry with me, Margaret," answered the young girl, a little in the spirit of deprecation. "But you see *I* should have been satisfied with the rose as it was, and the other would have been cruelly dissatisfied with it in any shape, and you——"

"Well, dear? I——"

"You showed that you were not entirely satisfied with every thing as it was, and that you had a little self-will leading you to force things to be as you chose, by trying to make that poor little flower outrun the course of nature and bloom before it was quite ready."

"I think you are right, Elsie," said Margaret, nodding her head in that slight and repeated manner indicative of answering the mind within quite as much as any observation from without. "I am *not* satisfied with every thing in the world, Elsie. I am not cruel, I hope and believe; but I am sharper, harder, more requiring than you, and consequently not formed for half so much true happiness. I *do* feel like forcing things to be what I require, sometimes, and then I suppose I grow unamiable."

"You are never any thing else than a dear good girl, with a wiser head than my rattle-pate, and my own sweet sister that is to be!" and the arm of the speaker went still more closely around the slight waist it encircled. A blush as delicately roseate as the first flushings of dawn crept over the more classic face that bent above her own, the lips above came down to meet those pouting below, and the two young girls were kissing and embracing as if they had been two lovers of opposite sexes but very much of one opinion as to the best office of the lips. Any delicately-nerved old bachelor who should have happened to pass in front of the house at that moment and catch a glimpse of the scene just then enacted on the piazza, would certainly have fainted away on the spot, at the idea of such a waste of the most delicious of "raw material."

"You may have the rose for your lesson—you see I have not spoiled it, after all," said Margaret, when the kiss had been given and the rosy flush died away from her own cheek.

"To give to Carlton?" asked Elsie, as she held out her hand for it.

"No, Carlton must come after his own roses!" was the reply, with the least dash of pride in the curling of the upper lip.

"And pluck them himself?" asked saucy Elsie.

"Certainly!"

"No matter where he finds them growing—on tree, or on cheek, or on lips!" continued the young girl, with a light laugh.

For an instant the same flush rose again on the cheek of Margaret Hayley; then she forced it away, smiled, and said:

"Certainly! why not? Carlton Brand kisses me, sometimes, and I have more than once kissed him back. What is that to you, sauce-box, when we are engaged to be married?"

"What is that to me? Every thing! Joy—happiness—to know that I am going to have so dear a sister!" cried the little one, throwing both her arms, this time, around the pliant waist of Margaret and hugging her in a perfect transport of delight, which seemed quite shared in, though more tranquilly, by the object of the demonstration. [Pg 40]

The saddest, cruellest thing in all the lyric drama is the blast of De Sylva's horn on Ernani's wedding morning, calling him in one instant from happy love to dishonor or death. Neither in romance nor in nature should such sudden transitions occur. Alas, for humanity! they do occur in both, not occasionally but habitually. The Duchess of Richmond's ball—then Waterloo. De Joinville springs on board his flag-ship to sail for the attack on Vera Cruz, in the very ball dress in which he has been dancing the whole night through with the republican belles at Castle Garden. The Pall is over every thing of earth: how sadly and how inevitably it droops above the Banner! No scene upon earth could have been more exquisitely peaceful, and few could have been lovelier, than that which surrounded and comprehended those two fair girls in their embrace upon the piazza. Wealth, youth, beauty, good feeling, happiness—all were there; and love blent with friendship, for was not the embrace, given by Elsie Brand and accepted by Margaret Hayley, both given and accepted quite as much for her brother's sake as her own? It was fitting, then, according to the sad fitness of earth, that the element of discord should enter into the peaceful and the beautiful.

The officer spurred by, as we have seen him do, gazing only with our incorporeal eyes. Both the young girls, just releasing each other from their embrace, saw the dark cloud of war sweeping between them and the sunlit grain fields. Elsie Brand shuddered and drew back, as if the incongruity jarred her nature. Margaret Hayley instantly lifted her proud neck the higher, as if something in *her* nature sympathized with every suggestion of the struggle, and as if she was, indeed, insensibly riding on with the hurrying horseman.

"And what does the shudder mean, little one?" asked Margaret, who had plainly distinguished it at the moment of release. [Pg 41]

"I hate war, and every thing connected with it!" was the reply, the tone almost petulant.

"And I do *not* hate it, painful as it may be in many particulars," said Margaret. "Force and energy are the noblest developments in life. Bravery is the nearest possible approach to that divine character which knows no superior and consequently fears none."

"Nearer to the divine than *love*?" asked the little one.

Just for one instant, again, that roseate tint on the cheek of Margaret, as she said: "Nobler, if not nearer to the divine; and sorry as I must be to see the bloodshed caused by a civil war in my native land, I am almost glad that it has occurred, sometimes, as a means of rousing the sluggish pulses of men who would otherwise have stagnated in trade and pleasure, and proving that we yet possess something of the hero spirit of old."

"And *I* am sorry for it all the while, night and day, in my prayers and in my dreams," answered Elsie Brand, with a sigh. "Hark!" as the tap of the drum came across from the lateral road before-mentioned. "There is another reminder of the curse, and one that comes nearer home. Do you remember, Margaret, that I shall soon have a brother, and you a lover, separated from us and in terrible danger? They say Harrisburgh must be taken, unless a very large body of troops can reach it at once. The Reserves will probably go on, to-night, and Carlton will probably accept his old commission again. I do want him to do his duty, Margaret, if it *is* his duty; but I hope that he will not think so—that he will not go away."

"And *I* hope that he *will*!" answered Margaret, her tall form drawn up to its full height, and a look of stern pride upon her face that could not very well be mistaken.

"To go into danger—perhaps to death?" asked Elsie, looking sadly at the proud Sibylline face.

"To a thousand deaths, if necessary, rather than towards the least suspicion of a want of true manhood!" [Pg 42]

"Ah, you do not know the trembling fear of a sister's love!" said Elsie, with a sigh.

"I know a love fifty times deeper!" said Margaret, the pride still on her face, and yet that ever-returning flush coming up again to say that if love had not conquered pride it had at least divided the dominion. "Listen, Elsie Brand, to some words that you may as well understand now as ever. There is no one near to hear us, and so it is almost like speaking before heaven alone. I love your brother, deeply, devotedly, with all the power of my nature—so devotedly that if that love should be wrenched away from my heart by any circumstance, I know that my life would thenceforth be but one long, wretched mockery of existence. Happy natures like yours, Elsie, do not know the absolute agony that lies in such love. And yet I could give up that love, and my life with it, and would do so, before I would live, love, and yet *despise*!"

"Despise?—are you speaking of Carlton—of my brother?" asked the young girl, apparently a little lost in the mysterious energy of her companion's words.

"I said that I could *not* despise," Margaret Hayley went on. "I must not, or we have no future. Do

you know that I should have reverenced your brother more, even if I did not love him better, if he had not refused the commission in the army tendered him at the commencement of the war? I might have wept, perhaps mourned—but I should have idolized. Now, I only love a mortal like myself, where I might have been worshipping a hero!"

"Or sobbing over a grave!" said Elsie, with a sigh which told how easily she might have been brought to illustrate the word she used.

"What then!" was the quick reply of Margaret. "The glory would have been his—the loss and grief would have been mine, and I could have borne them. But he did not choose to enter the struggle, prominent as he had once been in military movements. He had the excuse of business and occupation, and I have tried to believe that he needed no other." [Pg 43]

"Needed?—what do you mean, Margaret?" cried Elsie Brand in a tone and with a movement of starting back which evidenced both pain and alarm.

"It is a painful thing, but I must say it, to you, as I do not know that I could say it to him," pursued Margaret. "I mean, that I have tried to believe that there was no flaw in my idol—that Carlton Brand, who held every pulse of my woman's heart responsive to his touch—did not lack the one manly virtue of *courage*!"

"And would you *dare* to believe my brother—the man you have pretended to love—a *coward*?" There was something vexed and sharp, almost angry, in Elsie's tone, now, that did not promise another immediate embrace like that of a few moments previous. Margaret Hayley saw the expression of her face, but neither blenched before it nor seemed to feel any anger at the manifestation.

"Elsie Brand," she said, her words slow, measured, and with a cadence that was somehow inexpressibly pained and mournful, "I am no school-girl, and I am speaking words that I mean. I know your brother to be patriotic, I know him to be in high health, athletic, vigorous and determined; and have sometimes believed that if he had possessed that one requisite, animal courage, he would long ago have been fighting the foes of the republic. Grieve as I may to part with him, I am glad you believe that he is going with the Reserves. He had his choice, before, and I let my own heart instead of my reason have sway, and did not question its propriety. But were he to hang back now, when his native State is invaded and every arm necessary to drive back the rebels from Pennsylvania soil, I should know that he was a coward!"

"I don't like you, Margaret Hayley, when your face looks so and you talk in that manner!" said the little girl. "But I will not quarrel with you. Carlton is going with the Reserves, and some day when he is killed or you hear how he has shamed all the rest with his bravery, you will be sorry for the words you have just spoken!" Just then the little yellow-haired girl was the Sibyl, and her prophecy went upon record with the wild words of Margaret, to be afterwards remembered—how sadly! [Pg 44]

"No—do not be angry with me, Elsie," said Margaret, taking the hand that had been temporarily released. "You have no cause. I have been speaking against my own heart all the while, much more than against the man whom I truly love. I know him to be noble and true, and I will believe him brave. Are you satisfied? Kiss me!" and the proud, statuesque face once more lost its gravity, to bring back all the joyousness into the rounder and merrier one from which it had temporarily departed.

The light summer jockey-hat of Elsie lay just within the door, on a chair. With a quick glance at the watch hidden under her waist-riband, she stepped within the door, threw on her hat, and was about to terminate her somewhat prolonged morning-call, when Margaret took it off again, dropped it into one of the vacant chairs, and said:

"No—do not go away. You have nothing to do at home—mother has gone down to the city for the day, you know, and I shall be lonely. We shall have some lunch—you may call it dinner if it will taste any better,—very soon. Stay till the afternoon—cannot you do so, just as well as not?"

"I suppose so—no, I must see Carlton—yes, though, Carlton will be quite as likely to come here first as to go home, if he has arranged to go away—yes, I will stay if you wish it so much!" rapidly answered the little one.

"That is a good girl," said Margaret Hayley, just as she might have patted a school hobby-de-hoy on the head. "Now run into the parlor and get the very nicest book you can find, draw the easy-chair out of the hall, and enjoy yourself the best you can for just twenty minutes, while I go down to the kitchen, in ma's place, and see what progress our new Dutch cook has been making." [Pg 45]

She disappeared with the words, and her injunctions were acted upon almost as rapidly. In half a minute Elsie had the arm-chair out of the hall, and an illustrated work off one of the tables in the parlor, and was prepared for her short period of indolent enjoyment.

CHAPTER II.

The Coming of Carlton Brand—Almost a Paladin of Balaklava—Brother and Sister—A

SPASM OF SHAME—THE CONFESSION—THE COWARD—HOW MARGARET HAYLEY HEARD MANY WORDS NOT INTENDED FOR HER—THE RUPTURE AND THE SEPARATION.

Not long was the young girl, left at the close of the last chapter bodily ensconced in an easy-chair on the broad piazza, and mentally absorbed in the attractions of one of the choicest books in Margaret Hayley's collection, allowed to pursue her reading undisturbed. Not two minutes had elapsed when a horseman, riding a chestnut horse of handsome appearance and fine action, came rapidly up from the direction of the city, dismounted with the same practised grace that he had shown when in the saddle, threw the rein of his horse over one of the posts standing near the gate, opened that gate and came up the walk, without attracting the attention of the young lady on the piazza, or that of any other occupant of the house he was approaching.

Lifting from his brow, as he approached the house, to wipe away the slight moisture which had gathered there even in riding, the broad-brimmed and low-crowned hat of light gray, which so well accorded with his loose but well-fitting suit of the same color, he gave an opportunity for [Pg 46] studying the whole man, which could not well have been attained under other circumstances; and both narrator and reader may be excused for stopping him momentarily in that position, while due examination is made of his most striking outward peculiarities.

He was at least five feet eleven inches in height, with a figure rather slight than stout, but singularly erect, sinewy, and elastic, every movement giving evidence that the body could not well be set to a task beyond its power of endurance. The foot was not very small, but well-shaped, and the ungloved hand which held his riding-whip was almost faultless in shape and color. The hat removed, a brow rather broad than high was seen, with a head well balanced in all the intellectual and moral requirements, densely covered with light, curling hair, of that peculiar shade which the poetical designate as "blonde" and the practical as "sandy." The complexion, though the cheeks were a little browned by the summer sun, was very fair, and that of the brow as stainless as any petted girl's could be. The features were nearly faultless in the Greek severity of their outline, the nose straight and well cut, the mouth small but with full curved lips, the eyes of hazel, widely set. The lower part of his face was effectually concealed by a luxuriant full beard and moustache, a few shades darker than his hair, and showing a propensity to curl on slight provocation. He was a decidedly handsome man of twenty-eight to thirty, erect, gentlemanly, dignified, and with something in his general appearance irresistibly reminding the spectator of the traditional appearance of those blonde Englishmen of good birth, who seem made to dawdle life away without exhibiting one of the sterner qualities of human nature, until deadly danger shows them to have that cool recklessness of life which charged two hundred years ago with Prince Rupert and ten years ago with poor Nolan. Yet this was the idea more likely to be formed of him and his capabilities, by strangers and those who lacked opportunity to examine his face [Pg 47] and manner closely, than by those intimately acquainted with both; for there was an occasional nervousness in the movement of the hands, and even of the whole figure, that to a close observer would have belied the first-assumed self-confidence; and a something drooping, tremulous, and undecided in the lower lip at the corners, was so well matched by a sad and even troubled expression that often rested like a cloud over the eyes, that the whole man seemed to be made into another self by them.

Such was Carlton Brand, the brother of Elsie, about whom the tongues of the two young girls had wagged so unreservedly but a few minutes before. Such was his appearance, to the outward eye, as, hat still in hand, he approached the piazza. Elsie was sufficiently absorbed in her book, not to feel his presence; and it was not until he was close upon her that the young girl saw him, flung down the costly illustrated volume in her chair with less care than might have pleased the less impulsive owner, sprang to the step and seized both the occupied hands of the new-comer, with a warmth that showed how cordial was the affection between brother and sister, so widely different in appearance and indication of character.

"How did you come here, pet?" the brother asked, as soon as his mouth was free from the kiss his sister tendered.

"Oh, ran across the fields half an hour ago, and intended to be back home by this time, only that Margaret was alone and wished me to stay; and besides——"

"Well—besides what?"

"Besides, I almost knew that you would stop *here* before you went home, and I should see more of you before you went away, by remaining."

Could the young girl but have seen the quick spasm of agony that just then passed over the face of Carlton Brand—the agitation and trembling which seized upon lip and hands—she might have been wiser the next moment, but she certainly would not have been happier. Just for that one [Pg 48] moment there seemed to be lack-lustre vacancy in the eyes, total want of self-assertion in face and figure, and the handsome, noble-looking man actually seemed to have collapsed, bowed, and sunk within himself, so that he was more an object of pity than of envy. But the sister's eyes were fortunately turned away at that instant, and she saw nothing. When she looked at him again, the spasm, whatever it might have been, was gone, and she only saw his usual self. He did not reply to her last suggestion, but asked, after an instant of hesitation:

"Where is Margaret?"

"Gone down into the kitchen for a few moments, to look after a new Dutch cook, but she will soon return. And so you are really going away, brother, and I shall be so lonesome!" and the hand of

the sister sought that of the dearly-loved brother again, as if every moment lost without some touch of one who was so soon to leave her, was lost indeed.

Even to this the brother gave no reply, but made a remark with reference to the rapid ripening of the grain in the wheat-fields that skirted the road beyond. A duller wit than that of Elsie Brand might have become aware that he was avoiding an unpleasant subject; and the young girl recognized the fact, but gave it an entirely erroneous explanation, believing that he must have heard some peculiarly threatening news from the scene of the invasion, making the peril of the troops about to leave more deadly than it would have been under ordinary circumstances, and that he dreaded to enter upon the theme at all, for fear of alarming her. As a consequence, her next words were a disclaimer of her own fears.

"Oh, Carlton, you need not be afraid to speak of it to me. Much as I have dreaded your going away, I know, now, that it is your duty, when your own State is invaded; and I have made up my mind to bear the separation, and even to think of you, my own dear brother, as in danger, without saying one word to hold you back." [Pg 49]

"Have you?" That spasm was again upon his face, and the words were hoarse; but again the eye and the ear of the sister missed the recognition of any thing unusual.

"Yes; and so has Margaret."

"Has she?" The spasm had not gone off his face, and the second question was asked even more hoarsely than the first. For some reason that the young girl could not understand, he turned away from her, walked down to the end of the piazza, and stood looking off. What he was suffering at that moment, with three or four of the most powerful passions known to humanity tearing at his heart-strings at once, none may know who have not passed through the same terrible ordeal which he was then enduring. There were only the fays who may have been playing among the green grass, and the dryads yet lingering among the whispering leaves of the maples, looking in at the end of the piazza upon his face: had they been human eyes, what of wrestling and struggle might they not have seen! When he turned to walk back towards the spot where his sister was standing in surprise not unmingled with alarm, his face was again calm, but it would have shown, to the observant eye, a calmness like that of despair. His words, too, were forced when they came:

"You and Margaret both, Elsie, love me so well, I know, that you would give up almost any thing to please me; but I do not intend to task either of you too far. I am not going—that is, business detains me so that I cannot—I am not going to Harrisburgh."

"Business!" Elsie Brand had never before, in her whole young life, uttered a word so hardly or in a tone so nearly approaching to a sneer, as she spoke the single word at that moment. Were the words of Margaret Hayley ringing in her ear, and did she find some terrible confirmation, now, of what had before been so impossible to believe? "Business!—what business, Carlton, *can* be sufficient to keep you at home when they seem to need you so much?"

"What do *you* know about it?" and *his* tones were harsh and almost menacing. "Do we ask you women to decide what we shall do, where we shall go, and where we shall stay?" [Pg 50]

"Oh, Carlton!" and the cry seemed to come from the very heart of the young girl. It was perhaps the first harsh word that had ever fallen on her ear, aimed at her from the lips of the brother she so adored. God only knew the agony under which that harsh word had been wrung out, as only he could know the agony it might cause! The cry instantly melted the heart to which it appealed. Carlton Brand took the hand of his sister in his own, kissed her tenderly, and said:

"Forgive me, Elsie, if I spoke as I should never speak to *you*! But you do not know, sometimes, what moves men to harshness which they afterwards bitterly repent."

"But you are not going with the regiment?" again she asked.

"No!—I have told you I was not, Elsie!" and the tone came very near to being a harsh one, once more.

"I am sorry—very sorry, Carlton!"

"Sorry?" and the often-recurring spasm which again passed over his features, could not have been unobserved by the young girl, for her own face seemed to reflect it. "Sorry? Are you indeed sorry that I am not going into—that I am not going to be absent from you?"

"Oh, no, Carlton! heaven knows I am not!" said Elsie, and the merry blue eyes were filled with tears. "But I think you ought to go; and you do not know, Carlton, how much may hang upon it. Do you love Margaret—really and truly love her?"

"Love her? as my own soul!" answered Carlton Brand. He did not say "as his own *life*"! "Why do you ask, after all that you have known of our attachment and our engagement?"

"Because, Carlton"—and the young girl, weeping the while under an impulse of feeling that she could scarcely herself understand, caught him by the arm and drew down his head towards her —"because I believe that if you do not go with the Reserves, Margaret will think that you do not do so because—oh, I cannot speak the word!" [Pg 51]

"Because what? Speak it out!" and he seemed to be nerving himself to meet some shock that was

likely to need all his energies.

"Because"—in a voice very low and broken—"because you are afraid to go—because you are a *coward*!"

"Has she said as much?" and the eyes of the speaker, very sad, troubled, and almost wild, seemed still to have power to read the very soul of the young girl before him. Elsie could not speak at first, but she nodded twice, and never death-bell of a condemned criminal rung out more clearly or more frightfully on the startled air, tolling the knell of a last hope, than the whisper that came at last from her lips:

"Yes!"

"Then God help me!" came from those of the strong man, in such a manifestation of agony as was painful to behold, while his hands for one moment clasped themselves together as if he would wring them in womanish weakness, then went up to his face and spread themselves as if they would shut it away forever from human sight. "God help me!—and you, Elsie, despise me if you will, but, oh, help me to keep it from *her*. I dare not go! I *am* a coward! If I should go into battle I should disgrace myself there forever, by running away at the first fire, and that would break our poor old father's heart!"

"Carlton! Carlton! my poor brother!" and the hands of the young girl closed around one of her brother's, with so warm a pressure as proved that she did not think of any shame, disgrace or fault in the connection, but only as the announcement of some great misfortune.

"Yes, Elsie, you have wrung from me the confession that I hoped never to be obliged to make to any one but my God. I have made it to Him, oh, how many times, and I almost feel that he has forgiven me, as my fellow-men will never do. I have been a coward, I suppose, from my very cradle and heaven only knows how I have managed to conceal the terrible truth from you, all this while! The very sight of blood sickens me, even when it is only the blood of beeves in a slaughter-house. One spirt from the arm of a man when he is being bled sets every nerve to trembling, and sometimes sends me fainting to the floor. One moment among the horrible sights of battle—the groans, and shrieks, and crashing bullets and spouting blood of carnage—would drive me mad or send me flying away with the curses of my whole race ringing in my ears."

"Oh, Carlton! my poor brother!" repeated once more, and in the same tone of heart-broken sympathy, was all that Elsie Brand could answer to this humiliation of the one to whom, perhaps, next to God, she had ever looked up as to His noblest human manifestation of greatness in creative power.

"Do you see what a poor miserable wretch I am?" he went on, apparently forgetful that any one besides his sister might be within hearing, and she so absorbed in the grief and shame of the revelation that she possessed no more forethought. "Think of me as an officer in my regiment, and know with what a reddened face I must have walked the streets when we paraded, conscious that if suddenly called to duty—even the quelling of a mob at the street-corner—I should be obliged to disgrace myself at once and forever! Think what I have suffered since the war broke out!—commission after commission offered me—loving my country as I believe man never loved it before—and yet not daring to strike one blow in its behalf. Obliged to make slight excuses when others have inquired why I did not go to the war—obliged to wear a double face, a mask, everywhere and at all times—dreading detection every day, and in that detection perhaps the loss of my proud father's life and of the love that has made the only hope of my own—cursing the omen that unwittingly gave me the brand of the coward in my very name—racked and tortured thus, and yet obliged to hold an honorable place among my fellow-men—it has been too hard, Elsie, too hard! And now to lose all! If *she* has learned to suspect me—I know her brave heart and her proud nature—I shall lose her, the richest, noblest thing on earth, half grasped, to be mourned for as never man yet mourned for woman! Do help me, Elsie! Help me to conceal my shame—to deceive her, yes—God help me!—to deceive *her* before whom my very soul should be laid bare—so that she will not know me for the miserable wretch and coward that I am!"

And all this while his face was wrought and contorted, at short intervals, by those fearful spasms of shame and mental suffering; and ever and anon his hands locked together and seemed to wring themselves even beyond his own volition. How different he looked, at that moment, from the handsome, noble man, in the full pride of mature adolescence, who had stepped upon that piazza but a few moments before!

"I would do any thing in the world to help you, Carlton; but what *can* I do?" faltered the young girl, who saw no light beyond the thick, black cloud of shame and ruin slowly settling down on the head of her beloved brother.

"Help me to conceal the truth"—he went on—"to enforce any excuse for not leaving the city at this moment! I know it is base and contemptible, but it is for a good purpose, Elsie—to save a heart that is already distracted, and a life that must be wrecked without it. We may never be placed in the same circumstances again—the war may soon be ended—if she can only be kept from knowing this, I may never be placed in the same peril again, and my whole life shall be one long proof that I am not otherwise unworthy of the woman I love so madly."

"It does not need, Carlton Brand!" sounded a voice from within—a voice that both recognized but too well; and out of the hall came the figure of Margaret Hayley.

Her words and her manner alike proved that she had heard all, or at least enough; for there was an expression of withering contempt flashing out of her dark eye and curling her proud lip, not easily to be borne by any person towards whom they were directed. There did not seem, for the moment, to be any thing like pity in her composition; and if there had been love within her heart, it appeared to have been so crushed out by one stunning blow that it could never bloom again any more than the wild flower ground beneath the heel of the wayfarer. Her head was proud, erect, haughty, disdainful; and one who had leisure to examine her closely would have seen that the nostril was opening and shutting convulsively, as if overwhelming passion was only suppressed by the physical act of holding the breath. Elsie Brand was too much dizzied and confused to be quite aware what had happened or what was about to happen. She merely uttered a cry of agitation and fright, and shrunk back alike from her brother and the woman who had come to be his judge. Carlton Brand saw more, with the quick eye of the lawyer and the sharpened perception of the lover. He realized that Margaret Hayley had heard his agonized and unmanly confession—that anger and scorn had driven away from her face the love which had so often and so pleasantly beamed upon him—that his doom was sealed.

With the knowledge came back to him that manliness in demeanor of which he had been so sorely in need a moment before. In the presence only of his sister, and when pleading with her to assist in rescuing him from the pit of grief and shame into which he felt himself to be sinking, he had been humble, abject, even cowering. Now, and in the presence of the woman for whose softened opinion he would have given the world and almost bartered his hopes of heaven,—he stood erect, and if the spasm of pain did not entirely pass away from his face, at least it changed in its character so that he was a man once more.

"I understand you, Miss Hayley," were the first words he spoke. "You have heard some words not intended for your ear. You have been *listening*." [Pg 55]

"If you merely mean that I have heard what was not intended for my ear, you certainly speak the truth, Mr. Brand," she replied, catching the formality of his address at once. "But if you mean that I have listened meanly, or even voluntarily, to words intended to be confidential, you wrong yourself, equally with me, in saying so. You have spoken so loudly that not only I but even the servants in the house could not well avoid hearing you; and there is not much 'listening' in hearing words almost brawled on a piazza."

Her words were very bitter—they beseemed the lips from which they flowed. A man who loved her less or, who had fewer of the natural impulses of the gentleman than Carlton Brand, might only have thought of the taunt conveyed and forgotten its justice. He did not do so, but bowed at once with an air of respectful humility, and said:

"I beg ten thousand pardons for my hasty speech. I was mad when I made it. Certainly you have heard nothing but what you had a right to hear." And then he stood erect but silent.

Poor little Elsie Brand could contain herself no longer. How she loved her brother, only the angels knew. How easily we pardon, in those of our kindred, what would be indelible disgrace in the characters of others, all close observers of humanity know too well. Little Elsie Brand was only acting the part of nature in espousing the cause of her own blood, and saying, before time enough had elapsed for any additional words between the two principals:

"Margaret Hayley, I say that you are too hard with Carlton! If you had ever loved him, as you pretended, you would not be so! There, you have not asked my opinion, but you have it!"

The words, though kindly meant, were ill-advised. Not even her brother, who had but a few moments before been imploring her assistance, thanked her for what she had then spoken. At least he silenced her for the time with— [Pg 56]

"You can do no good now by speaking, Elsie. It is too late. Miss Hayley has something more to say to me, no doubt, after what she has accidently heard; and I am prepared to hear it." He stood almost coolly, then, the bared head bent only a very little, and the face almost as calm as it was inexpressibly mournful. So might a convicted criminal stand, feeling himself innocent of wrong in intent, beaten down under a combination of circumstances too strong to combat, awaiting the words of his sentence, and yet determined that there should be something more of dignity in his reception of the last blow than there had ever been in any previous action of his life.

Twice Margaret Hayley essayed to speak, and twice she failed in the effort. If she had been calmly indignant the moment before, Nature had already begun to take its revenge, and she was the woman again. Her proud head was bent a little lower, and there was a dewy moisture in the dark eyes, that could never be so well dried up as in being kissed away. Who knows that the proud woman was not really relenting—letting the old love come back in one overwhelming tide and sweep away all the barriers erected by indignation and contempt? Who knows how much of change might possibly have been wrought, had the next words of Carlton Brand been such as indicated his belief that the chain between them was not yet severed utterly? Who knows, indeed?—for his words were very different.

"Miss Hayley, I have waited for you to speak what I feel that you have to say. You have heard words that no betrothed woman, I suppose, can hear from her promised husband and yet retain that respect for him which should be the very foundation of the marriage-bond."

"I have." The words came from her lips in tones much lower than those in which she had before spoken, and she did not even look at him as she answered. [Pg 57]

"You have heard me declare myself—I know by the face you wore but a moment since, that you have heard all this—what you hold to be the lowest and most contemptible thing on God's footstool—a *coward*."

"I have. I would rather have died on the spot than heard those words from the lips of the man I have—have loved!" The words still low, and some hesitation in those which concluded the sentence. One would almost have believed, at that moment, that of the two the culprit was the down-looking and low-voiced woman, instead of the man whose godlike presence so contradicted the dastardly vice he was confessing.

"I have no defence to offer," the speaker went on. "If you have heard all that I believe, no further explanation is necessary. You know the worst; and as a proud woman, with honor unspotted and beyond suspicion, you have a right to pass what sentence you choose upon my—my shame, my crime, if you will!"

Perfect silence for an instant, then a broken sob from Elsie, whose face was streaming with tears denied to both the others, and who was leaning her forehead against the sharp corner of one of the columns of the piazza, apparently that the slight physical pain thus inflicted might do something to still the mental agony that raged within. Then Margaret Hayley, as if she had passed through a long struggle but conquered at last with a triumph slaying her own soul, raised her head, drew in a hard breath, shook back one of the tresses of her dark hair which had fallen over her brow, and spoke:

"Do you know, Carlton Brand—I cannot call you *Mr.* Brand again, for that address is mockery after what we have been to each other—do you know what that sentence must be, in justice to myself and to you?"

"I can guess it, Margaret Hayley," was the answer, the prefix changed again in imitation of her, just as she a moment before had changed it in imitating him. The incident was a mere nothing, and yet suggestive as showing how closely the two seemed to study each other, and how much of real sympathy there must after all have been between them. "I can guess it, and I will try to bear it."

"You can guess it—you do guess it—separation!" said Margaret in a low voice that she could not quite render firm.

"I was not mistaken—I supposed as much," he answered. "You are a proud woman, Margaret, and you could not marry a man for whom you failed to entertain respect—"

"I *am* a proud woman, but a woman still," said Margaret. "You whom I have loved so truly, can best guess the depth of my woman's nature. But I cannot and will not marry a man to whom I cannot look up and say: 'This man has the courage and the will to protect me in every peril!'"

"Have you ever had reason to believe that I could not and would not protect you, if need came, against all the world?" and his eyes momentarily flashed, at that thought, with a light which should not have shone in the orbs of a coward.

"Words are idle, Carlton Brand!" said Margaret. "There is no protection so sacredly due as that of a strong man to his country. You know it, and I know it as well. The man who knows his duty to his country and dares not do it, through sheer bodily fear, could not be trusted in any relation. His wife would not dare trust him, if she knew it; and you have opened my eyes but too painfully. And so, in mercy to both, all must be over between us—"

"Oh, do not say that, Margaret, sister!" broke out Elsie, in a more faltering voice than she had ever used in pleading for herself since the earliest day of childhood. Margaret did not heed her, if she heard, but went on from the point at which she had been interrupted:

"All is over between us, Carlton Brand, at once and forever, unless——"

"Unless?—what is the possibility you would yet hold out to me?" and the speaker showed more agitation, at that one renewed glimpse of hope, than he had done when battling against utter despair.

"Unless you will yet obey the summons that has called you with every other true son of Pennsylvania to the field, and prove to me that you did not know yourself or that you were endeavoring to play a cruel part in deceiving your sister and me!"

The face of Carlton Brand had been comparatively calm, ever since the coming out of Margaret. Suffer as he might, most of the suffering had been hidden. Now that face assumed an aspect that was really fearful to behold. The veins on his forehead swelled as if they would burst, his lip set hard, his eyes glared as if one touch might have made him a maniac, and his hands worked convulsively. All the symptoms of extreme terror and of a repugnance which no effort could overcome, were imminent in every glance and motion; and something of those phenomena was exhibited which we may suppose the Highland seer of old time to have shown, when he was carried beyond himself by the invisible powers, and saw battle, defeat and horrible death for himself or others, slowly unrolling before his spiritual sight. Elsie Brand shuddered and drew back to the column which had before sheltered her. Margaret Hayley still stood erect, though she was evidently laboring under suppressed excitement, and none could say what the end of this scene might be. It was quite a moment before Carlton Brand could command himself sufficiently to speak, and then he said in a low, broken voice:

"No—I cannot. I cannot kill my poor gray-haired old father with the spectacle of the flight and disgrace of his only son."

"And you have decided well," said Margaret. "It is a bitter thing to say, but I am glad that you have marked out my course as you have done. Think—oh heaven!" and she seemed indeed to be for the moment addressing the powers above instead of those regnant upon the earth—"think how near I came to being this man's wife and the possible mother of his children, each one marked with the curse set upon them by their father!" No human ear could have heard the whisper which followed: "Enough of disgraces descending from parents—oh, heaven!" [Pg 60]

"You are right, Margaret Hayley—right!" spoke Carlton Brand, his voice lower, more hoarse and broken than it had been at any part of the long interview. "You have reminded me well of your duty and mine. The day may come when you will be sorry for every word that has fallen from your lips; but it may not. To-day you are doing right—let the future take care of itself. Good-bye!"

He took the long, slender white fingers in his, and looked upon them a minute, the tears at last gathering in his eyes. Then, when through the thickening drops he could scarcely see them longer, he raised them to his lips, pressed a kiss upon them, dropped the hand and strode off the piazza and away, never once looking back as he passed down the path towards the gate.

Margaret Hayley had been overstraining both heart and brain, and the penalty asserted itself very soon. Her discarded lover was scarcely half way down the path when the revulsion came, and pride for the moment broke down before her terrible sorrow. The proud neck bent, she stretched out her arms after the retreating figure, the single word, "Carlton!" came half whispered and half groaned through her lips, her eyes closed, and she sunk fainting into the arms of Elsie.

Carlton Brand did not hear the call. A moment, and still without another glance at the house where he was leaving behind the happiness of a life, he had unloosed the splendid chestnut pawing at the gate, swung himself into the saddle and ridden away westward. He reeled a little in his seat as he rode, as a drunken man might have done—that was all the apparent difference between the man with a hope who had arrived half an hour before and the man who now departed without one.

CHAPTER III. [Pg 61]

KITTY HOOD AND HER SCHOOL-HOUSE—DICK COMPTON GOING SOLDIERING—A LOVERS' QUARREL, A BIT OF JEALOUSY, AND A THREAT—HOW DICK COMPTON MET HIS SUPPOSED RIVAL—AN ENCOUNTER, SUDDEN DEATH, AND KITTY HOOD'S TERRIBLE DISCOVERY.

"I do not care, Dick Compton! You are a mean, good-for-nothing fellow, and the sooner you go away and get killed, the better. I hope I may never set eyes on you again, as long as I live."

A pleasant style of address, especially from a pretty woman; and yet one to which a good many persons have submitted, first and last, from little people whom they could physically have slain with a single stroke and mentally discomfited with very little more trouble!

The time of this objurgation was the same morning on which the events took place which have already been recorded as occurring at the residence of Margaret Hayley, and at a very little earlier hour than that which witnessed the departure of Carlton Brand from the place of his signal discomfiture. The place was in front of a little country-school-house standing half a mile from the Darby road, north-westward, and perhaps two miles westward from the Hayleys. The interlocutors were Richard Compton (already introduced as "Dick" by the flippant tongue of his companion), a young and well-to-do farmer of the neighborhood, about a quarter of a century old, perhaps some five feet nine in height, thickset, strong-limbed, with a round, good-humored face guiltless of beard but browned a good deal by exposure in the field, generally smiling and content, but with a spice of the bull-dog in his nature which made him sullen occasionally and led him always to be very fond of his own peculiar way;—and Kitty Hood, teacher of the district school of that particular section of the Keystone State, a short, round, rosy little lass, with merry brown eyes that only occasionally had a sterner kind of mischief in them, dark brown waved hair, and just the last general appearance in the world that a phrenologist would have selected for the necessarily calm and dignified life of an instructress of callow youth. [Pg 62]

The old weather-beaten school-house, erected perhaps fifty years before but not yet swept away in the prevailing rage for staring new white baby-houses for the instruction of children in the country, stood at the base of a slight wooded hill, facing southward; a fine old sycamore near the door holding the whole house and all its contents in flecked light and shade; a group of locusts not far away to the left showing a motley jumble of benches beneath, that were evidently the favorite lounging-place of the children during play-hours; and a little pond of a hundred or two feet in diameter, with one edge half covered with the leaves of the intrusive pond-lilies, and the other bordered by a juvenile wharf of stones, old boards and bark, supplying the youngsters with a place in which to paddle, sail boats and get very wet without any danger of being drowned, in summer, and with a reliable though limited skating-ground in winter. Its convenience for winter sports could only be imagined, at that season of the year when the wild-roses were clambering up the dingy boards of the inclosure, to the windows of the school-room; but its inevitable use as a

part of the great "highway of nations" was too plainly shown by a circumstance which, alas!—at the same moment illustrated the vicissitudes of commerce and the necessity for the existence of insurance companies. A stately vessel of the mercantile guild, twelve inches in length but with the dignity of three masts and each holding spitted on it as a sail nearly an entire half-sheet of foolscap paper, had evidently left the little wharf during the morning play-hour, freighted for the Spice Islands lying up among the pond-lilies, but suffered the fate of many sea-going ships, fallen under the power of foul winds or adverse currents, and stranded on a reef of mud some paces from the shore, from which the ingenuity of her factors had not yet been able to release her, and where she lay "keeled over" in a manner equally contaminating to her white paper sails and unpleasant to her possible passengers. No doubt anxious eyes were meanwhile glancing out of the windows, between two leaves of the geography which detailed the perils of navigation in the East Indian archipelago, to see whether piratical canoes or pirogues did not put off to burn that noble vessel and massacre her crew, before noon should give time for any further efforts towards her release. Here the course of this narration painfully but necessarily loses sight of the good three-master "Snorter, of Philadelphia," as many another of the fairy barks launched by inexperienced youth disappears from view and is known no more forever; but let us hope that this particular venture was floated off at some early "spring tide" of play-spell, and that she "came safely to her desired haven!"

Within the little one-story school-house, with its unpainted desks and benches of pine, dark with age and scarred by notch and inscription from the penknives of half a century of school-boys,—there was going on, at that moment, precisely what may be seen in any school from Windsor to Washoe, when the ruling power is temporarily absent. Wilkie painted not only from life, but from the inevitable in life, when he drew the "Village School in an Uproar;" for mobs have been put down by the military power and even savage communities have been made quiet by the exercise of powder-and-ball; but no force has yet been discovered that could check (and who would wish it to be entirely checked, after all?) the riotous mischief of the school-room when the terrible eye is removed! Five minutes before, Mistress Hood in the chair of authority, fifty heads of all hues and all textures had been more or less closely bent down over book and slate, and a low monotonous hum, something like the sleepy drone from a score of bee-hives, had been heard floating out on the summer air. Now, Mistress Kitty Hood had been just two minutes absent from the school-room, and a nice little Pandemonium was already established, that it would need some birchings and many strong words to annihilate. Half a dozen of the big boys had gathered into a knot, not far from the door, and were snickering aloud and pointing knowingly towards the point of interest without, with running comments on "Miss Hood's beau!" Three little girls, forgetting their sex, were playing at leap-frog between and over two of the benches, to the disarrangement of their short skirts and the eventual tumbling over of one of the benches with a loud clatter. Two or three of the larger girls were in close conversation, about what there is no means of knowing except that one of them remarked that "it was real indecent and she meant to tell her ma!" One boy, who was the possessor of a magnificently national handkerchief, had stuck it on the end of the long ruler from the mistress' desk, and was going through a dress parade of one, with a feeble whistle as music. A young brute was taking the opportunity of pinching the ear of a smaller boy, and making him whimper, as a punishment for some previous alleged injury. Another had made a pair of spectacles out of blue paper, and stuck them on the nose of a little girl on one of the near benches, who blushed so rosily that her white dress, blue spectacles and red face quite supplied the national colors. And still another, with cheeks marvellously distended, was trying whether he could, in the short space of time during which the mistress might be absent, manage to choke down three early harvest-apples without dying by strangulation or requiring any assistance from his companions.

Such were the surroundings of the country school-house, and such was the aspect of Kitty Hood's little school-room during her temporary absence. And now what was the necessity which had for the moment withdrawn her from her charge, and what was the provocation under which the words were uttered, given at the commencement of this chapter?

Perhaps the personal appearance of Dick Compton may go at least a little distance towards the explanation. As he stood kicking his foot against the lower step of the school-house door and listening to the words of petulance which his mistress so plentifully bestowed upon him, it was to be seen that while his coat was a sack of ordinary light summer-stuff, looking civil and homelike enough, his pants and cap were both gray and military, according to the pattern of the Reserves. Under his arm he held a bundle which might very easily have contained the coat necessary to make the uniform complete; and such was, indeed, the composition of the parcel. Dick Compton, never before connected with any military organization, had the night before determined to abandon home and the girl he loved, leave other hands to gather in the fast ripening harvest, intrust his favorite pair of farm-horses to the care of his younger brother and the hands on the farm, and make at least a small part of the response to the urgent call of Governor Curtin. He had been down to the rendezvous, to sign the roll of membership in the Reserves, and to get his uniform, that morning. He was to leave with the regiment for Harrisburgh, that evening, and it was on his way home to the pleasant farm-house lying a couple of miles northward and across the main road leading up from Market street, that he had called at the school-house to make his adieux to Kitty Hood, which seemed to be so ungraciously received.

They were so indeed. Kitty, from the moment when Compton tapped at the door and called her out amid the surprised glances and then the tittering of the school-children—from the moment when she had observed his military cap and pants—had understood the whole story and put herself not only on her dignity but her unamiability. She had not smiled even once upon him, or

allowed him to take her hand, though he reached out for it; and though the jolly round face of the school-mistress was not by any means the pattern of countenance that could be made stupendously awful by the greatest amount of effort, yet Kitty had done her best to be royal—not to say imperial. To his explanations she had been worse than the traditional "deaf"—insultingly interrupting; and to his asseverations that the country needed the heart and the arm of every true man, she had answered with that unromantic but unanswerable word: "fiddlestick!" She had tried wheedling, coaxing, scolding, every thing but crying, in the effort to make him forego his resolution and take off his name (supposing that he could do such a thing) from the roll of the Reserves. She had no doubt, and expressed herself to that effect, that if he went to Harrisburgh he would come back in a coffin, all cut up into little bits by the savages, or not come back at all and have his skull and bones used for a drinking cup and a few necklaces by the women of Secessia, or come back in a condition worse than either, with both legs cut off close up to the body, one arm gone and his skull broken in, and a pretty thing for a respectable young woman to marry! [Pg 66]

It was very well, for the sake of his adherence to his patriotic purpose, that Dick Compton had in him that dash of bull-dog tenacity to which allusion has before been made; for it is not every man to whom such words of spiteful prophesy and determined discouragement, coming from the lips of a pretty woman who made her own love the excuse for uttering them, would have been without their effect. They might as well have been uttered to one of the granite gods of old, as to Compton, so far as moving him to any change of purpose was concerned; but his temper was by no means of as good proof as his determination. In fact, Kitty Hood's spiteful expostulations very soon made him ill-natured if not angry; and by the time the culmination already recorded was reached, he was quite ready to say, in a tone corresponding to her own:

"Well, I *will* go, Kitty Hood, whether you like it or not. I was a fool not to go away without walking a mile further to let you know any thing about it." [Pg 67]

"Nobody asked you!" was the petulant reply.

"Nobody *need* to ask me, next time!" was the rejoinder. "I have a right to be killed, if I please, and it is none of your business whether I am or not. A pretty world it would be, with half of it made up of women too weak and too cowardly to fight a cat, and the other half of men tied fast of their apron strings, so that they had to ask every time they wanted to go away, just as one of your little whelps of school-boys whines: 'Please to let me go out!'"

Kitty Hood was finding a tongue quite as sharp as her own, by this time, and the effect was very much what is often seen in corresponding cases. Finding her lover growing as angry as herself, and a little more violent, the young school-mistress concluded that it was time to assume a less decided demeanor, so that if they must part they might do so without an absolute quarrel.

"Well, Dick," she said, after a moment of pause, "there is no use of your being angry about it!" Just as if she had not been showing ill-temper from the beginning—the minx! "Of course I cannot hold you, and do not wish to do so, if you prefer dressing yourself up in that ridiculous manner and standing up to be shot at, to remaining here with *me*."

"I don't *prefer* it, you know I don't, Kitty!" said Dick, aware that his flank of conversation had once more been turned and himself placed in a false position.

But here came an interruption. A young gentleman of seven made his appearance in the door of the school-room, his hands blacker than the proverbial ace-of-spades, his nether raiments spotted, and his face drawn into a most comical whimper, while his words came out between a sob and a hiccough:

"Please, Miss Hood, won't you come in to Jem Stephenson? He has gone and upsot the inkstand all over my hands and spoilt my new trowsers!"

"Go in and keep your seat, you young villain, or I shall flog you and Jem Stephenson both!" was the consoling assurance with which the "young villain" departed; while the hum from the school-room was evidently increasing, and the young school-mistress felt that she must indeed soon resume the reins of government if she was not to be permanently left without a realm worth ruling. But she took time to rejoin to Compton's last assertion. [Pg 68]

"I don't know any thing of the kind. I say that if you thought half as much of me as you did of public opinion and making a show of your fine new clothes, you would not stir one step."

"Now, Kitty, do be reasonable—" again began Compton.

"Look at other people—don't *they* respect the wishes of those they expect to marry?" the young lady went on, not heeding his last attempt. "See—there is Carlton Brand—who does not know that he has remained at home ever since the war broke out, though he could have been a Colonel and perhaps even a General—just because he was really in love with Margaret Hayley, and she did not wish him to leave her?"

It is scarcely necessary to say, at this stage of the narration, that Miss Kitty Hood was "begging the question." She had never heard one word to indicate why Carlton Brand had not accepted his opportunities, and she merely mentioned the two as people of prominence in the section, acquaintances, and the first pair of lovers of whom she happened to think. But she had made a terrible blunder, as many of us do at the very moment when we seem to be performing the very keenest of operations. Carlton Brand—one of the finest-looking men to be found within a radius

of an hundred miles, a member of one of the liberal professions, and known to be wealthy enough to afford indulgence in any line of life which he might happen to fancy—was naturally an object of envy if not of suspicion to hundreds of other young men who did not feel that they possessed quite the same advantages. Young farmers, who chanced to catch him saying a polite word to their sisters, looked at him through eyes not too confiding, in spite of the fact that not even rumor had pointed out a single instance in which he had indulged in a dishonorable amour; and those who detected him in glances of kindness (perhaps of admiration) towards demoiselles whom they had marked out as their own destined marital property, had a bad habit of even looking out of the corners of their eyes and scowling a little, at such manifestations. Carlton Brand, in all this, was only paying a very slight penalty for his triple advantage of wealth, position and good looks, while many others pay the same unpleasant toll to society for the possession of even one (and sometimes none) of the three favors of fortune. [Pg 69]

The farm-house of the Comptons and the residence of the Brands (as will be hereafter made apparent) lay but a very short distance apart; and the little house (perhaps it might with more propriety have been called a cottage) in which Kitty Hood had seen the light, and where she lived with her quiet widowed mother, was still nearer to the abode of the young lawyer. Though the Hoods were much more humbly circumstanced than their neighbors, intercourse between the two families had always been frequent, with a very pleasant friendship between Elsie and Kitty, and more visits of the young girl at the residence of the Brands, and of Carlton, accompanying his sister, to that of the Hoods, than at all pleased the lover and expectant husband of Kitty. Then the latter had a head a little giddy and a tongue more than a little imprudent; and she had shown the bad taste, many times since their tacit engagement, to draw comparisons, in the presence of her lover, to his disadvantage, and in favor of a man who had much better opportunities than the farmer for keeping his clothes unimpeachable, his hands unsoiled, and his cheek unbrowned. Only very imprudent people, and perhaps very unfeeling ones, use such words; but they are used much too often, ignoring the pure gold that may lie within a rough nugget, and preferring the mere tinsel leaf on a bit of handsome carving. Kitty Hood was one of the thoughtless, and she was likely, some day, to pay the penalty in a manner she little anticipated. [Pg 70]

Within the few weeks previous, without Kitty being at all aware of the fact, Mr. Dick Compton had allowed himself to ruminate more than was healthy upon the glances he had chanced to see interchanged between Kitty and her "stuck-up lawyer friend," as he chose to designate him, and upon the continual commendations which she chose to bestow on the latter—until rooted personal dislike and something very near to positive jealousy, had been the result. Walking over towards the rendezvous that morning, if one shadow of hesitation on the subject of going to Harrisburgh had passed through the mind of the young farmer, it was caused by his dislike of leaving Kitty out of view, with Carlton Brand in the same near neighborhood. All that difficulty had been removed by the understanding that the lawyer was to leave at the same time and on the same service with himself; but when Kitty at once revived the obnoxious name with a new phrase of commendation, and signified that the section was not to be relieved of the lawyer's presence during his own absence, it is not very strange that the unreasonable demons of jealousy began tugging again at his heart-strings, and that he felt like performing some severe operation upon the Mordecai who sat in his gate, if he could only catch him!

"So you have got to quoting Carlton Brand again, have you!" he responded to Miss Kitty's citation. "I thought I had told before that I had heard nearly enough of that proud puppy!"

"'Puppy' indeed!" and Miss Kitty fired in an instant. "He's nothing of the kind, but a man and a gentleman, and you know it, Dick Compton!"

"Oh, yes, a *gentleman*, and that suits you to a turn, Kitty Hood!" was the sneering reply. "When your *gentlemen* are in the way, you think that an honest hard-working man is nobody."

[Pg 71] If ever a man spoke an unjust word to a woman (and it is to be feared that a great many have been uttered since the unfortunate gift of speech was conferred upon the race), Dick Compton was stupidly unjust at that moment. For the very quarrel (it was but little else, from first to last) in which they were engaged, had originated in the young girl's evident anxiety for his safety and pleading that he would not go away and leave her, even for a short period! Kitty Hood felt the injustice, if he did not, and all the old rage came back again, in a varied form, but hotter than ever. Her eyes flashed, she choked for a moment, and then, before Dick Compton could be at all aware what was about to happen, the school-mistress drew her little white hand back and brought him a ringing box on the ear and cheek, that the latter would not be very likely to forget for a fortnight,—while she flashed out:

"Dick Compton, just take that for a fool! You are not worth any honest woman's loving, with your mean jealousy. You can go where you please, and I will never speak to you again until you learn better manners than to talk to *me* in that manner!"

Before the jealous lover had half recovered from the blow she stepped away from him and put her foot on the sill of the door, to re-enter. Compton, spite of the tingle in his cheek, did not quite believe in the propriety of parting in that manner, when he was just going to the war; and he made a step towards her.

"Kitty!—oh, now, Kitty—"

"Keep off, Dick Compton! Good-day and good-bye, and nobody cares where you go or how long you stay!" was the forbidding rejoinder, as the school-mistress swung herself round the jamb of

the door and half disappeared. Her blood was at fever heat: that of her lover was likely to be at the same pitch in a moment.

"You won't come back, then?"

"No, I won't!"

"Then I will tell you something, Kitty Hood!" and the young man was very angry and very earnest when he made the threat. "If I can catch Carlton Brand before I go away to-night, I will just flog him till he is the nearest to a dead man *you* ever saw,—and see how you both like it!" [Pg 72]

Without another word the young farmer turned and strode round the corner of the school-house with his bundle and his indignation, making hasty strides up the hill and towards the woods that lay in the direction of his home. Kitty Hood saw thus much, and realized that very probably she was looking at him for the last time. Then she realized, too, what she had scarcely felt before—that she had been terribly to blame in the quarrel—that she might have been wrecking the happiness of a life by her ill-temper—and that it would never do to let poor Dick go away to the war, so angry at her that if killed his last thought would be upon every one else rather than her, and that if he returned he would never come near her again—never! Then poor Kitty dropped her head upon her desk, heedless of the only partially-hushed Pandemonium around her and the necessity of settling with Master Jem Stephenson, spiller of ink and others,—dropped her head upon her desk and sobbed loudly enough for some of the children to be quite aware of the fact, so that one of the little boys hazarded the remark, *sotto voce*: "Wonder what is the matter with her!" and a bigger one enlightened his ignorance with: "Why, didn't you see? Her beau has got on sojer clothes and is going away—stupid!"

Only a minute or two, and then Kitty Hood could endure the struggle no longer. She was very unhappy and not a little penitent. She *could* not remain any longer in the midst of those noisy children: she *must* go home (or elsewhere) and see what facilities fate might yet throw in her way for seeing and speaking once more to her angry lover before his departure. Perhaps she could even find some means, still, for inducing him to remain, and then——. And at that thought the school-mistress raised her head, informed her school that she had a bad headache and must go home to bed, and dismissed them for a half-holiday. [Pg 73]

Whereupon one of the larger girls, who had seen the lover go away, without hearing any of the parting words, and who thought that she understood all about the affair, remarked to one of her companions that: "That was real nice, and she thought all the better of Miss Hood for it!" while one of the larger boys, unawake as yet to any of the softer feelings, bawled out to his mates that: "Miss Hood was going to see her old beau off—ki-yah!" It is painful to be obliged to say, justifying previously-expressed apprehension, that even the stranded vessel was forgotten in the haste with which the school separated, and that all the imaginary pirates of the Society, the Friendly and various other islands that maintained every thing else rather than friendly society for sailors, had at least one day more of chance at her with their canoes and pirogues.

Her scholars dismissed, Kitty Hood took time to wash and cool her eyes and to smooth her hair, for a moment, at the little wash-closet in one corner of the school-room—then flung on her light bonnet and gauzy mantle and took her way, walking somewhat rapidly in spite of the heat of the coming noon, along the path that led around the base of the hill north-westward towards the residence of Carlton and Elsie Brand.

Mr. Richard Compton had meanwhile been walking yet more rapidly, with his bundle under his arm, up the path leading over the hill, almost due north, and through the belt of woods discernible from the school-house. Whether the increasing heat of the day added to the heat of his temper is uncertain; but certain it is that he did not at all cool down under it. He had the excuse of being the party *last* ill-used, if not indeed the party *first* so treated. He loved Kitty Hood beyond all reason, and he was of course the person most likely to grow angry at her and jealous of her, beyond all endurance. He felt that he could not worse punish her, or better satisfy himself, than by carrying out his threat and soundly flogging Carlton Brand if he should once catch him under proper circumstances; he had no doubt whatever of his ability to flog him or "any other man," when he once set about the task; and while surmounting the hill, and even after plunging into the cool, thick, leafy woods, full of the twitter of birds and the fragrance of June blossoms, which should have had the power to soften passion in the breast of any man who held a true sympathy with Nature, his mental fists were clenched and his teeth set in a manner most threatening for any opposing force with which he might happen to be brought into contact. [Pg 74]

That "opposing force" was much nearer than the young man at the moment imagined. He was just emerging by the path to the main road which he was to cross, half a mile before reaching his own farm, when he saw a horseman riding rapidly up from the eastward. Intersecting the path just where it joined the road, was a blind road leading through the woods across toward the Darby, and closed at the entrance by a swinging gate. There was a low panel near it, and the young farmer leaped it in preference to unfastening the clumsy latch—finding himself, when beyond the fence, in the presence of Carlton Brand, who had just reined in his horse at the gate. Whatever there may have been in the face of the horseman at that moment, within a few minutes after his leaving the presence of Margaret Hayley and his sister, the eyes of Dick Compton were not sufficiently keen to recognize it. He only saw the handsome, proud-looking young lawyer, and his old antipathy rose, with the remembrance of the threat he had just used, accompanying it. Carlton Brand saw nothing more in the face of the young farmer than he had been accustomed to see, and accosted him as he might have done any other acquaintance, under the same

circumstances, with a request for a slight service.

"Ah, Compton, is that you?—just be kind enough to throw open that gate for me, will you?"

"No—I'll not do any thing of the kind. If you want the gate open, just get off and open it yourself!" [Pg 75] was the surly reply, very much to the astonishment of the lawyer. His face paled a little, then flushed, and he hesitated for an instant before he asked:

"What do you mean, Richard Compton, by answering me in that manner?"

"What I say!" answered Compton, quite as insolently as before. "You are a puppy, Carlton Brand, and I have half a mind to take you off that horse and flog you soundly, instead of opening a gate for you."

"The d——l you have!" was the very natural reply. "Well, Dick Compton, I do not know what it is all about, but you are behaving very much like a ruffian, to a man who has never done any thing worse to you than to treat you like a gentleman."

"You lie, Carlton Brand, and you know it!" was the response.

"I lie, do I?" and the speaker shifted a little uneasily in his saddle, though he made no apparent movement to alight.

"Yes, you lie!" said Compton, his voice thick and hoarse with agitation and anger. "And if you will get off that horse I will teach you a lesson about meddling with other people's property, that you will remember for a twelvemonth."

If Carlton Brand's face expressed intense surprise, it was certainly nothing more than he felt; for what the "meddling with other people's property" could mean, except that he might unwittingly have run across some interest of Compton's in the pursuit of his profession, he had no more idea than he could have had of the number of trees in the adjoining wood or the depth of soil on which his horse was standing. Yet he threw his leg at once over the saddle, at the last salutation, sprang to the ground, flung his bridle over one of the posts near the gate, and said:

"Now then!"

In an instant and without another word, Dick Compton, who had dropped his bundle as the other dismounted, sprang at him, fury in his face and the clench of determined hostility in every nerve. [Pg 76] Probably no battle on earth was ever fought so singularly—the one combatant without the least cause for his rage, and the other not even acquainted with the accusation made against him. They seemed not badly matched, in physical force, though any connoisseur of the exclusively muscular would have considered Compton likely to be by far the most enduring. He was fifteen or twenty pounds the heavier, and fully trained by field labor; Brand two or three inches the taller, athletic, and a little the longer armed.

Half a dozen blows were rapidly exchanged, before either succeeded in breaking the guard of the other. Then Compton managed to reach the lawyer's cheek, with a blow of some violence that probably stung within quite as much as it did without. At all events it brought a new color to his face, and from that instant he was cool no longer. He struck out more rapidly and angrily, and Compton followed his motion. In less than a minute half a dozen blows had reached the faces and bodies of each, and there was a probability that, whatever the event of the fight, both would be injured as well as disfigured. Suddenly, the instant after, as Compton aimed a well-directed blow at the throat of his antagonist, that he believed would entirely settle the affair, something happened, upon which he had not calculated. Whether his blow was entirely fended he did not know; but what he did know, so far as he knew any thing, was that Carlton Brand's right fist, dashed out with a force little less formidable than the kick of an iron-shod horse, struck him on the left of the nose and the cheek adjoining, sending a perfect gore of blood spouting over face and clothing, and throwing him reeling backward, stunned and half senseless, to the earth,—the fight over, so far as he was to bear any part in it.

There was only a little sensation left in poor Compton at that juncture, but that little cried out against being beaten down in such a manner by a man whom he had before considered his inferior in muscular power, and whom he had set out to flog. [Pg 77] The bull-dog within him wished to rise and make another effort, but for a moment his eyes *would not* open and his head would not clear sufficiently for him to make any effort at regaining his lost perpendicular. When he thought he heard a groan and a loud "thud" on the ground, and he did manage to struggle to a sitting position, the sight that met his eyes was nearly sufficient to drive him back into his partial insensibility, amazement and horror being about equally compounded in the spectacle. Carlton Brand lay at length on the ground, his face set in a frightful spasm, a thin white froth issuing from the set lips, the eyes closed, and not even a quiver of motion in the limbs. Dick Compton sprang up, then, with a supernatural energy born of absolute fright, and bent over his prostrate antagonist. To all appearance he was dead!—dead as if he had been lying there for the last century! The frightened farmer put his hand to his temples, his pulses and his heart, and found no motion whatever. Then the dreadful fear took possession of him that his own last blow, which he remembered aiming at the throat of the other, might have taken effect there at the same moment when he was himself struck and prostrated—that some vital part of the throat might have been touched and death instantly ensued!

To say that Dick Compton was frightened and even horrified at this unexpected issue of the pugilistic combat which he had forced, is indeed to put the case very mildly. He was literally

paralyzed, for the moment, with consternation. What was his fate?—to be a homicide! And—good God!—here another thought took possession of him. He had left Kitty Hood at the school-house, only a little while before, himself angry and in a dangerous mood, and with his last words threatening personal violence against Carlton Brand! If he should be dead—and there seemed to be no hope to the contrary—what words of his could ever persuade the school-mistress that he had not entertained enough of jealousy and anger against the lawyer to desire his death?—and how far would not Kitty's evidence go in proving before a criminal court that he was an intentional murderer?

Such reflections are not pleasant, to say the least! A very few of them go a great way in a man's life. Those who have been placed, even for one moment, in the belief that they have suddenly become homicides, need not be told how far beyond all other horrors is the feeling: those who have missed the sensation, may thank God with all reverence for having spared them one of the untold agonies which belong only to the damned!

Dick Compton was not one of the most delicate of men, either in action or perception, but he was a good fellow in the main, with quite enough of intuition to foresee the worst perils of a situation, and with quite enough of presence of mind to act quickly in a desperate emergency. There was yet no breath or motion in the prostrate man: he would die very soon if not already dead: something might yet be done for him: but that something, if done at all, must be done at once. Besides, if death should prove to be real, he would himself be a little better circumstanced if found trying to preserve the life of his antagonist, than if discovered to have let him die without effort. A mile to the westward, and at the side of the very road at the edge of which he was standing, was the residence of one of the two doctors of the immediate section, and medical assistance might be procured, with the aid of the fallen man's horse, in a brief period.

With this thought in mind, and in far less time after the occurrence of the catastrophe than it has needed to put it upon record, Dick Compton had unfastened the horse of Carlton Brand from the post, swung himself into the saddle, and was galloping away westward, a little doubtful in mind whether he was indeed going after a doctor or looking for a convenient gallows and a hangman,—and wishing, from the bottom of his soul, that he had never entertained quite so good an opinion of his personal prowess as that which had led him into such a terrible position. Once, as he galloped on, he caught sight of his new military trowsers, and found himself thinking whether, when they hung soldiers, they allowed them to retain their uniform or subjected them to the degrading alternative of the prison gray! And that is all, of the very peculiar reflections of Mr. Dick Compton as he sped away after the doctor, that needs to be put upon record.

Kitty Hood, meanwhile, leaving the school-house perhaps ten minutes after her lover, had sped along the path at the base of the woods, intent on going over to the residence of the Brands and seeking advice, if not assistance, from Elsie, in her dilemma. She had quite overcome her anger, now, and taken into her young heart a full supply of that which very often follows the former—anxiety; and her feet moved as glibly, in the better cause of reconciliation, as her tongue had done not long before in a very unreasonable lovers' quarrel.

The path she was pursuing would have led her out to the main road, which she must cross to reach the Brands', some half a mile further west than the point at which the gate gave access to the blind road through the wood. But there was a little spot of marshy ground before reaching the road; she remembered that her shoes were thin and that wet feet were disagreeable even in June, and as a consequence she struck into a cross path which intersected the blind road and would bring her out at the gate. As a secondary consequence, she followed that road and came out a minute after at the gate, to open it without observing what lay beyond, and to start back with a scream of affright as she saw the body of Carlton Brand lying on the green sward without, his face still set in that terrible contortion, and the rigidity of death alike in limb and feature.

The young girl had seen but little of death, and not yet learned to regard it rather as a deliverance than otherwise; and in any shape it frightened her. How natural, then, that she should regard it with peculiar horror when she came upon it alone, by a wood-side, and in the person of an acquaintance equally admired and respected! But what must have been her feelings when, the moment after, and before she had commanded herself sufficiently to do more than utter that single scream of terror, she saw a bundle lying near the apparently dead man, saw blood staining one of his hands and the grass beside him, and recognized the bundle as the same she had seen, not half an hour before, under the arm of Richard Compton!

If that unfortunate young man, on discovering the supposed extent of his mishap, had remembered the threat against the lawyer made but a little while before to Kitty, how did that threat spring into her mind on seeing the blood and recognizing the bundle! Murder, beyond a doubt, and Dick Compton the murderer! The two had met, accidentally, had quarrelled, had clenched, and in that clench her lover had forgotten all except his jealousy and fear of the lawyer, and had killed him outright! Oh, here was trouble, indeed, to which that of a few moments previous had been but the merest shadow! Dick would be arrested, tried, imprisoned, perhaps hung; and *she* would be obliged to give the fatal evidence that must seal his doom! Terrible indeed—most terrible!—the thought culminating in such mental suffering that the poor girl scarcely knew whether she was treading upon earth or air, as she took one more look upon the motionless form, the blood, and the accusing bundle that lay beside—then turned her back with a shudder upon all, crossed the road and hastened over the fields beyond, by a bye-path that would lead her to the home of the murdered man—her errand now, and her reason for haste, how different from what it had been when walking towards, the same destination but a few moments

before!

CHAPTER IV.

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The Residence of the Brands—Robert Brand and Dr. Philip Pomeroy—Radical and Copperhead—A passage-at-arms that ended in a Quarrel—Elspeth Graeme the Housekeeper—The Shadow of Shame—Father and Daughter—The Falling of a Parent's Curse.

Half a mile northward from the Market street road which has already been before so many times alluded to—on the north side of that road and at the distance of a mile westward from the Hayley residence, was located that before mentioned as the abode of the Brands. It was a fine old house, built fifty or sixty years before, but within a few years repaired and rebuilt with a lavish disregard of cost, a railed promenade having been added at the apex of the steep roof, the whole two stories of height re-enclosed, the windows and doors comparatively modernized, the piazzas remodelled and widened, and all done that the carpenter's art could well be expected to achieve, to add to the comfort and durability of the mansion without destroying the appearance of respectable age which it had already put on. The house stood facing southward upon nearly level ground, the lawn in front of good depth and thickly dotted with forest and other shade trees that had evidently known all the years of the building; while from the eastern side a narrow lane ran down to the road and afforded ingress and egress to carriages passing back towards the handsomely-grouped range of outbuildings in the rear. Adjoining this lane and behind the house was a large garden, with grape trellises and many of the appliances of luxury in horticulture.

At the eastern end of the piazza a broad single door opened into the somewhat antiquated hall; and from that hall a door opened into a parlor fitted up with every appliance of convenience that could be needed in such a country residence. Behind that parlor another door opened into a smaller apartment correspondingly fitted but with more of those belongings calculated to show its constant occupancy; and from that rear room still another door opening to the left disclosed a bed-room of comfortable appearance and tasteful arrangement. On the other side of the hall the dining and domestic apartments stretched away, while the spacious upper story supplied rooms to other members of the family.

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It was very evident, at a glance, that wealth presided over the modernized old house, and that good taste was not forgotten; and yet an impression could not well be avoided that there must be something of severity, and repugnance to ornament, conjoined with the wealth. Poverty, or even struggling pride, would not have afforded so much of the best: warm taste and lavish liberality would have supplied something more of the costly and the luxurious.

In the second of the rooms mentioned—that immediately in the rear of the parlor, two persons were in conversation at about noon of the same day of the occurrences previously recorded. The one, sitting in an easy-chair with his right leg raised and resting upon another chair crowned with a pillow,—was apparently sixty-five to seventy years of age; tall, if his proportions could properly be judged as he sat, with a figure that must have been robust in its time; the hair so nearly white as to preclude any idea of the color which it might have worn in earlier days; the face well cut and even handsome for its age, though with a shade of severity in the firm nose and shaven lips, which under some circumstances might grow threatening; but any accurate judgment of his character rendered difficult, by the look of pain stamped upon his face by evident bodily suffering. Resting against a small table partially covered with bandages and embrocations, was a stout cane, indicating both that the invalid was in the habit of using a support of that character, and that he could not, even now, be entirely confined to his chair. Such was Robert Brand, owner of the mansion into which we have been introduced, and father of two children apparently as little alike in nature as in sex—Carlton and Elsie Brand.

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The second figure was quite as well deserving of notice as the old man in his easy-chair. Doctor Philip Pomeroy, who was at that moment pacing up and down the room without any apparent cause for that violent exercise in warm weather, was a man in whom the acute physiognomist might have found something illustrated by that seemingly listless motion—something possessed in common by restless men, in the superior animal kingdom, and those bears and hyenas which seem to traverse a great many unnecessary miles in travelling up and down the bars of their cages, in the inferior. And yet the doctor could not have been called, with any propriety, an "animal-looking man"—it was the motion which supplied the comparison. He was apparently forty-five to fifty, tall and slight figured, with face clean shaven except a heavy dark moustache, features a little aquiline and decidedly sharp lips that suggested an occasional sneer and a word cutting like a scimetar, eyes of keen scintillant dark brown or black, and rather long dark straight hair through which the threads of silver began to show more as an ornament than a disadvantage. A very fine looking man—a man of undoubted power and will—a man who had evidently enjoyed the most favorable associations; and yet how nearly a man to be either braved or trusted without reserve, it might have needed Lavater's self to decide on a brief acquaintance. That same Lavater, if acquainted with the peculiarities of road turn-outs, would have decided one point, at least, from the vehicle that stood in the lane, near the door—no clumsy and cumbersome gig, weighing an indefinite number of tons and set down as the proper conveyance for doctors from the day when the first one grew too lazy to walk,—but a light, sporting-looking buggy,

seated for one, and suggesting fast driving quite as much as the high-blooded, thorough-bred bay that champed his bit before it and stamped impatiently for the coming of his master. [Pg 84]

From the medical character of the visitor and the disabled appearance of the man in the easy-chair, it might have been concluded that the call was a professional one; and such was indeed the fact. An injury to the right limb of Robert Brand, received many years before, had a habit of asserting itself at uncertain periods, crippling him materially all the while, and at those particular times throwing him into all those agonies indifferently known as the pangs of neuralgia and inflammatory rheumatism. At such periods, the traditional character of the "gouty old Admiral" of the English stage, always limping and thumping a heavy cane, and nearly always venting words more forcible than polite, was very nearly illustrated in the old gentleman, his desire for active motion being generally in an inverse ratio to the power of movement. Dr. Pomeroy, one of the most skilful of the physicians of the section, and a man in very extensive practice, was always his medical adviser at such times, and re-directed the application of those warm flannels and neutralizing embrocations which constituted all that even science could do for the alleviation of his sufferings, and about which old Elspeth the housekeeper knew a good deal more, all the while, than any physician could possibly do. For the three days previous, Robert Brand had been suffering to a most painful degree, and this was the third of the daily visits of the doctor.

But whatever might have been the professional character of the visit, it had, before the moment when our attention is called to the two interlocutors, lost any feature which could have marked it as such. Robert Brand was a patriot, almost equally warm-hearted and hot-headed in the type of his attachment to his country; while Dr. Pomeroy was one of those quasi-loyalists, popularly called "Copperheads," who have the love of country quite as often on their lips as the most unshrinking war-advocate can do, but who prefer to show that love by objecting to every effort [Pg 85] made for the preservation of nationality, by denouncing, in every nine words out of ten, something done by the loyal government, while only the poor tenth is kept for a wail over the unfortunate character of the "civil war,"—and by undervaluing every success won by the Union arms, while every momentary advantage gained by the rebels is correspondingly magnified. He seemed to take particular delight, always, in tormenting the old gentleman just to the verge of a positive rupture without quite causing one; and just now, in the advance of the rebel forces into Pennsylvania, he found a golden opportunity.

"Bah!" he said, in response to a strongly patriotic expression of his patron, which had led him to bring down one of his hands upon the disabled leg with a force causing a new tingle in that limb and a new expression of agony upon his face—"bah! All you hot-headed people, young and old, use just such language, all the while. It amounts to nothing, except that perhaps it eases your minds. Saying that 'the Union must and shall be preserved,' and prophesying all kinds of good things for the nation, amount to but very little while a set of incapables sit filling their pockets at Washington (more than half of them traitors, in my opinion), while the army is worse mismanaged than it could be if a set of school-boys led it, and while the enemies you affect to despise are really winning every thing and overrunning the whole country."

"Out upon you, Dr. Pomeroy!" cried the old man, angrily. "You dare to call yourself a patriot, and talk in that manner! There are plenty of fools at Washington, but I would rather see fools there than traitors! If you are not a perfect block-head, you know that the rebels have lost twice as much as they have gained, within the past year, and that if the fight goes on in the same manner for one year more, the miserable mongrel concern will die of its own weakness! But you do not *want* it to die—that is just what ails *you*!—you would rather see Jeff Davis in the Capitol than any [Pg 86] loyal man who would not give all the offices to your miserable broken-down party!"

"And you would rather see the whole country lying in ruins, with heaps of dead everywhere and the few who remain starving to death in the midst of them, than that the country should be in any other hands than those of your friends who do nothing else than talk about the nigger, legislate for the nigger, and fight for the nigger!" answered the doctor, still continuing his walk, and his face showing decided temper.

"It is false, and you know it, Philip Pomeroy!" said the invalid, with a motion of his hand towards the big cane, which indicated that he would have liked to use it by breaking it over the doctor's head.

"It is true, and *you* know it, Robert Brand!" replied the doctor, whose temper seemed to return to its equanimity the moment he had succeeded in throwing his patient into a sufficient rage. "But you need not take so much pains to conceal your opinions, old gentleman! *I* don't! If the country is to lie under the control of men who only legislate and fight for the nigger, who trample upon the Constitution and fill Fort McHenry and Fort Lafayette and Fort Warren with better men than themselves, who do not happen to think and act precisely as *they* do,—why, the sooner that Jeff Davis, or any one else, gets possession, the better for all concerned."

"Doctor Pomeroy, you ought to be taken and hung, with the other traitors, and I shouldn't much mind having a pull at the rope!" broke out the old man, now almost entirely beside himself with indignation.

"Oh, I know that!" answered the doctor, whose temper was still visibly improving as that of his patient grew worse. "Any of your abolition pack would have helped to hang every democrat, long ago, if they had only *dared*! The only trouble is that they did not do it while they had the opportunity. Now it is too late. You daren't open the doors of your State-prisons any more, unless [Pg 87] it is to let somebody *out*! And before many days some of you will sing a different tune—take my

word for it. Some of you radicals, even here at Philadelphia, will try to make the Confederate leaders believe that you have been the truest friends of the South, all the while."

"What do you mean, you scoundrel?" asked the old gentleman, whose harsh words to a man somewhat younger than himself appeared to be fully understood and not taken in quite the sense which they might have borne to other ears.

"I mean that Lee will take Harrisburgh, and that next he will take Philadelphia; then—"

"Take Purgatory! He can never take Harrisburgh, let alone Philadelphia!"

"He can and will take it! What is to hinder him?"

"Just what has hindered his taking Washington, any time the last two years—better troops than his own, and more of them."

"Sheep before butchers'-dogs! The men of the North have never gone into the war at all, and they never will go. That scum which you call an army cannot fight the earnest and determined men of the South, and you ought to know it. Within a week Lee will be in Philadelphia, and then we will see about the change of tune!"

"Within a week, if he dares advance, he will be eaten up by the State militia alone, even if the Army of the Potomac does not save them the trouble!" said the old man.

"The Army of the Potomac has been good for nothing ever since Hooker blundered its last opportunity away at Chancellorsville!" retorted the physician. "The army has no confidence in *him*, and the country has no confidence either in him or the army. The State militia will vigorously stay at home, or they will behave so badly after they go out, that they had much better kept where nobody saw them! Oh, by the way!—" and the face of the doctor lit up with a new expression. A sneer settled itself upon his well-formed lips, and there came into his scintillant eyes a gleam of deadly dislike which boded no good to the subject of which he was about to speak. He might have been only half in earnest, before, while driving the old man wild with his Copperhead banter; but he was certainly interested in what he was about to say, now! [Pg 88]

"Well?" asked the patient, querulously, as he saw that some new topic was to interlard that which had already been so unpleasant.

"That State militia you were talking about," said the doctor. "Your son was expected to take up his old commission and go out with one of the regiments, was he not?"

"He was not only expected to do so, but he has done so!" answered the father, with love and pride in his eyes. "Not all the people in the country are either Copperheads or cowards, doctor; and I am proud to tell you that if *I* am too old and too much crippled to take part in the battles of my country, or even to get up and break my cane over your head when you insult the very name of patriotism,—I have a son who when his opportunity comes can do the one and will do the other!"

"When his 'opportunity' comes!" echoed the doctor, sneeringly.

"Yes, his opportunity!" re-echoed the father, who felt that there was something invidious in the tone, though he could not read that face which might have given him a better clue to the character of the man with whom he was dealing. "My son has been too much hampered with business before, to accept any of the chances which have been offered him; but now that his native State is invaded, business is thrown by and you will find him, sir, keeping up the honor of the name."

"Humph!" said the doctor, pausing in his walk and for some unexplainable reason going to the window and looking out; so that he stood with his back to the old gentleman. "Where is your son, now?" [Pg 89]

"Where? Gone down to the rendezvous to take his commission, of course, as I understand that the troops will leave to-night."

"Humph!" once more said the doctor, in the same insolent tone and retaining his position at the window. "And yet I happen to know that your son has discovered some new '*business*,' (with a terribly significant emphasis on the last word) and that he is not going one step with the regiment."

"Dr. Pomeroy, I know better!" was the reply.

"Mr. Brand, I know what I am talking about, a good deal better than you imagine!" sneered the doctor, who having by that time managed to get his face into that shape which he had no objection to being seen by his patient, now turned about and faced him, with his hands under the tails of his coat.

"*What* do you know?" was the inquiry, a little trouble blending with the anxiety in the face.

"Well, I will tell you, as perhaps you may as well learn the fact from me as from any one else," answered the doctor, his tones now very smooth, and his manner almost deferential, as should be the demeanor of any man towards his victim at the moment of stabbing him under the fifth rib. "I had occasion to call at the armory of the Reserves, an hour or two ago, to set the broken arm of one of the fellows who had taken too much Monongahela in anticipation of his start, and fallen

down-stairs. I learned there and then, with some surprise and not a little grief (the father ought to have caught the expression of his face at that moment, and thereby measured the "grief" indicated!) that Mr. Carlton Brand had been down at the armory, alleged his *business* to be such that he could not possibly leave the city, and declined any further connection whatever with the regiment."

"It is impossible!" said the father. [Pg 90]

"It is true, however, like a good many impossible things!" again sneered the physician. "And I have been thinking whether some others of members of the State militia would not be found like your amiable son—too *busy* to pay any attention to the defence of the State!"

"Dr. Pomeroy!" said the father, after one moment of almost stupefied silence. "Dr. Pomeroy, you have not been friends with my son for a long time, and I know it, though I do not know what could have caused any disagreement. But I do not suppose you would deliberately tell a falsehood about him that could be detected in half an hour; and I want to know what there is hidden in your words, more than you have chosen to convey."

"You had better ask your son when he comes!" was the reply.

"No—I ask *you, now*, and I think you had better answer me!" said the old man.

"Well, then," answered the doctor, "if you insist upon it, my love for the young man is not so warm as to give me a great deal of pain in the telling, and you may know all you wish. Your son has been doubted a little, ever since the breaking out of the war, from his repeated refusals of positions in the army; and—"

"The man who says that my son is disloyal, lies!" cried the old man, interrupting him. "You, or any other man!"

"It was not on the ground of his *disloyalty* that he was suspected!" sneered the doctor.

"And what ground then?" asked the father, his face and his whole manner showing something terrible within that could be only partially suppressed.

"The ground of his *cowardice*, since you will have it!" spoke the doctor, in such a tone of fiendish exultation as Mephistopheles may have used to Faust, at the moment of assuring him that the last hope of happiness on earth or pardon from heaven had been swept away in the slaughter of Valentine and the moral murder of Marguerite. "There is not an officer in the Reserves, who [Pg 91] heard him refuse to join the regiment this morning, but believes him—yes, *knows* him, to be an arrant poltroon."

"Doctor Philip Pomeroy, you are a liar as well as a traitor and a scoundrel! If I had two legs, and still was, as I am, old enough to be your father, you would not leave this house without broken bones! Get out of it, send me your bill to-morrow, or even to-day, and never let me see you set foot in it again while I live!"

The face of the old man was fearful, at that juncture. In spite of the pain of his disabled limb, he had grasped his cane and struggled to a standing position, before concluding his violent words; and as he concluded, passion overcame all prudence, and the heavy cane went by the doctor's head, crashing through the window and taking its way out into the garden, at the same moment when his limb gave way and he sunk back into his chair with a groan that was almost a shriek, clutching at the bell-rope that hung near him and nearly tearing it from its fastenings.

Dr. Pomeroy said not another word, whatever he might have felt. He had dodged the flying cane, by not more than an inch, and such chances are not likely to improve the temper of even the most amiable. For one instant there was something in his face that might have threatened personal revenge of the violence as well as the unpardonable words, in spite of the difference of age: then the sneer crept over his face again, he stepped out through the parlor into the hall, took his hat, and the next moment was bowling down the lane into the road, behind his fast-trotting bay. It seemed likely that his last professional visit to the Brands had been paid, even if it had not yet been paid for!

The terrible appeal of the master of the house to the bell-rope at his hand was answered the moment after by the appearance of a woman of so remarkable an aspect as to be worthy of quite as much attention as either of the personages who have before been called, in the same room, to the reader's attention. Her dress was that of a housekeeper or upper servant, though the height [Pg 92] of her carriage and the erectness of her figure might have stamped her as an empress. And in truth that figure did not need any such extraordinary carriage to develop it, for, as compared with the ordinary stature of woman, it was little else than gigantic. The man who built a door for Elspeth Graeme, less than six feet in the clear, subjected her to imminent danger of bringing up with a "bump" every time she entered it; and her broad, square, bony figure showed that all the power of her frame had not been frittered away in length. Her hands were large and masculine, though by no means ill-shaped, and her foot had not only the tread supposed to belong to that of the coarser sex, but very nearly its size. In face she was broad yet still longer of feature, with hair that had been light brown before the gray sifted itself so thickly among it as to render the color doubtful,—with eyes of bluish gray, a strong and somewhat coarse mouth with no contemptible approach to a moustache of light hairs bristling at the corners,—and with complexion wrinkled and browned by the exposures of at least sixty years, until very nearly the last trace of what had once been youth and womanhood was worn away and forgotten. Yet there was something very

good and very kindly amid the rugged strength of the face; and while little children might at the first glance have feared the old woman and run away from her as a "witch," they would at the second certainly have crept back to her knees and depended upon a protection which they were certain to receive.

It is only necessary, to say, in addition, that she was Scottish by birth as well as by blood and name—that she had come to this country nearly forty years before, when Robert Brand was a young man, and attached herself to the fortunes of the family because they were Scottish by blood and she was the very incarnation of faithful feudality—that his daughter had been named Elspeth (since softened to Elsie) at her earnest desire, because she said the name was "the bonniest ava" and she had herself been named after a noble lady who bore it, in her own land, [Pg 93] and who had done much to give her that upright carriage by standing as her god-mother—and that for many a long year, now, she had been the working head of the Brand household, scarcely more so since the death of its weak, hysterical mistress, a dozen years before, than while she was alive and pretending to a management which she never understood.

If any one person beneath that roof, more legitimately than another, belonged to the family and felt herself so belonging, that person was Elspeth Graeme; and if something of the romantic, which the stern sense of the father would have been slow to approve, had grown up in both his children, it was to the partial love of Elspeth and her stories of Scottish romance, poetry, history, song and superstition, carrying them away from prosaic America to the wimpling burns and haunted glens of the land from which their blood had been derived,—that such a feeling, fortunate or unfortunate as the future might prove, was principally to be credited.

"Did you ring, sir? Ech, Lord, the mon's deein'!" were the two very different exclamations made by Elspeth as she entered the room, after the departure of the doctor, and caught sight of the situation in which the master seemed to be lying.

"No, Elspeth, I am not 'deein' as you call it," he growled out, when the pain of his exertion had again somewhat subsided and he could find breath for words. "But I wish I was! Is that cursed doctor gone?"

"He was gettin' to his carriage the minute, and he's awa by this," answered the housekeeper. "But what ava has he been doin' to ye? Murderin' ye maybe!—they're a dolefu' uncanny set, the doctors!"

"If you ever see that man here again, and you don't have him shot or set the dog on him, out of the house you go, neck and crop, the whole pack of you—do you hear!" was the reply to Elspeth's comment on the medical profession. [Pg 94]

"Just as ye say, master," said Elspeth. "I'll set Carlo at him myself, if ye say so; and wo but the brute will just worry him, for he does na like him and is unco fond of snappin' aboot his heels!"

"Where is Elsie?" was the next question.

"Gone over to Mistress Hayley's the mornin'. Can I do any thing for your leg, sir?—for the wench in the kitchen's clean daft, and I'll be wanted there, maybe."

"No—you can do nothing. My leg is better. But send Elsie to me the moment she comes in."

"Hark!" said the housekeeper, as a light foot sounded on the piazza and came in through the hall. "There's the lassie hersel—I ken her step among a thousand. I'll just send her in to you the moment she has thrawn aff her bonnet." And the old woman departed on her errand.

There must have been an acuteness beyond nature, in the ears of old Elspeth, if she indeed knew the tread of the young girl; for her step, as she entered the room, was so slow, laggard and lifeless, so unlike the usual springing rapidity of her girlish nature, that even her lover might have been pardoned for failing to recognize it. It was as if some crushing weight fettered her limbs and bowed down her brow. And a crushing weight indeed rested upon her—the first unendurable grief of her young life—the knowledge of her only brother's shame. Robert Brand marked the slow step and saw the downcast head; and little as he could possibly know of the connection of that demeanor with the subject of his previous thought, it was not of that cheerful and reassuring character calculated to restore the lost equanimity of a man insulted in the tenderest point of his honor and chafed beyond human endurance. His first words were rough and peremptory:

"Why do you move in that manner, girl, when you come to see *me*? I do not like it—do not let me see any more of it!"

"I was coming, father!" was poor Elsie's only answer. [Pg 95]

"So I see—at the rate of ten feet an hour! What is the matter with you?"

"Nothing."

"Nothing?—do not tell me that, girl! I know better, or you would never carry that gloomy face and move as if you were going to your grandmother's funeral!"

"Indeed there is nothing the matter with me, father; but there soon will be, if you scold me!" and the young girl, making a terrible effort to be cheerful, came up to his side, put her arm around his neck and pressed her lips to his forehead with a movement so pure and fond that it might

have softened Nero at the moment of ordering his last wholesale murder. It partially disarmed the pained and querulous father. He put his arm around the daughter's waist, returned the pressure and seemed to be soothed for a moment by resting his head against the bosom that pressed close to him. But the demon that had been roused could only sleep thus temporarily. Directly he put her away, though not roughly, looked her full in the face, and asked:

"Where is your brother?"

"You know he went down to town this morning, and he has not yet come home," was the reply, with an effort not by any means a successful one, to keep the voice from quavering. The practised ear of the father detected the difference between that intonation and the usual unembarrassed utterance of his daughter; and he naturally connected it at once with the restraint of her manner, and noticed an evasion in her answer that might otherwise have escaped him.

"I know he has not come home," he said. "But that was not my question. You have been at Mrs. Hayley's where he spends quite as much of his time as here. Have you seen him?"

Elsie Brand would have given the proudest feature of her personal adornment, at that moment, to be able to lie! She saw that some undefined anxiety with reference to her brother must have moved her father's repeated questions, and naturally she feared the worst—that Carlton's mad words had indeed been overheard, and that even in that brief space of time some messenger of evil had travelled fast and betrayed the fatal secret. If so, the storm was about to burst on the devoted head of her brother, not the less deadly because she must bear the first brunt of its violence. Yes—Elsie Brand would almost have given her right hand to be able to lie at that moment. But her education had been as true as was her nature, and she managed to falter out, yet more suspiciously: [Pg 96]

"Yes, father!"

"And you *dared* to trifle with me, girl, when I asked you a plain question?" and Robert Brand grasped his daughter by the arm so forcibly that she nearly screamed with the violent pressure, and tears did indeed start to her eyes as she sobbed out—

"I did not mean to trifle with you, father. I only thought—"

"You thought that when I asked one question, I meant another, did you?" and the face that looked upon her was set, hard and very stern. "You had better not try the experiment again, if you do not wish to suffer for it!"

"Oh, father!" and the young girl, enough broken before, now wept outright. But he stopped her, very roughly.

"No bawling! not a whimper! Now listen to me. You have seen your brother since morning—since he went down to the rendezvous."

"Yes, father."

"You saw him at Mrs. Hayley's."

"Yes, father."

"And he came there to bid Margaret good-bye, before he went away, and you are such a miserable whining school-girl that you are making all this fuss about his absence. Is that the fact? Speak!" He still held her arm, though his grasp was less painful than it had been at first; and his eyes looked upon her with such a steady, anxious, almost fearful gaze, that it would have driven away the second temptation to falsehood, even had such a temptation once obtained power. There was nothing for it, at that moment, but to speak the truth so far as compelled. [Pg 97]

"No, father. Carlton is not going away." The last three words were uttered so low, and so tangled up among the sobs that she had not been able entirely to check, that they might not have been distinguishable except to the preternaturally acute ear of the suspicious father.

"He is not going? Why?" The first words were harsh and loud—the last one was almost thunder, easily heard, if any one was listening, over the whole house. Before it the young girl shook like an aspen and broke out into fresh sobs as she attempted to answer.

"Because—because his business will not allow—"

"Because he is *a coward!* Answer me that question, girl, or never speak to me again while you live!" Robert Brand had apparently forgotten all his pain and risen from his chair, still holding his daughter's arm, as he hurled out the interrogation and the threat. Poor Elsie saw that he knew all, too surely; further dissembling was useless; and she dropped upon her knees, that iron grasp still upon her arm, lifted up both her hands, and piteously moaned—

"Yes, that is the reason! Oh, how did you hear it? Kill *me*, father, if you will, but do not kill poor Carlton! He cannot help it—indeed he cannot!"

They were fearful words that immediately thereafter fell from the lips of Robert Brand—words that no provocation should ever tempt a father to utter, but words which have been plentifully showered on the heads of the shamed or the disobedient, by the thoughtless or the unmerciful, who arrogated to themselves God's power of judgment and retribution, through all the long ages.

"Get up, girl, if you do not wish me to forget that you are not yourself the miserable hound for whom you are pleading!" [Pg 98]

"Oh, father!" broke again from the lips of the frightened girl, who did not move from her kneeling position.

"Get up, I say, or I will strike you with this cane as I would a dog!"

Elsie Brand staggered to her feet, she knew not how, but stood bowed before the stern judge in an attitude of pleading quite as humble and pitiful as that of prayer. The next words that fell upon her ears were not addressed to her, but seemed to be spoken for others' hearing than those who dwell in tenements of clay, while the voice that uttered them trembled in mingled grief and indignation, and the disabled frame shook as if it had been racked with palsy.

"*My* son a coward! a miserable poltroon to be pointed at, spat upon, and whipped! *My* blood made a shame in the land, by the one whom I trusted to honor it! God's blackest and deepest curse—"

"Oh, father! father!" broke in the young girl in a very wail of agony so pitiful that it must have moved any heart not calloused for the moment against all natural feeling, but that availed nothing to stop the impending curse or even to lower the voice that uttered it.

"—God's deepest and blackest curse 'light upon the coward! shame, sorrow, and quick death! He shall have neither house, home nor family from this moment! I disown this bastard of my blood! I devote him to ruin and to perdition!"

Few men have ever uttered, over the most criminal and degraded of the offspring of their own loins, so dire an imprecation; and no father, who has ever uttered one approaching it in horrible earnest, but is doomed here or hereafter to feel the bitterest weight of that curse resting upon his own head. Lear was clean distraught by wrongs beyond human endurance, before he called upon "all the stored vengeances of heaven" to fall on the "ingrateful top" of Goneril, and threatened both his unnatural daughters with "such revenges" that they should be the "terrors of the earth"; and only that incipient madness clears him from the sin and leaves him human to demand our after pity. [Pg 99] There can be no excuse for such paroxysms of remorseless anger—it is difficult to supply even a palliation. And yet there was something in the blood, in the past life and associations of Robert Brand, coming as near to offering excuse for shame and indignation driving to temporary madness, as could well have been offered in behalf of any man of his day, committing a sin of such nature. And to circumstances embodying these it is now necessary to revert, even at the expense of a temporary pause in the directness of this narration.

CHAPTER V.

The Birth and Blood of the Brands—Pride that came down from the Crusades—Robert Brand as Soldier and Pension-Agent—The Pensioners of the Revolution—How Elsie raved, and how the Father's Curse seemed To Be Answered—Dr. James Holton, and the loss of a Corpus Delicti.

It has already been indicated, in speaking of the ties which bound Elspeth Graeme to the Brand family, that they were Scots by descent as she was by both blood and birth. Robert Brand himself stood in the fourth remove from Gaelic nativity, without the spirit of his race being extinct or even modified. When Archibald Alexander, father of that William Alexander who claimed to be Earl of Stirling in the peerage of Scotland while he was gallantly fighting as a Major-General in the patriot army of the Revolution, came to America in 1740, he was accompanied by a man who claimed to hold quite as good blood as himself, though he served in little less than a menial capacity to the heir of the attainted house of Stirling. [Pg 100] This was Malcolm Brand, of Perthshire, a member of the Scottish and elder branch of the Brands of Hertfordshire in England, who at a later day carried the two crossed swords which they had borne on their shields since the Crusades, to augment the threatening bulls, wolves and leopards of the Dacres, in the possession of that barony. It was in a victorious hand-to-hand fight with a gigantic Saracen on the field of Askalon, that Gawin de Brande, laird of Westenro in Lothian, fighting close beside King Richard, won that proud quartering of arms; and it is to be believed that no descendant of his blood, either in 1740 or in 1863, had quite forgotten that exploit or the fact that the very name of the family was only another antique appellation for the sword.

Malcolm Brand, the emigrant, was the father of a son Robert, born in New Jersey, as Archibald Alexander was the sire of William, who so proudly outdid the exploits of his elder blood, fighting under the leadership of Washington. The two young men, resident nearly together among the New Jersey hills, entered the army at the same time, and while the one rose to the dignity of a Major-General, the other shared in his combats at Long Island, Germantown and Monmouth, always fighting gallantly, but never rising beyond the grade of a first-lieutenant, and dying at last a prisoner on one of the pest-ships of the Wallabout. His son William, named after Lord Stirling and born in 1768, had of course passed as a boy through the trying period of the great contest, known that identification with the patriot cause inevitable from anxiety for a father engaged in it and grief over his lingering death by disease and privation for its sake; and it could not be otherwise than that the ears of *his* son, Robert (the man of 1863), should have been filled with

relations calculated at once to keep alive the pride of his blood and to identify him with the glory and honor of the land in which his lot had been cast.

Then had come another influence, not less potent—the second breaking-out of hostilities against England, in the War of 1812. The blood of the Brands was not cooled—it sprung to arms; and Robert Brand, then a young lawyer, taking the place of his father already invalided, assumed the sword of his armorial bearings and fought with Scott at Chippewa and Lundy's Lane, receiving so terrible an injury in the leg, at the close of the latter battle, that he was to be a tortured cripple from that day forward, but glorying even in the disablement and the suffering, because his injury had not been met in some trivial accident of peaceful life, but sustained where brave men dared their doom.

And yet another influence, not less potent, was still to come. Years after, when Carlton Brand was a child in arms, his father, then a practising lawyer in his native State, became identified with that most romantic and most picturesque body of men, of whom the present age remembers but little, and of whom the age to come will know nothing except as the knowledge is handed down from father to son, or carried forward in such desultory records as these—*The Pensioners of the Revolution*. At that time, not less on account of his spotless reputation than the crippling wound received in the service, he was appointed Pension Agent for the section in which he resided, and duly commissioned twice a year to receive from the War Department and pay over to the old men the somewhat scant and very tardy pay with which the land of Washington at last smoothed the passage to the grave of those who had been his companions.

It was Robert Brand's privilege, then, to meet those men in the familiar intercourse of business—to listen to their tales, so often slighted by those wiser or less reverent, of foughten field and toilsome march, of cheerless camp and suffering in the wilderness, when this giant nation was a wilful child unjustly scourged by a tyrant mother—to find in each some reminder of his patriot grandfather, and some suggestion of what that grandfather would have been had the fortune of war spared him to go down into old age and senility.

Twice a year, as the pension day came round, one by one they gathered in the little room where the scanty pension was to be doled—each with the measured beat of his stick sounding upon the floor as he entered, regularly as when his foot had beaten time in the olden days, under the iron rain of Princeton, or on the suffering march to Valley Forge. One by one they gathered to what was their great semi-annual holiday, with the kindly greetings of garrulous and failing age—with the gentle complaint, so patiently uttered, over limbs that seemed to be bowing with the weight of time, and with the pardonable boast that it was not so when the speaker had been young, in such a winter on the Northern Lines, or with such an officer at Yorktown or Saratoga. When the winters—said they—were colder than they are now, when the men were hardier, and when the women (they had all long before gone to rest, in the family graveyard or the little plat beside the church,) were fairer far than their daughters ever grew!

Harmless deception of age!—pleasant coloring that distance gives in time as well as in the material world, so that the forms we once loved may be even more beautiful in thought than they were in reality; the grassy lawns upon which we played in childhood, greener far in memory than they ever were beneath the sun of June; and even those hours once filled with anxiety and vexation, so beguiled out of their uncomely features, that they have no power to harm us in after-thought, and almost seem to have been freighted with unalloyed happiness! There may have been a thunder-cloud rising in the heavens, that afternoon when we went boating with Harry and Tom and Mary and Susan and Alice, all the way down from Lovers' Bend to the Isle of Kisses, with music, and laughter and loving words that were sweeter far than song; and the thunder-cloud may have thickened and gathered, so that the young lovers were drenched and very dismal-looking, long before their return at evening; but be sure that forty years after, when the day is remembered, only the sunshine, the smiling faces and the flashing water is seen, and if the thunder-storm has a place in memory at all, it comes back more as a pleasure than a disappointment. Mary may have had a cloud upon her brow, that evening at the garden-gate, from the absence of a ribbon lightly promised, or the presence of a recollection how some one flirted with Julia on the evening before; and there may even have been a tiff verging far towards a lover's quarrel, before the reconciliation and the parting under the moon; but when the hair has grown gray, and Mary is with the millions sleeping in the breast of our common mother, only the moonlight, that dear last kiss, and the rapture of happy love are remembered, and that checkered hour is looked back upon as one of unmixed enjoyment. Time is the flatterer of memory, as well as the consoler of grief, and perhaps has no holier office. So it was well that the old men's mental eyes were dim when their physical vision was failing; and when we grow old as they, if the scythe of the destroyer cut us not away long before, may the far-away past be gilded for us as it was for them, by the rosy hue of fading remembrance, until all the asperities, the hard realities, the sharp and salient edges and angles of life, are smoothed and worn away forever!

Sitting side by side, they talked—those bent and worn and gray old men—of scenes long matters of honored history, glorying (ah! honest and natural glory!) in having stood guard at the tent of Wayne, or shared the coarse fare of Sumter in the Southern woods, but most of all if happily the eye of Washington had chanced to beam upon them, and his lips (those lips that seldom broadly smiled) approved or thanked their honest service. Few men, even of those who fought beside him, seemed ever to have known a smile from the Father of his Country; but for those few there always beamed a light of glorious memory to which the all-repaying word and the intoxicating smile of the Great Corsican would have been empty and valueless.

It was easy, twenty or thirty years afterwards, to remember the fire that blazed in the dim eyes of old Job Marston, as he told how Washington commended him for his good conduct on the afternoon of the dreadful day of Long Island, when Sullivan's legion broke and fled like frightened sheep,—and how the veteran straightened himself upon his staff as if the head which had once borne the praise of the Joshua of American Liberty should scarcely bend even to time. Or the quivering of the hand of Walter Thorne, one of the men who bore, through every trial and danger, the pledge of faith of the Monmouth League—quivering yet with the anger which had brooded for more than fifty years,—as he pictured so plainly the burning of his father's house by the Refugees, the acres of broad land laid waste by them, the cattle driven towards the royal lines from his own homestead, the arming of his friends, the chase, the recapture, and the ghastly figure of the Refugee captain as they hung him on a spreading limb that spanned the road, a sacrifice not only for the home in ashes but to the manes of Captain Huddy, scarcely yet taken down from his oak-tree gallows on the heights of Navesink. Or the quietly felicitous chuckle with which Stephen Holmes, who had been one of "Captain Huyler's men" in the operations of that patriot marine freebooter around the shores of the lower bay of New York, detailed the success of a night attack in boats pretending to carry live-stock and oysters for sale, by which one vessel of the British fleet lying in the bay was captured, much welcome spoil fell into their hands for the use of needy families at home, and all the remaining vessels of the squadron rode uncomfortably in the bay for a long time after. Or the half playful and half indignant raising of the cane of Robert Grey, when told by his old companions, for the five-hundredth time beyond a doubt, that he was suspected of a share in Arnold's treason, for not stopping the disguised Andre as he passed his sentinel post below West Point, before he fell into the hands of the three very common and insignificant men made immortal by one single act—Williams, Paulding and Van Wert. There would have been no pretence in the motion, spite of his eighty years and faltering limbs, had the speaker hazarded more than a jest against the faithfulness of the old man's service in the "dark day." But easiest of all was it to remember the story of Thomas West, wounded, and crippled from that day forth, in assisting to bear the wounded Lafayette from the field of Brandywine, and named a subaltern officer at the close of that memorable action. His was the seat of honor; and his was something more, even, than that measure of respect demanded by all and so cheerfully paid to white hairs and honorable scars.

Seldom was there a voice to speak one word of disrespect or undervaluation in the old men's company; and though the privilege of garrulous and failing age was often taken, and though the story once full of life and interest grew sadly tedious when again and again repeated,—yet there was no pardon, and deserved to be none, for him who forgot that reverence due to the men who bore the last personal recollections of the seven-years war. Only once, within the experience of Robert Brand as a Pension Agent, was such disrespect shown; and then the punishment was so signal that there were no fears of the impropriety being repeated. Mart Tunison, a wealthy young landowner, rudely jostled old Job Marston on one occasion, and when called to account for the offence, snapped his fingers at the veteran as a "cursed old humbug, always in the way and always telling stories of battles he had never seen." "You are rich, they say, Mart Tunison," said the old man, while the younger one could not read the flash that still lived in his faded eye. "I *am* rich, and what is that to you, grand-daddy?" was the answer, with a slap of the hand on the jingling pocket. "Yes, you are rich, and most people do not know how you became so!" almost hissed the old man, little knowing how he was pointing a moral for a future day by speaking of the "shoddy" of that by-gone time. "I will tell all your friends, and you, how you got so stuffed up that you can snap your fingers in an old man's face! You are living on the proceeds of the money that your Tory grandfather, old Tom Tunison, made by stealing cattle, when he was one of the Refugee Cow-Boys, and driving them over the lines to sell to the British, before he ran away to Nova Scotia to save his neck!" Mart Tunison, if he had ever before known the real origin of his wealth, which is doubtful,—would probably have given the best field of all his broad lands to prevent that revelation of the shame of his family, which afterwards followed him like a thing of ill-omen, to the very grave!

There was at that time in the office of Robert Brand, a stripling youngster who promised very little good to the world and has probably as yet disappointed no one—who thought more of play than of work, of music than of mortgages, of Burns than Blackstone, and of a rosy-cheeked girl who came into the office on some little errand to the "'Squire" than of the most proud and stately of his male clients. Among his vices, he had a fancy for jingling verse; and one day when the semi-annual visit of the pensioners had just terminated and he had listened afresh to the same old tales of glory told over again in the same faltering accents that he had heard so many times before, his one virtue of reverence for the aged and the venerable rose into an idle rhyme, which may have a fit place in this connection, and which he called

THE PENSIONERS.

They come but twice a year,
   When the pension-day rolls round,—
Old men with hoary hair
   And their faces to the ground.
One leans upon his crutch;
   And one is upright still,
As if he bore Time's clutch
   With an iron nerve and will.

And feeble are the steps
  That so patiently they feel;
And they kiss with trembling lips
  The old Bible and the seal;
And they lay with care away,
  In wallets old and worn,
The scant and tardy pay
  Of a life of toil and scorn.

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They love a cheerful pipe
  And a warm place in the sun,
From an age so old and ripe
  To call memories one by one;—
To tell of Arnold's crime,
  And of Washington's proud form
That beamed, in battle time,
  A beacon o'er the storm.—

To tell of Yorktown's day,
  When the closing fight was gained,—
When Cornwallis went away
  And the eagle was unchained;
To show us, o'er and o'er,
  The seamed and withered scars
That many a hero bore,
  As his passport from the wars.

'Tis pride, with these old men,
  To tell what they have seen,
Of battle-fields, again
  With their harvest bright and green:
'Twill be pride, when we are old,
  To say that in our youth
We heard the tales they told
  And looked on them in their truth.

They are the last sad link
  Of a race of men with ours,
Who stood on ruin's brink
  And built up fair freedom's towers.
They are passing, as the foam
  From the ocean wave departs,
But finding yet a home
  In heaven, and in our hearts.

[Pg 108]

And when the last is gone,
  To their memory we will build
A pyramid of stone
  Whose top the sun shall gild
When the name of patriot weal
  And of tyrants' bitter wrong
Shall be told but in a tale
  And known but in a song.

The time then prophesied has come; though the monument then promised has not been erected, and though it may never be, because a later and grander though scarce nobler struggle to preserve what was then first created, almost dwarfs the memory of the first contest and demands all the resources of wealth and art for its commemoration. The Pensioners of the Revolution are all gone, long ago, on the line of march to that great meeting where the last pension, whether of good or evil, shall be told out.

Almost every year, beneath the eye of the Pension Agent, one more withered leaf would drop from the bough where it had feebly fluttered, and sad comments be made by the survivors when they met, with: "Ah, well-a-day!—poor —— is gone!" and "Well, we are very old, and we must all follow him—some day!" with nervous shakings of the head and tremblings of the palsied hand, that told to all but themselves how soon the end must come. Thinner and thinner grew the group, reduced to six—to four—to three—to two! Oh, that sad, mournful, heart-breaking two!—enough gone to mark the coming extinction; enough still left to hold their melancholy converse! And then one day there came but *one*, who looked vacantly round on the empty space and seemed to remember that others than himself must once have been there, but to remember no more. The "Last Man" had not then been written, and *Geoffry Dale* was yet to spring from the imagination or the memory of the dramatist and supply poor *Jesse Rural* Blake with one of his best opportunities for throat-choking pathos; but in the last of the pensioners his history was sadly prefigured. [Pg 109] One other lonely visit, and then the survivor was gone. All the group had dropped away. Their forms seemed to linger, long after the forms that cast them had mouldered into impalpable dust. It was the most natural thing in life for Robert Brand, months and even years

after, to turn when hearing the measured beat of an old man's cane upon the floor, and look to see if the comer was not one of the veterans of Yorktown or of Trenton, yet lingering far behind the time of his companions. But no—death had come to all, and as yet no resurrection. The last pittance had been paid them, and laid away for the last time by their careful fingers; and they, too, had been laid away by the hoarding miser of human forms, in quiet graves in those humble country church-yards dotting the bosom of that land which they had helped to free and to cover with human glory!

Perhaps they died in good time—before the dark hour came back again after a glorious morning and a cloudless noon. Perhaps it is well that the last of the Revolutionary veterans had passed beyond acute pain and heart-felt shame, before the attempt at national suicide came to embitter their last moments with the belief that after all they might have labored and suffered in vain. But their memory does not die. Mecca and Jerusalem are blended in the sacredness of that pilgrimage which the reverent heart travels back through the years to pay them; and if there is yet a leaven of self-sacrificing devotion in our national character sufficient to bear us on triumphantly to the great end, the yeast of true patriotism from which it is made was preserved through the long night of corruption and misrule, in the breasts of the Fathers of the Republic.

Their children have long been old men now. Their very grandchildren begin to show gray hairs. Following close upon the steps of the Last Man of the Revolution—the last of the men who could say that they saw and took part in that throe which gave birth to a nation,—tread all those who can even say that they ever saw them and took them by the hand. A few years, and the last of these, too, will be quiet and voiceless. The chain of personal recollection is growing thin,—it may break to-morrow; and "the rest is silence."

Such was the blood of Robert Brand, and such had been the influences and surroundings of his earlier life—himself a soldier when in possession of health and vigor, and the companion, friend and guardian of the noblest of all American soldiery when he became disabled and inactive. He loved his native land with an idolatry bordering on insanity; and during the long struggle between the interests of the sections, preceding the war, he had imbibed love of free institutions and hatred of slavery to a degree little less than fanatical. No regret had weighed so heavily upon him, when the note of conflict sounded in 1861, as the fact that his aged and crippled frame must prevent his striking one blow in a cause so holy; and if he held one pride more dearly than another, it was to be found in the remembrance that he had a noble and gallant son, too busy and too much needed at home, thus far, to join the ranks of his country's defenders in the field, but ready when the day of positive need should come, to maintain unsullied the honor of his race. What marvel, all these surroundings considered, that the knowledge of that son being an abject poltroon should nearly have unseated his reason, and that he should have uttered words which only the partial insanity of wounded pride and rankling shame could supply with any shadow of excuse?

At the close of the last chapter, and before this long explanatory episode intervened to break the progress of the narration, Elsie Brand, the agonized sister and daughter, was seen standing before her father, with hands clasped in agony and lips uttering agonized pleadings. But the very instant after, when the terrible severity of that parental curse had been fully rounded from the lips and that fatal evidence given that for the moment all natural affection had given way to impious rage and denunciation,—the young girl stood erect, her blue eyes still tearful but flashing anger of which they commonly seemed to be little capable, and her lips uttering words as determined as those of the madman, even if they were less furious and vindictive:

"You may strike me if you like, but I do not care for you, now—not one snap of my finger! You are not my father—you are nobody's father, but a bad, wicked, unfeeling old man, gray headed enough to know better, and yet cursing your own flesh and blood as if you wished to go to perdition yourself and carry everybody else along with you!"

The very audacity of this speech partially sobered the enraged man, and he only ejaculated in a lower but still angry tone:

"What!"

"What I say and what I mean!" the young girl went on, oblivious or heedless of any parental authority at the moment. "I do not love you—I hate and shudder at you! I would rather be my poor brother, a coward and disgraced as he may be, than his miserable father cursing him like a brute!"

"Do you dare——" the father began to say, in a louder voice and with the thunder again threatening, but Elsie Brand was proving, just then, that the gift of heedless speech "ran in the family," and that for the moment she "had the floor" in the contest of denunciation.

"Oh, you need not look at me in that manner!" she said, marking the expression of the old man's eyes and conscious that he might at any moment recover himself sufficiently to pour out upon her, for her unpardonable impudence, quite as bitter a denunciation as he had lately vented against her disgraced brother. "I am not afraid of your eyes, or of your tongue. You have turned Carlton out of doors, for a mere nothing, and I am going with him. I will never set foot in this house again, never, until——"

How long was the period the indignant girl intended to set for her absence, must ever remain in doubt, with many other things of much more consequence; for the sentence thus begun, was never completed. In at the open front door, through the parlor and into the room of the invalid, at

that moment staggered Kitty Hood. The phrase descriptive of her movement is used advisedly and with good reason; for fright, exhaustion and the terrible heat of the June meridian had reduced the young school-mistress to a most pitiable condition. Her face was one red glow, her brow streamed with perspiration, and she was equally destitute of strength and out of breath.

This strange and unannounced interruption naturally broke the unpleasant chain of conversation between father and daughter; and the eyes of both, during her moment of enforced silence to recover breath, looked upon her with equal wonder and alarm.

"Oh, Mr. Brand!" and here the breath gave out again and she sank exhausted into the chair which Elsie pushed up to her.

"You are sick? Somebody has insulted or hurt you? What *is* the matter, Kitty?" she asked.

"Oh, no, no!" at last the school-mistress mustered breath to say, at short, jerky intervals. "Nothing ails *me*, except that I am out of breath; but your son, Mr. Brand."

"Well, what of *him*?" asked the old man, his tone sharp and angry and his brow frowning, confident that the coming information must have some connection with the disgraceful report of the morning—that Kitty Hood had only run herself out of breath in her anxiety to tell his family unwelcome news that they already knew too well.

"Oh, sir, Mr. Carlton—your poor brother, Elsie!—is dead!"

"Dead!" The word had two echoes—one, from the lips of Robert Brand, little else than a groan; and the other from poor tortured Elsie, compounded between groan and shriek.

"Oh, yes, how can I tell it?" the young school-mistress went on, as fast as her broken breath would allow. "I found him lying dead, only a little while ago, by the gate, down at the blind-road, as I came across from school; and I have run all the way here to tell you!"

"My poor brother dead! oh, Carlton!" moaned Elsie Brand; then, but an instant after, and before the old man had found time to speak again, the curse came up in connection with the bereavement and she broke out, hysterically: "See what you have done, father! You wished poor Carlton dead, and now you have your cruel wish! Oh, my poor, poor brother!"

"Silence, girl!" spoke Robert Brand, sharply, with a not unnatural dislike to have the school-mistress made aware of what had so lately passed. The old man was terribly affected, but he managed to control himself and to speak with some approach to calmness.

"You are sure, Kitty, that you saw my son lying dead?"

"Oh, yes, Mr. Brand, he was lying dead on the grass close by the gate."

"Lying alone?" The voice of the father trembled, in spite of himself, as he asked the question.

"All alone, and he could only have been dead a few moments. He looked so."

"Was there—" and the old lawyer tried to steady his voice as he had many a time before done when asking equally solemn questions concerning the fate of other men's children—"did you see any thing to prove what killed him? He went away from home on horseback—"

"Yes, he was on horseback at Mrs. Hayley's only a little while ago," Elsie mustered strength to interrupt.

"Did you see his horse?—had he fallen from it—or—" and then the voice of the father, who but a few moments before had believed his love for his son crushed out forever, entirely broke down. Heaven only knew the agony of the question he was attempting to put; for the thought had taken possession of him that that son, overwhelmed by the knowledge that he would be pointed out and scoffed as a poltroon, had shown his second lack of courage by laying violent hands on his own life and rushing unbidden into the presence of his Maker!

"No," answered Kitty Hood, setting her teeth hard as she realized that the time had come when she must prove her own honesty at the possible sacrifice of the life of the man who had been her lover. "No, I did not see his horse. He had not been killed by falling from it, I am sure. He had been *murdered*!"

"Murdered!" Again the word was a double echo from the very dissimilar voices of father and daughter; the latter speaking in the terror of the thought, the former under the conviction that the dreadful truth was being revealed, and that, though the young girl did not suspect the fact, the crime would be found to have been *self*-murder.

"There was blood on his face and on the grass," poor Kitty went on, "and there was a bundle lying close beside him, that I had seen under the arm of—of—"

"Eh, what? Under whose arm?" asked the father, in a quick voice, as the relation took this new turn.

"Richard Compton's!" choked out Kitty Hood.

"Richard Compton's!" again echoed the old man. "Why he was your—"

"We were engaged to be married," cried poor Kitty, at last overwrought and bursting into tears.

"But I must tell the truth, even if it hangs him and breaks my heart. He was at the school-house only a little while before; he was angry with Mr. Carlton, and threatened him; and I am afraid that he killed him."

"Oh, this is dreadful!" said Elsie.

"Dreadful indeed!" replied Robert Brand, whose own grief and horror were somewhat modified if not lessened by the thought in what a situation the honest young girl was placing herself and her lover. He reached back and pulled the bell-rope again, and again Elspeth Graeme made her appearance, a little surprised to find three persons in the room where she had before left but two, the third coming unannounced, and all three of the faces looking as if their owners had been summoned to execution. [Pg 115]

"Tell Stephen to get up the large carriage, instantly, and have it round within five minutes," was the order to the old woman, delivered in a quick and agitated voice.

"Are ye gaein' out, sir?" was the inquiry, in reply.

"Yes, but what is that to you, woman?"

"Naethin', maybe, only you're clean daft if ye'r thinkin' of it, Mr. Robert Brand."

"I am not only thinking of it but going to do it; and the quicker you do my bidding, the better."

"Gang yer ways, then, for an uncanny, unmanageable auld ne'er-do-weel!" was the grumbling comment of the Scotch woman, as she prepared to obey the injunction. She strode half way through the parlor, then returned and fired another shot into the invalid's room before she finally departed: "Hech, but ye've been sendin' away the doctor wi' the grin on his grunzie, and wha' will I ca' when ye come back a' ram-feezled and done over—answer me that, noo!"

Less than five minutes sufficed to bring the carriage to the door, with its team of well-groomed bays, and with much exertion (of which the stalwart Elspeth furnished no small proportion) the invalid was placed in it and so surrounded with cushions that he could ride with comparative ease. Elsie's tearful request to be allowed to accompany him in his quest of the body of her brother was sharply denied, with orders that both Kitty and herself should remain within the house until his return; and the carriage drove rapidly away towards the point designated by the school-mistress, while the housekeeper was learning the fearful tidings from the lips of the two girls, and uttering broken laments and raining tears down her coarse cheeks, over "her winsome bairn that had been sae sair wanchancie!"

Scarcely more time than had been consumed in getting ready the vehicle elapsed before the carriage, driven at rapid speed, dashed up to the spot that had been indicated by Kitty, the eyes of the father looking out in advance with an indescribable horror, to catch the first glimpse of the body of a son whom he half accused himself, in his own heart, of murdering. A doctor's top-sulky and a saddled horse, with two men, were seen standing near the gate as they approached; but, strangely enough, they saw no dead body. One of these men, Robert Brand saw, was the young farmer, Richard Compton, who had been accused by Kitty of committing that terrible crime; the other, standing by the side of his professional sulky, was a man of twenty-five, of medium height, very carefully dressed, fair faced, dark haired and dark eyed, with features well rounded and an inexpressibly sweet smile about the handsome mouth, which might have made an impression, under proper circumstances, upon other hearts than the susceptible one of Elsie Brand. Dr. James Holton, as has before been said, was a young physician, in very moderate practice, pleasing though very quiet in manners, irreproachable in character (an unpopular point, as we are all well aware, in one of the heroes of any tale), and considered very much more eligible as a match by the young lady with whom his name has before been connected, than by the parent who was supposed to have the disposal of her hand. Dr. Holton, as many people believed, possessed skill enough and was sufficiently attentive and studious in his profession, to have run a closer race with the local professional autocrat, Dr. Pomeroy, than he had yet been able to do, but for the skilfully managed sneers and quiet undervaluations by which the elder had kept him from winning public confidence. For more than two years he had been a frequent visitor at Robert Brand's, received with undisguised pleasure by Elsie and treated with great consideration by her brother, but meeting from the respected head of the family that peculiar treatment which can no more be construed into cordiality than insult, and which says, quite as plainly as words could speak, "You are a respectable young man enough, and may be received with politeness as a visitor; but you do not amount to enough in the world, ever to become a member of my family." Quarrel as he might with Dr. Philip Pomeroy, the old gentleman persisted in retaining him as his medical adviser; and it was her knowledge of the antagonism between the two and of the estimation in which each was held, that had induced the housekeeper to make her parting suggestion of the effect which must follow his order to set the dog on Pomeroy if he ever again attempted to approach the house. No one, meanwhile, could better appreciate his own position than Dr. James Holton; and while well aware that he loved Elsie Brand dearly, and firmly believing that she held towards him an unwavering affection, he was content to wait until his fortunes should so improve as to make him a more eligible match for her, or until in some other providential manner the obstacles to their union might be removed. [Pg 116] [Pg 117]

Such was the gentleman who approached Robert Brand's carriage door with a bow, the moment the coachman had reined up his horses, and while that gentleman was looking around with fearful anxiety for an object which his eyes did not discover.

"We are in trouble about your son," he said, before the other had spoken. "Something very extraordinary has occurred. Have you heard—"

"That my son was killed and lying here? Yes. Miss Kitty Hood, the school-mistress, saw the body as she passed, and came to inform me."

"Kitty Hood!" gasped Richard Compton, turning from the fence against which he had been leaning, and exhibiting a face nearly as white as that traditionally supposed to belong to a ghost.

"Is it true?" continued the father. "If so, where is the body?"

"That is what puzzles us," answered the physician. "Mr. Compton, here, had an altercation with your son—"

"Excuse me, Doctor, for telling the story myself," said the farmer, interrupting. "Altercation is not the word—it was a *fight*. The devil was in me, I suppose, and I insulted Carlton Brand like a fool, and dared him to get off his horse to fight me. He got off, we exchanged a few blows, and directly he knocked me stiff. Perhaps I hit him in some unlucky place at the same time—I do not know. All that I do know is, that when I got my senses again, he lay stiff as a poker there on the grass. I thought him dead or dying, and rode away on his horse for the doctor. When we got here, just a moment ago, the body, or Mr. Carlton Brand with the life in him—the Lord knows which!—was gone."

"My son got off his horse to fight you, you say?" asked Robert Brand, in such a tone of interest as almost seemed to be exulting.

"Yes, sir," answered the farmer.

"And actually fought you?—do not tell me a falsehood on this point, young man, for your life!"

"Fought me? yes, he did more than that—*whipped* me; and I do not let myself be whipped every day. If I ever found strength to rise again, I was just going to own up beat and ask his pardon."

From that moment, an expression of pain which had been perceptible on Robert Brand's face from the instant of his conversation with Dr. Pomeroy, changed in its character and lightened up, so to speak, if it did not entirely depart. "Not so total and abject a poltroon as I feared!" was his thought. He had not alighted from the carriage, his crippled limb making that step difficult; but leaning over the side of it, he saw something on the grass reminding him of what Kitty had alleged.

"There is blood upon the grass—whose is it?—my son's?" he asked.

"Mine, every drop of it—out of my nose. See, here is the rest of it," answered Dick Compton, drawing from his pocket the bloody handkerchief with which he had tried to improve the appearance of his countenance, while riding away after the doctor.

"What do you make of all this, Doctor?" at length asked Robert Brand.

"It puzzles me, of course," said the medical man. "It is strange how Mr. Brand should have fallen for dead, if he was not. And yet it is not likely that any one would have taken up the body and carried it away, if he was. It would seem most probable that—"

"That he is still alive?"

"That his apparent death was only the result of a fit of some character, and that, coming to after Mr. Compton left, and missing his horse, he has gone homeward, or in some other direction, on foot."

"So I should think," answered the father. "Stephen, drive me home again. If you should hear any thing further, Doctor—"

"I will do myself the honor of letting you know immediately," answered the young physician, with a bow and a quiet consciousness that, from stress of circumstances, the man whom he yet hoped to call father-in-law, had at last given him a tacit invitation to come to his house on *his* business.

"And what shall I do with the horse?" asked Compton.

"As it seems that you have been the means of forcing the rider off its back, if you have not killed him, I think you can do no less than to ride him home to Mr. Brand's stables," said the doctor.

"I am sorry that I brought you here for nothing, Doctor. You don't think that I need to go and give myself up, eh?"

"I am very *glad* that you brought me here for nothing, as it appears, instead of for something," answered the doctor. "No, I do not think that you will have occasion to give any thing up, except your bad temper and your propensity for fighting peaceable men along public roads. I wish you a very good day, Mr. Brand!" and stepping into his sulky, he drove away down the road to attend to some one of his limited number of patients; while the carriage containing Robert Brand whirled rapidly home again, followed at a little distance by Dick Compton on Carlton Brand's horse, the fear of being proved a murderer somewhat lifted from his mind; his military pants haunting him a little less than they had done during the former ride; and the bundle which had at one time threatened to prove so damning an evidence against him, hugged up under his left arm.

CHAPTER VI.

The Residence of Dr. Pomeroy—Nathan Bladesden and Eleanor Hill—A kneeling Woman and a rigid Quaker—The ruin that a Letter had wrought—A Parting that seemed eternal—Carlton Brand alive once more, and a Glance at the fatal Letter.

It sometimes happens, in this world which fast people consider dull and slow, that events crowd themselves very closely, both as to time and space. Within a very limited section, in a period covering scarcely more than an hour, we have seen a complication of occurrences, affecting many persons, sufficient to occupy many hours in the recital. And yet the storehouses of event and circumstance have not yet been at all closely ransacked; and that June-day has yet much to reveal, affecting some of the persons already introduced, and others who have not yet come into the field of observation.

The spot at which the conflict between Carlton Brand and Richard Compton occurred, it will be remembered, was at the intersection of the highway leading down to the Schuylkill at Market Street, by a blind road which ran back southwardly through the wood,—and that the request of the lawyer to Compton that he would open the gate admitting to that blind road, was made by the farmer the occasion of that quarrel and fight which we have seen terminate so singularly. [Pg 121]

Following that blind road half a mile through the wood, southward towards the Darby road, the visitor descended the little range of high land crowned by the wood, crossed a wide meadow with the frogs sunning themselves on the banks of the little brooks that ran beneath the bridges of the causeway, and the blackbirds singing in the low clumps of elder-bush that grew beside them, and found himself, on the other side, rising another slight hillock and at the back gate of the residence of Dr. Philip Pomeroy.

This was a house of modern construction, and of a completeness betokening the wealth of the owner; standing near the crown of the hillock, with the garden at the back sloping away towards the meadow (a bad slope, that towards the north, all the agriculturists in the section averred); handsome shrubbery in the broad yard lying before the pillared front or south face of the house; and a good many fine trees of inconsiderable age, with the pine everywhere predominant, promising abundant shade in coming years, both in front and at the rear. The continuation of the blind road which crossed the meadow, extended past the house on the west side, immediately beside the pickets of the yard enclosure, and running across to the Darby road afforded access to both the great highways, with only short distances of travel, and at the price of opening an occasional gate, which merely answered the purpose of stretching the cramped limbs of the rider. Some persons, who knew the extensive practice of Dr. Pomeroy, were disposed to wonder that he had not located himself immediately on one of the great roads, with no necessity for traversing by-ways to reach them; while others, who better knew the peculiarities of his will, believed that his motive was a fancy for being comparatively isolated and a little baronial. Whether he really had any motive whatever in selecting the location, except the desire of pleasing himself, is a matter of very little consequence. [Pg 122]

There was a light buggy, drawn by two magnificent horses, standing at a post in the road, very near the house, at a little after noon on that day; and within the house certain developments were at the same moment being made, so illustrative of the depth to which human depravity can descend when the rein is given to all base and unholy passions, that the pen of the narrator, who is merely attempting a feeble recital of actual occurrences in the real life of to-day, pauses at the task before it, the fact being so certain that the circumstances about to be recorded will be supposed to have sprung from the disorder of an unscrupulous imagination, instead of being the fruit of sad research and knowledge that would be avoided if such a thing was possible.

The middle portion of the front of the doctor's residence, immediately over the somewhat narrow portico, was a sitting-room of small dimensions, tastily furnished; while out of it opened a little bed-room, the white curtains and snowy bed-drapery of which, seen in glimpses through the door, suggested maiden purity and peace or that bridal rest which should be quite as pure and holy. The sitting-room had at that moment two occupants; and the picture presented was such as no looker-on would have been likely to forget while he lived.

Nearly in the centre of the room stood a gentleman some years past middle age, large framed and with large hands, tall and commanding in figure, unexceptionably dressed in garments betraying the Quaker cut, and with that air of undeniable respectability which no pretence can ever imitate, conveyed by every motion of the man and every fold of his garments. He was dark-eyed and with features a little prominent; and years had made a perceptible mark on the smoothness of his face, at the same time that they had heavily grayed his neat side-whiskers and dashed heavy masses of gray among the still-curling locks that clustered upon his head. A merchant or banker, evidently, from manner and general appearance—and one to whom the idea of dishonorable conduct and the thought of a disgraced reputation would be alike unendurable. [Pg 123] With a face in which sorrow seemed to be struggling with anger, this man stood holding a letter clenched in his right hand, and looking down upon something at his feet. That something was a woman.

The woman was kneeling, with hands clasped in entreaty, hair shaken partially loose, face streaming with tears, and her whole system so shaken by the sobs convulsing it that the most

dangerous form of hysterics might be very likely to follow that excitement. Even when kneeling it was to be observed that her figure was tall, finely moulded and upright—that her face was fair, pleasant, and notably handsome, though the features were too small, the dark eyes mournful, and the general impression created that of confiding helplessness very likely to degenerate into dangerous weakness—that her hands were long, taper and delicate, as beseemed her figure—that her brown hair was very full, rich, silken and glossy—and that she had probably numbered some five-and-twenty summers. Formed to be loved, protected and shielded from every harm, and certain to return for that love and protection the most unreserved affection and the most unquestioning obedience; and yet kneeling there with that upon her face which told a tale of the most cruel outrage quite as plainly as the quivering lips could speak it!

Much has been said of the sadness of the spectacle when a strong man weeps, as compared to the same exhibition of feeling by a woman. It is equally sad when a woman is seen kneeling to any other power than that of her God! It seems man's province, given alike by nature and the laws of chivalry, to bend his proud knee in other aspects than that of devotion; and even when he is showing that prostration his eye may be glowing with the conscious pride of the future conqueror; but what except the most abject shame or the most overwhelming sorrow, can be shown when the delicate limb of womanhood kisses the green sod or the floor beneath her tread? [Pg 124] To save by pitiful entreaties a perilled honor—to beg through blinding tears and choking sobs the restoration of that honor lost, that can often so easily be given back to her by the hands of the tyrant who will not hear her cry—to implore the concealment of a shame too heavy to bear—to plead for the forfeit life of some one dearer than the very pulses beating in her own bosom—to moan for the restoration of some object of love and protection, her babe perhaps, reft from her and her heart and her arms left alike empty—ay, to wail for the boon of a crust that shall chase starvation from the thin lips of herself or her child and keep them yet a little longer as clinging sufferers upon the earth,—these have been the compelling motives so often bending the knee of woman since the earliest day of recorded time. And yet not one of all the long array of unchronicled martyrs has been bowed under a deeper wrong than was that day made manifest, or uttered a more piteous appeal than that day went up to heaven!

"Oh, do not cast me off!—do not desert me, Mr. Bladesden!" wailed a voice that would have been marvellously sweet and tender had it not been broken and roughened by grief, while her poor hands wrung and agonized themselves in sad sympathy with the writhings of her cowering form. "Do not take away from me my last hope of knowing one hour of peace before they put me into the coffin! I am no worse to-day than I was yesterday! Oh, do pity and save me, even if you cannot love me any longer!"

"I do pity thee, Eleanor Hill, and I should like to save thee if I could!" answered a voice rich, full and strong, with only an occasional tremor in its intonation, and the Quaker phraseology seeming to accord peculiarly with the voice as well as the general appearance of the man. "But thou hast deceived me, and the plain people—"

"Oh, no, I did not deceive you, Mr. Bladesden," the poor girl interrupted. "Do let me speak! Do let me try if I cannot move your heart to believe that I have never willingly done wrong—that I have never been intentionally wicked!"

[Pg 125] "Can thee deny what is in this letter, Eleanor Hill?" asked the Quaker, his voice trembling, in spite of himself, a little more than it had before done. Then he added, with something very like a sob in his throat, that seemed strangely at variance with the general calmness of his demeanor: "I am rich, Eleanor—very rich, men say; and yet I would give half of all that I have won in these many years that have made my hair gray, if I could see thee lay thy hand upon thy heart and look up in my face and say: 'The man who writes this writes falsehood!'"

"I cannot—oh, God, you know that I cannot, Mr. Bladesden!" sobbed the poor girl. "It is true in word, and yet heaven knows how false it is in spirit."

"Thee should not appeal to heaven so much, Eleanor, and thee should rise from thy knees, for I will believe thee just as quickly in the one position as the other, and the friendly people make their yea yea and their nay nay, without taking the name of the Father every moment between their lips."

Eleanor Hill managed to rise from her knees and stagger to her feet; but her position was not the less humble afterward, for she stood grasping the back of a chair with both hands for support, and with her head bowed down in such abject shame and humility that the change of posture seemed rather to have been taking on an added degradation than putting one away.

"See, I have done as you told me to do!" she said, without looking up. "I would be so obedient to you, always, if you would only take me away from this misery and shame. Oh, why would he injure me so cruelly—me to whom he should have been merciful, now, if there was any mercy in his nature!"

"Can thee say that Doctor Philip did not do right, if, as thee says, he wrote this letter?" asked the Quaker, keeping his eyes steadily upon the crouching woman, and making no motion to change the distance between them. "Thee had deceived me, and he knew it. He was sure, perhaps, that thee had not told me all, and—" [Pg 126]

"I told you, months ago, when you first spoke of making me your wife, Mr. Bladesden," said the poor girl, with one momentary lifting of the bowed head and one transient flash of womanly spirit —"that I could not give you a whole heart—that my life had been very unfortunate, and that if I

consented to marry you, you must promise never to ask me one question of my miserable past. Do you remember that I did?"

"Thee did tell me so much, Eleanor," answered the Quaker. "But thee only indicated misfortune—not guilt."

"I have *not* been guilty—I was never guilty!" spoke the girl, the momentary flash of womanhood not yet extinguished. "You will not let me appeal to heaven, Mr. Bladesden, yet I must do so once more. I call upon the all-seeing God to punish me with even worse grief and shame than I have already borne, if there has ever been one guilty wish in my mind towards that man or any other—if I have not been forced or deceived into every act which makes you despise me to-day."

The Quaker turned away, the letter still in his hand, and walked toward the window. He lifted the other hand to his brow and seemed to brush away something that troubled him; and he yet retained that position towards the girl, as he said, after the pause of a moment:

"I believe thee speaks the truth, Eleanor Hill."

"You do believe me! Oh, thank you for that mercy, if no more!" and the poor girl had stepped forward, caught his disengaged hand in both hers and lifted it to her lips, before he could prevent her. Then something in his manner, as he turned, seemed to chill her again to the heart, and she fell back silent to the support of the chair.

"I believe thee so far, and yet thee deceived me."

"How *could* I tell you all, Mr. Bladesden? How *could* I publish my own shame? Oh, why was I ever born!" and the voice had sunk low again, and the spirit seemed crushed quite as completely as before. [Pg 127]

"Thee blames Dr. Philip, and yet Dr. Philip was a better friend to me than thee was; for thee would have allowed me to bring disgrace upon my name, and he would not."

The proverbial worm turns when trodden upon. Eleanor Hill had little native spirit, and she had been the veriest worm of the dust throughout all that terrible interview; but this last deadly stab at the vitals of her faith, given in laudation of her destroyer, seemed too much for human endurance, and there was yet one spark of spirit left in the very ashes of disgrace.

"Nathan Bladesden," she said, standing fully erect, and anger usurping the place of shame in her face, "I am satisfied! I will kneel to you no more—beg you for mercy no more! If you are base enough to defend the man who could write that letter, and to call his action honorable, I would rather crawl out into the road and beg my bread from door to door, than to call you husband; and I thank heaven even for that letter which has saved me from a worse man than Philip Pomeroy!"

Life and society are both full of terrible struggles. Perhaps there is no conflict of them all, more enduring in its character, or more racking to those necessarily engaged in it, than that which is fought by those who take the Sermon on the Mount as their declared pattern, and attempt to carry out the principles it enunciates. To forgive when smitten is God-like; but, oh, how difficult for any mere man! To love an enemy is an injunction coming down to us from a higher and purer source than that which gave the philosophy once taught in the Groves of Academe; but, oh, how impossible for any man to do in reality, until he has been baptized with fire! While others have waged this conflict desultorily and in isolated instances, for nearly three centuries, the Quakers have waged it as a sect, entitling themselves alike to wonder and admiration. They have practised a non-resistance unaccountable to the fiery children of the world, and stark madness on any other supposition than that there is really a special protecting Hand over those who heed the peaceful injunction. [Pg 128] They have triumphed alike in society and in savage life, when the strong hand failed and the maxims of worldly wisdom became powerless. And on the faces of the men and women of the sect, to-day—beneath the broad hat of the Friend, under the close gray bonnet of his wife, on brow and cheek of the Quaker maiden with her softly-folded hair, and even in eye and lip of the young man subjected to temptations which have power to fever and wreck all others,—in all, there is the record of a long line of men at peace with God, themselves, and the world, as easily read and as unmistakable as are the traces of toil, unrest, and consuming passion on the countenances of those who have fought through the world with the defiant heart and the strong hand. They have met despisers as well as foes, outside of their own charmed circle; but they have also met admirers. And to-day there are men who could not and who would not take up their cross of self-control and occasional self-denial so long and so patiently carried,—but who cannot and will not refuse to them the tribute of heart-felt admiration, and who often heave fruitless sighs towards that land of mental peace from which they are themselves excluded, because they neither share its blood nor know the tongue of its speech.

But the Quaker has not conquered without struggling, and he has not always conquered at any sacrifice. Twice, the old men of the Revolution used to tell us, the *Pater Patriæ* was known to vent words of even profane anger—once, when the Continental troops failed him on the day of Long Island, and again, when Lee disappointed his just expectations and almost broke his line of battle at Monmouth. These were the two great exceptions proving the rule of his habitual self-command and his religious purity of speech; and the occasional outburst of anger in the Quaker blood may be held to illustrate the same self-control—to prove its abiding existence by the weight of the shock which momentarily throws it into confusion. [Pg 129]

The face of Nathan Bladesden showed, as Eleanor Hill spoke the last words already recorded, a

mental conflict to which he was evidently little accustomed. The calm cheek flushed, the smooth brow corrugated, and the dark eye was for the moment so nearly fierce that the purity of the Quaker blood might well have been doubted. And when she had finished, the lips of the merchant uttered words, at which words themselves and their tone the speaker would equally have shuddered half an hour before:

"Doctor Philip Pomeroy is an infernal scoundrel—unfit to live! He deserves to be killed, and I could kill him with my own hands!"

"Ha!" It was something like a cry of joy from the lips of the poor girl. "Oh, I am so glad! You know this man—you hate him—you have only been trying me—you——" and her brow and cheeks glowed with excitement as she looked up in the Quaker's face. Then her eyes fell again, for she did not read there what she had been led to expect by his words. There was anger, but no pity; and even the anger was dying out under the strong habit of self-control, as rapidly as the momentary glow of a slight conflagration goes down under the dense volume of water poured upon it by the engine.

"Thee mistakes me, Eleanor Hill!" he said. "I may follow the evil ways of the world's people so far as to hate the bad man who has ruined thee, but I have been speaking to thee in all earnest. I have not been 'trying thee,' as thee calls it. I pity thee, truly, and would help thee, but—"

"But in the only way in which you *could* help me, Nathan Bladesden, by lifting me out of this horrible pit in which my feet are sinking lower and lower every day in defiance of all my struggles and all my prayers—you desert me and leave me to perish. I understand you at last, and God help you and me!"

"Thee knows I cannot marry thee, Eleanor Hill, after what has passed," said the Quaker, apologetically.

"I know nothing of the kind, Nathan Bladesden!" answered the girl, no tears in her eyes now, and her words short and even petulant. "You have nothing to do with my past, any more than I with yours, to come to the truth of the matter! You know, in your own soul, that had you despised the malice of that serpent in human shape, and kept the engagement you had made with me, no man on earth would have owned a more faithful or a more loving wife. But you have cast me off, degraded me even lower than before in my own sight, made me kneel to you as I should only have kneeled to my Father in heaven; and this is the end."

"Eleanor—" the Quaker began to say; but the girl interrupted him.

"Please don't say another word to me! I understand you, now, and I know my fate. Let me have that letter, and do not speak any more in the streets, of the shame of a woman whom you once professed to love, than is absolutely necessary; and I shall never ask another favor of you in this world."

"Eleanor Hill, thee is doubting my honor!" said the Quaker, alike forgetting that such idle words as "honor" were only supposed to belong to the "world's people," and that his voice was becoming so low and broken that he could scarcely make himself understood.

"You have done more than doubt mine!" answered the girl, bitterly. "You have told me, in so many words, that because I had been cruelly wronged and outraged by a man who should have cared for me and protected me, I had no 'honor' left. We begin to understand each other."

A moment of silence, the girl weeping again but not convulsively as before; the Quaker with his hand upon his brow and his eyes hidden. How materially the situation had changed within a few minutes, since Eleanor Hill was kneeling with clasped hands and tearing out her heart with sobs. Yet another moment of silence, and then the merchant said:

"I am going away, Eleanor. Has thee nothing more to say to me?"

"Not another word, Mr. Bladesden!" answered the girl, through her set teeth. The Quaker raised his head, looked at her face for one moment, and then slowly moved towards the door, still looking towards her. She made no movement, as he seemed to expect that she would do, and as it seemed possible that some changed action on his part might depend upon her doing.

"Farewell, Eleanor!" The Quaker stood in the door, hat in hand.

"Good-bye, Mr. Bladesden!" The girl still remained on the other side of the room, as if either too much stupefied or too indignant to make any nearer approach. The next moment Nathan Bladesden had left the room and descended the stairs; and within two minutes after, seated alone in the buggy, behind his span of fast horses, he was bowling along towards the Darby road, apparently driving at such speed as if he would willingly fly as fast as possible away from a scene where his manhood had been severely tested and not found proof in extremity.

For an instant after the departure of the Quaker, Eleanor Hill stood erect as he had last seen her. Both hands were pressed upon her heart, and it might have seemed doubtful whether she had nerved herself to that position or lacked power to quit it. Then her eyes fell upon the letter which Bladesden, when she requested him to leave it, had dropped upon a chair; and at the sight the spell, whatever it was, gave way. The poor girl dropped upon her knees before another chair which stood near her, with a cry of such heart-breaking agony as must have moved any heart, not utterly calloused, that listened to it,—dashed her hand into her long, dishevelled hair with such a

gesture as indicated that she would madly tear it out by the roots in handfuls, then desisted and broke out through moans and sobs into one of those prayers which the purists believe are seldom or never forgiven by the heaven to which they are addressed—a prayer for immediate death!

"Oh God!—let me die! Do let me die, here and at this moment! I cannot live and be so wretched! Let me die!—oh, let me die!" [Pg 132]

Whether unpardonable or not, the prayer was certainly impious; for next to that last extremity of crime which any man commits when he dismisses his own life, is his crime when he becomes a suicide in heart and wish, without daring to use the physical force necessary for that consummation. Despair is cowardice; the theft of time is a sin that no amendment can repay; and the robbery of that time which heaven allots to a human life, whether in act or thought, is something over which humanity well may shudder.

But Eleanor Hill's impious prayer had no answer—at least no answer except the denial found in the breath of life which still fluttered from her nostrils and the blood which seemed to flow in torture through the poor frame sympathizing with the mind within. The aspiration was scarcely yet dead upon her lips when there was a footfall on the floor behind her; and she sprung up with one wild desperate hope darting through her brain, that the stern judge had at last relented after leaving her presence—that he had proved himself capable of a great sacrifice and returned to extricate her feet from the pit into which she was so irretrievably sinking. But that hope died on the instant, another and if possible a madder one taking its place; for before her, as she turned, stood Carlton Brand, though so disfigured and changed in appearance that any one except the most intimate of acquaintances might have been excused for doubting his identity.

The young lawyer had always been noted for a neatness of personal appearance approaching to dandyism without reaching that mark; and only an hour before, in face and garb, he would have attracted attention in any circle, from the perfection of every appointment. Now, his face was bruised and swollen; his eyes were bloodshot and fiery; one lappel of his coat was torn from the collar; his coat and his nether garments were soiled and dusty; his hat was crushed and out of shape; and every detail of his presence seemed to be marred in corresponding proportion. A rough peasant's or a highwayman's disguise for a masquerade, would scarcely have changed him more than he had been changed, without the least premeditation, by that little rencontre with Dick Compton, to which we have already been unbidden witnesses. Absorbed as poor Eleanor Hill was in her own situation, she could scarcely suppress a scream when she saw the aspect of a man who always appeared before her so differently; and there was fright as well as concern in her voice as she said: [Pg 133]

"Why, Carlton Brand! Good heaven!—what *has* happened to you?"

"Much, Eleanor!" answered the lawyer, dropping into a chair with every indication of weariness, and wiping his heated brow with a handkerchief which showed that it had been soiled in removing some of the grime from his clothing.

"Your clothes are torn—your face is swollen! Have you been attacked?—beaten? Are you seriously hurt?" inquired the girl, coming close to him and laying her hand on his shoulder with the affectionate anxiety which a sister might have shown. These women have no bounds to that sympathy which alternately makes them angels and lures them on the road to be fiends; and there is probably no true woman, who had ever been wife, sweetheart or mother, but would forget at least one pang of her pain on the rack, in sympathy for some wronged and suffering person who approached her!

"Oh, no!" and Carlton Brand tried to laugh and made a miserable failure of the attempt, with his bruised face and swollen mouth. "Do not be alarmed, Eleanor. I have simply been in a little encounter with one of my neighbors, and—I scarcely know what has happened—I believe my clothes are torn and I suppose that I am disfigured a little."

"Disfigured a little! Good heaven, I should think you were!" said the girl, coming still closer and looking into his face. As she did so, the eyes of the lawyer, not too bloodshot for sight if they were for grace of aspect, detected the swollen condition of her face, the fearful redness of her eyes, and the various symptoms which told through what a storm of shame and sorrow she had lately been passing. He started to his feet at once, grasping her hand: [Pg 134]

"Eleanor, *you* are worse hurt than myself! Tell me what has happened! Has he been torturing you again?"

"Oh, yes," answered the poor girl—"worse than torturing me! I could bear his personal cruelty, for I have grown used to it. But he has just made me lose my last hope in life, and I have nothing left me but to die!"

"Your last hope?" echoed Carlton Brand. "What? Has Mr. Bladesden—"

"Mr. Bladesden has just been here," answered Eleanor Hill, choking down the grief and indignation that were so painfully combating each other in her throat, dropping her head as she had done a few minutes before in the presence of the merchant, and holding out in her hand the crushed letter which Bladesden had dropped as he left the house. "Mr. Bladesden has just been here, and he brought this letter to read to me. It had been sent to his store, and he received it this morning. You can see, after reading it, what hope in life he has left me!"

"Curse him! He deserves eternal perdition, and will find it!"

Carlton Brand had momentarily forgotten his own troubles in the evident anguish of the young girl, just as a few moments before she had merged all those sorrows in anxiety for his personal safety. He took the letter she handed, smoothed out the crumpled folds made in it by the grasp of anger and shame, and read the damning words that follow—words so black and dastardly that one of the fiends from the lower pit might come back to earth to clear away from his name the suspicion that he had ever penned them. A few sentences of this *bona fide* communication are necessarily omitted, in an interest easily understood:

West Philadelphia, *June —, 1863.*

Mr. Nathan Bladesden:

Sir:—You are a merchant of respectability, as well as a member of the Society of Friends—a society for which I have the highest respect, although I do not happen to have been born a member of it. I should very much regret to see you made the victim of a designing woman, and linked for life to one who would bring disgrace upon your name and family. Report says that you are engaged to be married, or that you very probably may be so at an early period, to Miss Eleanor Hill, the ward for some years of Dr. Philip Pomeroy, and who is still resident in the house of that medical gentleman. I suppose that you know very little of the early history of the young lady, as, if you had known, you would never have allowed yourself to be entangled in that manner. Her father left her a few thousands of dollars in property, which she no doubt has the reputation of still possessing, while I have very good reason to know that it has really all (or nearly all) been used up in unfortunate speculations by different persons to whom she intrusted it, and that she is little else than a beggar, except as the Doctor offers her a home. As to her personal character, which is the thing of greatest consequence at the present moment,—Miss Hill was a very giddy girl, and many of her friends had fears for her future; but none of them foresaw what would indeed be the issue of the unfortunate situation in which she was placed. I am writing this letter, as you must be aware, for no purposes of my own, and simply to serve an honorable man who seems to have been tricked and cajoled by unscrupulous people. As a consequence, I must ask of you as a right which you cannot disregard, that you will not show this letter to Dr. Pomeroy, who might know enough of the direction from which such a revelation would be likeliest to come, to awaken his suspicion and put him in the way of injuring me. This promised, I now go on to state what you will never cease to thank me for communicating to you, if you are the high-toned man of honor that I suppose. Dr. Pomeroy is well known to be a man of somewhat violent passions; and though I believe that his conduct has been nearly spotless during his professional career, yet there are stains against him for which he is probably the sorriest of men in his calmer moments. Miss Hill, as I have said, was giddy and thoughtless, if no worse; and very soon after the death of her father, those who happened to see her in company with her guardian, noticed that she paid him attentions which showed a very warm personal attachment, while he received them as a bachelor man of the world could not very well avoid receiving such marks of regard from a young and pretty girl. How long this went on, I am not at liberty to say, even if I have any means of knowing: it is enough that, to my knowledge and that of more than one person with whom you are acquainted, the natural result followed. If there was any seduction, I should be puzzled to say on which side the art was used; but perhaps when you remember that the lady has, during all your acquaintance with her, (at least I presume so, from your continuing to visit her,) passed herself off on you as pure enough to be worthy of the honor of your hand, you may be able to form some idea whether she might not have been quite as much in fault as her partner in crime. I say "partner in crime," as I have no wish or motive to shelter Dr. Pomeroy. Perhaps I ought not to say more, and indeed my pen hesitates when I attempt to set down what I consider so lamentable, as well as so culpable. But I must go on, after going thus far. The secret of Miss Hill's remaining at the house of Dr. Pomeroy after her attainment of majority, is that a guilty attachment and connection has existed between them for not less than five years past, unsuspected by most persons who know them, but well known to myself and some others, at least one of whom has been the accidental witness of their crime. If you should think proper to tax her with this depravity, and she should choose to deny this statement, by way of convincing yourself whether this is a foul calumny or a bitter truth, ask her * * * * * * * * I hope and believe that you will take the warning that I have thus conveyed, and not give yourself any trouble to discover the writer, who does not conceal his name from any other motives than those which you can understand and approve.

A True Friend.

Carlton Brand read through this precious document without speaking—a document not worse in motive than all other anonymous communications, any one of which should subject the perpetrator, if discovered, to cropped ears and slitted tongue,—but worse than all others of its evil kind in the atrocity of its surrounding circumstances, as the reader will have no difficulty in believing when a little additional light is shed upon the personality of the writer by the chapters immediately following.

CHAPTER VII.

[Pg 137]

A Return To 1856—Nicholas Hill, Iron Merchant—His Death, his Daughter and his Friend—How Dr. Pomeroy became a Guardian, and how he discharged that Duty—A Ruin and an Awakening—The market value of Dunderhaven stock in 1858.

Seven years before 1863, and consequently in 1856, died Nicholas Hill, a merchant of Philadelphia, whose place of business on Market Street above Third had been the seat of a respectable though not remarkably extensive trade, for nearly a quarter of a century. His trade had been in iron and hardware, but the material of his stock by no means entered into his own composition, for he was a man somewhat noted for his quiet and retiring manners and a pliancy of spirit making him at times the victim of the unscrupulously plausible. His private fortune met with sundry serious drawbacks on account of this weakness, though a generally prosperous business enabled him to keep intact the few thousands which he had already won, and gradually if slowly to add to the accumulation. He had remained a widower since the death of his wife ten years before his own demise; and his pleasant though quiet little house on Locust Street, had only contained one member of his family besides himself, for years before his death—his only daughter and only child, Eleanor.

The warmest and longest-continued friendships are very often formed by persons diametrically opposed in character and disposition; and the rule seemed to hold good in the instance under notice. A friendship formed several years before between the merchant and Dr. Philip Pomeroy, when the latter was a practising physician resident in the city proper, had never died out or become weakened, at least in the heart of the confiding and quiet dealer in iron, and there was no reason to believe that the sentiment had been more transient in the breast of the physician. [Pg 138] Mr. Hill had been suffering under the incipient threats of consumption, for years, and the doctor had been his medical attendant, as before the death of his wife he had filled the same confidential relation towards that lady and the other members of his household. Neither personally nor by marriage had the merchant any near relatives in the city or its vicinity; and his retiring disposition was such that while he made many friends in the ordinary acceptation of the word, he had few who stood in that peculiar relation which the French, supplying a noun which has scarcely yet crept into our own language, designate as *les intimes*.

It was not strange, then, that when Nicholas Hill was suddenly seized with hemorrhage of the lungs and brought home in an almost dying condition from his store, one afternoon in November, 1856, Dr. Pomeroy, who was hurriedly summoned to his aid, was summoned quite as much in the capacity of friend as in that of medical attendant. The story of life or death was soon told. The merchant had believed, from the moment of attack, that his day of probation was over; and, apart from his natural anxiety for the welfare of his only child, there was little tie to bind the sufferer to earth. His wife—his wife that day as much as she had been at any period of their wedded life,—had long been awaiting him, as he believed, in a better world; and there is something in the facility with which those quiet, good people, who seem never to have enjoyed existence with the fiery zest which tingles in finger and lip of the sons of pleasure and sorrow, give up their hold upon being and pass away into the infinite unknown which lies beyond the dark valley,—something that may well make it a matter of question whether theirs is not after all the golden secret of human happiness, for which all ages have been studying and delving.

The doctor came, with that rapidity which was usual with him, and with every mark of intense interest on his face and in his general demeanor. He found the invalid sinking rapidly, and his [Pg 139] attendants, the weeping Eleanor, then a handsome, promising but defectively-educated girl of near eighteen, and two or three of the ladies of the near neighborhood who had gathered in to tender their services when it was known that the merchant had been brought home in a dying condition. A few words from the sufferer, uttered in a low tone almost in the ear of the stooping physician, and then all the others were sent out of the room except his daughter, whose pleading gesture, asking to be allowed to remain within the room was not disregarded, but who was motioned by the doctor to take her place at the window, beyond supposed hearing of the words that were to pass between the two friends.

"Tell me the exact truth," said the low voice of Nicholas Hill, when these dispositions had been made. "I am prepared to hear any judgment which your lips may speak. There is no hope for me?—I am dying?"

Either the doctor could not speak, or he would not. He merely bowed his head in a manner that the questioner well understood.

"So I thought, from the first," said the dying man. "The life blood does not flow away in that manner for nothing. And I do not know that I regret the end, for I have lived almost as long as I could make myself useful, and I think I am as nearly prepared to die as poor, fallen humanity can hope to be."

"I hope and believe that you are indeed prepared to die, my dear, good friend," answered the doctor, with feeling in his tone, and the feeble hand of the sufferer meanwhile within his. "I cannot hold out a false hope to you—you cannot live. How gladly science and friendship would both join hands in doing something to keep you in the world, you know; but how much we shall all miss you and grieve for you, you do *not* know."

"That you will miss me, I hope," said the dying man. "But there is no occasion whatever to grieve for me. It is a peaceful end, I think, and in God's own good time. I have but one anxiety." [Pg 140]

He paused, and the doctor nodded his head towards the side of the room where poor Eleanor was sitting, trying to distract her own thoughts by looking out of the window. The father saw that he understood him, and pressed the hand that he held.

"Yes, you have guessed rightly," he said. "My only anxiety is for the fate of my child. Eleanor is a good girl, but she is yet very young, and she will need protection."

"She shall find it!" said the doctor, solemnly.

The face of the dying man lit up with an expression of the sincerest pleasure and happiness, and his feeble grasp again pressed the hand of high health which lay so near his own ebbing pulse.

"I believe you and I thank you, my friend as well as physician," he replied. "I have not been afraid to think of this day, as they tell me that so many are; and my affairs are in some degree prepared for it. I have a handsome property, though not a large one, and you will find a will lying in the private drawer of the safe at the store. With the exception of a few legacies to friends, a small one to yourself included—it all goes to Eleanor, and you will find yourself named my executor."

"A confidence which flatters me, and which I hope I shall deserve," said the doctor, as the enfeebled man again paused for a moment.

"I *know* that you will," the sufferer resumed. "Thanks to my property, Eleanor will not be a burthen to you, except in the demand of *care*. Her few relatives, as you know, are distant ones, and none of them reside nearer than California. There will be none to interfere with you in guiding her aright, keeping her pure in her remaining years of girlhood, and watching over her until she becomes the wife of some honorable man, or in some other way ceases to need your protection." [Pg 141]

"I accept the charge as freely as it is given, and I will perform it as I would for one of my own blood!" was the solemn answer of the medical man.

"I knew that before I asked, or I should never have asked at all!" said the dying man. "Eleanor, my daughter, come here."

The young girl obeyed and knelt beside the bed, striving to restrain her sobs and tears. The father laid his hand on her head and gently smoothed the masses of dark brown hair with fingers that would so soon be beyond capacity for such a caress.

"Eleanor," he said, "you are almost a woman in years, and you must be altogether a woman, now. I am going to leave you—I may leave you in a few minutes."

"Oh, I know it, father!—dear, dear father! Oh, what will become of me?" and in spite of her efforts to restrain herself she sobbed and choked piteously.

"You will be cared for, my child, not only by heaven but by kind friends; and you must not grieve so over what does not grieve me at all," said the departing parent. "Dr. Pomeroy is to be the executor of my estate, and your guardian. Love and obey him, my daughter, in every thing, as you would love and obey me if I was allowed to remain with you. Do you understand me?—do you promise me, Eleanor?"

"I do understand you!—I do promise you, dear, dear father!" sobbed the young girl. "I will obey Dr. Philip, and try to be good all my life, so that I can meet you where I know that you are going to meet my mother."

"My dear, good child!—you and the doctor have made me so happy! Kiss me now, Eleanor, and then let me sleep a few moments." And directly after that kiss of agonized love was given, he fell back upon his pillow—as if he was indeed dropping into a quiet sleep; but the doctor felt the hand that lay within his relax its pressure, one or two sighs fluttered from the quivering lips, while a light foam tinged with blood crept up to them and bubbled there, and the moment after Eleanor Hill was fatherless. [Pg 142]

And yet the poor girl who sobbed so heart-brokenly over the corpse of one who had been to her the truest and kindest of parents, was not fatherless in that desolate sense in which the word is so often used. The ties of blood might be rudely broken, but did not the hand of true friendship stand ready to assert itself? Had not Philip Pomeroy promised the friend of years, that he would be father and protector to her—that he would shelter her with all the power given to his ripe manhood, and hold her pure as the very angels, so far as he had power to direct her course? No—not fatherless: the weeping girl, in the midst of her sobs and unfelt caresses over what had once been the father of her idolatry, appreciated the truth and was partially comforted.

It so chanced that Dr. Pomeroy, in his domestic relations, was admirably placed for offering a home to the daughter of his dead friend. Marrying did not seem to run in the Pomeroy family, for not only was the doctor a confirmed bachelor, some years past middle age, but his only living sister had kept herself free, like him, of matrimonial chains, and presided pleasantly over his household under her maiden name of Miss Hester Pomeroy. While the removal of a young girl of eighteen to a bachelor's residence, without the cover of female society, might have seemed grossly improper in spite of the color given to it by the guardianship so lately acquired, there could be no impropriety whatever in her becoming the companion and to some extent the pupil of

the bachelor's maiden sister of forty.

Dr. Pomeroy's residence was at that time within the city limits, though in that extreme upper section bordering on the Schuylkill; but his practice had been gradually extending out into the country over the river; and ideas long cherished, of a residence beyond the reach of the noises of the great city, were gradually becoming realized. At the time of the death of his friend, that mansion which it has just been our sad privilege to enter, was in the course of erection; and in the spring which followed he took up his abode within it, with his sister, his ward, and that array of domestics necessary for a man of his supposed wealth and somewhat expensive habits. [Pg 143]

It did indeed seem that Eleanor Hill was blessed among orphans if not among women. Her tears dried easily, as they had good cause to do. The residence to which she had been removed was a very handsome and even a luxurious one; Miss Hester Pomeroy was one of those good easy souls who neither possess any strength of character themselves nor envy it in others,—with an almost idolizing admiration of her gifted and popular brother, and a belief that no movement of his could be other than the best possible under the circumstances; and the doctor himself, a man of fine education, distinguished manners, admitted professional skill, and an uprightness of carriage which seemed to more than atone for any lack of suavity in his demeanor—the doctor himself appeared to be anxious, from the first, that no shadow of accusation should lie against his name, of inattention to the ward committed to his charge. From the day of her coming into his house, whenever his professional engagements would allow, he spent much time in the society of Eleanor, greatly to the delight of Miss Hester, who had thought herself very unattractive company and wished that her gifted brother had some one in the house more worthy to be his companion. He selected books for the young girl; brought home others; directed her studies into channels calculated to form her mind (at least some portions of it); invited the young people of the neighborhood to meet her; drove her out frequently; took such care of her health as he might have done of that of a darling daughter or an idolized sweetheart; and gave evidence that none could doubt, of his intention to fulfil in the most liberal and conscientious manner the sacred promises he had made over the death-bed of her father.

[Pg 144] To the young girl, meanwhile her surroundings became Elysium. She had warm affections, of that clinging character which finds no difficulty in fastening almost anywhere if permitted time and quiet. She had little force of will and still less of that serpent wisdom which discerns the shadow of danger before that danger really approaches. She was equally good, by nature, and weak by disposition—formed of that material out of which good wives and mothers are so easily made, and which may, on the other hand, be fashioned so easily into the most melancholy semblance of lost womanhood. She was handsome, if not strictly beautiful, and the lips of her guardian, so strict to most others, told her so with smiles and low-breathed words. She was flattered by his preference, paid her deferentially in public and yet more unreservedly when none but themselves heard the words he uttered,—proud to be thus distinguished by one so attractive in appearance and unimpeachable in position,—bound to him by that obedience enjoined by her dying father, and by that strong tie of gratitude which she felt to be due to her willing and unrecompensed protector, —and brought into that close communion with his strong mind which could not fail to sway an unmeasured influence over her, by those studies in poetry, romance and philosophy which he had himself directed.

It is an old story, and melancholy as old. Before she had been six months an inmate of the house of Dr. Pomeroy, Eleanor Hill loved him as madly as young, defenceless and untrained girlhood can love that which supplies its best ideal and lures it on by the most specious of pretences. Not more than that time had elapsed, when she would have plucked out her heart and laid it in his hand, had he asked it and had such an act of bodily self-sacrifice been possible. Less than a year, and the tale of her destiny was told. For weeks before, the words of her "guardian" and "father" had been such as ill became either relation, but not warmer, still, than the snared heart of the young girl craved and echoed. Then came that promise of the dearest tie on earth, which falls on the ear of loving woman with a sweeter sound than any other ever uttered under the sun or stars. [Pg 145] He loved her—that proud, high-spirited, distinguished man, the friend of her father, and the man for whose hand (so he had told her, not boastingly but in pity, and so she had every reason to believe) the wealthiest, the most beautiful and the most arrogant belles of Broad Street and Girard Avenue had been willing to barter all their pride and all their coyness—he loved *her*, the poor young and comparatively portionless girl, held her worthy to be his wife, and was willing to share his high destiny with her!

What marvel that the untutored heart beat faster than its wont, when that golden gate of paradise was opened in expectation to her eyes? What marvel that all the lessons of childhood, which stood between her and obedience to the master of her destiny, were forgotten or only remembered with abhorrence? What marvel that the past became a dream, the present dull and unendurable, and only the delirious future worth a wish or a thought? What marvel that one evening when the full moon of August was peeping in through the trees which already began to cast their shade over the new home into the room where the "guardian" and the "ward" were sitting alone together—when the air seemed balm and the earth heaven—when the night-sounds of late summer made a sadness that was not sorrow, and temptation put on the very robes of holy feeling to do its evil work—when the lips of the subtle, bad, unscrupulous man of the world repeated words as sweet as they were unmeaning, promises as hollow as they were delicious and prayers as bewildering as they were sacrilegious—when the heart of the young girl had proved traitor to her senses and all the guardian angels of her maidenhood had fled away and left her to a conflict for which she had neither wisdom nor strength—what marvel that the moment of total

madness came to one and perhaps to both, and that before it ended Eleanor Hill lay upon the breast of her destroyer, a poor dishonored thing, frightened, delirious, half-senseless, and yet blindly happier in her shame than she had ever been while the white doves still folded their wings above her! [Pg 146]

We know something of ends and something of intermediary occurrences, but very little of beginnings. The common eye can see the oak from a tiny sprout to its lordship of the forest, but none may behold the first movement of the germ in the buried acorn. The unnatural rebellion of Absalom, the reckless treason of Arnold, the struggle for universal empire of Napoleon, all stand out boldly on the historic page, as they appeared at the moment of culmination; but who sees the disobedient son of David when he walks out into the night with the first unfilial curse upon his lips, or the arch-traitor of the Western Continent as he starts from his sleep with the first thought of his black deed creeping under his hair and curdling his blood, or the victor of Marengo nursing his first far-off vision of the dangerous glory yet to be! We can know nothing more of the beginnings of vice in the hearts of the great criminals of private life. It can never be known, until all other secrets are unveiled before the eyes of a startled universe, whether Dr. Pomeroy, (no imaginary character, but a personage too real and very slightly disguised), in this ruin wrought by his hand had been acting the part of an unmitigated scoundrel from the beginning, a lie upon his lip and mockery in his heart when he promised the dying Nicholas Hill protection to his helpless daughter, and every act and word of his intercourse with her subtly calculated to bring about the one unholy end,—or whether he had merely *permitted* himself, without early premeditation, to do the unpardonable evil which proved so convenient. For the welfare of the victim, it seemed a question of little consequence: for the credit of humanity, always enough disgraced, at best, by its robbers and cut-throats of the moral highway, it may be at least worth a thought. After events make it doubtful whether the very worst had not been intended and labored for from the outset; and certain it is that if there had before been one redeeming trait to temper the moral baseness of Philip Pomeroy, from the moment when that ruin was accomplished no [Pg 147] obstacle of goodness hindered his way towards the end of the irredeemable. If he had before kept terms with Eleanor Hill and his own soul, he kept those terms no longer.

The poor girl had of course no right to be happy in her new and guilty relation, and yet she was so for a time—almost entirely happy. She had been wooed and won (oh, how fearfully *won*!) under an explicit promise of marriage and with continual repetitions of words of respect which left her no room to doubt the good faith of the man who uttered them. She was more than a little weak, as has already been said; very unsuspicious and clinging in her trust; and neither wise enough to know that the man who respected her sufficiently to make her his wife, no insurmountable obstacle lying in his way, would have made her so before laying his hand on the hem of the garment of her purity,—or precise enough to feel that any disgrace had really fallen upon her, which would not be removed the moment that promise of marriage was fulfilled. Then, by a natural law which can be easily understood if it cannot be explained, the young girl a thousand times more deeply loved the master of her destiny because he had made himself entirely so; and for a time, at least, the conduct of the victor towards his helpless captive was full of such exquisite tenderness in private that she could not have found room for a regret had her heart even revolted at the situation in which she was placed. He did not speak of an immediate fulfilment of his promise of marriage—no, but he had before hinted that owing to certain temporary circumstances (oh, those "temporary circumstances"!) the hour when he could make her his own before the world must be yet a little delayed; and so the young heart took no fright at the procrastination. Good Miss Hester, meanwhile, saw nothing suspicious and suspected nothing improper. Perhaps she saw a deeper light of tenderness in the eyes of the poor betrayed girl, when they beamed upon him who should have been her husband; and perhaps she saw that her [Pg 148] brother treated his ward with even more delicate attention than he had shown during the months before; but the spinster's eyes had no skill to read beneath the mask of either, and if she thought upon the subject at all her impressions were not likely to go farther than the mental remark: "How good Philip is to Eleanor; how obedient to him she seems to be; and how happy for both that he ever became her guardian and she his charge!"

Under such circumstances the awakening, even a partial one, could not come otherwise than very slowly. But unless the young girl was an absolute idiot or utterly depraved, an awakening must come at some period or other. Though weak and ill-trained, Eleanor Hill was by no means an idiot; and the angels of heaven could look down and see that through all that had occurred there had been no depravity in her soul, no coarse, sensual passion in her nature. If she had fallen, she had been sacrificed on the altar of man's unscrupulous libertinism, and offering up the incense, meanwhile, of a good, yielding, compliant, worshipping heart. The moral perceptions may have been blunted, but they were not annihilated; the reason may have been choked and dizzied in the flood of feeling, but it was immortal and could not be drowned.

Months had elapsed after the culmination of their intercourse, before the sense of right became strong enough and the heart bold enough, for the young girl to hint at the fulfilment of what had been so long delayed. The answer was a passionate kiss and an assurance that "only a little time more should elapse—just yet it would not be prudent and was in fact impossible." Eleanor wondered: she had not yet learned to doubt; and for a time she kept silent. Again, a few weeks later, and the question was repeated. This time a light laugh met her ear, and there was more of the master toying with his slave or the spoiled boy trifling with his play-thing, than there had been in the first instance. Still the promise was repeated, and still there were "insurmountable [Pg 149] obstacles." Another interval of silence, then a third request, this time with tears, that he would do her the justice he had promised. To this ill-nature responded, and for the first time the young girl

learned what a claw of pride and arrogance lay folded in the velvet palm of the tiger. She shrunk away within herself, at his first harsh word, almost believing that she must have committed some wrong in speaking to him of his delayed promise; and when he kissed her at the end of that conversation and said: "There, run away and do not bother me about it when I am worried and busy!" she almost felt—heaven help her poor, weak heart!—that that kiss was one of needed pardon!

The dullest eyes will recognize at last what only the quick and accustomed discern at first. Eleanor Hill had been blind, but her eyes gradually opened,—with an agony in the first gleams of light, of which her yielding, compliant nature had before given little promise. Nearly two years had elapsed after her becoming the ward of Dr. Philip Pomeroy, and more than one year after that fatal era in her own destiny, when the wronged girl, then twenty and within only twelve months of her legal majority, at last sounded the depths of that man's nature sufficiently to know that he had been inventing the existence of obstacles—that he had never intended to marry her, at least at any near period. At that moment of discovery a higher and prouder nature than hers might have been moved to personal upbraiding, despair and perhaps to suicide: with Eleanor Hill the only result was that a sense of shame, before kept in abeyance, came in and settled down upon her, making her more humble than angry or indignant, and unnerving her instead of bracing her mind anew for any conflict that might arise in the future. Aware, at last, of his deception, she could not quite believe in her guardian's utter baseness; and she still *hoped* that though he might demand his own time for the fulfilment of that promise which had won her from herself, in his own time he would render her that justice in reality so poor but to her so full of compensation for all the past. [Pg 150]

Would it not seem, even to one most fully acquainted with all the falsehood of the betrayer and all the cruelty of the torturer, that the cup of that man's infamy was nearly filled? And yet—sorrow that the bitter truth must be recorded!—not a tithe of that which was to curse him before the end, has yet been indicated. Slowly and surely the blackening crimes pile up, when the love of virtue and the fear of heaven have both faded out from the human heart; and who can measure the height to which those mountain masses of guilt may tower, after the first foundations have been laid in one unrepented wrong, and before the coming of that day when the criminal must call upon those very mountains to fall and bury him away from the wrath that is inevitable!

Dr. Pomeroy came home late one evening in December, 1858. Hester had long been in bed, and Eleanor, as was her habit, had waited up for his return. Some weeks had now elapsed since her discovery of his deception, but hope had not yet died out, nor had all her confidence been lost in that affection for her which she believed underlay all the impropriety of his treatment. So far, except in the one particular, he had treated her with almost unvarying kindness; and while that pleasant status existed and hope had yet a little point for the clinging of her tenacious fingers, it was not in the nature of the young girl to despair. She met him at the door, as she had done on so many previous occasions, assisted him to divest himself of the rough wrappers by which he had been sheltered from the winter wind, and when at last he dropped into his cushioned chair before the grate, which had been kept broadly aglow to minister to his comfort, took her place half by his side and half at his feet.

Perhaps there was some malevolent spirit who on that occasion, before the glow of the winter fire, once more brought to the lips of the poor girl that subject always lying so near her heart—marriage. She mentioned the word, and for the first time since he had given her shelter under his roof, Philip Pomeroy hurled an oath at her. Perhaps he had been taking wine somewhat too freely, in one of the tempting supper-rooms of the city; or some other cause may have disturbed his equanimity and brought out the truth of his worst nature. The reply of Eleanor Hill to this was the not unnatural one of a burst of tears, and that outburst may have maddened him still more. The truth came at last, in all its black, bitter, naked deformity: [Pg 151]

"Eleanor, you have made a fool of yourself long enough! No more of this whining, or it will be the worse for you! When *I* marry *you*, I shall be very nearly out of business; and if you have not had judgment enough to know that fact before, so much the worse for your common sense!"

Eleanor Hill staggered up from her chair and cast one glance full into the face of her destroyer. Her eyes could read the expression that it bore, then, if they had never before attained the same power. There was neither the smile of reckless pleasantry nor the unbent lines of partial pity for suffering, upon that face. All was cold, hard, determined, cruel earnest, and the victim read at last aright what she should have been able to decipher more than two years before. And never the life of a dangerous infant heir went out beneath the choking fingers of a hired murderer, at midnight and in silence in one of the thick vaulted chambers of the Tower, more suddenly or more effectually than at that moment the last honorable hope of Eleanor Hill expired, strangled by the hand of that "guardian" who had promised beside a dying bed that he would shield and protect her as his own child!

In that hard, cold face Eleanor Hill at last read her destiny. She had been weak, compliant and submissive, but never reconciled to her shame; and at that moment began her revolt.

"I understand you at last," she said. "After all your promises, you will *not* marry me!"

"Once for all—no!" was the firm reply, the cruel face not blenching in the least before that glance, mingled of pain and indignation, and so steadily bent upon it. [Pg 152]

"Then I have lived long enough in this house—too long!" broke from the lips of the young girl. "I

will leave it to-morrow. You cannot give me back the thing of most value of which you have robbed me—my honor and my peace of mind; but my father left my property in your hands—give me back that, so that I may go away and hide myself where I shall never be any more trouble to you or to any others who know me."

"Humph! your property!" was the reply, in so sneering a tone that even the unsuspicious ears of the victim caught something more in the manner than in the words themselves.

"Yes, I said my property—the property my father left in your hands for me!" answered poor Eleanor, striving to conquer the deadly depression at her heart and to be calm and dignified. "You have told me the truth at last; and I will never ask you the question again if you will give me enough money for my support and let me go away from this life of sin into which you have dragged me."

"You want to go away, do you!" again spoke the doctor, in the same sneering tone. "And you expect to support yourself upon what you call 'your property?'"

"I do want to go away—I must go away, Dr. Philip!" answered the victim, still managing to choke down the tears and sobs that were rising so painfully. "You have cruelly deceived a poor girl who trusted you, and we had better never see each other again while we live."

"Your property, you said! Bring me that large black portfolio from the top of the closet yonder," was the only and strange reply. With the habit of her old obedience the young girl went to the place designated, found the pocket-book and brought it to him. He opened it, took out half a dozen pieces of what seemed to be bank-note paper, and handed them over to her without an additional word.

"What are these, and what I am to do with them?" she asked, in surprise.

"They are 'your fortune' that you have been talking about, and you may do what you like with them if you insist upon leaving my house!" was the reply.

"I do not understand you!" very naturally answered the recipient, making no motion to open the papers. "If these are mine, I cannot tell what to do with them or how much they are worth."

"Oh, I can tell you their value, very easily, though I might be puzzled to direct you as to the other part of your anxiety!" said the doctor, with a scarcely-suppressed chuckle at the bottom of his sneer. "They are the scrip for four thousand shares in the capital stock of the Dunderhaven Coal and Mining Company, in which, with your consent, I invested the forty thousand dollars left you by your father; and their present worth is not much, as the company unfortunately failed about six months ago, paying a dividend of five-sixteenths of a cent on the dollar. The amount would be —I remember calculating it up at the time of the failure—just one hundred and twenty-five dollars."

"And that is all the money that I have in the world!" gasped the young girl, tottering towards a chair.

"Every penny, if you leave my house!" answered the model guardian. "If you remain in it, as I wish, and forget all the nonsense that priests and old women have dinned into your ears, about marriage,—your fortune is just as much as my own, for you shall find that there is nothing which I can afford to purchase for myself, that I will not just as freely purchase for you!"

Eleanor Hill said not a word in reply. She had sunk into a chair and covered her face with both her hands, through the delicate fingers of which streamed the bright tears, while her whole frame was shaken and racked by the violence of her mental torture. How utterly and completely desolate she was at that moment! Refused the justice of marriage by the man for whom she had perilled all, and bidden no longer even to hope for that justice—then coldly informed that if she left the house of her betrayer she went away to beggary, as all the fortune left her by her father had been squandered by imprudence or dishonesty,—what additional blow could fall upon her, and what other and heavier bolt could there yet be stored for her in the clouds of wrath?

CHAPTER VIII.

WHAT FOLLOWED THE REVELATION OF BETRAYAL—A GLEAM OF HOPE FOR ELEANOR HILL—A RELATIVE FROM CALIFORNIA, A PROJECTED VOYAGE, AND A DISAPPOINTMENT—ONE MORE LETTER—THE BROKEN THREAD RESUMED—CARLTON BRAND'S FAREWELL, AND A SUDDEN ELOPEMENT.

Eleanor Hill should of course have left the house of her guardian, that had proved such a valley of poison to her girlhood, the very moment when she made that discovery of her final and complete betrayal. But then, strictly speaking, she should have left it long before; and the same compliant spirit that had once yielded, could yield again. Pity her who will—blame her who may—she bowed beneath the weight of her own helplessness and remained, instead of fleeing from the spot that very night and shaking off the dust of her feet against it, even if she begged her bread thereafter from door to door. Not with what she should have done, and not with what some others whom we have known would have done under the circumstances, have we to do. She remained. Not the same as she had been before—Dr. Philip Pomeroy knew and felt the difference; and yet

submissive and apparently unrepining. Not the same in cheerfulness, as Miss Hester felt and deplored: she spoke less, seldomer went out, even when strongly tempted, and spent much more time in the solitude and silence of her own room. [Pg 155]

It is not for us to put upon record precisely what passed between the guardian and his ward in the months that immediately followed that revelation; as unfortunately at that point information otherwise complete and uninterrupted, is defective for a considerable interval. It is beyond doubt that in the breast of Eleanor Hill fear and hatred had taken the place of love towards the man whom she had once idolized—that the sense of shame weighing upon her had become every day heavier and less endurable—and that she would have fled away at any moment, but from the fact that she was utterly helpless, pecuniarily and in any capacity for earning her own subsistence, and that she believed in the probability of Dr. Philip Pomeroy putting in force the cruel threat he had made, and publishing her shame to the world, distorted to suit his own purposes, the moment she should have quitted his abode and his guardianly "protection!"

With reference to the wishes and intentions of Dr. Philip Pomeroy himself, it is not much more easy to form any accurate calculation. That he did not wish to follow the example set him by so many unscrupulous traffickers in female virtue, and drive away at once from his presence the woman whose life he had poisoned, is only too certain. That he had no intention of making her legally his own by marriage, his own tongue had declared. It only remains to believe that he held towards the poor girl some sort of tiger mixture of love and hate, which would not consent to make her happy in the only manner which could secure that end, and which yet would not consent to part with her at any demand or upon any terms. Other than she was, to him, she could not be: as she was, she seemed to minister to some unholy but actual need of his nature; and he held her to himself with an evil tenacity which really seemed to afford a new study in psychology. Circumstances were close at hand, calculated to show something of the completeness of the net drawn around the feet of the young girl, even if they did not clearly point out the hand drawing the cord of continued restraint. [Pg 156]

Miss Hester Pomeroy died suddenly in the winter of 1860, alike guiltless and ignorant of the evil which had taken place under the roof which owned her as its mistress, regretted by her brother with as much earnest feeling as he had the capacity of bestowing upon so undemonstrative a relation, and sincerely mourned by the forced dweller beneath that roof, to whom her presence had been a protection in the eyes of the world, and to whose cruel lot she had furnished more alleviations than she had herself capacity to understand.

With this death, the introduction of a mere housekeeper to take the place which she had so worthily filled, the additional loneliness which was inevitable when a hired stranger occupied her room, and the certainty that the last excuse of propriety for her remaining was removed,—it may be supposed that the struggle in the mind of the poor girl began anew, and raged with redoubled violence. The desire to be freed from the presence and the power of her destroyer had by that time grown to be an absorbing thought, ever present with her, and worthy of any possible sacrifice to give it reality. Any *possible* sacrifice: to poor Eleanor Hill, sacrifices which many others would have embraced without a moment's hesitation, seemed literal madness. The certainty of penury and the probability of open shame pressed her close; and she could not shake off the double fetter. Her tyrant would give her no release; and she succumbed to her living death once more.

Months longer of weary waiting for deliverance, every spark of love died out from her heart, and yet soul and body alike enslaved. Oh, God of all the suffering!—how often has this been, with no visible hand to deliver, with no pen to chronicle! Months, and then came what seemed the opportunity of the poor girl's life.

It will be remembered that Nicholas Hill, at his dying hour, spoke of his only relatives, and even those removed by several degrees, residing on the Pacific coast. One of these, William Barnes, a distant cousin, and a man of forty, who owned a comfortable ranch near Sacramento, came on to the East in the summer of 1861, bringing his wife, and in one of his visits to Philadelphia casually heard of the whereabouts of the orphaned daughter of his relative. Within a day or two following he pursued his information by driving out to the Schuylkill and calling upon Eleanor, in the absence of the doctor as it chanced. Half an hour's conversation satisfied the large-hearted Californian that the young girl was unhappy, from whatever cause; ten minutes more drew from her the information that all the property left her by her father had melted away in unfortunate speculations, though of course they won no way towards the other and more terrible secret; and the next ten minutes sufficed him to offer her a home, as a relative and companion to his wife, at his pleasant ranch in the Golden State. Girls were scarce in California, he said; girls as handsome as Eleanor were scarce in any quarter of the globe; and if she would accept his invitation they would astonish all his neighbors a little, on their arrival out, while she could select at will among fifty stalwart fellows, with plenty of money, any day when she might fancy a husband. [Pg 157]

Here was hope—here was deliverance. How eagerly Eleanor Hill grasped at it can only be known by the wretch who has once been so nearly drowned that the last gasp was on his lip, and then found a helping hand stretched out for his rescue—or that other wretch who has wandered for hours over a trackless waste and then found a landmark at the moment when he was ready to lie down and die! William Barnes was to leave New York on his return to California within a fortnight: he would inform his wife of the arrangement, and she would be delighted with the thought of finding a companion; and on the morning of the sailing of the steamer Eleanor would appear, to fill the state-room already engaged.

Somewhat to the surprise of the escaping prisoner, and immeasurably to her joy, when that evening, with an expression on her lip that was nearer to triumph than any which had rested there during all the four years of her sinful slavery—Dr. Philip Pomeroy neither threatened her with poverty nor exposure as he had before done (perhaps because he felt that when under Mr. Barnes' protection the former would be beyond his power and the latter of little consequence in a State so far removed as California) nor even seriously opposed her accepting the offer made her. At last, then, the cruel heart had relented, her shameful dependence was at an end, and the reformation of her life could find its late beginning. [Pg 158]

Three days later came a letter from New York, from William Barnes, reiterating what had been said personally, and accompanied by the indorsement of the arrangement by Mrs. Barnes. The last shadow of doubt, then, was removed out of the way, and the young girl's moderate preparations for removal went on with new vigor. One hundred dollars in money was all that she asked of her guardian for these preparations, and that sum was accorded without hesitation or comment. On the morning of the sailing of the steamer she left Philadelphia by the early train, the doctor himself bringing her down to the depot in his carriage, and bidding her good-bye with a word of kind regret, and a kiss which seemed chaste enough for that of a brother. Her small array of baggage had preceded her, and was no doubt already within the hold of the vessel that was to bear her to the Pacific, to a renewed life, and an opportunity of gathering up the broken threads of lost happiness.

The steamer, the old Northern Light, of such varying fortunes, was to sail at two. At half-past twelve, the carriage containing Eleanor Hill dashed down to the foot of Warren Street, among all that crush of carriages, baggage-wagons, foot-people with valises and carpet-bags, idlers, policemen, pickpockets, United States Mail vans, weeping women, whining children, and insatiate shakers of human hands, that has attended the departure of every California steamer [Pg 159] since the first ploughed her ocean way towards the land of gold. Mr. Barnes had promised to meet her at the gangway or on shipboard, but neither on the dock nor on deck could she discover him. One o'clock was long past, and Eleanor had grown sick at heart under the idea that some mistake as to the steamer must have been made, when from the gangway she saw a carriage drive up and her new protector alight from it. He was assisting out a lady who could be no other than his wife; and the young girl, fairly overjoyed, ran down the plank to meet and welcome them. The lady, who was just starting up the plank as Eleanor reached the foot of it, did not notice her, but continued her ascent: William Barnes did see her, and allowing his wife to proceed alone, he seized her arm and drew her hurriedly away down the pier, and beyond ear-shot. Eleanor noticed that his face seemed flushed, and his whole demeanor agitated; but she was far from being prepared for the startling intelligence that burst from his lips, interlarded with oaths and expressions of honest indignation. The generous-hearted Californian was, in truth, very nearly beside himself with shame and mortification. Eleanor could not accompany his wife and himself to California, after all! And the story of the disappointment, though a little mixed up with those energetic expressions and once interrupted by the necessity of the enraged man's pausing to throw into the dock a package of fruit which his wife had just been purchasing for her comfort on the voyage (the porter who brought it being very nearly included in that sacrifice to Neptune), the story, in spite of all these hindrances, was far too quickly told; and every word, after the first which revealed her fate, fell upon the heart of the poor girl as if it had been the blow of a hammer smiting her living flesh.

Up to that morning—the Californian said—his wife had seemed not only willing to accept Eleanor's society, but highly pleased at the prospect. Her ticket had been bought and various [Pg 160] presents selected by Mrs. Barnes' own hands, for the comfort of their guest on the route and in her new home. That morning, and not more than two hours before, the weather in the matrimonial horizon, never entirely reliable in the latitude of Mrs. Barnes, had changed entirely. On coming into the hotel from some business calls, among them a visit to the Post Office (though Mr. Barnes thought, very naturally, that the latter place could have nothing to do with the sudden barometric variation)—she had suddenly declared to him that "he might as well go down to the office and countermand the order for Miss Hill's ticket and save the money; as if she [Miss Hill] went to California with him on the steamer that day, she [Mrs. Barnes] would not stir one step but stay in New York." Inquiry and even demand had failed to secure any explanation of this strange and sudden veering of the marital weathercock; and expostulation and even entreaty, with full representations of the contemptible position in which he would be placed by any change in the arrangements at that hour, had failed to secure any modification of the sentence. She wanted no strangers in her house, or in her company on board ship; and she would not have any—that was flat! If Eleanor Hill went to California, *she* remained! A full-blown domestic quarrel, lasting with different degrees of gusty violence for nearly an hour, had been the result; and that other result had followed which nearly always follows when husband and wife commence discussion of any matter seriously affecting the feelings (or whims) of the latter—the husband had succumbed, the arrangement had been definitely broken off, and the state-room which the young girl was to have occupied was no doubt by that time in the occupancy of a man with a red beard, long boots, a broad hat and a gray blanket!

Poor Eleanor Hill!—it seemed too hard, indeed—this being plunged back again into the pit of helpless sin and self-reproach, at every effort made for extrication!

There is a legend told of the great well in the court-yard of one of the old English castles, at the [Pg 161] period of the Parliamentary wars, which comes into mind when the cruel facts of her life are remembered. Sir Hugh, the Cavalier, had seen his castle surprised, taken and sacked by the

Cromwellian troopers, guided and led on by a roundhead churl who owed him gratitude instead of ill-service—had been wounded and made prisoner, while the females of his family were maltreated and the pictures that made half his ancestral pride stabbed and hacked in pieces by the ruffians who could not enough outrage the living members of his race. Then the tide of fortune had turned; he had once more regained his strong-hold, with manly arms around him, and those of his dear ones who had not perished by outrage and exposure, once more under his sheltering hand. Then the recreant roundhead neighbor fell one day into his hands, and the cruel blood of the Norman ancestors who had begun *their* robbery and rapine on English soil at Hastings, rose up in the breast of Sir Hugh and made him for the time a very fiend of revenge. The great well had been ruined by the corpses thrown into it at the sacking of the castle; and into that well, in spite of his struggles, he had the poor wretch lowered by his retainers, then the slight rope cut away and the victim left to cling to the slippery stones at the edge of the water thirty feet below, unable to climb them, too desperate to sink, and wailing out his cries for mercy, while a huge lamp, lowered by another rope, showed the whole terrible spectacle to the pitiless eyes that dared look down upon it. Then another rope was lowered by the great windlass, within reach of the struggling wretch, and he was allowed to seize hold upon it and climb a little way from the water, under the belief that his tyrant had at last relented and that he was to be allowed to save himself after that dreadful trial. Then, when he had climbed for a few feet from the black ooze beneath him, the rope was lowered away and the poor wretch again submerged, to shriek, and wail, and climb again, and to be again dropped back at the moment of transient hope, until the wearied fingers could cling and climb no longer and the life thus outraged and the light which had revealed that sad refinement upon cruelty went horribly out together! And how much less cruel was Fate, thus standing guard over the life of Eleanor Hill and dropping her back again into her own shame at every attempt which she made to escape from it or to rise above it,—than the grim and grizzled old Sir Hugh who had been made a human fiend by his past wrongs and the bandit blood of his race? [Pg 162]

There was genuine regret blended with the anger and shame on the honest face of William Barnes, as he made that confession which dashed all the hopes of the young girl,—that he *dared not* take her to California. But who shall describe the expression of hopeless sorrow and despondency which dwelt upon hers at that moment? Yet despondency was unwise as struggle was unavailing. This, too, must be borne, as a part of the penalty of—no, we cannot write the word "guilt"—the penalty of being unfortunate and abused! The Californian took the privilege of blood, to urge the acceptance of such a sum from his well-filled wallet as would enable her to replace the clothing and other articles in her trunks, then too late to remove from the hold of the vessel,—bade her good-bye and sprung on board just as the last call was given. The poor outcast mustered courage to speak to a hackman as the steamer moved away that she had so lately hoped was to bear her to a more hospitable land and a better life; and half an hour later she was speeding back towards Philadelphia on the Camden and Amboy boat; with strange thoughts running through her mind but happily finding no lodgment there, that under some circumstances of desertion and despair there could not be such a terrible crime in slipping quietly overboard and going to a dreamless sleep in the cool, placid water.

Had Eleanor Hill possessed that energy the want of which has been so many times before deplored, she would have sought out another home, though in the most miserable alley of the overcrowded city, before returning yet more disgraced to that place of misery once abandoned. But she lacked that energy, and perhaps her coming life was foredoomed, as the past had been. That night the bars of her cage closed again upon her. Dr. Philip Pomeroy received her in all kindness, with some expressions of pleased surprise and a few sharp epithets hurled at the man who could be weak enough to change his mind in that manner at the bidding of a woman. But there was something in his tone and demeanor which left the girl in doubt whether he was really so much surprised as he pretended; and later developments were rapidly approaching which made the doubt more tenable. [Pg 163]

Among the acquaintances formed by Eleanor Hill in the early days of her residence under the roof of Dr. Pomeroy, had been the family of Robert Brand, which the doctor visited (as he did many others in the neighborhood) both as friend and medical attendant. In those days she had been visited by Elsie Brand and her brother, and had visited them in return. Gradually all intimacy between Elsie and herself had ceased, as that great change, known only to herself and two others, affected the whole tenor of her life. But the friendship at that time formed with Carlton Brand had never weakened, and it perhaps grew the stronger from the hour when each became satisfied that no warmer personal interest would ever rise in the breast of the other. Perhaps Carlton Brand, to some extent a man of the world, and a close student of character by virtue of his profession, may have formed his opinions, long before 1861, of the relations existing between the doctor and his ward; but if so, he had not a thought of blame or any depreciation of respect for the poor girl on account of it; and during all those years, if he indeed harbored such suspicions, he had no means of verifying them, for Eleanor Hill's lips had been and remained quite as closely sealed to him as to others.

Between Dr. Philip Pomeroy and the lawyer had always existed, since the young girl had been an inmate of the house, an antagonism which could not well be mistaken. No open rupture had taken place, in the knowledge of any acquaintance of either; but they never met without exchanging looks which told of mutual dislike and distrust. Within the three years between 1858 and 1861 that antagonism, as even the unobservant girl could see, had markedly increased, so that even in his own house the doctor, when he came upon him, seldom addressed a word to his unwelcome guest. Had she known that in the investigations which followed the failure of the [Pg 164]

Dunderhaven Coal and Mining Company, in the later days of the great commercial crash of 1857-8, Carlton Brand had been one of the counsel employed to prosecute that great swindle in which her own fortune had been swallowed up with hundreds of others,—had she known this, we say, she might have imagined some reason for this increase of dislike which was certainly not founded upon jealousy. But she would not have guessed, even then, one tithe of the causes for deadly and life-long hatred which lay between two men of corresponding eminence in two equally liberal professions. It is not possible, at this stage of the narration, to explain what were those causes, eventually so certain to develop themselves.

On the eve of her attempted transit to California, of which we have already seen the melancholy failure, Eleanor Hill wrote but one letter of farewell, and that letter was addressed to Carlton Brand. On her way homeward from her great disappointment, she paused in the city to drop a pencil note written on board the steamboat; and that was also to Carlton Brand, informing him of her return. No reply was made to the latter note, for three days: then the lawyer called upon her one day during the professional absence of the doctor. He had been absent, at the city of New York and still farther eastward, for more than a week previous. He had returned from the commercial metropolis only the day before, and had taken the very earliest moment to acknowledge the reception of her missive and to express his sympathy in her disappointment—perhaps something more.

After a few moments of conversation on that unfortunate affair, the lawyer remarked that he had chanced to stop at the same hotel in New York, patronized by Mr. Barnes and his wife, and having some recollection of the face of the former, from old Philadelphia rencontres, had made the acquaintance of both. He had known nothing whatever of the intention of Eleanor to accompany them to the Pacific coast, or even that any relationship existed between herself and William Barnes. But Mrs. Barnes had "cottoned to him" a little, apparently, he had been the possessor of a few spare hours, and he had become her companion and escort on some of her shopping excursions when Mr. Barnes was otherwise employed. He had been her escort on the morning of the day on which she sailed, and after her return from the Post-office had been present at her opening of several letters, over one of which she fell into a storm of rage requiring an apology for such an exposure before a comparative stranger. As a part of that apology, she had handed him the letter, bearing the Philadelphia post-mark; and inadvertently, as he then supposed, but providentially, as he afterwards saw reason to believe, he had kept the letter in his hands, dropped it into his pocket with his newspaper, and forgotten to return it until he had parted from the enraged woman and left the hotel. It was only after his return to Philadelphia and reception of the two notes advising him of Eleanor's intended departure and her disappointment, that he had been able to connect that letter with any one in whom he possessed a personal interest.

Eleanor Hill had been gradually growing paler during this recital; and she was chalky white and almost ready to faint, when at that stage the lawyer paused and handed her a letter taken from his pocket, with the inquiry, "if she knew that handwriting." The letter was very brief, but very expressive, and ran as follows—the words being faithfully copied from the shameful original, lying at the writer's hand at this moment:

PHILADELPHIA, —— —, 1861.

MADAM:—I have accidentally learned that arrangements have been made by your husband and yourself, to take a young lady back with you to your home in California, on your return. When I tell you that I knew your husband and his family many years ago, you will understand my motive for taking part in what is apparently none of my business. If the report is true, that you do so intend, you have been shamefully deceived and imposed upon. The young lady, whose name I need not mention, has been for years the mistress of the man with whom she is living; and you can judge for yourself the policy of introducing such a person into your household. I have no means of judging whether your husband is or is not acquainted with the real character of the lady; but any doubt on that subject you can have no difficulty in solving for yourself. I have preferred to address you instead of him, with this warning, because in the event of his really being aware of all the circumstances, any communication to him would of course never have reached your eyes. With the highest esteem and regard for yourself, for your husband and his family, I am (only concealing my real name, for the present, from motives which I hope you will readily appreciate,) yours, obediently,

D. T. M.

"My God!—yes, I know that handwriting!" sobbed Eleanor Hill, covering her eyes with both hands, after glancing over the precious epistle.

"So I feared!" said Carlton Brand.

"Oh, how can any man be so cruel!" continued the poor girl.

"How could he dare to utter such a falsehood?" said the lawyer, glancing closely at the young girl meanwhile. Her face, that had the moment before been pale, was now one flush of crimson, and it seemed as if the very veins would burst with the pressure of shamed and indignant blood. Carlton Brand saw, and if he had before doubted, he doubted no longer. He spoke not another word. But the instant after, at last goaded beyond all endurance, Eleanor Hill started to her feet, and said:

"Carlton Brand, I believe that I have but one friend in the world, and you are that friend. I have tried to keep my shame from you, because I could not bear to forfeit your good opinion. You know all, now, but do not believe me guilty and wicked! That man—" [Pg 167]

"I do not believe you guilty, Eleanor, whatever may be the errors into which you have been dragged by that worst devil out of torment!" he interrupted her.

"Expose that man to the world, then, or kill him! Do not let my shame stand in the way! I can bear any thing, to see him punished as he deserves, for this last cruel deed!" The girl was for the moment beside herself, and she little thought, just then, what was the penalty she braved! It seemed that Carlton Brand better appreciated the peril, or that some other weighty consideration chained his limbs and his spirit, for his was now the flushed face, and he made none of those physical movements which the avenger inevitably assumes, even if beneath no other eye than God's, when he determines upon a course of action involving exposure and possible danger. He seemed to tremble, but not with anxiety: his was rather the quiver of inertiæ than any nobler incitement.

"Expose him?—kill him?" he gasped rather than said. "You do not know what you ask, Eleanor! I cannot!—dare not—"

"*Dare* not?" echoed Eleanor Hill, her face that had ordinarily so little pride or courage in it, now expressing wonder not unmingled with contempt. For the first time, she saw the countenance of that man who had seemed to her almost a demi-god, convulsed with pain and shame; and the sad wonder that was almost pity grew in her eyes, as within a moment after, moved by her confidence and assured by it that he need fear no danger of betrayal, Carlton Brand entrusted her with the secret of that skeleton in his mental closet which made him powerless against the bold, unscrupulous and determined Philip Pomeroy. Each had the most dangerous confidence of the other, then; and each realized, if nothing more, a certain painful satisfaction in knowing that the burthen was not thenceforth to be borne entirely without sympathy. But to neither did there [Pg 168] appear any hope of unravelling a villany which seemed to both so monstrous.

All this took place in the summer of 1861, it will be remembered; and between that time and the period at which we have seen Eleanor Hill kneeling piteously before Nathan Bladesden and afterwards greeting Carlton Brand with such a sympathy of shame and sorrow,—nearly two years had elapsed. During that time Carlton Brand had seemed to gather more and more dislike of the physician, and, as must be confessed, more and more positive fear of him; while Dr. Pomeroy had more than once treated poor Eleanor with positive bodily indignity for daring to receive his visits at all, though he was the last of all her old acquaintances who kept up the least pretence at intimacy. Finally, for months before the June of 1863, the lawyer had ceased to make any visits to the house, except at times when he knew the doctor to be absent; and then he stayed but briefly at each infrequent call, while one of the female servants, who was devoted to Eleanor, had confidential orders from her to keep watch for the sudden coming of the doctor, so that this man, who seemed born to be a Paladin, could skulk away by one door or the other and avoid a meeting! A most pitiable exhibition, truly!—but the record must be made a faithful one, even in this melancholy instance.

Since Eleanor Hill's return from her temporary Hegira, for a long period, so far as the eye could see no change had taken place in the relations existing between the "guardian" and his "ward." Perhaps he treated her with more coolness than of old; and she may have been more habitually silent, while she had become a virtual recluse and seldom passed beyond the doors of that fated dwelling. Whatever the weakness which the fact may have shown on her part, whatever of persistent evil on his,—the old intimacy of crime had been maintained, though the love once existing in the breast of the young girl had long changed to loathing, and there was every reason [Pg 169] to believe that the ignobler passion urging on her destroyer had quite as long before become satiety.

This up to a certain period. One day during the winter of 1862, Nathan Bladesden, a Quaker merchant of the city, gray-headed, eminently respectable and a widower, had found occasion to call at the residence of Dr. Pomeroy. In the host's absence he had been received by his ward; and the blind god, ever fantastic in his dealings, had smitten the calm, strong man with a feeling not to be overcome. He had called again and again, sometimes in the doctor's absence and sometimes when he was at home; but the object of his pursuit had evidently been Eleanor Hill. His visits had seemed to be rather pleasing than otherwise to the master of the house, who could not fail to see towards what they tended; and that he did see and approve had seemed to be evident from his entire withdrawal of himself from Eleanor's private society, from the time of the second visit. The poor girl's heart had leaped with joy, at the possibility of union with a noble man, that should finally remove her from her false position and make her past life only a sad remembrance; and those precisians may blame her who will, while all must sorrow for the circumstances which seemed to render the deception necessary,—that she had not shuddered, as she possibly should have done, at the idea of marriage without full confidence. Two months before, while April was laughing and weeping over the earth, the grave, unimpeachable man, who already held so much of her respect and could so easily induce a much warmer feeling of her nature,—had asked her to be his honored wife and the mistress of his handsome house in the city; and the harrassed girl, the goal of a life of peace once more in sight, had answered him that she would be his wife at any moment if he would consent to accept the remnant of a heart which had been cruelly tortured and to make no inquiries as to a past which must ever remain buried. To these terms the Quaker had consented; this had been Eleanor Hill's betrothal; and with such a

redeeming prospect in view had her life remained, until that fatal day of June when the knowledge that her whole secret was betrayed burst upon her in the presence and the reproaches of Nathan Bladesden. What passed between them has already been recorded, at a stage of this narration antecedent to the long but necessary resumé just concluded; and we have seen how, only a few minutes after, Carlton Brand held in his hand the letter of her second denunciation, and what were his brief but burning words as he commenced reading. [Pg 170]

"Curse him! He deserves eternal perdition, and he will find it!"

He read through the letter without speaking another word, though there were occasional convulsive twitches of his face which showed how his heart was stirred to indignation by the perusal.

"You are sure, are you not?" Eleanor asked, when he had finished.

"Just as sure as I was in the other case. The deed is the most black and damning that I have ever known; and if I had before been an infidel I should be converted by the knowledge that such an incarnate scoundrel must roast in torment!"

"And what am I to do?" asked the girl, with that helpless and irresolute air which is so pitiable.

"Heaven help us both! I do not know!" was the reply, with the proud head drooping lower on the breast than it should ever have been bowed by any feeling except devotion.

"I cannot remain here after this!" she said. "Can you not take me away—do something for me? Does the—do the same obstacles stand in your way that stood there two years ago?"

"No—not the same, but worse!" answered the lawyer, bitterly. "Oh, there never was a child so helpless as I am at this moment. I have wealth, but I cannot use it for your benefit without exposing you to final and complete ruin in public opinion. And for myself—poor Eleanor, I pity you, God knows I do, but I pity myself still worse. I came to tell you that I am going away this very day,—that I shall not again set foot within my father's house—perhaps never again while I live,—that my spirit is crushed and my heart broken." [Pg 171]

"What has happened? tell me! The old trouble, Carlton?" asked the young girl, in a tone of true commiseration.

"Yes, the old trouble, and worse!" was the reply, followed by a rapid relation of the events of the morning, and concluding with these hopeless words: "An hour since, I parted with the woman I loved and hoped to make my own. To-morrow my name may be a scoff and a by-word in the mouth of every man who knows me. I cannot and will not meet this shame, which is not hidden like your own, but will be blown abroad by the breath of thousands of personal acquaintances, and perhaps made the subject of jest in the public newspapers. Think how those who have hated and perhaps feared me—criminals whom I have brought to justice and thieves whom I have foiled in their plunderings,—will gloat over the knowledge that I can trouble them no more—that I have fallen lower, in the public eye, than they have ever been! I am going away, where no man who has ever looked upon my face and known it, can look upon it again!"

The tone in which Carlton Brand spoke was one of utter despondency and abandonment. There was nothing of the sharp, vigorous ring of that speech which contains and declares a purpose: the words fell stolid and lifeless as hung the head and drooped the arms of the utterer in her presence with whom he held a sad community of disgrace.

"I understand you, and I believe that your lot is even worse than my own!" said Eleanor Hill, after a moment of silence. "You do right in going away, and you could not help me if you stayed. Nothing can help me, I suppose. Do not think of me any more. I can bear what is to come, quite as well as I have borne all that is past!" She had been nodding her head mechanically when she commenced speaking, and at every nod it sank lower and lower until the face was hidden from the one friend whom she was thus losing beyond recall. [Pg 172]

At that moment there was a rapid foot on the stairway above, and the house servant whom Eleanor had managed to keep in her interest spoke quickly at the door.

"If you please, Miss, doctor's carriage is coming through the gate from the Darby road. Thought you would like to know it." And as rapidly as she had come down, she ascended again to her employment in the attic.

"Oh, Carlton, you must not be seen here, now!" exclaimed the poor girl, her face all fright and anxiety, and herself apparently forgotten. Something in that look and tone smote the heart of Carlton Brand more deeply than it had ever been smitten by the sorrow and disgrace of his own situation; and with that feeling of intense compassion a new thought was born within him. "Yesterday I could not have done it—to-day I can!" he muttered, so low that the girl could not understand his words; then he said aloud, and speaking very rapidly:

"I cannot meet him, and you shall not! Throw something on your head and over your shoulders, quick; and come with me!"

For one instant the young girl gazed into his face as if in doubt and hesitation; but the repetition of a single word decided her:

"Quick!"

A glow of delight and surprise that had long been a stranger to her face, broke over it; she ran to the little bed-room adjoining the apartment in which they were speaking, threw on a black-silken mantle and a sober little hat that hung there, and was ready in an instant. In another Carlton Brand had seized her arm, hurried her out of the room, down the stairs, through the hall and out into the garden which lay at the north side of the house and extended down almost to the edge of the causeway. Dr. Pomeroy was driving down the lane leading from the Darby road, and was consequently on the opposite side of the house from the fugitives. Fugitives they may well have been called, though perhaps so strange an elopement had never before been planned—an elopement over a comparatively open country in the broad light of a summer noon, by two persons who held no tie of blood and no warmer feeling for each other than friendship, and who had not dreamed of such an act even five minutes before.

But those operations the most suddenly conceived are not always the worst executed. Necessity, if not genius, is often a successful imitator of that quality. When the doctor drove up at the gate in front of the house, his "ward" and her new companion were just dodging out of the tall bean-poles and shrubbery, over the garden fence, to the edge of the meadow; by the time he had fairly entered the house they were on the causeway and partially sheltered by the elders that ran along it and fringed the bank of the singing brook; and long before he could have discovered the flight and made such inquiries of the servants as might have directed his gaze in that direction, the lawyer in his strangely soiled and unaccustomed attire, and the girl so slightly arrayed for starting out on her travels in the world, were within the circle of woods before mentioned, stretching northward to the great road leading down to the city.

CHAPTER IX.

Dr. Pomeroy's purposed Pursuit—A plain Quaker who used very plain Language—Almost a Fight—How Mrs. Burton Hayley consoled her Daughter, and how Margaret revealed the Past—A Compact—Dr. Pomeroy's Canine Adventure—Old Elspeth once more—A Search that found Nothing.

It will be noticed that with the exception of the somewhat extended glance at the earlier fortunes of Eleanor Hill, all the occurrences thus far recorded, and affecting the after lives of so many different people, have occupied not more than two or three hours of a single June day. The Parcæ were evidently very busy on that day of June, repaying the past and arranging the future; and not less than three scenes of this veritable history yet remain, occurring on the same day, a little later, but within the same space as to distance, that has been covered by those preceding.

The first of these is that presented in the house of Dr. Pomeroy, ten minutes after he had entered it, and when two or three sharp inquiries after his "ward," whom he failed to find in her room, had elicited from one of the frightened servants the information not only that she had left the house, through the garden, with hat and mantle and in great haste,—but in the company of the man of all the world towards whom the medical gentleman entertained that deadliest hatred which would have made his drugs safe and reliable had he been attending him in a dangerous sickness! He might not have known the fact quite so soon, from any of the other servants, as he certainly would not have discovered the truth under a twelvemonth from the one who had acted as Eleanor's sentinel on the watch tower; but it chanced that he possessed one creature of his own, who had been in the habit of playing spy around the house generally and making very considerable additions to her wages from the "appropriation for secret service"; and from that open-mouthed person, who seemed to see with that organ as well as with the eyes, he had no difficulty in extracting all the truth that could be known, in an inconceivably minute fraction of time.

The rage which broke out in the face of Dr. Philip Pomeroy and set his eyes ablaze, at about that period, would not have been a pleasant thing to look upon, for any person liable to the penalties and inflictions which that rage denoted. For he was a sharp, keen, calculating man, jumping to a conclusion with great rapidity, and seldomer missing the fact than most men under corresponding circumstances. Eleanor Hill was gone—had left his house forever, so far as her own will had any power: he knew the fact intuitively. She would never have dared to cross the threshold with Carlton Brand, knowing the hatred which he held against that man of all others, if she had intended to place herself again in a position where she could feel his displeasure. Then the doctor knew, as the reader may by this time be inclined to suspect, reasons why the young girl would have been much more likely to leave his house forever, that day, than at any previous time of her sojourn, if aid and protection chanced to offer themselves. They *had* offered themselves, in the shape of the lawyer: they had been embraced; and the good physician, hurling a few outward curses at the servant who had afforded him the intelligence, at all the other servants, at the house and every thing within it,—mentally included in his malediction every patient who had assisted in luring him away from his home that day, while such a spoil was being made of his "domestic happiness."

The worst of the affair—and the doctor saw it—was that Eleanor Hill had attained her majority years before, and that he had no power whatever to compel her return, except that power still existed in the impending threat of public shame. But he was wronged—robbed—outraged! He would pursue the fugitive—find her—force her to abandon her new protection—drag her by main

force from any arm that dared to interpose! If he failed, he would make such a general desolation in family peace, in the quiet neighborhood lying beyond that side the Schuylkill, as had never been known within the memory of the "oldest inhabitant"—such an exposé, convulsion and general explosion as would put out of countenance any thing in the power of the advancing rebel Lee!

All this in the two minutes following the knowledge of Eleanor's flight. The ostler had just led round his heated horse to the stable, before the discovery; and that functionary had orders shot at him from the back piazza, in a very loud and commanding voice, to throw the harness on another of his fastest trotters, and have him round at the gate in less than half a minute, before his double-seated buggy, on pain of being flayed alive with his own horse-whip. It may be supposed that under such incitement the stable official handled strap and buckle with unusual dexterity; and in very little more time than that allowed by the regulation, the vehicle dashed round to the gate, and the enraged owner stood whip in hand, ready to leap into it and urge a pursuit yet madder than had been the elopement. But Dr. Philip Pomeroy, having prepared to ride at once and with all diligence, found an unexpected hindrance, and did not pursue his journey until a much more advantageous start had been allowed to the fugitives.

For while the doctor was preparing to spring into his vehicle, down the lane from the Darby road dashed the buggy and pair of Nathan Bladesden, which had so lately taken that direction—dashed down, driven at such speed as flung the fine horses into a lather of foam, and utterly belied the calm reputation of the Quaker merchant. Nor was there any thing of the deliberation of the sect in the jerk with which he brought up the flying team by throwing them both back upon their haunches, or the suddenness with which he sprang from the buggy, leaving the horses unfastened, and strode to the open gate.

The rencontre was most inopportune and vexatious to the doctor, to whom minutes just then were hours; and he may have had motives for wishing, that day, not to be placed beneath an eye so sharpened by age and experience. But Nathan Bladesden was a man of wealth and a power in the city, and not even Dr. Pomeroy could afford to treat him with rudeness by driving away at the very moment of his arrival. He smoothed his bent brows, therefore, and accosted him with every demonstration of interest.

"Glad to see you, Mr. Bladesden! You seem to have been driving fast! But you come just in time, for I was about starting in a hurry to—to see a patient."

Had Dr. Pomeroy been aware of all the circumstances connected with the morning call of the merchant—the shameful revelations made in the little room overhead—the agony of spirit in which the Quaker had forced himself away from the presence of Eleanor Hill, deserting her utterly and leaving her in such a state of suffering as made suicide very possible—and the continued and ever-deepening conflict which had since been going on in his mind, as he dashed along roads that led him nowhere, his horses foaming in the heat but the heat in his brain a thousand times more intense, until at last he had driven back determined to drag the young girl, at every hazard and sacrifice, from that moral pest-house which must be sure infection and death to her soul,—had Dr. Pomeroy known all this, we say, not even his hardy spirit might have been willing to brave the encounter. But he knew nothing, and some of the perilous consequences of ignorance followed.

"I did not come to see *thee*, Dr. Philip," replied the Quaker to his salutation, passing on meanwhile towards the front door, and something short and choppy in his words indicating that he did not wish to open his mouth at full freedom. "I saw thy ward, Eleanor Hill, this morning, and I am going to see her again."

"Ah, you have been here to-day, then, before? And you are going to see her again, after—." It was surprising, for a man of his age and experience, how near he came to saying a word too much!

"After receiving *thy letter*?—yes!" answered the Quaker, turning short and confronting his quondam host, the restraint on his utterance removed.

"*My* letter? What do you mean by my letter?" Had any one told Philip Pomeroy, half an hour before, that there was a man living who in five words could change the color on his cheek, he would have reckoned the informant a liar and grossly insulted him. Yet so it was; and the flush, though it was already growing into that of defiant anger, had not been such when it began to rise.

"Thee does not seem to understand me, Dr. Philip," said the Quaker, his words still slow and no point of the sectarian idiom lost, but each dropping short and curtly as if a weighty substance falling heavily. "But thee will understand me before I am done. Thee wrote me a letter, signed 'A True Friend'—"

"You lie!" A terrible word, to be flung into the teeth of any man; and doubly terrible as hurled from lips then ashy white. For just one instant the Quaker's large hands clutched, and he might have been moved to advance upon his insulter and avenge Eleanor Hill, himself and all the world, by choking the insult from his throat. But if such a thought really moved him, he controlled it and merely smote on with his words.

"Thee wrote me a letter, signed 'A True Friend,' and thee shall have my opinion of it, before I go into that house and remove from thee, at any peril that may be necessary, the poor girl thee has disgraced."

"Set a foot nearer that house, if you dare!" was the reply.

"Thee is a base, miserable coward, Dr. Philip!—a scoundrel, a seducer, a lying slanderer, the offspring of a female dog of the cur species, a disgrace to thy country and thy profession; and if thee knows any more hard words that I forget, thee may put them all in on my account." [Pg 179]

"Nathan Bladesden, do you think that you will leave this spot alive, after using such words to *me*!" and the hands of Philip Pomeroy were clutching at his wristbands as if rolling them up to put them out of the way of blood! The purpose of attack was reversed: he seemed to be about to spring, tiger-like, at the Quaker's throat.

"*Thee* will not kill me, Dr. Philip, if I do not!" the latter said. "I am stronger than thee, and have a better cause. I think I will not touch thee, but leave thee to thy Maker, if thee keeps thy hands off; but I have made up my mind, if thee touches me, to beat thee until thee has no shape of a man—until thee is dead as yonder gate-post. If thee thinks that I will not, thee had better try it!"

Dr. Pomeroy did not believe himself a poltroon, nor was he one in that sense relating to purely physical courage. And had there been merely involved a conflict with that larger, stronger and better-preserved man, in which one or the other might suffer severe injury and disfigurement, he would have carried out his thought and sprung upon him, beyond a question. But something in those slow dropping pellets of compressed rage falling from the Quaker's lips, told the medical man (seldom too angry to be subtle and cunning), that in the event of a struggle, and the merchant getting the upper hand, he would probably carry out his threat and actually beat him to death with those heavy fists before any human aid could interpose. And to be mangled into a corpse by a Quaker—bah! there was really something in the idea, likely to calm blood quite as hot with rage as that of Dr. Philip—apart from the slight objection he may have had to being hurried into eternity in any way, at that moment. Then another thought struck him—a double one: how completely the Quaker would be at fault, searching through the house for Eleanor Hill; and how he was himself losing time, in that miserable quarrel—time that could never be regained. His horse and buggy stood all the while just within the opened gate, where the ostler had left it and gone back to his care of the blown animal at the stable; and as that important reflection forced itself upon his mind, he turned his back short upon the Quaker, strode to his buggy, stepped into it and dashed away, only pausing to hurl at his tormentor this one verbal bolt: [Pg 180]

"You infernal, snuffling, hypocritical ruffian! I will settle with you for all this, when I have more time!"

"Thee had better let the account stand as it does, Dr. Philip, if thee is not a fool as well as a scoundrel!" was the reply of the Quaker, but it is very doubtful whether the doctor heard half the words. He was already flying past the garden palings, at the full speed of his trotter, towards the causeway and the Market Street road, on his errand of reclamation and perhaps of vengeance. Then Nathan Bladesden pursued his way into the house, looking for the lost sheep, with that ill success rendered certain by Eleanor's flight, and that disappointment which often attends noble resolutions embraced one moment too late.

The second of the supplementary scenes of that day was presented in the parlors of the residence of Mrs. Burton Hayley—that parlor into which the reader had only a doubtful glance a few hours earlier, when events which seemed likely to affect the life-long interests of some of the residents of that house, were occurring on the piazza.

Rich furniture in rosewood and purple damask; a piano of modern manufacture, the open bank of keys showing the soft coolness of mother-of-pearl; carpets of English tapestry; pier glasses that might have given reflection to the colonel of a Maine regiment or one of the sons of Anak; tables and mantels strewn but not overloaded with delicate bronzes, gems in porcelain and Bohemian glass, and articles of fanciful bijouterie; on one of the mantels—that of the front room—Cleopatra in *ormolu* upholding the dial of a clock with one hand, but with the other applying to her voluptuously-rounded bosom the asp so soon to put a period to all her connection with time;—what need of more than this to indicate the home in which Margaret Hayley had passed the last few years of her young life and approached that crisis so momentous to her future happiness? Yet one thing more must be noticed—the stand of rosewood elaborately carved, set not far from the centre of the front parlor, and bearing on it a large Bible in the full luxury of russet morocco and gold, with massive gold clasps and a heavy marker in silk and bullion dependent from amid the leaves,—the whole somewhat ostentatiously displayed to the sight of any one who first entered the room, as if to say: "There may seem to be pomps and vanities in this house, but any such impression would be a mistake: this book is the rule by which every thing within it is squared." [Pg 181]

On the sofa, wheeled into that corner of the luxurious parlor upon which the closed shutter threw the deepest and coolest shadow, lay Margaret Hayley, her head buried in the white pillow which some careful hand had brought for her, and her thrown-up hands drawing the ends of that pillow around her face as if she desired to shut away every sight and every sound. Her slight, tall figure seemed, as she lay at length, to be limp and unnerved; and there was that in the whole position which seemed to indicate that the mental energies, if not the vital ones, had recoiled after being cruelly overtasked, and left her alike incapable of thought and motion.

She was not alone, for beside her sat a lady dressed in very thin and light but rich and rather

showy summer costume, rolling backward and forward in her Boston rocker, waving a feather fan of such formidable dimensions that its manufacture must have created a sudden rise in the material immediately after, and talking all the while with such stately volubility as if she believed that the hot air of the June afternoon would be less unendurable if kept constantly in motion by the personal windmill of the tongue. This was Mrs. Burton Hayley, mother of Margaret, widow of the late Mr. Burton Hayley, railroad-contractor, snugly jointured with eight or ten thousand per annum, and endowed (as she herself believed, and as we will certainly endeavor to believe with her, in charity) with so many of those higher gifts and graces of a spiritual order that her wealth had become dross and her liberal income rather a thing to be deplored than otherwise. (It may be the proper place, here, to say that the gilt Bible on the stand was the peculiar arrangement of this lady, and the sign—if so mercantile a word may be applied to any thing really demanding all human respect and devotion—of that peculiar mental stock in trade which she was to be found most ready in exhibiting on all occasions.) [Pg 182]

Mrs. Burton Hayley was tall—even taller than her daughter; and her form had assumed, with advancing years, a fulness which the complimentary would have designated as "plump," the irreverent as "stout," and the vulgar as "fat." Her face, moulded somewhat after the same fashion as that of Margaret, must have been undeniably handsome in youth, though now—the truth must be told—it was not a specially lovable face to the acute observer. Her dark eyes had still kept their depths of beautiful shadow, and her intensely dark hair (though she had married late in girlhood and was now fifty) showed neither thinness nor any touch of gray. But the long and once classical features had become coarsened a little in the secondary formation of adipose particles; the possible paleness of girlhood had given place to a slight red flush (especially in that tropical weather) that was not by any means becoming to her; and there were all the while two conflicting expressions fighting for prominence in her face, so different in themselves and so really impossible of amalgamation, that the most rabid disciple of "miscegenation" could not have arranged a plan for blending them both into one. The outer expression, which seemed somehow to lie as a thin transparent strata over the other, indicated pious and resigned humility—that feeling which passes by the ordinary accidents and troubles of life as merely gentle trials of faith and of no consequence in view of the great truth rooted within. The second and inner, which would persist in obtruding itself through the transparent mask, was *pride*—pride in its most intense and concentrated form—pride in blood, wealth, personal appearance, position, every thing belonging to and going to make up that marvellous human compound, Mrs. Burton Hayley. The eyes were trained to be very subdued and decorous in their expression; but they did so want to flash out authority, if not arrogance! The nose was kept always (or generally) at the proper subservient level; but it did so itch and tingle for the privilege of lifting itself high in air and taking a nasal view, from that altitude, of all the world lying below it! It was very evident, to any one observing the mother after having examined the daughter's face in the clear light of physiognomy, that the latter had derived from her maternal progenitor most of that overweening pride which youth and beauty yet wore as a crown of glory but age might wear as something much less attractive,—and that she must have inherited from her dead father that softness, frankness, and that better-developed love-nature which toned down in her own all the more decided features of the mother's face and made her worthy of affection as well as admiration. [Pg 183]

As we have said, Mrs. Burton Hayley was using her tongue with great volubility at the moment of her introduction to the attention of the reader, though really the mode in which her single auditor kept her head buried in the pillow and drew the soft folds around her ears with both hands, did not indicate that desire for steady conversation which could have made such a continual verbal clatter a thing of necessity. There is the more occasion for giving Mrs. Burton Hayley her full opportunity for speech, as she has occasion to utter but little hereafter, in this connection.

"You should be very thankful, my child, for all that has occurred," the voluble woman was saying. "A Power higher than ourselves overrules all these affairs much better than we could do; and it is flying in the face of Providence to cry and go on over little disappointments." [Pg 184]

A pause of one instant, and one instant only, as if in expectation that some reply would be vouchsafed; and then the band was again thrown upon the driving-wheel—as one of the machinery-tenders in a factory might say,—and the human buzz-saw whirled once more.

"I have told you, child, time and again, that you would be punished for setting your affections on any person who had not given evidence of a changed heart—a man who had not passed from death unto life, but who still ran after the pomps and vanities of the world—those pomps and vanities which religion teaches us to despise and put away from us." (Oh, Mrs. Burton Hayley, why did you not catch a glance, at that moment, of the room in which you were sitting, redolent of every luxury within the reach of any ordinary wealth, and of your own stately and still comely person, arrayed in garments the least possible like those with which people content themselves who have really eschewed the "pomps and vanities of the world," either from conscientious humility or that other and much commoner motive—the lack of means to continue them!) "You should be very glad that you have been providentially delivered from your engagement with an unbeliever and a man of the world—a man without principle, I dare say, as you have discovered that he is without courage; and all the money there is in his family (and they *do* say that the Brands have not much and never have had much!)—all their money, I say, acquired in the disreputable practice of the law, so that if this thing had not happened and you had been left to depend for subsistence upon his fortune, you might have found it all melting away in a moment, as money dishonestly acquired is certain to do; for does not the blessed book that I try to make my rule of life, say, my child, that moth is certain to corrupt and thieves break through and steal

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whatever has been wrung from the widow and the orphan?"

Margaret Hayley had not replied a word during the whole application of that verbal instrument of torture, though it seemed evident from the context that some conversation employing the tongues of both must have passed at an earlier period of the interview. She had merely writhed in body and groaned in spirit, as every moment told her more and more distinctly that in her dark hour she had no mother who could understand and sympathize with her—that cant phrases and pious generalizations were to be hurled against her at that moment when most of all she needed to be treated by that mother like a wearied child, drawn home to her bosom and cradled to sleep amid soothing words and loving kisses.

But Margaret Hayley did something else than writhe when the accusation of having acquired his wealth by dishonesty was cast upon the man whom she had worshipped—yes, the man whom she worshipped still, in spite of the one terrible defect which seemed to draw an eternal line of separation between them. She started up from her recumbent position, her hair dishevelled, her eyes red with weeping, and her whole face marked and marred by the anguish she had been suffering,—sprang up erect at once, with all her mother's pride manifest in voice and gesture, and said:

"Mother, are you a rank hypocrite, or have you neither sense nor memory?"

A strange question, from a daughter to her mother! The reply was not quite so strange, and it seemed to have much more of earnest in it than any portion of the long tirade she had before been delivering:

"Margaret Hayley, how *dare* you!"

"We can dare a good many things, when we do not care whether we live or die!" was the reply. "And though I have loved and respected you as my mother, I do not know that I have ever been afraid of you. Now listen. You have hated Carlton Brand, ever since he first came to this house, because he did not treat your religious assumptions with quite as much deference as you considered proper. He may have been right, or wrong: no matter now, as he is out of the way! But you have hated him, and you know it—because I loved him—I am not ashamed to own it!—loved him with my whole soul, as I believed that he deserved—as any woman *should* love the man whom she expects to take her to his heart!"

"Well, what if I did dislike him? I had a right to do that, I suppose!" answered the mother, her voice no longer religiously calm, but rough and querulous.

"Do not interrupt me!—hear me out!" said the young girl. "You liked Hector Coles for a corresponding reason—because he pretended to fall into all your notions, and complimented you on your 'piety' and 'Christian dignity,' when he was all the while laughing at you behind your back. You would have been pleased to see me discard the man I loved, and marry the man I could never love while I lived,—because your own likes and dislikes were in the way, and because you believed that in the position of mother-in-law you could manage the one and could *not* manage the other."

"Well, what else, to your mother, Miss Impertinence!" broke in the lady who had been so voluble.

"Oh, a great deal more!" answered Margaret, with a manner not very different from a sneer. "To-day, since you have known that for one spot on a character otherwise so noble, I have broken off all relations with Carlton Brand, you have done nothing but sit here and preach me Christian resignation in words that your own heart was as steadily denying. When a true mother would have tried to console, you have tortured. And you have ended all by alleging that Carlton Brand and his father have acquired their money dishonorably, because they have both been lawyers,—and that such money must be accursed in the hands of any one who holds it."

"I have said so, and I have a right to say so!" echoed the mother. "You may let loose your ribald tongue against the author of your being, ungrateful girl; but the truth is from heaven, and must be told—wealth obtained in any manner by day, upon which a blessing cannot be asked at night, is itself accursed, and curses every one who partakes in the use of it."

"And every dollar that has been dishonestly obtained, then, should at once be restored to the rightful owner, I suppose—in order to escape the curse?" suggested Margaret.

"Every dollar, and at once; for, as the Bible says, the spoiler cometh as a thief in the night, and no one can say how soon the judgment may fall!" answered the mother, triumphantly and in full confidence that she had at last silenced her refractory child by a strictly orthodox quotation.

"How much are we worth, mother?" was the singular question which followed this supposed annihilation of all argument.

"Why, you know as well as I do that we have eighty thousand in stocks and in bank; and this property and that at Pottsville is believed to be worth twenty or thirty thousand more. We are worth, as you call it, more than a hundred thousand, and the whole of it will be yours some day—not very long first, when I have gone, as I hope and trust I may say, to my reward. You are rich, my child, and I am glad to see that you think of these things at last, as you may be kept from throwing yourself away *again*."

The voice and whole manner of the mother were much more amiable than they had been at any

time since the rising of her daughter from the sofa; for nothing seemed to restore the tone of her agitated feeling like references, from whatever source, to her wealth and position.

"A hundred thousand. There is not nearly enough, then!" The words were half muttered, but Mrs. Burton Hayley distinctly heard them. And she saw something on the face of the young girl which she by no means understood, as the latter drew from her bosom the lower ends of the gold chain depending there, and unclasped the back of a rather large and very thick locket, the front of which presented a miniature in ivory of the handsome, well-whiskered and pleasant-looking Mr. Burton Hayley, her deceased father. Though she raised the locket to her lips and kissed it reverently, that something on the face had not changed when she took from its unsuspected concealment a small slip of newspaper, neatly folded and of size enough to contain some twenty or thirty lines of small type. The mother's eyes were by this time wide open with astonishment and partial fear that her daughter had lost her wits in the agitation of that day. The paper looked old and yellow. Margaret unrolled it and said:

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"Mother, here is something that I have carried with me night and day for five years past. I found it at that time, when clipping old newspapers in the attic, for my scrap-book. I marked the date on the back—it is eighteen years old, and the paper was a Harrisburgh one of that time. Have you your glasses with you, or shall I read it?"

"Why, child, are you crazy? What has that slip of paper to do with the subject of which we were talking?"

"Perhaps you can tell quite as well as myself, after I read it," answered Margaret. And she moved nearer to the one unshuttered window of the parlor, to secure a better light for the small type and dingy paper, the face of her mother gradually changing, meanwhile, from the surprise which had filled it, to a whiteness which seemed born of terror. Margaret read:

> "SOUTTER AND OTHERS VS. HAYLEY AND OTHERS.—This somewhat remarkable railroad case closed yesterday, and the complaint was dismissed. Judge L——, in granting the motion for a dismissal, took occasion to remark that he had seldom performed a more painful duty. That the railroad company had been defrauded to the extent of not less than eighty thousand dollars by Burton Hayley, the contractor, was one of the conclusions—the learned judge said—in which all would unfortunately agree. But the operation had been managed with great skill, and legal evidence of what was morally certain had not been produced. He should therefore grant the motion, with the regret expressed, and with the hope that in a future prosecution the evidence which was certainly demanded might be forthcoming, and the defrauded company at least find themselves in a position to punish the wrong-doer. We hear it stated, upon authority which seems reliable, that Hayley has heretofore been known as a reliable man, and that he has undoubtedly been urged to steps which he must regret during his whole life, even if justice does not reach him, or conscience compel him to make restitution,—by the demands made upon him in behalf of a ruinously expensive family, and by evil advice which he has no doubt received from the same quarter. Hayley will probably leave Harrisburgh at once, to enjoy what may be left of his ill-gotten gains in some locality where his antecedents are less fully understood."

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Mrs. Burton Hayley had sunk back into her chair at the moment when Margaret read the first words, and she remained silent till the close. Her face was white, except that a single red spot burned in the very centre of either cheek. Her daughter looked steadily upon her for an instant after she had concluded. Still neither spoke. The mother's eyes had in them something of that baleful light shown by the orbs of a wild beast when driven to its corner; and they, with the crimson spotted cheeks, were not pleasant things to look upon. At last Margaret asked:

"Did you ever hear of this before? Was that man my father?"

"What of it? Yes!" The words were nearer spat out than spoken. Margaret glanced, perhaps involuntarily, at the ostentatious Bible on its carved stand.

"Was that money ever repaid to the railroad company?"

For just one instant the lips of Mrs. Burton Hayley moved as if she was about to utter a falsehood little less black than the original crime had been. If she had for that instant intended to do so, she thought better of it and jerked out: "How should I know? I suppose there is no use in telling a lie about it, to *you*! No!"

"So I thought!" said Margaret Hayley. "That eighty thousand dollars, then, has been standing for fifteen years, and the interest upon it would nearly double the sum. We owe that railroad company, or so many members of the original company as may be yet alive, not less than one hundred and fifty thousand dollars. We have only an hundred thousand or a very little more, but that will be something. Of course, after what you have just said of the curse that clings to ill-gotten gain, you will join me in paying over every dollar in our possession, at once."

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Mrs. Burton Hayley sprang up from her chair with more celerity than she had before exhibited. "Margaret Hayley, are you a born fool?" she almost screamed.

"No, nor a born *hypocrite*!" the young girl replied. Again her eyes went round to the Bible, and those of the mother followed hers as if they were compelled by a charm. Then those of the latter

drooped, and they did not rise again as she said, in a much lower voice:

"You know the secret. I am in your power. But I am your mother, and it may be quite as well for you to be merciful to me as well as to yourself. Upon what terms will you give me that paper and promise never to speak of it or of the affair to any one without my consent?"

"I will not give you the paper upon *any* terms!" was the answer. "That has been my shame and my torture for five years, and must still accompany me. But I will be your accomplice in crime and make the promise you require, on three conditions and those only. *First*, that you drop all hypocrisy when speaking to *me*, whatever you may do before the world. *Second*, that you never speak one disrespectful word of Carlton Brand, again, in my hearing. He is dead to me: let your hatred of him die with him, or at least let me hear no word of it. *Third*, that you urge no person upon me as a husband. Present me whom you please—throw me into any company you wish; but say not one word to force me into marriage with Hector Coles or any other person. This will not break my heart—I know it. I shall marry some time, no doubt, when I find the man who can supply that place in my heart which has to-day been left empty,—without any foible or weakness to make him an unfit match for my own *stainless* blood!"

There was a bitter emphasis upon the penultimate word, and Mrs. Burton Hayley distinctly recognized it. She recognized, too, the somewhat singular prophecy made by a young girl on the very day of her final parting with the man she had loved so dearly—that *she would yet find another to fill her heart more completely*. Most young persons think very differently at the moment of the great first sorrow, believe that the vacant niche can never be filled, and make painful promises of hopeless lives and celibacy, to cancel those promises some day amid blushes of regret or peals of laughter. Mrs. Burton Hayley recognized the singularity then, and she may have had reason to recall that prophecy at another day in the near future. [Pg 191]

But there was yet something that she must do, to seal that treaty of which her daughter was the dictator. Her own compact was to be made: she made it.

"I will do as you wish, Margaret. They are hard terms to set, to *your mother*; but I accept them."

"Very well, then. We understand each other, now; and I hope there will never be another painful word between us. I will try to speak none, and for both our sakes I hope you will be as careful. Now leave me, please. I will draw to this other shutter, for I need darkness, silence and rest—yes, rest!"

The closed blind left the room in almost total dusk. The mother left the room, stepping slowly and appearing to bear about with her a dim consciousness that within the past half-hour her relative position with her daughter had been most signally changed. Margaret Hayley threw herself once more on the sofa, buried her fevered brow and her dishevelled hair in the soft, cool, white pillow, and sought that wished-for "rest." Alas! no tyrant ever invented a torture-bed so full of weary turnings and agonized prayers for deliverance or oblivion, as the softest couch whereon young love, suddenly and hopelessly bereft, reaches out its arms in vain, finds emptiness, and falls back despairing—moaning for the lost twin of its soul! The agony may be all forgotten to-morrow, in the sunshine, and the intoxication of music, and the voices of friends, and the far-off dawning of a new passion; but oh, what is the martyrdom of to-night. [Pg 192]

The third and last of these supplementary scenes, occurring at nearly the same period in the afternoon as the second, has its location at the house of Robert Brand, and a part of it in the same room where we have before seen the testy invalid while receiving the news of his son's defection and disgrace.

Robert Brand was once more back in his easy-chair, his injured limb again propped on the pillows, and his face showing all those contortions of extraordinary pain likely to be induced by his imprudent ride and the agitation attending it. Satisfied, now, that his son was not dead, the tender father had again died out in him; but made aware by a succession of facts, which he could neither understand nor doubt, that that son, just characterized, even by himself, as a hopeless coward, had since that time been fighting, and fighting without any evidence of cowardice, in a species of hand-to-hand conflict likely to try the courage quite as seriously as the shock of any ordinary battle,—he was mentally in a state of confusion on the young man's account, altogether unusual with him and not a little painful. He did not curse any more, or at least no more of his curses were aimed at the head of his son.

Poor little Elsie had been left without a hope of reconciliation between her father and her brother, after the hurling of that wild and wicked curse and the exile from his home which it involved. But the episode of the supposed death had made a diversion in Carlton's favor; her father had returned from the search for his son's body, worried and unsettled if not mollified; and the affectionate soul thought that the opportunity might be a favorable one for securing the reversal of the cruel sentence, with concealment from her brother that any such words had ever been uttered, and his eventual return home as if nothing painful or unpleasant had occurred. "Blessed are the peace-makers!" says very high authority; and most blessed of all are those who, like little Elsie, ignoring their own suffering and ill-treatment, strive to bring together the divided members of a once happy household! [Pg 193]

But the little girl was not half aware how stubborn was the material upon which she was trying to

work, or how deeply seated was the feeling of mortification which had embittered the whole nature of the man who held cowardice to be the most unpardonable of vices.

"Hold your tongue, girl!" was the severe reply to her suggestion that there might be some mistake, after all—that poor Carlton had enemies, and they had no doubt labored to place him in a false position—and that he would be sorry, to the last day he lived, if when Carlton returned home, as he probably would do that night if nothing serious had really happened to him, he should say one word to drive him away again, to leave himself without a son, and her without a brother. "Hold your tongue, girl! You are a little fool, and do not know what you are talking about. If you do not wish to follow your brother, you had best not meddle any more in the relations which I choose to establish with a son who has disgraced himself and me!"

"But suppose poor Carlton *should* be dead, after all, father? Who knows but some stranger may have come by in a wagon, seen the body lying on the ground, picked it up and carried it away to the Coroner's?"

"Eh! What is that you say?" For the instant Robert Brand was startled by the suggestion and his heart sunk as well as softened at the recurring thought that his son might indeed be dead. But the thought was just as instantaneous, how general was the objection to touching an unknown dead body, and how unlikely that any such course should have been adopted by strangers, while any acquaintance, removing the body at all, would certainly have brought it home to his own house. No—he was alive; and that belief was once more full in the mind of Robert Brand as he said: [Pg 194]

"What do I care if he *is* dead! I believe I could forgive him better, if I knew that he was, and that I should never again set eyes on the likeness of a man with the soul of a cat or a sheep! If he is alive, as I believe he is, let him never come near this house again if he does not wish to hear words said that he will remember and curse the last thing before he dies!"

A sharp spasm of pain concluded this unhallowed utterance, and words followed that have no business on this page. Elsie Brand fired again, when she found all her pleading in vain, and broke out with:

"You are a miserable heartless old wretch, and I have a great mind to go out of this house, this very moment, and never come into it again as long as I live, unless you send for me to come back with my brother!"

"Go, and the quicker the better!" writhed the miserable man, in the midst of a spasm of pain. "If I hear one more impertinent word out of you, you *will* go, whether you wish to go or not, and you will never come back again unless you come on your knees!"

What might have been the next word spoken by either, and whether that next word might not indeed have wrought the separation of father and daughter, no one can say. For at that moment came a fortunate interruption, in the sound of carriage wheels coming rapidly up the lane, and easily heard through the open doors—then the furious barking of a dog, the yell of a woman's voice, and a volley of fearful curses poured out from the rougher lips of a man. Elsie, alarmed, but perhaps rather glad than otherwise to have the threatening conversation so suddenly ended, rushed out of the room, through the parlor, to the front piazza, where she joined the general confusion with a scream of affright, hearing which, the invalid, who had before, more than once that day, proved how superior the mind could be to the disablements of the body, hurled one more oath at the people who would not even allow him to suffer in quiet, started again from his chair, grasped his heavy cane and stumped hurriedly to the door, writhing in agony and half crazed with pain and vexation. There the sight which had the instant before met the eyes of his daughter, met his own, though the effect produced by it upon himself was so very different that instead of screaming he dropped against the lintel of the front door in a loud explosion of laughter. [Pg 195]

There was a horse and buggy in the lane, very near the gate—the horse unheld, rearing and squealing, but making no attempt to run away as might have been expected. Close beside the vehicle, a man easily recognizable as Dr. Philip Pomeroy, was engaged in a hand-to-hand (or is it hand-to-*mouth*?) conflict with Carlo, the big watch-dog, using the butt of his whip, the lash of it, his boots, and any other weapon of offence in his possession, against the determined assaults of the powerful brute that really seemed disposed to make a meal of the man of medicine. The doctor fought well, in that new revival of the sports of the Roman arena, but he was terribly bested (by which it is only intended to use an old word of the days of chivalry, and not to make an atrocious pun upon *beast-ed*;) and just at the moment when Robert Brand's eyes took in all the particulars of the scene, the human combatant, following up a temporary advantage, lunged ahead a little too far, lost his balance or caught his foot, and went headlong on the top of the dog, the contest being thereafter conducted on the ground and in the partial obscurity of the fence. At the same instant, too, the tall, bare-headed and bare-armed figure of old Elspeth Graeme appeared from behind the corner of the house, and the voice of that Caledonian servitor was heard screaming out:

"Here, Carlo! Here, lad! coom awa, ye daft deevil! Here! here! coom awa, lad!"

Elsie joined with a feeble "Here, Carlo!" from the piazza; and Robert Brand, if he could have found voice, would probably have assisted in calling off the dog; but Carlo, a formidable animal in size, black, with a few dashes of white, compounded of the Newfoundland and the Mount St. Bernard, with a surreptitious cross of the bull-dog (such immorality has been known even in [Pg 196]

canine families, to the great regret of precisian dog-fanciers)—Carlo had no idea whatever of "throwing up the sponge," (which with a dog consists, we believe, in dropping his tail), and might have fought on until death, doomsday, or the loss of his teeth from old age, arrived to stop him—had not Elspeth closed in with a "Hech! ye born deevil! Ye'll aye be doin' more than ye'r tauld!" grasped the huge animal by the nape of the neck, and dragged him away very much as if she had been dealing with a kitten.

Thus relieved, the doctor recovered his feet; but he was—as Elspeth described him in a communication made not long after—"a sair lookin' chiel!" He had lost his hat, dusted his coat, and found a sad rent in one leg of his nether garments, not to mention the rage which flashed in his eye and almost foamed from his mouth. For the first moment after the rescue he seemed to have a fancy for "pitching into" old Elspeth, unreasonable as such a course would have been after her calling off the dog and finally lugging him off by main force; and he did hurl after her an appellation or two which might have furnished a rhyme to the name of the Scottish national disease; but the stout serving woman quelled him with this significant threat, and went on her way, dragging the dog towards his kennel in the backyard:

"'Deed, if ye can't keep a ceevil tongue in yer heid, I'll no be holdin' the tyke awa from ye a bit langer, and he'll eat ye up, I doubt!"

At that juncture the discomfited doctor caught sight of Robert Brand and his daughter, in the door and on the piazza, and he strode in to them without further ado, whip still in hand, rage still in his face, and threatening enough in his manner to indicate that he intended to cowhide so many of the family as he could find, male and female. [Pg 197]

"Who let out that infernal dog?" was his first salutation, without first addressing either the old man or his daughter by name.

"He must have broken loose, himself. Indeed, Doctor, we are so sorry—" began little Elsie, who had really been frightened out of her wits, and who had that organ unknown to the phrenologists, called Hospitality, very largely developed.

"Hold your tongue, girl, and let me attend to my own business!" was the surly interruption of the invalid father, who had stopped laughing, and who had at that juncture a very low development of the corresponding organ. "We are not sorry at all. Dr. Pomeroy, I told you this morning, when I ordered you out of this house, never to come near it again; and you had better paid attention to the order."

"Then *you* had that dog set loose!"

"That is a lie!" was the response. The doctor, who had used the same expression in a still more offensive form, not long before, was getting the chalice returned to his lips at very short notice. And the old man, in denying the act, intended to tell the exact truth—he had not turned the dog loose, or set him upon the doctor, except secondarily. Some hours before, when the medical man had just been dismissed for the first time, he had told the Scottish woman that 'he would bundle her out, neck and crop, if she did not set the dog on that man if he ever came near the house again!' and she had promised to obey his orders: that was all! Carlo, a dear friend of his young master, had always hated the doctor, who was his enemy, and never passed without snapping and growling at him; and the old woman well knew the fact. Consequently, when she saw the buggy dashing up the lane, and recognized it, she had religiously kept her promise, darted round to the kennel, unloosed the dog and directed his attention to the obnoxious individual, with a "Catch him, laddie!" that sent him flying at the doctor's throat just as he stepped to the ground. And it was only when the old woman believed the punishment going a little too far and the victim likely [Pg 198] to be eaten up in very deed, that she had interposed and dragged the enraged brute from his prey. All this was unknown to both father and daughter, who merely supposed that the dog had broken loose at that awkward moment; and Robert Brand's disclaimer, though a very uncourteous one, had the merit of truth. But the doctor, just then enraged beyond endurance, literally "boiled over" at the word.

"I lie, do I?" he foamed. "If you were not a miserable cripple, I would horse-whip you on your own door-step, old as you are!"

"Oh, Doctor! oh, father!" pleaded the frightened Elsie, who did not know what might be coming after this.

"Hold your tongue, girl!" again spoke Robert Brand, who still stood leaning against the lintel of the door. "Horsewhip me, would you, you poisoning Copperhead! If I could not beat out your brains with this stick, I could set a woman at you who would take you across her knee and spank you till you were flat like a pancake!"

Dr. Pomeroy thought of the woman who had dragged off the dog, and had some doubts whether she could not indeed do all that her master promised. He seemed to have the luck, that day, to fall into the way of people sturdy of arm and strong of will!

"What do you *want* here?" was the inquiry of the old man, before the doctor could answer again, and remembering that there might be some special errand upon which he had a right to come.

"You have remembered it, have you?" was the response. "Well, then, I want your thief of a son! Is he in this house?"

"Oh, he was a coward this morning: now he is a thief, is he? What do you want of him?"

"He committed theft at my house not more than an hour ago; and I am going to find him if he is in the State. Once more—is he here?" [Pg 199]

"What did he steal?" asked the father with a sneer, while poor Elsie stood nearly fainting and yet unable to move from the spot, at that new charge against her brother.

"A woman." Elsie felt relieved; the old man sneered.

"Well, I can only say that if he took away any woman belonging to *you*, he must have a singular taste!"

"Robert Brand"—and the doctor spoke in a tone of low and concentrated passion—"once more and for the last time I ask you whether your son is in this house, with Eleanor Hill, my—my adopted daughter, in his company."

"Eleanor Hill!" gasped Elsie, but no one heard her.

"Dr. Pomeroy," answered Robert Brand, "you do not deserve any answer except a blow, but I will give you one. My son, as you call him, Carlton Brand, is not here, and will never be here again while I live, unless to be thrust out like a dog. How many girls he has, or where he conceals them, is none of my business, or *yours*! Now go, if you know when you are well off, for as sure as God lets me live, if I ever see you approaching this house again, I will shoot you from the window with my own hand."

Something in the tone told Dr. Pomeroy that both the assertion and the threat were true. He turned without another word, stepped to his buggy, mounted into it and drove away.

"He is alive, father—thank God!" said Elsie Brand, reverently, when the unwelcome visitor had disappeared and she was assisting the invalid back to his chair of suffering. That one assurance had been running through her little head, putting out all other thoughts, since the remark of the doctor that Carlton had been at his house not an hour before.

"He is as dead to me as if he had been buried ten years!" was the reply of the implacable father, who stood in momentary peril of the grave from some sudden turn of his disease, and yet who had not even taken that first step towards preparation for the Judgment, comprised in pity and forgiveness!

CHAPTER X. [Pg 200]

Before and after Gettysburgh—The Apathy and Despair which preceded, and the Jubilation which followed—What Kitty Hood said after the Battle, and what Robert Brand—Brother and Sister—A guest at the Fifth Avenue Hotel—A fire-room Visit, an Interview, and a Departure for Europe.

It was a dark day for the nation—perhaps none darker!—that day of late June, 1863, marked by the occurrence of the preceding events. Private interests, private wrongs, private sorrows seemed all to be culminating or laying down fearful material for culmination in the future; but those domestic convulsions were only a faint and feeble type of that great throe agitating the whole nation. That day the bravest feared, not for themselves but for the country they loved; and that day the miserable trucklers who would long before have had the republic veil its face and sink on its knees before the arrogance of rebellion, begging for "peace" with dishonor, instead of demanding and enforcing victory,—that day they experienced such a triumph as they had never before known and such as their narrow souls could scarcely appreciate. "We told you so!" rung out from the throat of every "conditional loyalist," as the same paltry exultation had rung many an age before against the unsubmitting tribunes by the mad populace when the Volscians threatened to devastate Rome—as it had been yelled into the ears of Philip Van Artevelde and his brother defenders, when Ypres and Bruges fell, and the fierce Earl of Flanders promised death to the burghers of Ghent; and there was little, except bald defiance, that loyal men could reply. That long-boasted "invasion of the North" had come at last; and there is always a disheartening effect in the drawing of war nearer to the doors it has heretofore spared, even as there is always a scum among any population, ready to cry "ruin!" and counsel "submission" or "compromise" [Pg 201] when a single move in the great game of war has ended disastrously.

A more dreary spectacle than Philadelphia presented during some of the days of that week, cannot very well be imagined. From Harrisburgh and many of the minor towns of the west and southwest of the State, the inhabitants had fled by thousands to other places supposed to be less easily within reach of the enemy; and, if in a future day of peace those who at this juncture took part with the rebellion should chance to be shamed with a reminder of the panic in Richmond, and the removal of the Confederate archives, after Hanover Court-House in 1862, they may very pleasantly retaliate by calling up the panic at Harrisburgh and the packing up of the Pennsylvania State records, after York and Carlisle in 1863. Hundreds of wealthy persons removed their valuables even to Philadelphia; and there is no guarantee whatever that many of them did not make a still further removal East, when they could do so without attracting disagreeable attention and running the chance of after ridicule.

There seemed to be an impression just then, in fact, that there was no power whatever to check the disciplined but half-starved and desperate rebel hordes. Even those who did not view the affair as any matter of gloom or discouragement, still believed it one of heavy loss that must be submitted to with the best grace possible.

One of the young Philadelphia merchants was recognized by a friend, on one of the very last days of June, knocking about the balls in the billiard-room of the Cattskill Mountain House, and questioned by him as to the propriety of his being away from the Quaker City at a time when so heavy a misfortune as the rebel advance to the Delaware seemed to be impending.

"Oh," said the merchant, making an eight-shot at the same moment, "I do not see any good that I could do by staying."

"And do you not believe that the rebels will reach Philadelphia?" asked the friend.

"Well, yes, I rather think they will," answered the nonchalant. "I should not be surprised if they should reach there to-morrow. In fact I telegraphed to my partner from Albany, yesterday, whenever they had taken Harrisburgh to pack up the most valuable of our goods and send them to New York."

"And when they have taken New York?" asked the interrogator, not a little amused at that new system of defending valuable property and the country.

"Oh," said the merchant, as he sighted another shot and made his carom without the tremor of a pulse—"when they take New York, as I suppose they will in a week or two, we shall move them to Boston, and so keep on working East till they drive us into Canada or the Atlantic."

And this was not all a jest, by any means. The player had so telegraphed, and he more than half believed that his goods were at that time in course of removal, while he had no thought whatever of deserting his billiard-table and going down to assist in defending them. He was not alone, meanwhile, in his reprehensible coolness, as history will be at some pains to record of that extraordinary crisis.

Philadelphia presented many strange spectacles on those days. Apart from the blowing of a brass band on every corner, the patrolling of every sidewalk by a recruiting officer with fife and drum, and the requisite number of human "stool-pigeons," and the exhibition of the placard before noted, offering every inducement in money and every plea of patriotism for "State defence,"—there were other and yet more marked indications of a period out of the common order even for war-time. The American and the Merchants', favorite resorts of mercantile buyers from the rural counties of the State, were full of guests, but they lounged in the reading and smoking-rooms, and had no thought of commercial transactions. Gold was going up, its higher rate marking increased fever in the pulse of the national patient; and yet business was almost as stagnant in the broker's offices of Third Street as were wholesale transactions in the heavy houses on Walnut and Chestnut and Market below Second. The old Tonawanda and the still older Saranac, lying idle at the foot of Walnut Street, their yards lank and bare as winter trees, and the ships waiting for freight that seemed to be long in coming, found a new use in illustrating the hopeless stagnation of the city. The theatres had nearly all closed before, and the last hurried its unprofitable season to an end. The red bricks of old Independence Hall seemed more dingy than ever; and those who glanced into the hall where the great Declaration was signed in Seventy-six, at the cracked bell and the other sad reminders of a past age and a by-gone patriotism, thought whether new masters would not claim those relics for their own, before many days, issuing a new manifesto of slavery from that second Cradle of Liberty, while their gaunt steeds were picketed in Independence Square. Men saw the sleepless eye of the clock look down from the old steeple, at night, with a helpless prayer, as if something of protection which had before lived in the sacred building was to be found no more; and the bell woke many a sleeper at midnight, with its slow and melancholy stroke, to a feeling of loss and sorrow like that which it might have evoked when sounding for the burial of dear friends. All day long crowds gathered and held their place, wearily moving to and fro, but never dispersing, in the open space in front of the historic pile; and "peace" orators, who had before been awed into silence by the threats and demonstrations of earlier days, once more ventured treasonable harangues to sections of those crowds, while the policemen scarcely found energy enough to disperse the hearers or arrest the disturbers. The bulletin boards were besieged; the newspaper offices had a demand for extras unknown to the oldest inhabitant of the quiet city; and the telegraph offices, busied alike with messages of public and private interest, had never before known such a test of their capacity since Morse first set Prometheus at his new occupation of a messenger. A few troops marched away, the Reserves (with Dick Compton in their ranks) among the number; and the New York militia regiments and some of the New Jersey troops passed through on their third campaign for "home defence;" but the public mind was not reassured. Once there was a rumor that McClellan had been called again to the command of the Army of the Potomac, or at least entrusted with the defence of the State, and then the general pulse for the moment beat wildly; but the inspiriting report died away again, the non-arrival of the morning train from Harrisburgh one day threw the whole city into panic, and the thought of successfully defending the State capital sunk lower than ever. The President, who had been bespoken to meet the Loyal Leagues and raise a new flag on Independence Hall on the Fourth of July, was too busy or too much discouraged, and would not come; and what heart lacked an excuse for sinking down when so much was threatened and so little spirit shown for meeting the great peril?

This was the week preceding the Fourth; and in that week, which closed with the National

Anniversary, what changes had taken place! The time and its vicissitudes seemed to be an exact offset to the hopes and the disappointments of the same period of 1862. Then, the Army of the Potomac had lain before Richmond, and the Fourth was to have seen the old flag waving in the rebel capital. It had really seen the little General driven back upon the James, and repulsed if not hopelessly defeated. The Fourth of 1863 was to see Harrisburgh in the hands of the rebels, and the national cause sunken lower than it had before been since the advent of the secession. What did it really see? Thank God for a few such hours as those of the close of the Fourth, in the midst of whole centuries of loss and disappointment! All was changed—all was saved! Meade, a man of whom but few knew any thing more, a week earlier, than that he was a brave man, a good fighting General, and a brother of the overslaughed Captain Dick Meade, of the North Carolina—Meade had arisen in doubt and culminated in glory. Bloodiest and most important of all the battles of the Continent, Gettysburgh stood already upon the pages of the National history, soaked with the blood of the bravest—holy with the bravery and the energy which had there broken and rolled back the tide of invasion, and yet to be holier still as the Cemetery of the Battle-Dead of the Republic. Orators who began their Fourth of July addresses with only their pulses of anxiety stirred by the knowledge that there had been three days fighting, that Reynolds was killed, and that the conflict seemed to have been desperate and undecided, did not close them before they knew that the great victory was won, that Meade was to be thenceforth a name of honor in the land, that Lee and his hordes were in disastrous retreat, and that the "invasion of the North" was at an end for all the time covered by this struggle. The news of Vicksburg was soon to come, another crowning glory for the Fourth, though not known for days after, and Grant was to be a third time canonized. But just then there was enough without Vicksburg, and the nation might have gone mad over the double tidings had they come at once.

Who, that has one drop of patriotic blood surging in his heart, can ever forget the reading of those "victory extras" that flew wide over the land on Saturday night and Sunday morning—the quavering voices of the readers, the reddening cheeks and flashing eyes of the hearers? Never before did so much seem to have been won, because never before did so much seem to have been perilled. And Philadelphia, that had sunken lowest in despondency of any of the great cities, naturally rose highest when the word of victory came. Bells rung, flags waved, music sounded, gas blazed like the noonday, processions paraded, business revived as if Trade had a human form and a crushing weight had suddenly been lifted from its breast, and old Independence Hall once more boomed its bell and flashed over the city its midnight eye of fire, as if its defiance to tyranny and treason had never faltered for a moment.

It was of Gettysburgh that Kitty Hood had been reading, at her little cottage home near the great road, after her return from church on Sunday the fifth of July, when she dashed away the tears of agitation and anxiety that had been gathering in her eyes, and said:

"Dick Compton was right, after all, and I was a fool to try to keep him away! If he had obeyed me, I should have despised him now; and if he has not been killed in that terrible battle and lives to come home again, I will tell him how wrong I was, and what a ninny I made of myself, and how sorry I am for every word I spoke that day, and how much better I love him because he obeyed the call of his country instead of the poor, weak, miserable voice of a frightened woman!"

And it was of Gettysburgh and the desperate fighting around Cemetery Hill that Robert Brand had been reading, on the same Sunday afternoon, sitting in the shade of his own piazza, when he hurled out these bitter words, which poor little Elsie heard as she lay upon the lounge in the parlor within:

"This is what he has lost, the low-lived, contemptible poltroon! *My son*, and to shirk a great battle! He might have been dead now, and in a grave better than any house in which he can ever hide his miserable life; or he might have had something to remember and boast of all his days—that he was one of the Men of Gettysburgh! If I had two legs, I would go out and find him yet and shoot him with my own hand—the infernal cowardly cur!"

And then the disgraced and irate father tried to forget his son and to bury himself in other details of the great battle.

The sister did not reply aloud to her father's renewed objurgation. She merely sobbed a little and took from her bosom a crumpled note and read it over again for perhaps the fiftieth time, muttering low as she did so:

"Oh, father, father! If you knew how far you would need to go to seek poor Carlton and make him even more miserable than he is, and how little chance you have of ever seeing him again while you live—perhaps you would not speak so cruelly of him." Then she kissed the crumpled note again and put it back into her bosom, and tried to compose herself once more to that sleep which the tropical heat invited and her aching heart forbade.

From the tone of that letter, it would seem that Elsie had written to her brother, to his place of business in the city, when fully aware of the unreasonable indignation which moved her father, advising him not to risk serious personal insult by coming home until he should again hear from her,—and that he had replied, from a place much farther away, informing her of his intention to put seas between himself and the eyes of all who had looked upon his disgrace. But better even this long separation—thought the young girl—than a return which would induce words between father and son, never to be forgiven or forgotten while either held life and memory. Years might mellow the recollection and change the feeling—years when the country should no longer make demands upon her children to breast the battle storm in her behalf, and when the eloquent voice

in the halls of justice and the active, busy life in deeds securing the common welfare, might be sufficient to win new honor and blot away any recollection of that single sad misstep in the career of manhood. Poor, gentle, loving, faithful little Elsie Brand!—it may be long before we have occasion to look upon her again, and indeed she becomes henceforth but a comparative shadow; so let it be put upon record here that she seemed "faithful among the faithless" in practising the great lessons of hope and charity. The father might utter curses to be set down against his own soul in the day when human words as well as human actions must be called into judgment; friends might look askance and enemies gloat over the disgrace of one who had before stood high above them in all the details of honorable character; even the sweetheart, whose pulses had once beaten so close to his that the twin currents seemed flowing into one—even she might find some poor excuse of pride to falsify her by-gone boast that she loved him better than all the world, and let that hollow, wordy "honor" work their eternal separation: all this might be, but the *sister* had no such license to waver in the course of her affection towards one who had been fondled by the same hands in babyhood and drawn sustenance from the same maternal bosom as herself. And no treason, all this, to the truths and the eternities of other loves. All other relations may sooner change than that which binds sister and brother, whose fondness has not been tainted by some falsehood in blood or chilled by some wrong in education. Wife or mistress, yesterday cold, may be to-day throbbing with the most intense warmth of absorbing passion, and to-morrow chilled again by instability in herself or unworthiness in the object of her regard: even the mother, that tenderest friend of song and story and sometimes of real life, may scatter her affections wide among so many children that each has but the pauper's share, or form new ties and forget that ever the old existed. But the brother, if he be not the veriest libel upon that sacred name, clings with undying fondness to the sister; and the sister, ever faithful, clings to the brother "through evil and through good report," when one or even both may have become a scoff and a bye-word in every mouth that opens to speak their names. Happy those men for whom the bond has never been either frayed or broken: sad for those who ever look back through the long years and see some sunny head of childhood hiding itself beneath the falling clods of the church-yard, that might have nestled closer to them in after years than all whom they have grasped, and cherished, and chilled, and lost!

It now becomes necessary to inquire the whereabouts of Carlton Brand, the subject of so much sisterly love and so much fatherly indignation, at that second period when Gettysburgh was a glorious novelty, its bloody splendors flashing broad over the loyal States. And those whereabouts may very readily be discovered. On the register of the Fifth Avenue Hotel, in the city of New York, his name had been inscribed on the Wednesday evening previous to Gettysburgh (the first day of July); and those among our readers who may have chanced to be sojourners at the Fifth Avenue during that week, and who will take the trouble to read over again the close and accurate description given of the lawyer on his first appearance in the presence of his sister and Margaret Hayley, in the second chapter of this narration, may not find much difficulty in remembering the appearance of so marked a man at the hotel at that period—the glances of admiration cast upon his handsome face and manly figure as he sat at table or moved quietly among the ever-changing crowd in the reading-room or down the long halls—the almost total silence which he maintained, seeming to have no acquaintances or to be anxious for escape from all conversation—his inquiring more than once every day at the office for letters which continually disappointed him—and the expression of drooping-eyed melancholy in face and restless unquiet in movement, which gave rise to many side remarks and led to many singular speculations.

He was alone—at least alone at the hotel; and Dr. Pomeroy, if he had entertained any actual belief in his suggested elopement between the lawyer and his "ward," might easily have satisfied himself, had he followed him to the commercial metropolis, that no such elopement had taken place or that the abductor had hidden his paramour carefully away and managed to keep continually out of her presence.

Something indescribably dim and shadowy grows about the character and action of Carlton Brand at this time; and the writer, without any wish or will to do so, yields to the necessity, very much as the proud man of the world yields to the pressure when events which he has assumed to direct grow too mighty for his hand and bear him away in their rush and tumult,—or as a father—to use a yet stronger and more painful image—submits with a groan and a prayer when the child of his dear love shuts the heart against him and breaks away from that tender control which it has been alike his duty and his pleasure to supply. Some of our mental children, especially when they are so real that time, place and circumstance cannot be made for them at will, are sadly unmanageable; and this instance furnishes an illustration which will be better understood at a later period. Acts may yet be recorded, while yet acts remain to record; but the heart closes, motives become buried in obscurity, and the narrator grows to be little more than a mere insignificant, powerless chronicler of events without connection and actions without explanation.

Taking up his quarters at the Fifth Avenue Hotel on Wednesday, this man, on Friday, the third of July, while the city was in agonized anxiety over the conflicting accounts of Meade's first battle of the day before, and while the black frames for the Fourth of July fireworks were being erected in front of the City Hall in the Park, with some uncertainty in the minds of the workmen whether they would not be used for a pyrotechnic display over the death-throe of the nation,—this man, Carlton Brand, took one of the omnibuses of the Fifth Avenue line passing the door of his hotel, alighted at the corner of Fulton Street and Broadway, walked down to the Bowling Green and entered the office of the Cunard Steamships fronting that faded relic of the Colonial splendors of New York. When he emerged from the office, fifteen minutes later, the cash-box of the British

and North American Royal Mail Steamship Company was the richer by many broad pieces of American gold, and Carlton Brand bore, folded away in his wallet, one of those costly little pearl-white wings on which the birds of passage bear themselves over the Atlantic. It was evident that he was about to desert his country—that country for which he had before refused to fight,—to desert it at the very moment when its fate before God and the world seemed to hang trembling in the balance.

Coming out from the office of the Steamship Company, apparently wooed by the breeze from the North River, the lawyer bent his steps in that direction as if intending to make the tour of the shipping at the piers and resume his conveyance at some point higher up the town. Past two or three of the piers; and the dense black smoke pouring out from the funnels of one of the transport steamers on the eve of departure for the South with troops and munitions, seemed to attract his attention. He walked down the dock and observed more closely the movements on and around the vessel. The black smoke still rolled out, and steam was hissing from the escape-valves. Heavy wagons were discharging boxes at the gangway, and with much puffing and clatter a donkey-engine was hoisting them on board. A marine stood at the plank, bayonetted musket on shoulder, and close behind him an officer. To the civil inquiry of the lawyer, how long before the steamer would sail, the sentry replied that she was then steaming-up and would probably leave within a few hours; and to a request to be allowed to come on board and see the arrangements of a government transport on the eve of sailing, the officer, after a moment's glance at the unimpeachable dress and appearance of the visitor, assented with the stately bow of his profession.

It certainly seemed strange that on that blazing day, when his errand at the Hudson side of the city had been to inhale the cool breeze from the river, Carlton Brand, within a moment after stepping on board the transport, should have ignored all the details of decks, spars, cabins, and even machinery, and descended the narrow stair-ways, little more than ladders, leading down to those flaming intestines of the ship from which the hot air crept up through the companion-ways like breaths from some roasting and agonized monster. Yet so it was; and regardless alike of the heat which fevered his lips and the greasy rails upon which he soiled his gloves and risked the smirching of his spotless summer garments, the lawyer pressed down to the fire-room, where the stokers were sweating great drops of perspiration that rolled down like beads from their broiled foreheads—where the coal was rattling and crashing as it was thrown forward, then crackling and hissing at its first contact with the flame, as it was dashed into the midst of the sweltering furnaces. Down, until he stood before those mighty furnaces and caught blinding glimpses, as the firemen momentarily opened the doors to dash in still other tons of the crackling coal of what seemed little less than a ship's-cargo of the fuel, seething, raging and lowing in such a heat that it made the old fancy of the lower pit no longer a dream but a horrible present reality.

"Terrible work for hot weather, I should think," said the lawyer, when the shovels were still for a moment and the great fires raged, roared and crackled within. He seemed to feel the necessity of saying something to do away with the impression of his being a sulky intruder,—and was addressing one of the bronzed old stokers who had paused to wipe from his grimy brow the sweat that was actually pouring into his eyes and blinding him.

"Yes, hot enough while we are lying at the dock," answered the stoker.

"Why hotter now than at any other time?" asked the lawyer, who had probably never happened to study that peculiar philosophy, simply because he had never been thrown into contact with it.

"Why? oh, Lord bless you!—because we are lying still, now, and there is no draught. When we are going through the water, and of course through the air, the motion makes a draught and we do not more than *half* roast."

"Then it never gets *very* cool down here?" was the next inquiry.

"Not *very*!" answered the fireman, sententiously. "But we never have the worst of these hot fires," he continued, answering something that had not been spoken but that seemed to be in the face of his auditor.

"Who then?"

"The passengers—at least some of them—on board any steamer that carries them over sea or down the coast."

"You mean when they—when the steamers take fire and burn?" The question was asked in what seemed to be a hurried and troubled voice; and had not the reflected glow from the furnace made every thing red under its light, there might have been seen a face of ghastly white contrasting with the dark and grimy one so near.

"No!" and the stoker laughed. "I did not mean that—only the thought of it. Steamers do not burn *very* often—not half so often as I should think they would, the way they are built, and with a whole Pennsylvania coal-mine on fire inside of them at once. When they do go, though, they make things howl! No slow burning, as there is sometimes on sailing-vessels, so that they can batten down the hatches and keep the fire under until there is a chance of help: every thing goes in a moment, and all is over in an hour—iron steamer or wood, very little difference."

"Horrible!" said the lawyer. The word seemed forced from him, and there could not be a doubt that he was at the moment fancying some terrible reality.

"Yes, horrible enough!" answered the stoker. "But what I was speaking of, is the foolish habit that passengers have—I have seen it often in crossing the Atlantic—of coming down into the fire-room very soon after they start, and taking a look at the furnaces. A good many of them never sleep a wink afterwards, during the whole voyage, I believe, thinking of that mass of red-hot coal lying in the middle of the ship, and wondering *when* she is going to burn. They are fools to come down at all: if they would just keep out of the way they would never know how badly it looks, and then at least they would never be burned until their time came!"

[Pg 214] Just then the raging monster within seemed to demand more blazing food, and the stoker turned away to attend to his duty. Had he remained conversing one moment longer, he might have seen Carlton Brand totter back against the bulk-head of the fire-room, literally gasping for breath—then grapple for the railing of the stairs, and ascend the steps with the staggering motion of a sick or drunken man, breathing heavily and giving painful indications of being on the verge of falling insensible.

When the lawyer again emerged to the air of the deck, his face was ghastly white, and he seemed altogether strangely altered since the moment of his descent into those regions of fire and grime and terrible suggestion. What had so changed him?—the heat, choking his lungs and preying upon a frame unaccustomed to it?—or had the curse of his nature again found him out, in the low of the furnaces and the heedless conversation of the fireman? and did he remember that between himself and even that flight beyond the sea which only could shut out from his ears the voice of contempt and the cry of a neglected country, there yet lay the peril of the Amazon and the Austria?

This occurred on Friday the third of July; and between that day and the Sunday following there was nothing in the movements of the sojourner at the Fifth Avenue, worthy of special record. But on that Sunday afternoon, perhaps at the very hour when Kitty Hood, in one spot of that section of country which had been his old home, was glorying over her lover's having been at Gettysburgh,—and when Robert Brand, in another, was writhing and cursing over the absence of his son from the same great battle,—an incident took place at the hotel, apparently trivial, but which may subsequently be found to have exercised no slight influence on the fortunes of some of the different persons named in this chronicle. Unfortunately, again, over this little event hangs a mist and a shadow, and only slight glimpses can be obtained of what afterwards proved to be of such unsuspected importance.

[Pg 215] On that Sunday afternoon, at about two o'clock, Carlton Brand went down from his room to the office of the hotel, to exchange a few words with the clerk, and to secure one of the battle-extras which he had just heard from his window cried in the street. Knots of men, guests, or passers-by, driven in by the pouring rain without, filled the long hall, every third holding a newspaper, every group in more or less animated conversation, and the one topic that great conflict which had just bloomed out into a great victory. The lawyer seemed to have company enough in his own thoughts, and did not join any of the groups. He secured his extra, transacted his brief business at the desk, and returned immediately upstairs. The moment after he had left the desk, a young man advanced from one of the groups near the door, asked a question of the clerk, was answered, overran a few pages of the register with eye and finger, and then passed upstairs under the guidance of a servant.

Carlton Brand had already thrown off coat and boots again, and was sitting at the open window in dressing-gown and slippers, glancing over the sensation-headings of the extra which gave the particulars of the Waterloo of Secessia,—when there was a tap at the door. Stepping hastily thither and opening it, with a muttered wonder why he could not be left alone to his reading, a well-known figure stepped into the room and one of his Philadelphia bar-intimates—perhaps the nearest to a confidential friend in the whole profession, took him by the hand. For an instant the occupant of the room seemed to be displeased at the intrusion and an expression of annoyance flitted over his face; but old friendship was evidently too powerful even for shame and lacerated feeling, and the next instant he had cordially returned the grasp.

The new-comer, strangely enough, bore no slight resemblance to Carlton Brand. We say strangely, because the lawyer was by no means such a person, in general appearance, as could be readily duplicated. Henry Thornton, his professional brother, had the same tall, lithe figure with evidence of great agility, the same mould of countenance in many respects, and with eyes of [Pg 216] hazel only a shade darker than Brand's. But here the resemblance, which might otherwise have been extraordinary, became slighter and eventually disappeared. His complexion was much darker, even brown, from chin to forehead, indicating Southern blood or residence. His hair, curling a little, was of very dark brown, almost black; and his heavy moustache, the only beard he wore, was so nearly black as generally to pass under that designation. In spite of the similarity of form and feature, it may be imagined that these differences told very strongly on the general effect produced by the two men on the mere casual observer; and while there was that indefinable something in the face of Carlton Brand, to which attention has before been called, denoting intellect and true nobility of soul, accompanied by an occasional pitiable weakness or want of self-assertion of the full manhood, there was that quite as plainly to be read in the face of Henry Thornton, which told of dauntless courage and iron will, a brain busy and scheming if not even plotting, and powers which might not always be turned to the service of the candid, the open and the honorable. Lavater would have thought, looking at his face—Well for him and for the world if what he wills is in consonance with honor and justice, for what he wills he will pursue with the unfaltering courage of the lion and the untiring determination of the sleuth-hound!

But Nature, giving to these two men who held no known relationship whatever, so striking a resemblance in some particulars and so great a dissimilarity in others—had not quite ended her freak of comparison. It is doubtful whether either was fully aware of the fact, but the similarity between the tones of their voices, in ordinary times, was quite as marked as that between certain physical features; and any person standing that day without the door, when the two had entered into conversation, might have been puzzled to know whether two persons were really speaking or one was carrying on a monologue. This, only at ordinary times: Thornton's voice was much steadier and more uniform under feeling, and it never broke into tones so low and melancholy as that of the other, when influenced by temporary depression.

Such was Carlton Brand's visitor on that Sunday afternoon, and he it was who but the moment after was seated in the proffered chair near the window and chatting upon current topics with as much nonchalance as if he had merely called upon his entertainer at his little office on Sixth Street, Philadelphia, instead of visiting him at a hotel in a distant city.

There was a little table standing between the two windows of the room and within reach of Thornton as he sat. On the table lay part of that miscellaneous collection of articles which every careless bachelor will persist in scattering about his room at the hotel; and at the edge of what may be called the pile lay a paper more than half unfolded, which caught the observant eye of the visitor. With a quick: "Will you allow me?" which brought an affirmative response, he reached over, took up the paper, unfolded it and read a receipt for a first cabin passage in the Cunard Mail Steamship to sail from New York to Liverpool, on the 8th July, for which $130.50 had been paid by Mr. Carlton Brand.

"The Cunarder for Liverpool next Wednesday," he said, when he had finished running his eye over the passage-ticket.

"Yes," answered the owner, and he answered nothing more.

A strange expression passed over the face of his interrogator—an expression so doubtful that even Lavater, or any other man pretending to read the human countenance like an open book, might have been puzzled to say whether it conveyed pleasure, scorn, wonder, or any one of the thousand different feelings whose outward show glints over our faces as often and as transiently as the cloud-shadows floating over the mountain woods or the mottled sunshine flickering over the wheat-fields. There was something there—something which the other did not appear to notice; and with that fact we must be content.

Five minutes later, Carlton Brand, through the medium of words growing out of the discovery of the passage-ticket, was in confidential conversation with Henry Thornton with reference to the disgrace which had driven him from home and must make him an exile for years if not forever. It may have been a serious weakness, towards one who had never been even on terms of speaking acquaintance with her, to talk to him of Margaret Hayley and to confess the shameful dismissal which he had received. But Henry Thornton knew of the Hayleys if he did not claim an acquaintance with them; he had it in his power to impart information of them and their probable movements during the summer, which the other might have found difficulty in obtaining through any other means; and perhaps that knowledge gave some excuse for reciprocal confidence. At all events that confidence was given, and it elicited a return of apparently equal candor. Before the separation took place, at the end of an interview which lasted more than an hour, a strange bond seemed to have been established and cemented between the two lawyers, very different from any which official intercourse can often rivet. That interview, in fact, appeared to have produced marked effects upon both, for while on the face of Henry Thornton, as he rose to take his farewell, there was a look of entire satisfaction that could not have been without a meaning more or less creditable,—there was in the eye of Carlton Brand less of that troubled expression which had been for days resting there like a shadow, and he breathed as if a weight had been lifted from his breast. To one this new satisfaction and lightness of heart may have been no false presage: to the other, what an omen of unsuspected evil, disaster and death!

They parted at the door of the lawyer's room, with a much warmer grasp of the hand than that with which they had met little more than a hour before; and each held the palm of the other in his for a moment, as those should do who have however slight a bond in common and between whom the waves of a whole wide ocean are so soon to roll.

"A pleasant voyage and a happy return!" said the one, on the threshold.

"A pleasant summer to you, wherever you are!" was the reply of the other.

So parted, after that brief meeting, Henry Thornton and Carlton Brand. The bearer of that latter name, once so honored but now holding so doubtful a position, left New York by the Cunarder Scotia from Jersey City on Wednesday the 8th of July, looking his last that evening from the deck of his steamer, on the dim blue line of the Highlands—a fading speck of that native land that the fates had ordained he should never see again with his living eyes! And as at this moment we lose sight of him for the time, to trace the fortunes of others remaining on this side of the Atlantic, it may be well to say that his outward voyage must have been a safe and prosperous one, for there was duly registered as having arrived at Liverpool, on the twentieth of July, (a date which it may afterwards be important to remember) "Carlton Brand, Philadelphia."

CHAPTER XI.

Anomalies of the War for the Union—The Watering-place rush of 1863—A White-Mountain Party disembarking at Littleton—Who filled the Concord Coach—The Vanderlyns—Shoddy on its travels—Mr. Brooks Cunninghame and his Family—"H. T.," and an Excitement.

The War for the Union has been unlike all other great struggles, throughout, in nearly every characteristic that can be named. Unnatural in its inception, the rebellion has seemed to have the power of making unnatural many of the details through which and in spite of which it has been carried forward—of changing character and subverting all ordinary conditions. There have been anomalies in the field: still more notable anomalies in society. Unflinching bravery and stubborn devotion to the fighting interests of the country have been found blended, in the same man, with pecuniary dishonesty which seemed capable of pillaging a death-chamber. The greatest military ability has been found conjoined with such inactivity and tardiness as to paralyze action and destroy public patience. Rapidity of movement has been discovered to be wedded to such Utopian want of understanding or such culpable recklessness as to make movement not seldom a blunder instead of a stroke of policy. Times which threatened disaster have brought triumph; and the preparations made to celebrate a victory have more than once been employed in concealing a defeat. All things have been mixed in estimation. The Copperhead, detestable on account of his view of the national duty, has yet compelled some portion of respect by his real or affected reverence for a perilled Constitution; the Radical, worthy of all credit for his active spirit and uncompromising position, has yet deserved contempt for a narrowness of view which made him almost as dangerous as disloyalty could have done; and the Conservative, that man of the golden mean, that hope of the nation in many regards, has bargained for a part of the abuse which he has received from either extreme, by faulting the active measures of both and offering meanwhile no active, practical course to supply their stead.

But amid the general anomaly perhaps fashionable (or would-be fashionable) society, and the world of ease and amusement, have supplied the most interesting and the most astounding study of all. The status of the "non-productive classes" is and has been, during most of the struggle, literally inverted, and the conditions of costly enjoyment have been changing as rapidly as if we were rioting through a carnival instead of breasting a rebellion. No nation ever carried on such a war as that waged by this loyal people; and no nation ever spent so much blood and treasure in accomplishing the same comparative results. Naturally, in view of the personal bereavement, it might have been expected that society should be quiet in its amusements and low-toned in all its conversation: naturally, a people bleeding at every pecuniary pore for the public good, might have been expected to diminish personal expenditure and husband those resources on the holding-out of which so much must eventually depend. Instead of this, society, with the craped banners and the muffled drums every day appealing to eye and ear, has grown continually louder in its tone and more pronounced and even blatant in its mirth; and reckless personal expenditure has quite kept place with any general waste that the highwaymen or incapables of government had power to entail. The theatre and the circus have never before been so full, the opera has never before been so generally patronized. Babylon could never have rioted more luxuriously on the very night before its fall, than have the people of our great cities dined, ridden, danced and bathed themselves in seas of costly music, any day since the first three months of the rebellion ended.

Summer recreations have perhaps told quite as significant a story as any other feature, of the inevitable drift of society towards reckless expense and extravagant display. The summer resorts within the rebel territory may have grown desolate or deserted—the buildings of the White Sulphur and the Rockbridge Alum of Virginia may have been left empty or turned into hospitals, and Old Point may only have been visited for far other purposes than the meeting of the sea-breeze there in midsummer; but a very different fate has awaited the favorite hot-weather resorts of the North. Saratoga and Sharon of the chalybeates; Niagara and Trenton of the cataracts; the White Mountains, the Cattskills and the Alleghanies, of the high, pure air and the cloud shadow; Newport, Rockaway, Long Branch and Cape May of the south-eastern breeze and the salt aroma,—all have been, with the exception of a few frightened weeks of 1861, more densely filled during the war than at any former period in the memory of the pleasure-seeker; and wealth and enjoyment have both run riot there to an extent but little in accordance with the sack-cloth and ashes which the observant eye saw all the while lying on the head of the nation itself. All this may have been inappropriate and a part of it painful; but the result could not well have been otherwise. Some, with wealth honestly earned and no capacity for the public service, have needed rest or distraction and there found one or the other. Habitual idlers and professional students of society, never available for any other purpose, have naturally, as ever, found there their best ground of personal study. Young girls have needed the experience, and managing mammas have quite as sorely needed those fields for matrimonial campaigns. Invalids have needed their real or supposed opportunity for the recovery of lost health. Shoddy, grown suddenly rich while remaining incurably ignorant and vulgar, and finding it no easy task to force its way into the coveted "society" in the great cities, has eagerly welcomed the opportunities there afforded for at least learning the rudiments of what is called gentility, and creeping into that miscellaneous outer circle which surrounds the charmed inner. Politicians have found it necessary to do, in such places, that particular portion of the great task of boring, button-holing, prying and packing which cannot be so well done either at the primary election or the convention as around the spring or on the beach—on the piazza of the Ocean House or the United States;

and officers on furlough, who had fought enough for the time or had no intention to fight at all, have found no places like these for displaying jaunty uniform and decorated shoulder to the admiring eyes of that sex which descends from Athena and recognizes the cousinship of Mars. [Pg 223] Add to all this the rise of exchange on Europe and the folly of steamship companies in charging gold rates for passages abroad, which have together almost checked the summer exodus to the Old World,—and there is no longer reason to wonder at the watering-place crowds and the summer gayeties which have made carnival throughout the loyal States and filled the wallets of enterprizing landlords.

The year of grace 1863 saw an earlier beginning to the summer hegira than any other late year had done, as before its close it saw houses over-crowded, waiters overworked, and cots at a premium, from Casco to Cresson. The smoke had not yet rolled away from Gettysburgh when "the great North River travelling-trunk" began its perambulations; and by the middle of July everybody who was anybody (except a few in the city of New York, temporarily frightened or hindered by the riots) was gone from the great cities, and they were given over to the temporary occupancy of those laboring starlings who could not "get out," and the ever ebbing and flowing wave of transient visit.

All this as a necessary reminder of the period and a back-ground to the incidents so soon to follow,—and because the course of narration, at this juncture, leads us for a time to one of the favorite shrines of American summer pilgrimage and into the whirl of that literal storm of fashion and curiosity which eddies and sweeps, all summer long, around the peaks of the White Mountains—the Alps of Eastern America.

It was a somewhat varied as well as extensive crowd of passengers that disembarked from the cars of the White Mountain Railroad at Littleton, in sight of the head-waters of the Connecticut, about five o'clock on Wednesday afternoon, the 29th of July. The dog-days had begun; New York, Philadelphia and Boston were steaming furnaces, though partially emptied as we have before had occasion to notice; and those who had already visited them during the month, declared that neither Saratoga, the Cattskills, or even Lake George or Niagara, had the power to impart any coolness to suffering humanity. The sea-shore or the northern mountains offered the only [Pg 224] alternative; and a very heavy list of passengers had come up that day by the Norwich and Worcester line from New York, the Boston lines falling in at Nashua Junction, and the Vermont Central throwing in its reinforcement at Wells River.

Every portion of the loyal States (and no doubt a portion of the disloyal, if the truth could have been known!) had seemed to be represented in the crowd that thronged the platforms while fighting for a mouthful of lunch at Nashua Junction or crowding in to a hurried dinner at the poor substitute for the burned Pemigawasset House at Plymouth. There were even half a dozen resident Europeans—English, Scotch, with one Frenchman who snuffed continually, and one Spaniard who smoked in season and out of season—people who had no doubt rushed over to see the "American war," but very soon found the South too hot for comfort, in one sense or the other, —among the number destined to add variety to the overfilled caravanserais of the Franconia and White ranges. A few had dropped away at Weir's Landing, for a day or two on Lake Winnipiseogee, enticed by the pleasant loom of Centre Harbor down the bright blue water and the romantic figure of the Lady of the Lake on the prow of her namesake steamer; and a few more had left the train at Plymouth for the long coach-ride of thirty miles through the mountains to the Glen House, or by the southern approach to the Profile or the Crawford. Two or three stage-loads, too, who had but one thought in their pilgrimage—Mount Washington,—were bustling in for the immediate ride from Littleton to the Crawford; but there were still four heavy stage-loads—not less than forty to fifty persons—going on to the crowded Profile House that evening.

Some of the occupants of one of those heavy stages, rolling away towards the Profile, require, for the purposes of this narration, a somewhat closer view than was probably taken of them by many [Pg 225] of their fellow-passengers; and that view cannot be more appropriately taken than at this moment.

On the back seat of that vehicle sat two ladies, with a troublesome boy of ten years wedged in between them as if to come the nearest possible to getting him out of the way. Neither paid the youngster that attention which would have indicated that he belonged to them or was travelling in their company; and indeed they had every right as well as every inclination to wash their hands of his relationship if they could not wash from their travelling-dresses the marks of his taffy-smeared fingers. The two ladies were evidently mother and daughter; and at least one person in the coach had remarked them as they came up from Concord, and seen that their sole chaperon and protector seemed to be a son of the one and brother of the other, some eighteen or twenty years of age. As he saw them then and as he afterwards better knew them, they may be briefly described.

The Vanderlyns were Baltimoreans—the widow and children of a man of large wealth and considerable distinction, who had died three or four years before in that city, after having amassed a fortune by property speculations and subsequently filled more than one responsible office under the State government. They had the true Southern pride in wealth and position; and the hand of the daughter had already been sought, however ineffectually, by scions of the best families in and about the Monumental city. Let it be added that they belonged, whatever may have been their pride and arrogance as a family, to the not-too-extensive class of *loyal* Marylanders,—and then a better title of nobility will have been enrolled than any that Clayton

Vanderlyn's money and former public employments had power to supply. The widowed mother and her children were among the few residents below Mason and Dixon's line who had not forgotten the pleasant summer days of old in the North, when Puritan and Cavalier met as friends and brothers; and this summer tour, which was to include Saratoga and Newport before it closed, was a result of the old recollection. [Pg 226]

Mrs. Vanderlyn, the mother, seemed forty-five, but was fine-looking and had evidently been handsome in her youth—with those splendid brown eyes that must then have sparkled so much more brilliantly than at this period, and that perfect wealth of chestnut hair, not yet in the least sprinkled with gray, which must then have been a charm and a glory. Her travelling-dress was very plain, but of the best materials; and every thing in her appearance—especially pride of look and action,—spoke of wealth, the habit of mingling in that indefinable but actual thing, good society, and a perfect consciousness of what she was and what she possessed. Those who looked twice upon Mrs. Vanderlyn, with keen eyes, had no difficulty in deciding that she might be a very pleasant acquaintance for those in her own "set" and whom she considered her equals,—but that she would be any thing but a pleasant acquaintance for those whom she despised or with whom she chanced to fall into feud.

Clara Vanderlyn, the daughter, was a yet more interesting study than her mother; and it seemed altogether probable that the same observer before mentioned, and who will be hereafter more particularly introduced, coming up in the same car from Nashua and again thrown into near proximity in the coach, had read and was reading that second page of the Vanderlyn genealogy with peculiar care and attention. She was of middle height; slight, but well-rounded and evidently elastic in figure, with a clearly cut but very pleasant face, eyes a shade darker than Mrs. Vanderlyn's, and hair what that lady's had probably been twenty years before. A wonderful feature, indeed, was that head of hair—fine, silken, but perfectly massive in profusion, with more of a tendency to the wave than the curl, and of that rich golden chestnut or true auburn so seldom seen though so often lauded. At the first observation, it seemed that Clara Vanderlyn's hair was the great charm of her presence; but those who had the good fortune to be many hours in her company, learned that a still stronger and more abiding charm lay in the affability of her manners, the expression of thorough goodness in her whole demeanor, and the purity and sweetness of her smile. That face was certainly worthy of the fixed gaze which had rested upon it quite as often during the afternoon as delicacy permitted; and it might even have furnished excuse for glancing at it a moment too long, and planting blushes on those cheeks that the lip could have no hope of gathering. [Pg 227]

The third and youngest of the family, Frank Vanderlyn, did not enter into the group under observation, as he was at that time on the top of the coach with half a dozen others, enjoying the cigar which had been impossible in the passenger-car. But the glimpses caught of him before disembarking, may suffice to complete the family triad. He seemed a well-grown stripling, verging upon manhood, with a face distantly reminding the observer of his sister's, but with darker hair than either Mrs. Vanderlyn or Clara, and with an expression of settled hauteur upon his well-cut features, which very much detracted from the charm of a face that would otherwise have been singularly handsome. He was dressed a little too well for dusty travel, and wore more wealth in a single diamond in his cravat and a cluster-ring on the little finger of his right hand, than most young men would have been either able or willing to devote to such purposes of mere ornament.

This description of the occupants of that singularly-fortunate coach may have very little interest beyond that of a mere catalogue; yet it must be continued, for Fate, that grim old auctioneer who sometimes knocks us down at very low prices and to odd owners, may have some necessity for a mercantile list of his chattels.

The occupants of the middle seat were three in number, and they could have furnished any needed information as to the personality of the troublesome boy with the taffied fingers, who had been wedged between Clara Vanderlyn and her mother. All of one family—that second triad: Mr. Brooks Cunninghame, Mrs. Brooks Cunninghame, and Miss Marianna Brooks Cunninghame. The first, a squat man of fifty-five, with a broad, coarse, beardless face, bad teeth and bristly gray hair just suffering under its first infliction of slaty-brown hair-dye. His large hands had been all day cased in kid gloves, spite of the heat of the weather; and his gray suit, of really fine material, had a sort of new look, and did not seem to be worn easily. There was an impression carried about by the man and disseminated at every movement, that another and a much shabbier suit hung immediately behind his bed-room door at home, and that in that he would have been easy and comfortable, while in the fashionable garb he was laboring under a sort of Sunday-clothes restraint. The second, a stout woman of fifty, with reddish hair, a coarse pink face, high cheek bones and pert nose, corresponding well with her lord in conformation, while it wore an expression of dignity and self-satisfaction to which the countenance of that poor man could not have made the least pretension. She was only a *little* overdressed, for travelling—her bonnet of fine straw too much of a flower-garden for her years, a heavy gold watch-chain with the watch prominent, a diamond breastpin flashing hotly, and her voluminous blue lawn of costly fabric partially covered by a long gray mantle which must have been recommended to her by some mantua-maker with a "spasm of sense." But if there was any restraint in the make-up of Mrs. Brooks Cunninghame, that restraint was fully compensated by the gorgeousness of the general arrangement of Miss Marianna. That young lady of thirty, with a large mouth, sandy hair, bluish gray eyes and freckles, a dumpy figure and no eye-brows whatever, was arrayed—shade of Madame La Modiste forgive us while we pen the record—arrayed for that hot and dusty day of [Pg 228]

railroad and coach riding, in a rich pink silk flounced and braided to the extreme of the current fashion; with a jockey leghorn and white feather which—well, we may say with truth that they *relieved* her face; with a braided mantle of white merino that might have been originally designed for an opera-cloak; white kid gloves in a transition state; and such a profusion of gold watch, gold chain, enamelled bracelet, diamond cluster-breastpin, costly lace, and other feminine means of attracting admiration and envy, that the brain of a masculine relator reels among the chaos of finery and he desists in despair. The fourth of this family was Master Brooks Brooks Cunninghame, *ætat* ten, wedged in between the two aristocratic representatives of the Vanderlyn exclusiveness, and the freckles on his coarse little face and hands about equally balanced by the dauby debris of more or less hardened taffy to which allusion has before been unavoidably made. [Pg 229]

This group (the fact may as well be set down in this place as at any later period)—this was Shoddy on its summer tour. Mr. Brooks Cunninghame had been, a considerable number of years before, Patrick B. Cunningham; and his name had been scrawled, many hundreds of times, to receipts for work done as a petty contractor about the streets of New York City, with one horse and a dirt-cart, digging out cellars, and helping to cart the dirt of pipe-layings and excavations. Gradually he had crept up to two carts, and then to three. Eventually he had reached the employing of a dozen or two, with the bipeds that drove and the quadrupeds that drew them. By that time he had removed from his shanty of one story and rented a house. Then he had gone into ward politics and contracts with the city, at about the same time, and emerged into possession of a couple of brown-stone-front houses and a seat in the Board of Aldermen, at periods not very far apart. People said that the seat in the municipal board, with the "ring" performances (more or less clown-ish) thereunto appertaining, were made the means of increasing the two houses to four and of causing Mrs. Patrick B. Cunningham to forget the whole of her husband's first name and merely use the initials "P. B.," which might or might not stand for 'Pollo Belvidere. Then had come the war, with that golden opportunity for all who stood prepared for it. Mr. P. B. Cunningham had been at that time the proprietor of some fifty or sixty gallant steeds used before dirt-carts, and his vigorous and patriotic mind had conceived the propriety of aiding the country by disposing of those mettled chargers as aids towards a first-class cavalry mount. He had sold, prospered, bought more dirt-cart and stage-horses with an admixture of those only to be discovered between the thills of clam-wagons, found no difficulty in passing them as fit for the service, through the kindness of a friendly inspector who only charged two dollars per head for deciding favorably on the quadrupeds,—sold and prospered again and yet again. Mr. P. B. Cunningham had accordingly found himself, three months before the period of this narration, the lawful proprietor of half a million, acquired in the most loyal manner and without for one moment wavering in his connection with either Tammany Hall, through which he managed the Democrats, or the Loyal League by which he kept in favor with the Republicans. [Pg 230]

So far Mr. P. B. Cunningham had been uninterruptedly successful—the monarch as well as architect of his own fortune. But at that period (the three months before) he had suddenly been made aware that every man has his fate and the end of his career of supremacy. Mrs. P. B. Cunningham had proved herself his fate and put a sudden end to his supremacy. That lady, all the while emerging, had emerged, from the dust and darkness of lower fortune, and become a fashionable butterfly. She had ordered him to buy a four-story brown-stone front, finer than any that he owned, on one of the up-town streets not far from *the* Avenue; and he had obeyed. She had ordered him to discard his old clothes, and he had obeyed again, though with a sincere reluctance. She had changed his name to Brooks Cunninghame, (observe the *e*!) her own to Mrs. Brooks Cunninghame, that of Mary Ann to Miss Marianna Brooks Cunninghame, and that of the male scion of the house, *ætat* ten as aforesaid, to Master Brooks Brooks Cunninghame. The door-plate of the new house could not be arranged in accordance with the new programme, for door-plates had been voted vulgar and abandoned by the *creme de la creme*; but the family cards had been made to bear all the blushing honors in steel engraving and round-hand. This done, the requisite jewelry bought, and some other little arrangements perfected which may develop themselves in due time, the lady had informed Mr. Brooks Cunninghame that both the health and the dignity of the family required summer recreation, and dragged him away on that tour of which we have the privilege of witnessing one of the progresses. [Pg 231]

Some reference has been made to the array, rather gorgeous than otherwise, of Miss Marianna, for dusty travel. A few words which had passed between the three heads of the family at one of the Boston hotels that morning, may give a little insight into the philosophy of this arrangement. Mr. Brooks Cunninghame, yet retaining a little of the common-sense of his dirt-cart days, had ventured to suggest that "Mary Ann mought wear her commoner duds to ride in, for thim fineries 'ud be spiled before night wid the dust intirely;" and Mrs. Brooks Cunninghame, alike indignant at a suggestion so smacking of low life and grieved to find that her husband would persist in retaining a few touches of the brogue of which she had cured herself and her children so triumphantly,—had answered with a sort of verbal two-edged sword that did fatal execution on both the others:

"Brooks Cunninghame, you'd better keep your mouth shut if you can't open it without letting out some of that low Irish! One would think you drove a dirt-cart yit! And you, my dear"—to Marianna (the mother had been "posting herself" in some of the phrases of "good society," as well as in some other things which may also yet develop themselves)—"you, my dear, put on the very best o' them things that you've got! Ain't we rich, I should like to know? We may see a good many folks to-day, in them cars, and who knows whether you mightn't lose a beau that'd take a fancy to you, if you went slouchin' around with your old things on? Dress up, my dear!" [Pg 232]

Mr. Brooks Cunninghame had succumbed; Miss Marianna had "dressed up," as per order; and collective Shoddy was thus far on its way, without accident, towards the first halting-place in the grand tour of the mountains.

But what of the observer who has more than once before been mentioned, and who sat in the corner of the front seat, half buried under the voluminous skirts of two ladies who have nothing whatever to do with this narration, but looking so steadily (people who have habitually ridden in those Concord coaches know that the front is another back, and that the occupants of the front and back seats face each other)—looking so steadily, we say, at every permissible opportunity, into the sweet face of Clara Vanderlyn? He was a man of apparently thirty years of age, rather tall and very vigorous-looking even if slight, with curling dark hair, almost or quite black, and worn short, the face finely cut and showing no beard except a close, full moustache of raven blackness, the complexion (brow and all, as could be noticed when he lifted his hat from his head, as he often did, for coolness) of such a dark clear brown as to mark him of Southern birth or blood, clothes of thin dark gray material, with a round tourist hat and a duster, the small hands gloved in summer silk, and the whole appearance and manner that of a gentleman, used to good society, and very probably professional. He had been reading, nearly all the way up from Worcester, some of the other passengers noticed—though it must be confessed that a part of his reading had been over the top of the book at that attractive large type formed by a pretty human face; and no blame is intended to be cast upon Clara Vanderlyn when we say that that young lady had more than once met the evidently admiring glance of so fine-looking a man, with the little tinge of color that was becoming, but without any expression upon her face or any thought in her mind, resenting any more than returning an admiration which she believed that she had a right to receive and any gentleman to pay thus respectfully. He had spoken but seldom, during the ride, in such a way that any person then present had heard him; but once he had taken (or *made*) occasion to apologize to Miss Vanderlyn and her mother for being thrown against their seat by the motion of the car while walking through it, on the rough road when coming up from Plymouth to Wells river; and his few words, as the lady remarked, consorted well with the respectability (to say the least) of his appearance. As to his personality, which there did not seem the slightest occasion for his wishing to disguise, there was a big black trunk in the baggage-wagon following behind the line of coaches, and a small satchel strapped over his shoulder as he rode; and the first bore the initials "H. T." and the direction "Cincinnati."

While so much attention has been paid to the occupants of that single coach, leaving the others and even the noisy passengers on the roof of this, unnoticed, the vehicles had been buzzing and clattering along over the table-land lying at the foot of the mountains, past the little hamlet of Franconia, and nearing the mountains themselves. A glorious July evening it was, with the fiery air which had been so oppressive below gradually cooled by the approach to the presence of the monarchs, and the smoke from the fires in the woods playing fantastic tricks among the peaks, and compensating for the absence of the clouds which sometimes enveloped them. Not half the passengers in those four stages had ever seen the mountains before; and not one, even of those accustomed to such scenery, but felt the blood beating a little quicker as the mountain road beyond Franconia was reached, and they began to experience those rapid ascents, and yet more rapid descents, which accompany thence all the way to the Notch, with grand old woods overhanging, steep and sheer ravines at the side of the road that made the head dizzy in looking, reverential glimpses of the awful peaks of Lafayette and the Cannon frowning ahead, and of Washington, grander still, towering far away over the White range, and with all the other accompaniments of the finest mountain scenery on the Atlantic coast of the American continent. There was quite enough, indeed, to engage the attention of any except the most blasé and ennuyée traveller, in the grandeur of the scenery and the excitement of being galloped in rocking, lumbering, four-horse coaches, down declivities of road which would have made a driver in any ordinary hill-country draw tight rein and creep down with a heavy foot on the brake.

Not a few nervous passengers, first or last, dashing up and down the slopes of the White Mountain roads, have been more or less frightened, and wished that they could be once more on terra firma without incurring the penalty of a laugh at their cowardice; and in the present instance this little bit of locomotion was not to be allowed to pass without an adventure.

Half an hour from the foot of the mountain the coach went rapidly up a sharp ascent in the road, then dashed down again at full gallop, striking one of those necessary nuisances known as "breakwaters" when a few yards from the top, with a shock that sent the coach-body leaping on its leathern jacks like a yawl-boat in a heavy surf, made some of the outsiders on the top shout and hold on merrily to keep from being whirled off into one of the side-ravines, and created such a state of affairs inside the vehicle, generally, as effectually broke up the monotony. That shock drove the head of Mrs. Vanderlyn back against the leathern cushions with a force seriously damaging to the crown of her bonnet, brought a slight scream from Clara, who was frightened for the instant, made the troublesome Master Brooks Brooks yell and dash a dirty hand into the dress of each of the ladies who had the honor of the same seat, and elicited from Mrs. Brooks Cunninghame and her husband one of those brief but very significant marital displays which were no doubt afterwards to edify so many. Whether the lady had ascertained that fashionable people must always fall and faint under any sudden excitement, or whether the shock really frightened as well as unseated her, is a matter of no consequence: certain it is that she at that juncture threw up her hands and rolled up her eyes, gave one scream that degenerated into a groan, rolled from her seat and subsided into the bottom of the coach, under the feet of "H. T.," in what seemed to be a fit of some description. Miss Marianna, really alarmed, with the affectionate if not classic words, "Oh, mammy!" made a grab at that lady, clutching the back of

her hat and tearing it from the head it crowned, while Master Brooks Brooks changed his yell into a howl and Mr. Brooks Cunninghame stooped down, terror in his face and his hands feeling around at the bottom of the vehicle for any portion of what had been his wife, with the affectionate but not politic inquiry: "Is it kilt ye are, Bridget?"

Not politic?—no, certainly not! A stronger word might be applied without risk to the unfortunate expression. Among the changes in family polity not before indicated, had been an indignant throwing over of her very honest name of "Bridget" by the wife of the horse-contractor, and the adoption of "Julia" in its stead. More than one curtain-lecture had poor Mr. Brooks Cunninghame endured, before leaving New York, on the necessity of avoiding any blunder in that regard, when they should be "away from home"; and he had not escaped without severe drill and many promises of perfection in his part. And now to have forgotten the adopted "Julia" and used the tell-tale "Bridget" at the very moment of the family's entering upon their first essay in fashionable watering-place life, was really a little too much for patience not entirely angelic.

Both the poets and the romancers tell of cases in which some word of heart-broken affection, uttered at the instant when the death-film was stealing over the eyes of the beloved one, has had power to strike the dulled sense and call back for a moment the fleeting life when it had escaped far beyond the reach of any other sound. Something of the same character—not quite so romantic, perhaps, but quite as real,—was developed in the present instance. The woman may have been falling into an actual faint; but if so, that offensive word pierced through the gathering mists of insensibility, and she crawled out from the entanglement of legs before any effectual aid could be afforded her, and with such a look of contempt and hatred burning full upon her unfortunate husband that he must have felt for the moment as if placed directly under the lens of a sun-glass at focus. Mr. Brooks Cunninghame shrank into his number eleven patent-leathers, and Mrs. Brooks Cunninghame "swatted" herself (there is no other word in or out of the language that will quite so well express the act) down on the seat with an air that implied a wish for some one's head being beneath her at that juncture. Her glance had not at all softened, nor had "H. T." ceased looking out of the window or Clara Vanderlyn (behind her) yet taken her handkerchief from her mouth, when the female Cunninghame said, in what she thought very honeyed accents:

"Mr. Brooks Cunninghame, I wish you would find some other time to go and call me nicknames, than when I am jolted out of my seat in that way and a'most dead!"

The stroke of policy was a fine one, and even the thick head of Mr. Brooks Cunninghame recognized the necessity of following it up—an act which he performed thus gracefully and with a look intended for one of the staring ladies on the front seat:

"Yes, mim, her name isn't Bridget at all at all, but Julia. It's only a bit of a way I have of jokin' wid her, mim!"

This was satisfactory, of course—absolutely conclusive; and so Mrs. Brooks Cunninghame grew mollified by degrees; the redness which had come into the face of Miss Marianna gradually faded out; Master Brooks Brooks Cunninghame took occasion to manifest his filial fondness by reaching over and hugging his mother with hands just re-coated with candy dug out of his capacious pocket; and the Concord coach, with its consorts, rolled and jolted and swayed along, up and down the mountain road to its destination.

CHAPTER XII.

Landing at the Profile House—Halstead Rowan and Gymnastics—How that person saw Clara Vanderlyn and became a Rival of "H. T."—The Full Moon in the Notch—Trodden Toes, a Name, a Voice, and a Rencontre—Margaret Hayley and Capt. Hector Coles—The Old Man of the Mountain by Moonlight, and a Mystery.

Spite of the sometimes rapid speed, the toil up the mountain had been long and tedious; and dusk was very nearly falling and the chill of the coming evening was sufficient to induce the drawing close of mantles and wrappers that only two hours before had been reckoned an incumbrance,—when the coaches with their loads broke out from the overhanging woods on a steep down-grade, the passengers caught a glimpse of Echo Lake lying like a sheet of molten silver under the evening calm, and the whole cortege swept down at a gallop and with cracking of whips, to the broad, level plateau lying before the Profile House in the Franconia Notch.

Two of the coaches had been in advance of that to which the attention of the reader has been particularly directed, and still other coaches had just come in from Plymouth, the Glen and the Crawford; so that when they drew up to alight the long piazza of the Profile was filled with sojourners satisfying their curiosity or looking out for fresh arrivals; and coachmen, servants and every employee of the establishment, were busy hauling down from the racks and boots where they had been stowed, immense piles of trunks, valises and every description of baggage that had not been entrusted to the van yet lumbering behind. Landlord Taft and superintendent Jennings were alert and busy; old comers were curious as to the number and nature of new arrivals; new comers were glancing momentarily at the glorious scenery and anxiously inquiring every thing of everybody who knew no more of the things inquired about than did the askers themselves. All was charming bustle—delightful confusion: one of those peculiar scenes connected with summer

travel and watering-place life, which furnish the very best of opportunities for study to the quiet observer.

The coach door had been opened and all the inside passengers handed out, before the merry party from the roof made any attempt at getting down. Peal after peal of hearty laughter went up from that outside division of the vehicle; and evidently the party there assembled had reached the Profile before achieving the end of the jests and story-telling in which they had been engaged. They had already attracted some attention from the piazza, and one boarding-school miss had been appealed to by her eye-glassed swain in attendance, to "heah those awful vulgah fellahs!"—when the laughter ceased, and one of the roof-passengers made a sudden spring from that elevation, over the heads of half a dozen of those standing on the ground, and came safely to his feet with a jerk which would have laid up a less perfect physical man for a week and completely shaken out the false teeth from the mouth of any victim of a dentist.

The rapid man was followed by his companions, Frank Vanderlyn included among the number; but they all seemed to choose the more popular mode of getting down, by the aid of steps and braces.

"Pretty well done, Rowan!" exclaimed one of the others as he himself reached the ground. "Broke any thing?"

"No, nothing—except," and at that moment his eye caught the forms and faces of Miss Clara Vanderlyn and her mother, who were standing at the edge of the piazza, waiting while Frank descended and made some arrangement for the disposition of their baggage. "H. T.," of the coach-load, was standing within a few feet of them, his little satchel still strapped over his shoulder and his eyes scarcely wandering at all from the woman whom they had scanned so long and well during the journey by rail. But he had glanced around, with the others, at the noise made by the singular descent; and his eye met that of the man who had been called Rowan, as the latter made the discovery of mother and daughter. It was but a lightning flash that Rowan gave or the stranger detected, but few glances of any human eye have ever expressed more within the same period. He evidently saw the young girl for the first time, at that moment; and quite as evidently he drank in at that one glimpse the full charm of her beauty and goodness. That was not all: in the one glance, too, he apparently measured her wealth and social position—saw and reckoned up the proud woman standing beside her—then took, it is probable, an introspective view of himself and his own surroundings, and found time to realize the utter hopelessness of that impulse which for the tithe of a moment he must have felt stirring within him.

Perhaps half-a-dozen seconds had elapsed before he concluded the answer he had begun. "No, nothing—except—my heart!" He had begun to speak in a light, gay, off-hand manner: he concluded in a low, sad voice, full alike of music and melancholy.

"H. T." had been observing him very closely during that brief space of time, as had nearly all the other spectators, their notice attracted by his reckless mode of alighting. He was apparently about thirty years of age, a little less than six feet high—perhaps five feet eleven; with a form undeniably stout, but rounded like a reed and as elastic as whalebone. His hands were soft and womanish in their contour, though they were rather large, nut-brown in color, and had evidently felt, as had his face, the meridian sun. His feet were almost singularly small for so large a man—highly arched and springy. His face and head, as he the moment after removed his hat, were capable of attracting attention in any company. The face was a little broad and heavily moulded; the cheek-bones prominent and the nose slightly aquiline; the eyes dark, dreamy and lazy; the brow fair, and above it clustering dark, short, soft hair, curled, but so delicate in texture that it waved like silk floss with the veriest breath. The mouth would have been, the observer might have thought, heavy and a little sensual, had it not been hidden away by the thick and curling dark moustache which he wore without other beard. Only one other feature need be named—a chin rather broad and square and showing a very slight depression of the bone in the centre—such as has marked a singular description of men for many an hundred years. It needed a second glance to see that a broad, heavy scar, thoroughly healed, commenced at the left cheek-bone and traversed below the ear until lost in the thick hair at the base of the neck. Such was the picture this man presented—a contradictory one in some respects, but evidencing great strength, power and agility, and yet more than a suspicion of intellectuality and refinement. A close and habitual observer of men does not often err in "placing" one whom he may happen to meet, even at first sight,—after a few seconds of careful examination; but the keenest might have been puzzled to decide what was that man's station in life, his profession, or even his character. Any one must have been in the main favorably impressed: beyond that point little could possibly have been imagined by the most daring.

A small black trunk came off the top of the coach at about the time that "H. T.," who seemed to be bargaining for a rival at that early period, had concluded his inspection; and there was not much difficulty in connecting the name and address painted in white on the end with the appellation by which the stranger had the moment before been designated. That name and address read: "Halstead Rowan, Chicago, Illinois."

Two men appeared to be travelling in company with Rowan; one a man of something beyond his own age—the other five or six years younger; both respectable but by no means affluent in appearance. All were well dressed and gentlemanly in aspect; but neither Rowan nor either of his companions gave the impression of what might be designated as the "first circles of society," even in the great grain-metropolis of the West.

"H. T.," the observer, had fixed his eyes so closely on the male party in that singular meeting, that he probably lost the answering expression of the lady's face and did not know whether or not she had returned that glance of wondering interest. Something like disappointment at that lost opportunity may have been the cause of his biting his lip a little nervously as he took his way, with the rest of the new-comers, into the hall and reception-room, waiting opportunity for the booking of names and the assignment of chambers. Some of those in waiting no doubt found the tedium materially diminished by finding themselves, in the reception-room, at that close of a blazing day of July, standing or sitting with a decidedly grateful feeling before a quarter-of-a-cord of birchen wood, blazing away in the open fire-place with that peculiar warmth and hearty geniality so little known to this coal-burning age, but so well remembered by those who knew the old baronial halls of republican America in a time long passed away.

Not many minutes after the rencontre that has been described, the crowd had vanished from the piazza of the Profile House, the coaches had driven away, the baggage was being rapidly removed within doors, and the tired and hungry new-comers were booked for rooms and clearing away the soil and dust of travel, preparatory to supper. Soon the crockery and cutlery jingled in the long dining-room, and the flaky tea-biscuits steamed for those who hurried down to catch them in their full perfection.

It was a desultory supper and a somewhat hurried one, for the moonrise was coming—that rise of the full moon which so many had promised themselves, and for which, indeed, not a few of the arrivals of that evening had timed their visit to the mountains. Then, hunger has but little curiosity, and surveys and recognitions were both waited for until the broader light and greater leisure of the morning; and probably of the dozens of old residents (a week is "old residence" at a watering-place, be it remembered, and a fortnight confers all the privileges of the habitue)—probably of the dozens of old residents and new-comers who had acquaintances among the opposite class, not two found time or thought for seeking out familiar faces during that period when the sharpened appetite was so notably in the ascendant.

"The moonlight is coming: come out, all of you who care more for scenery than stuffing!" said a high, shrill voice, after a time had elapsed which would scarcely have begun the meal under ordinary circumstances. It was an elderly man with white hair and white side-whiskers, an old habitue of the house and therefore a privileged character, who spoke, pulling out his watch and at once rising from his seat. He was followed by more than half those at table, and would have been followed especially by Mrs. Brooks Cunninghame, who had somewhere learned that fashion and a rage for moonlight had a mysterious connection,—but for the insatiable hunger of Mr. Brooks Cunninghame himself, who was engaged in mortal combat with a formidable piece of steak and a whole pile of biscuits, and who outraged Mrs. Brooks Cunninghame by declaring, sotto voce, that "he'd be something-or-othered if he'd lave his supper until he was done, for any moonlight or other something-or-othered thing in the wurruld!"—and the obstreperousness of Master Brooks Brooks Cunninghame, who was up to his eyes in three kinds of preserves and bade fair to stick permanently fast to the table through the agency of those glutinous compounds.

Out on the piazza and the broad plateau in front of it, the visitors at the Profile gathered, to see what is not often vouchsafed to the most devoted of nature-lovers—the rising of the full moon in the mountains. Those who are familiar with the Franconia Notch well know how the mountains around the Profile always seem to draw closer after sunset, and how the frowning cliffs seem to form insurmountable barriers between them and the outer world, making it doubtful to the bewildered thought whether there is indeed any egress from that cool paradise of summer—whether or not they can ride away at will and look again upon green fields and flashing streams and the faces of those they love. And they well know that moonrise there, over those encircling cliffs, is not the moonrise of the lower country, with the orb throwing its broad beams of light at once wide over the world, but an actual peeping down from heaven of a fair and genial spirit that deigns for the time to pour welcome radiance into an abode of solitude and darkness. The spectacle, then, is one to be sought and remembered; and as storms habitually beat around those mountain tops and fog and mist quite divide the time with fair weather in the valleys, the tourist is mad or emotionless who allows the cloudless full moon to come up without catching its smile on cheek and brow.

The intense blue of the eastern sky was already gone when the anxious groups clustered in front of the great white caravanserai, and the stars began to glimmer paler in that direction. There was not a fleck of cloud, not a shadow of mist, to prevent the rounded orb, when it came up, flooding the whole gorge with the purest of liquid silver. The winds were still as if they waited with finger on lip for the pageant; and the shrill scream of a young eagle that broke out for an instant from one of the eyries under the brow of Eagle Cliff and then died trembling away down the valley, seemed like profanation. Conversation was hushed, among all that varying and even discordant crowd, as if there might be power in a profane word to check the wheeling of the courses of nature. The orient began to be flushed with that trembling light, and glints of it touched the dark pines on the brow of the cliff, a mile away. Then that light beyond the cliffs deepened and the dark pines grew still darker as fully relieved against it. Then at last, as they watched with hushed breath, a rim of silver seemed suddenly to have been set as an arch on the very brow of the mountain, and slowly the full orb rolled into view. As it heaved up, a broad, full circle of glittering and apparently dripping silver, it threw out the trees on the brow of the mountain into such bold relief as if a lightning flash had literally been burning behind them. There was one giant old pine, no doubt an hundred feet in height, so far away on the bold crest of Eagle Cliff that it seemed to be only a toy tree of three inches; and this was thrown against the

very centre of the moon, every gnarled limb and pendant branch as plain to the eye as if it hung within a stone's throw, a dead pigmy of the same family shooting up its ragged point not far distant, and a tangled wilderness of broken trees and scraggy branches filling the remainder of the circle. Then, the moment after, the moon heaved slowly up beyond the trees, they fell back into darkness, and the broad glow streamed full into the faces of the gazers and flooded the whole valley with light. The great spectacle of the month had been exhibited to hundreds of admiring eyes, and the full moon of July shed its broad glory like a blessing upon the Franconia.

It was at the moment when the pageant was just concluding and exclamations of pleasure breaking from a hundred lips, that "H. T." (who has not as yet furnished us data for any fuller revelation of his name), standing at some distance out on the plateau from the piazza, and stepping suddenly backward to observe a particular effect of the light among the trees on the cliff, trod upon the foot of a lady immediately behind him and nearly overthrew her. He turned immediately, with a word of apology, at the same time that a gentleman near her, who seemed to be in her immediate company, sprang to prevent her possible fall, venting meanwhile on the presumed awkwardness of the aggressor a word of ill-disguised petulance:— [Pg 245]

"You should be a little more careful, sir, I think, how you step upon ladies' feet and risk hurting them seriously."

"I beg a thousand pardons!" was the reply. "Certainly I did not know that there was a lady immediately behind me, and—"

The lady gave a sudden start, caught a quick glance at the speaker, and then recovered her equanimity so suddenly that perhaps not two of all the company observed the momentary agitation; while the gentleman interrupted the attempted apology, not too politely, with—

"Is your foot much injured, Miss Hayley?"

The answer made by the lady was in the negative, and in a tone that, though it trembled a little, proved her less petulant than her companion. But it is possible that "H. T.," as he has been known, did not pay that answer any attention whatever. As he turned he must certainly have seen the lady more or less distinctly in the moonlight, and yet had manifested no surprise at what he saw; but when the name was mentioned he gave a start that must have been noticeable by any acute observer. Had he really not noticed her before his attention was called by the mention of the name? or was the face one which he did not recognize while the name bore a talisman that commanded all his interest? Certain it is that he saw the lady now, distinctly; and equally certain is it that the face was the same which has met the gaze of the reader, a month before, on the piazza of the house at West Philadelphia.

Margaret Hayley, in very truth, dressed so darkly that at the first glance her attire might almost have been taken for black, and with not even one ornament to sparkle in the moonbeams, while that peculiarity of her raiment was made more notable by a light summer scarf or "cloud," of white berlin, thrown over her head to guard it from the night air, in a fashion somewhat oriental. Her proud, statuesque figure rose erect as ever; and the same stately perfection of womanhood looked out from her dark eyes and beamed upon her pure, high brow, that had shone there before the falling of that blow which had so truly been the turning point of her life. The cheek may have been a shade thinner than a month before; and there may have been a shadow under the eyes, too marked for her heyday of youth and health; but if so the moonlight was not enough of a tell-tale to make the revelation. [Pg 246]

The gentleman who had so promptly attended to the comfort of Margaret Hayley, and who did not seem averse to picking up a quarrel on her behalf, was dark haired and dark bearded, round-faced and rather fine-looking than otherwise, a little above the middle height, and wearing the uniform of a Captain on staff service. So much the eye of "H. T." took in at once, and he seemed to keep his attention somewhat anxiously on the two as the moment after they turned away and walked back towards the piazza, as if he would gladly have caught some additional word conveying a knowledge of the officer's personality. Nothing more was said, however, that could afford such a clue if one he really desired; and but a little time had elapsed when another subject of excitement arose, calculated to interest many of the hundreds who had already become partially drunk with the glory of the moonlight.

"The moon is high enough, now: let us see how the Old Man of the Mountain looks when his face is silvered!" said some one in the crowd; and the happy suggestion was at once acted upon. There were quite enough old habitues present to supply guides and chaperons for the new-comers; and in a moment fifty or more of the visitors went trooping away down the white sandy road through the glen and under the sweeping branches among which the moonbeams peeped and played so coquettishly.

Two or three windings of the road, two or three slight ascents and descents in elevation; some one said: "Here is the best view;" and the whole company paused in their scattering march. A sudden break, opening upon a dark quiet little lake or tarn, was to be seen through the trees to the right; and a quarter of a mile away, hanging sheer over the gulf of more than two thousand feet sweeping down towards the foot of the Cannon—there, with the massive iron face staring full into the moonlight that touched nose and cheek and brow with so strange and doubtful a light that the unpractised eye could not trace the outlines, while the accustomed could see them almost as plainly as in the sunlight—there loomed the awful countenance of the Old Man of the Mountain. Some there were in that company, familiar with every changing phase of that most [Pg 247]

marvellous freak of nature, who thought that grand as it had before seemed to them when the sun was high in the heavens and the dark outline relieved against the bright western sky, it was yet grander then, in the still, doubtful, solemn moonlight.

Among those who had gone down to the edge of the little Old Man's Mirror for this view, were two of the sterner sex who happened to be without ladies under charge and to be separated from any other company. Directly, walking near each other, they fell together and exchanged casual remarks on the beauty of the night and the peculiarities of different points of scenery. They were the two who had first seen each other at the moment of alighting at the Profile little more than an hour before—"H. T." of the initials and the lady's smashed foot, and Halstead Rowan of the gymnastic spring from the coach-top. The first glance had told to each that there was something of mark in the other; and under the peculiar circumstances of that night they drifted together, without introduction except such as each could furnish for himself, but not likely to separate again without a much more intimate acquaintance,—just as many other waifs and fragments, floating down the great stream of life, have been thrown into what seemed accidental collision by a chance eddy, and yet never separated again until each had exercised upon the other an influence materially controlling the whole after course of destiny. [Pg 248]

Eventually the two, both rapid walkers, had gone faster than the rest and become the leaders of the impromptu procession to the shrine of the Old Man, so that when the halt was called they were standing together and apart from the others, forty or fifty feet further down the glen and where they had perhaps a yet better view of the profile than any of the company. Both were dear lovers of nature, if the word "reverent" could not indeed be added to the appreciation of both; and standing together there, even in silence, the intuitive knowledge of the inner life of each seemed to bring them more closely together than introductions and a better knowledge of antecedents could possibly have done. Then the crowd tired of gazing and moved back towards the house, leaving the two standing together and probably supposing themselves alone. They were not alone, in fact; for under the shadow of the trees to the left, half way between the spot where the new friends were standing and that which had been occupied by the body of the visitors, were three persons continuing the same lingering gaze. These were the officer and two ladies who each found the support of an arm—Margaret Hayley and her mother, the latter of whom, it would thus seem, was also at the Profile under the escort of the military gentleman. Unobserved themselves, they had the two men in full moonlight below and could see them almost as well as in the broader light of day.

"Who are they, Captain Coles? Anybody we know?" asked the elder lady, speaking so low that the sound did not creep down to the two gazers.

"Both new-comers, I think," answered the military gentleman. "Yes, they both came in to-night; and one of them, Margaret, is the booby who stepped on your foot a little while ago, and whom I shall yet take occasion to kick before he leaves the mountains if he does not learn to keep out of people's way." [Pg 249]

"I beg you will not allow yourself to get into difficulty on account of that trifling accident, and for me!" answered Margaret Hayley, while something very like a shudder, not at all warranted by the words, and that the Captain was not keen enough to perceive, swept through her form and even trembled the arm that rested within his.

"Difficulty? oh, no difficulty, to me, you know; and for you, Margaret, more willingly than any other person in the world, of course!" and Captain Hector Coles, confident that he had expressed himself rather felicitously, thought it a good time to bow around to Miss Hayley, and did so.

"You are quite right, Captain Hector Coles," said Mrs. Burton Hayley. "Low people, who do not even know how to walk without running over others, should be kept at their proper distance; and of course gentlemen and soldiers like yourself find it not only a duty but a privilege to afford to us ladies that protection."

This time Captain Hector Coles, immensely flattered, bowed round on the other side, to the elder lady.

"Hark!" said Margaret Hayley, in a louder voice than either had before used, and a voice that had a perceptible tremor in it like that of fright.

"What did you hear?" asked the Captain.

"Listen—I want to hear what that man was saying."

"H. T." was speaking, just below.

"No, I have never been here before," he said. "Strangely enough, some of the greatest curiosities of the continent are neglected by just such fools as myself, until too old or too busy or too careworn to enjoy them."

"You speak like a jolly old grandfather, and yet you are scarcely as old as myself," answered the rich, sonorous voice of Halstead Rowan. "Well, that is *your* business. The White Mountains are no novelty to me, or any other mountains, I believe, North of the Isthmus."

"Is there any thing finer than this, at this moment, among them all?" [Pg 250]

"No, and I doubt if there is any thing finer on earth!" was the enthusiastic reply. "And by the way,

even *I* have not happened to see the full moon on the face of the Old Man, before. It is a magnificent sight—a new sensation."

"How long has it stood so, I wonder? Since creation?" said the voice of "H. T.," "or did the Flood hurl those masses of stone into so unaccountable an accidental position?"

"Haven't the most remote idea!" answered Rowan, gayly. "I have often thought of it, though, when looking at the marvel in the sunlight. But I have never been able to get any farther back than the idea how the winds must have howled and the rains beaten around that immobile face, age after age, while whole generations of the men after whom the face is apparently copied as a mockery, have been catching cold and dying from a mere puff of air on the head or a pair of wet feet."

"The eternal—the immovable!" said "H. T.," his voice so solemn and impressive that it was evident his words were only a faint representation of the inner feeling.

"I know one thing that it has been, without a doubt," said Rowan. "When the whole country was filled with Indians of a somewhat nobler character than the miserable wretches that alternately beg and murder on the Western plains, there is not much question that they must have worshipped it as the face of the Great Manitou, looking down upon them in anger or in love, as the storm-cloud swept around it or the summer sun tinted it with an iron smile."

Halstead Rowan was speaking unconscious poetry, as many another man of his disposition has done, while those who sought to make it a trade have been hammering their dull brains and spoiling much good paper in the mere stringing of rhymes bearing the same relation to poetry that an onion does to the bulb of a tulip! Whether his companion caught the tone from him and merely elaborated it into another utterance, or whether he possessed the fire within himself and this rencontre was only the means of bringing out the spark, is something not now to be decided. [Pg 251] But he spoke words that not only made the other turn and gaze upon him for a moment with astonishment, but moved the three unseen auditors with feelings which neither could very well analyze. His dark face, tinted by the moonlight as the stony brow of the mountain was itself touched and hallowed, seemed rapt as those of the seers of old are sometimes said to have been; and his voice was strangely sweet and melodious:

"To me, just now," he said, "that iron face is assuming a new shape."

"The deuce it is!" answered Rowan. "Where?"

"'In my mind's eye, Horatio!'" quoted the speaker, and the other seemed to understand something of his mood. "Do you know that face may be nothing more than sixty feet of strangely-shaped stone, to others; but to me, at this moment, it is the Spirit of the North looking sadly down over our fields of conflict and saying words that I almost hear. Listen, and see if you do not hear them, too!"

How strangely earnestness sometimes impresses us, even when little else than madness is the motive power! Halstead Rowan, by no means a man to be easily moulded to the fancies of any other, found himself insensibly turning his ear towards the Sphynx, as if it was indeed speaking through the still night air!

"'I am the Soul of the Nation,'" the singular voice went on, speaking as if for the lips of stone. "'Storms have raved around my forehead and thunders have shaken my base, but nothing has moved me! Scarred I may have been by the lightning and discolored by the beating rain, but the hand of man cannot touch me, and even the elements can disturb me not. I have seen ten thousand storms, and not one but was followed by the bright sunshine, because Nature was ever true to itself. Be but true to yourselves, loyal men of the great American Union, and the nation you love shall yet be throned above the reach of treason as I am throned above the touch of man [Pg 252] —unapproachable in its power as I am fearful in my eternal isolation!'"

Halstead Rowan had ceased looking at the Sphynx and gazed only at its oracle, long before the strange rhapsody concluded; and Margaret Hayley, supported upon the arm of Captain Hector Coles, had more than once shuddered, and at last leaned so heavily upon that arm as to indicate that she must be suddenly ill. To the startled inquiry of the Captain as to the cause of her trembling, she replied in words that indicated her feeling to have been excited by the strangely-patriotic words, and by a request to be taken back at once to the Profile. That request was immediately heeded, and the three passed on up the road, where all the other company had some time preceded them.

But one expression more fell from the lips of the strange man, as the three moved away, and Margaret Hayley heard it.

"Why, you must be a poet!" said the Illinoisan, when his companion had concluded the rhapsody.

"No, I am only a lawyer, and you must not take all that we say for gospel, or even for poetry!" was the reply. "Come, let us go back to the house and imagine that we have had enough of moonlight."

The two followed up the road at once and overtook the three but a moment after. As they passed, "H. T." recognized first the shoulder-straps of the officer, and then the figure of the lady upon his left arm. Turning to see her face more closely, his own was for a moment under the full glare of the moon, and Margaret Hayley had a fair opportunity to observe every feature. Shaded as were

her own eyes, their direction could not be distinguished; but they really scanned the face before them with even painful earnestness, a low, intense sigh of disappointment and unhappiness escaping her when the inspection had ended. She walked back with Captain Coles and her mother to the door of the Profile, and left them in conversation on the moonlit piazza, escaping up-stairs to her own room and not leaving it again during the evening. [Pg 253] What may have been her thoughts and feelings can only be divined from one expression which fell from her lips as she closed the door of her chamber and dropped unnerved upon a chair at the table:

"Who can that man be? His voice, and yet not his voice! A shadow of his face, and yet no more like his face than like mine! Am I haunted, or has this trouble turned my brain and am I going mad? Another such evening would kill me, I think!"

There was the sound of horn and harp and violin ringing through the long corridors of the Profile that evening; and many of those who had shared in the glory of the moonrise and the solemn levee of the Old Man of the Mountain were joining in the dance that went on in that parlor which appeared large enough for the drill evolutions of an entire regiment. But few of the new-comers joined the revel for that evening; most of them, fatigued at once with travel and excitement, crept away to early beds in order to refresh themselves against the morning; and nothing remained, of any interest to the progress of this narration, except Captain Hector Coles walking up and down the long piazza for more than an hour after Margaret Hayley had retired, his boot-heels ringing upon the planks with a somewhat ostentatious affectation of the military step, Mrs. Burton Hayley meanwhile leaning upon his arm, and the two holding in tones so low that no passer-by could catch them, a conversation which seemed to be peculiarly earnest and confidential.

Yet there was still one occurrence of that night which cannot be passed over without serious injury to the character of this record for strict veracity. Mrs. Brooks Cunninghame, during a large part of the night, was in serious trouble which required the full exercise of her maternal vigilance—while Miss Marianna, deserted by her father who had surreptitiously smoked a short pipe in the edge of the woods and thence gone to bed and to sleep, wandered disconsolately round the parlor, dressed in more costly frippery than would have sufficed to establish two mantua-makers, [Pg 254] unintroduced to any one, stared at with the naked eye and through eye-glasses, her freckles complimented in an undertone that she could not avoid hearing, the name of her dress-maker facetiously inquired after, and the poor girl, made miserable by being dragged by her silly parents to precisely the spot of all the world where she least belonged, suffering such torments as should only be inflicted upon the most unrepentant criminal.

But the peculiar trouble of Mrs. Brooks Cunninghame has not as yet been explained, and it must be so disposed of in a few words. Ill health, on the plea of which she had started on her "summer tour," had really attacked her interesting family, or at least one highly-important member of it. Master Brooks Brooks Cunninghame, naturally a little sharp set after his long ride and accustomed to regard any supper with "goodies" on the table as something to be clung to until the buttons of his small waistband could endure no farther pressure—Master Brooks Brooks Cunninghame, as has already been mentioned, had remained at the table a little beyond the bounds of strict prudence. In other words, he had devoured beef-steak and fruits, fish and milk, biscuits and pickles, tea, pickled oysters and sweetmeats, until even his digestive pack-horse was overloaded. Very soon after supper he had petitioned to be taken to bed, and then unpleasant if not serious symptoms had been no long time in supervening. During a large part of the night there were a couple of chambermaids running to and from that part of the building, with hot water, brandy, laudanum, foot-baths and other appliances for suffering small humanity; while Master Brooks Brooks kept doubling himself up in all imaginable attitudes and crying: "Oh, mommy!" in a manner calculated to wring the heart of that motherly person,—to make Mr. Brooks Cunninghame, who wished to sleep, growl out some reasonably-coarse oaths between his clenched teeth,—and to induce wonder on the part of people who had occasion to pass the front [Pg 255] of the building or come out on the piazza, whether they did or did not keep a small menagerie of young bears, wolves and wild-cats in full blast on the second floor.

CHAPTER XIII.

Miss Clara Vanderlyn and her Pet Bears—A Misadventure and a Friendly Hand in Time—The Question of Courage—Halstead Rowan and Mrs. Brooks Cunninghame on Geography—The Dead Washington, the Flume and the Pool—With the personal relations weaving at that juncture.

Breakfast was over at the Profile, on the next morning; the stages had rolled away for Littleton, the Crawford and Plymouth; and preparations were in progress for a ride of two or three wagon-loads down the glen to the Flume,—when "H. T.," cigar in mouth, passed out from the bar-room to the piazza and thence across the plateau in front, towards the billiard-room and ten-pin-alley, standing a hundred yards away to the right, and at the very bottom of the slope of the mountain. He had seen, in the dusk and afterwards in the moonlight of the night before, that a couple of the rough pets of the mountain region were sojourning at the Notch, in the shape of half-grown black bears, chained to stakes some twenty feet apart, with a dog-kennel for their joint retreat, perhaps a hundred feet from the house and immediately in front of it, where their antics could be discerned and enjoyed from the piazza and the front windows. He had seen, too, going out earlier

that morning, that they did not appear yet old enough to be dangerously vicious, and that they seemed very playful for that description of beast. Everybody was feeding them, from early morning to dusk, with nuts, raisins and crackers surreptitiously taken from the table for that purpose; and the youngsters no doubt consumed in feeding the young Bruins, quite as much food as they themselves managed to devour. [Pg 256]

Just then not less than a dozen persons were surrounding the household favorites, feeding them, putting them through their clumsy evolutions which principally consisted in sitting erect or climbing a short post to get a nut placed on the top,—or developing the usual human propensity for teazing. Most of them were ladies, and among the others, as he went by at a short distance, he recognized Miss Clara Vanderlyn, his fellow-passenger of the day before,—her face rosy with the excitement of a just-accomplished morning walk, her bonnet on arm, and her whole countenance radiant with amusement as she plied the dusky pets with her pocket full of nuts and raisins. She seemed to have acquired a wonderful ascendancy over the beasts in a very brief acquaintance; for while all the others shrank from coming absolutely within reach, she not only fed them without fear but rubbed their black coats and patted their gristly noses as if they had been pet kittens. Two or three men were lounging near, evidently admiring the new lady accession to Profile society, but none claiming an acquaintance.

"H. T.," who either had a propensity for ten-pins that morning, overbalancing the admiration of Miss Vanderlyn which he had shown the day before, or a still stronger attraction for company whom he knew to be at the alley—"H. T." was just passing on when Margaret Hayley, accompanied by the inevitable Captain Hector Coles, came out of the door of the billiard-room and advanced towards the bear-stakes. It must remain a mystery whether this appearance from the door did or did not make a change in his own necessity for exercise: suffice it to say that he stopped, turned partially around and joined the group who were making levee to the Bruins.

[Pg 257] At that moment, when Clara Vanderlyn had succeeded in luring one of the bears to the top of his "stool of repentance" (the short post), and was bending close above him, feeding and fondling what few other female hands dared touch,—a new actor came upon the scene, in the shape of Master Brooks Brooks Cunninghame, accompanying his "Mommy." He had *not* died the night before as might have been expected from his surfeit, but the freckled appearance of his face was materially improved by a ground hue of greenish white which his short sickness had imparted. His careful mamma had dressed him for that gala-day in a complete plaid suit of blue and white, with a cap of the same material and a black feather; and he looked scarcely less ornamental than useful. Evidently, sick as he had really been, he was all alive and awake that morning and might be safely calculated upon for adding to the general comfort by prowess of mouth and fingers. And the company were not obliged to wait very long for proof that the scion of the house of Cunninghame was aware of the duties of his position and quite equal to them. He left the maternal hand, spite of the clutching of the latter, at the moment of arriving at the bear-stakes, and spying what he rightly judged to be a good opportunity, stepped rapidly round behind the bear, caught him by the stumpy tail, and gave him a sharp twitch which nearly threw him from the top of the post.

In an instant the playful nature of the bear was gone, and with one sudden growl he raised his heavy paw with its sharp claws and struck full at the face of Miss Vanderlyn, not two feet from him. Every one present saw the blow, but no one seemed to have enough presence of mind or courage to shield her from a stroke which, falling full in her unprotected face, must certainly have disfigured her for life.

No one—it has been said: no one of those known to be present, most of whom were women or children; and neither "H. T." nor Captain Hector Coles had yet come near enough to be of any possible service. Yet the blow did not reach Clara Vanderlyn. A hand and arm were suddenly dashed between the paw and the threatened face, with such force that while the sharp claws tore the skin and flesh in ribbons from the back of the hand and split the coat-sleeve as if it had been paper,—the bear was knocked backward off his perch and rolled over in a ball on the ground at the side of the kennel. When any of the company sufficiently recovered from their astonishment to glance at the face of the lucky yet unlucky preserver, they saw that it was that of the bluff arrival of the evening before, Halstead Rowan. [Pg 258]

With the exception of three persons, all present rushed up at once, under the impression that Rowan's hand must be seriously injured. One of these exceptions was "H. T.," who made a movement to dart forward, even from his distance, when he saw the blow impending, but who the instant that it had fallen turned and walked back towards the ten-pin alley. The second was Margaret Hayley, who had recognized the personality of both the conversationists of the previous evening, and who naturally stopped in blank surprise to see one of two persons whom she supposed to be intimate friends, turn away the moment that the other was wounded. The third was Captain Hector Coles, who really had no power to do otherwise than obey the check laid upon him by the lady's hand.

All who saw knew that the injury must be severe, but it might have been the scratch of a pin for any effect which it seemed to produce on the Illinoisan. The blood was streaming profusely from the wound, but almost before any one saw it the other hand was inserted in a side-pocket, and a white handkerchief drawn thence and wrapped around the injured member.

"Are you much hurt, sir?"

"What a narrow escape, miss!"

"Indeed, I thought his paw would injure your face terribly!"

"Somebody ought to kill that boy!"

These and a score of similar expressions burst from the dozen or two of spectators. Miss Vanderlyn had caught the young man by the sleeve of the coat, with perceptible nervousness in her grip, and said, with all that sweet smile faded from her face, and her voice trembling with anxiety: [Pg 259]

"Indeed—indeed, sir, I am very grateful to you. I should have been badly hurt, I fear, but for your kind aid. Pray let us do something to prevent your suffering so much from your generosity. I am afraid that you are very much injured!"

"Oh, not in the least, madame—miss, perhaps I should say. Nothing but a scratch; and if the company at the Profile do not object to a big glove, none of us will be aware of the accident in a few minutes."

"Trust me, sir!" said the young lady, in the same anxious tone, "*I* shall be aware of your kindness so long as I live."

"Pray do not mention it again!" said Rowan. "Indeed I am only too happy that the little affair occurred." He was telling the truth, beyond a question, however far he might have been from telling what they equally require in the courts of law—the *whole* truth; and again for one instant there might have been seen sweeping over his face the same changing expression that had played hide-and-seek there on his first arrival the evening before:—admiration—regard—reverence—hope—joy; and then the dull shadow of recollection and hopelessness.

Clara Vanderlyn, too, whether she had or had not remarked him on that occasion—Clara Vanderlyn saw and read his face now! Her eyes fixed for one moment full upon his, then drooped, and the rich blood crept up to brow, neck, and bosom, from which it had been expelled by the temporary fright. For an instant she was silent, and seemed to be studying; then she drew from the little reticule which hung upon her arm a card-case, took out a card, and handed it to Rowan, with a still more conscious blush, her old smile, and the words:

"I am aware, sir, that this is a singular introduction, and on my part a painful one, as it has been the means of causing you an injury; but my mother and my brother will be glad to know you and to thank you better than I can do." [Pg 260]

"Miss Vanderlyn," said Rowan, taking the card and glancing at the name just as earnestly as if he had never paid any attention whatever to the register at the office, "you do me too much honor. I have no card in my pocket. Would you be kind enough to give me another of yours?"

She at once handed him another card and a pencil, and he dashed down, in a bold, rapid, and mercantile hand, though he used the sinister member for the operation, the name and address which the little black trunk had before revealed to those who chose to read.

"Thank you, Mr. Rowan. Good-morning! Pray take care of your hand, or I shall never forgive myself!" she said, nodding to her new acquaintance, and turning towards the house. Rowan bowed low, said good-morning, and strolled away towards the ten-pin alley, apparently not more concerned by the hurt than if he had merely pricked his finger. He was one of those booked for the ride to the Flume, but he seemed to need severer exercise, and the moment after he might have been seen with his hand still wrapped in the bloody white handkerchief, bowling away at the pins with the other, and humming the Grand March in "Norma" as if he thought that a favorable strain of music to accompany the levelling of obstacles or enemies.

Mrs. Brooks Cunninghame, hearing the threat directed at her promising boy, had mustered common-sense enough to hurry him away from the scene of action. Captain Coles and Miss Hayley had meanwhile come up, and "H. T.," turning once more before he reached the alley, reached the spot at the same moment. For the first time, in broad daylight, Margaret Hayley met the strange man face to face, and her cheek whitened—why, even she perhaps could not tell—at that expression or resemblance which she traced there. If there was any answering expression of agitation or surprise on the face of the man with the initials, she failed to read it, and her eyes in a moment sank from a survey which seemed so profitless. They were at that time very near each other, and Captain Coles and "H. T." not more than six feet apart. Their eyes met, and that indefinable something passed between them before another word was spoken, which includes antagonism, if not deadly hostility. There was no reason to believe that they had ever met before the preceding evening; there was no reason to believe that they could ever have an interest in conflict; and yet those two men were foes, and would remain so until one or the other should be thoroughly conquered. [Pg 261]

"A go-ahead fellow, I should not be afraid to stake my life!" said one of the gentlemen who had just come up, alluding to the hero of the hour and seeming to address any one who might choose to answer.

"Ya-a-as!" slowly and doubtingly said Captain Hector Coles, caressing his beard and throwing almost insufferable arrogance into a manner which naturally had quite enough of it. "Ya-a-as, go-ahead enough, apparently, but not a bit of a gentleman. Rough as the bear he just knocked over, and looks as if he might have come from among something of the same breed!"

"No, not a gentleman, probably!" said "H. T.," with a sneer in his tone quite as little disguised as

the other's arrogance. "But he is something a good deal better, in my opinion, and something a good deal rarer—a *man*, every inch of him!"

"At any rate," said another, who had not yet spoken, "I would give a hundred dollars to have blundered into an introduction to that splendid girl as he has done, even if it cost me a hand worse scratched than his."

"He has *had* worse scratches! Did you notice the scar on his cheek, coming away down here to the neck?" said one of the ladies who had witnessed the whole affair, addressing Margaret Hayley.

"No—has he a scar?" [Pg 262]

"A terrible one. I think he must have been a soldier, at some time or other."

"I believe that he has the noblest gift ever conferred by God upon man,—that of courage!" answered Margaret. "If he was a slave or a savage I could love and respect him for that, as I should despise him if he was a king without it!"

From the depth of what a terrible wound in her own heart was the young girl speaking, and what a concentrated force of bitter earnest rankled in such words falling from her beautiful lips! Captain Hector Coles heard, but made no answer, as why should he, for was he not one of the country's defenders and a brave man by profession? "H. T." heard her, and his upper lip, under the shadow of his dark moustache, set down tightly upon the lower, while over his handsome dusky face passed an expression which might have been pain and might have been the crushing out of some last scruple of conscience that stood between him and a half-intended line of action.

"Passengers for the Flume" had been the call some minutes before; and by the conclusion of this scene, at nine o'clock or thereabout, the wagons for that daily ride of inveterate Franconians were drawn up at the door. They were two in number, the list of riders for that fine morning being unusually heavy. Not coaches, that necessarily shut away a part of the view, but long low wagons on jacks, each with four or five cross seats, a heavy brake and four mettled horses—for fine weather and through the shaded glen roads, the safest and pleasantest of all the mountain conveyances. Five minutes sufficed to fill both those conveyances, with some thirty persons, among the number all those in whom this narration awakes any interest. How they were divided off or how seated is a matter of no consequence, except in a certain particular. Halstead Rowan managed to secure a seat in the same wagon with Clara Vanderlyn, though at the other end of the vehicle,—and in so doing found himself by the side of Mrs. Brooks Cunninghame and only one remove from that hopeful, Master Brooks Brooks. Not enjoying quite the same facilities as some [Pg 263] of the others for studying that lady the night before, he had still been attracted to her at breakfast and found time to "cypher up" her calibre and social position to a most amusing nicety. Whether wildness was the normal condition of his character, as seemed possible, or whether his slight rencontre with the young bear, and the flattering conversation with a pretty girl which followed, had dizzied his brain a little, as was both possible and natural,—he was in high spirits and the very demon of mischief had taken possession of him. He had apparently determined to devote himself somewhat to the comfort of that Arch-priestess of Shoddy during the morning ride, and a pleasant time that elevated personage was likely to have of it!

Just after leaving the breakfast table, Rowan had chanced to overhear a few words of conversation between Mrs. Brooks Cunninghame and one of the lady habitues of the house on whom she was aiming to make a tremendous impression; and those few words had fully revealed one of the leading points of the parvenu's tactics. Some one had told her, apparently, or she had read the statement in so-called "polite publications"—that no one could be fashionable, now-a-days, without having been "abroad"—*i. e.*, without having made at least one tour in Europe. Now that Mrs. Brooks Cunninghame *had* been abroad, at least so far as beyond the Atlantic, at that very early period before she left the paternal cabin, pig and potatoes,—seemed the most probable of allegations; but in the matter of actual travel, or of those substitutes for travel which may be found in a thorough acquaintance with geography and a close study of guide-books and the best travellers, the poor woman had been as guiltless, a few weeks before, as the most stay-at-home and illiterate of her early acquaintances. But she could read, which was something, and had no conscience worth speaking of, which was something more. Perhaps some one had told her the traditional story of Tom Sheridan and his father, and the wonder which the latter expressed that [Pg 264] the former "could not say that he had been down into a coal-pit without really going there." The worthy lady, as Rowan soon discovered by a few desultory words, had no corresponding objection, provided she could *seem* to have been anywhere; and there was little doubt that she had procured a guide-book or two and "read up," as Honorable Members very often do before making speeches on subjects of which they know nothing whatever,—and as snobs sometimes do in books on "Perfect Gentility" and the "Whole Art of Dining Out," before going into society which seems a little too weighty for their previous training. How well she had succeeded, may best be illustrated by a little of her conversation with the Illinoisan, who took care to introduce the subject of her "travels" (with what he had overheard, as a hint) very soon after the wagons rolled away from the Profile, and without waiting for any formal introduction.

He broke the ice with the remark, equally tempting and flattering to his next neighbor:

"You must enjoy this fine scenery very much, madam, as you have chances of comparison that some of us lack. You have travelled in Europe, I believe?"

"Yes—yes, sir," answered the lady, a little doubtful which of the two was the proper answer to so

profound a sentence. If she was at all nervous about plunging into such untried waters with a total stranger, his disclamatory hint of his own experiences reassured her; and besides, one of the ladies was on the seat immediately behind, to whom she had been boasting that very morning, and it would never do to abandon the ground once taken.

"Ah, how proud you must feel, madam, of having seen so many of the wonders of nature!" the wretch went on. "I have never yet been able to cross the ocean, myself, and the conversation of foreign travellers is naturally both pleasant and instructive to me."

"Much obliged to you, I am sure," the lady returned. Some of the passengers in the wagon, who had previously observed the hero of the morning, and thought him any thing else rather than a fool, looked twice at him, at this juncture, to discover what he could mean by addressing complimentary conversation to that compound of ignorance and vulgarity. It must be owned that Clara Vanderlyn, who sat on one of the back seats while the interlocutors were in front, believing the man in earnest, felt for the moment a sensation of disgust towards him and wished her card back in her reticule. But if she and some of the others were temporarily deceived, the deception was not of long continuance. [Pg 265]

The statement by Rowan that he had never been across the Atlantic, was the one thing necessary to reassure Mrs. Brooks Cunninghame; and that point settled, she felt sure of her ground.

"How long since you were abroad, madam, may I ask?" he continued.

"Five years," answered the lady, who no doubt felt that both her duration of standing in society and the accuracy of her memory would appear the better for a little lapse of time.

"Five years, indeed? so long?" asked the scamp, with every appearance of interest. "And did you have your dear little boy with you all the time?"

"No, my physician did not think it prudent for me to take him along of me, and I left him to home with the nurse," was the reply. The fact was, really, that at the early period named her "physician" had been a drunken Indian-herb doctor, the only description of medical man likely to visit the shanty which she yet occupied,—and that she had been (perhaps better and more honorably occupied than at any time after!) doing her own work without the hope or thought of ever employing a servant.

"Dear little fellow!" said the Illinoisan, caressing the scrubbing-brush head of the repulsive youngster. "What a pity that he could not have gone with you! By the way, madam, you went by steamer, of course. Did you take steamer for Paris, or—or—St. Petersburgh?" [Pg 266]

By this time most of the passengers began to perceive what was coming, and there were symptoms of a titter in the back seats, but nothing that warned or disturbed the victim.

"Oh, Paris, of course!" was the answer. "Dear, delightful Paris, where the shops was so handsome and the women wore such elegant bunnits!" (See guide-books.)

"You landed at Paris direct from the steamer, I suppose?" asked the tormentor, at which question the titter really began, but still too quietly to put the lady on her guard.

"Oh, yes, of course!" was the answer. "The tide was high, and we went right up." The poor woman had probably been aground, some time, on the Hudson Overslaugh or the Shrewsbury Flats, and supposed that nothing but low tide could prevent going up to Paris by steamship.

"Let me see—what is the name of that river that takes you up to Paris?" the scamp went on, with his face contorted into a wonderful appearance of earnest thought. "The—the—the—which is it, now, the Danube or the Amazon?"

"I am not very sure," answered the lady at hap-hazard, "I almost forget, but I think it is the Amazon—yes, I know it must be the Amazon."

At about that period there was a laugh in the back part of the long wagon, and Clara Vanderlyn was as red in the face as if she had been committing some serious fault. She would unquestionably have liked to pinch that naughty fellow's ears, if not to box them. But the laugh did not disturb Mrs. Brooks Cunninghame, for the young people were frolicking all the while and a hundred laughs might break out without one of them being directed at *her*. Halstead Rowan had kept his own face perfectly serene so far, but he evidently began to feel twitchings around the mouth which might give him trouble directly, and, for fear of the worst, he fired his concluding shots with great rapidity. [Pg 267]

"You were in London, of course?" he asked.

"Yes, a good while; we took a house there, and seen the Queen, and the Crystal Palace—"

"Let me see—the Queen lives in the Crystal Palace, doesn't she?"

"Of course she does!" answered the traveller, who remembered just so much as that queens and palaces belonged together, and no more.

More laughing at the back of the wagon, a little choking, and some stuffing of cambric handkerchiefs into mouths pretty or the reverse. No irreparable explosion as yet, though that catastrophe could not possibly be long deferred.

"Yes—you were in London: did you go up the Pyramids?"

"No, we went to 'em, but not up 'em."

"But you went up the Alps, of course?—everybody goes up the Alps."

"Of course we did!" and the lady really bridled. "Think we would go so far as that and spend so much money, and not go up that there?"

The explosion was impending—there was already a rumbling in the distance, which should have been heeded.

"How did you go up—in *what* kind of a vessel did you say, madam?"

It is to be presumed that by this time the lady was considerably confused even in the smattering of information from the guide-book, with which she had commenced; and she could not have had any moral doubt remaining that the Alps was a river; for she answered, without one symptom of consciousness in her countenance:

"We went up in a steamboat, and a nasty little thing it was!"

The threatened explosion had arrived. That wagon-load of people laughed, shrieked and roared, bent double and chuckled themselves red in the face, to a degree which was very discreditable to their sense of propriety and very bewildering to the mountain echoes. [Pg 268] Mrs. Brooks Cunninghame looked around to see what was the matter, and at that moment it seemed that a dim perception must have crept through her head that she had something to do with the merriment, for she reddened, bridled and grew strangely silent. Halstead Rowan, as she looked around,—not by any means joining in the laugh, had suddenly discovered that his legs were cramped from riding, sprung over the side of the wagon and disappeared behind a bend of the road, to make the rest of the short distance to the Flume House on foot.

A mile further, after this novel lesson in geography had been taken, and the wagons drew up at the door of the Flume House, once a great caravanserai that rivalled any other in the mountains, then a mere unoccupied pendant of the all-absorbing Profile which has literally swallowed it. It stands at the lower end of the Franconia Notch proper, and the mountains fall away below it southward, so much that the feeling of oppressive isolation at the Profile is here lost entirely. But there is one charm connected with the Flume House, that can never be forgotten by those who have once stood there and looked eastward; and the merry occupants of the before-deserted piazza, that day, were not likely to be allowed to ride away without having that charm called to their attention, to be remembered ever after as one of those marvels with which Nature confounds Art and defies calculation.

Full before them, as they looked, loomed up the peak of Mount Liberty, so called, as is supposed, because the curve of the crown northward has some indefinite resemblance to the Phrygian liberty-cap of the French revolution. But a sadder and more solemn resemblance was there, needing to be pointed out at first, but asserting itself as a strange reality thenceforward, in presence or in absence. It was with a thrill of awe that the riders, as so many had done before them and as some of them had done long before, recognized the form of the Dead Washington, stretched out on the summit of the eternal mountains that seemed almost mighty and enduring enough for their awful burthen. [Pg 269] There seemed a little obscurity in the mouth and lips, as if the shrouding pall partially covered them; but the contour of the massive nose was perfect, as the rugged peak stood relieved against the eastern sky, and above it the godlike forehead swept up southward and fell away again in the very curve of the hair drawn backward as it would be when lying in the calm repose of death. Northward the long round of Mount Liberty marked the full breast, sinking at the recumbent hip and rising again at the bend of the massive knee; while still farther away and in the exact line of symmetry, one of the peaks of the Haystack group shot up and fell suddenly on the other side, as the drapery would do over the stiffened feet. Then the resemblance was complete, unmistakable, almost fearful; and those who looked with reverent eyes realized that the Eternal Hand, thousands of years ago and in a mood that would write prophecy on the very face of the earth instead of recording it on tables of stone, had throned on the tops of the northern mountains an enduring likeness of that man yet unborn, whose glory was to gild every peak and fill every valley with the brightest and purest light of heroism.

Long, and with reverent silence only broken by an occasional exclamation of wonder, the company gazed upon that strange spectacle, more sadly suggestive than any other of the wonders of the American continent. The voice of merriment, which had been ringing so loudly but a few moments before, was hushed, and tears lay nearer to the surface than laughter. It could not be otherwise than that the spectacle, impressive always, should blend itself with the sorrow of a thousand hearts and the peril of a land, and that something of almost superstitious omen should seem to lie in the recognition. There were no words to syllable the great thoughts of that hour. How could there be? What tongue could have spoken what the heart so sadly reverberated to an inner sense that was subtler and better than hearing? "H. T.," whose tongue, as Margaret Hayley and her companions heard it, had so solemnly apostrophized the iron face of the Old Man of the [Pg 270] Mountain in the moonlight of the night before, stood silent and with folded arms on the end of the piazza, his strange, dark face full of a feeling that seemed sad enough for death and yet determined enough for a life of almost terrible daring. He was alone. He seemed to have made, even distantly, but one acquaintance since alighting at the Profile; and that one acquaintance, Halstead Rowan, had not yet paid all the penalty of his mischief in a walk to the Flume. He had no motive to speak: perhaps under no circumstances could he have done so before that company

and with the knowledge that the eyes of Margaret Hayley might be bent upon him from the other end of that group of gazers. But the man who had read the patriotic secret of the Mountain Sphynx felt the weight of that hour—who could doubt it? And if his lips had spoken, would not the words they uttered have been something like these, that have bubbled to other lips and yet been denied utterance, on the same spot and since the overcasting of our national sky by that dark cloud of war and that darker cloud of divided feeling, only to be rolled away in God's good time:

"Yes, look upon the Dead Washington, all of you, and prepare to bear the image away and keep it sacred in your heart of hearts. Dead and shrouded he lies, whose words might perchance have had power, at this fearful day in our history, to still the turbulent waves of passion and make us brothers once more. Dead and shrouded, when the day of doom may be near, and when his sword, flashing at the head of the armies of the republic, might have blinded treason and struck terror to the heart of the rebellion. Dead and shrouded, to wake not at the trump of war or the call of national peril. Yet look down upon us from the granite mountains that bore thine image a thousand years ago and will bear it until the very form and feature of nature decay—look down upon us from the heavens that are higher and more enduring even than the eternal hills, and bless us with some ray of that courage which dared the iron rain of Princeton—of that patient endurance which braved the wintry snow of Valley Forge—of that honesty which bent a world in awe and admiration—of that self-sacrificing humility which thought it but duty to refuse a crown! Not in irreverence we speak, shadow of the great dead! Thou didst live, and we sprang into existence as a nation. Thou art gone, and we wander in the night and darkness of hatred, of strife, of murder—perhaps even totter to a fall from which there is no arising. If thou hast power in the eternal world, Washington who livest, so faintly shadowed by the Washington that is dead—save us whom the might of no other nation can cast down—save us from ourselves!"

Hush! the fancy so reverently assumed cannot be cast off in a moment. Hush!—was not that low rumbling in the north which men call thunder, the voice of the Giant of Mount Liberty turning suddenly in his grave-clothes to answer the appeal? God!—if it might be so!—"Oh, for an hour of Hickory Jackson!" cried the agonized nation when the first paralysis fell upon our men in power: oh, for one moment of George Washington now!

The Celt looks for the awakening of Brian Boroihme from his long sleep in the Wicklow mountains, falsely called his death, after the red field of Clontarf, and for the deliverance of Ireland from the Saxon oppressor, which is to follow; the German is still waiting for the sounding of that horn which is to start Frederick the Redbeard from his repose in the Kypphauser, where the faithless laid him to rest, believing that he was dead, after his charmed bath in the Cilician Cydnus; even the old soldiers who guard the mighty dust of Napoleon beneath the dome of the Invalides, speak of the "Midnight Review" in other words than those of Friederich Freiligrath and hold a dim impression that the life of Austerlitz and the Pyramids must linger even after St. Helena: why may not the patriot heart of America believe that the man who of all others best represented the full glory of a nation, is immortal in body as in spirit, and that the Father of his Country will some day dash out from the sarcophagus that holds him prisoner at Mount Vernon,—to shame recreancy, to hurl incapacity from power, and to save, in its dark hour, the fabric that his great soul loved and his great hand builded?

No!—that awful presence lies unmoved on its bier on the peaks of the mountains, the blue sky the canopy of its catafalque, the waving trees the plumes of the warriors who guard it, and the hoarse storm wind its requiem. And while it so sleeps, the future of the republic, which seems to us in darkness, lies really in a Hand that knows no death and never changes in its unfaltering purpose!

But the saddest as well as the sweetest things in life have an end, and the halt of the company at the Flume House, that morning, supplied no exception to the rule. Just as the wagons were once more loaded, Halstead Rowan came striding up, his cigar smoked out, and his face the most unconscious imaginable, and took the seat which he had not long before vacated. Mrs. Brooks Cunninghame was very busy, at that period, looking after some of the details of arrangement of Master Brooks Brooks' dress, which had become slightly disarranged; and perhaps she did not see him. Let us suppose so, for she certainly did not notice her late student in geography. She was a little red in the face, which let us also suppose to have been the effect of the weather and not of mortification. And so all once more in place, away dashed the wagons to that marvellous gap in the mountains which gives name to the house. The road seemed very rough and broken, the rises and descents grew sharper, and the forest scenery wilder. Galloping his four horses up a steep ascent to the left, each driver vigorously applied the brake as the wagons literally slid down the very sharpest bit of road descent to be found at the Franconia (except perhaps on some portions of the Bald Mountain)—a descent so sudden, and overhanging a ravine so frightful, that some of the handsome eyes looked larger than ever for the moment, all the riders involuntarily threw themselves back in the laboring and creaking wagons, and pretty little screams that had no affectation in them emancipated themselves from rosy lips and took excursions out into the summer air. Then thundering over a rickety wooden bridge, almost at the bottom of the ravine, and up another slight ascent, the wagons stopped under a clump of wide-spreading trees at a rough platform, and disembarked their passengers, leaving all to follow their will in examining that wonder of nature in one of her frolic moods.

And what was the Flume like, to those who that day saw it for the first time? An irregular crack or fissure in the side of the mountain, half a mile long, and from ten to fifty feet in depth, such as the wedge of some enraged Titan might have made when he had determined to split the earth asunder, and used the thunder as a beetle. Whether he was frightened by the big oval boulder

which fell into the fissure half way up, and has ever since hung suspended there, touching only at the points, and apparently ready to fall at any moment—who shall say? At all events, if he intended to disrupt the earth he desisted for the time; and let us be duly thankful!

Walking laboriously over the broad flat stone platform at the mouth of the gorge, with the thin sheet of bright water straggling over it, then ascending the rough stairs of board that lay irregularly on either side, and anon climbing carefully over the mossed and slippery rocks that offered such precarious foot-hold, the party ascended the Flume and stood at last between walls of less than six feet separation, the rock rising fifty or sixty feet on either side, and almost as square as if cut by the chisel of an artificer, impassable slimy boulders piled in confusion far ahead, the rough little stream tumbling away through the wilderness of stones beneath, and a chill dampness like that of the grave striking in to the very life-blood of those who had been imprudent enough to tempt the mountains without the protection of thick garments and warm flannels. Once, a little white Blossom of the company, just unfolding to the June luxuriance of womanhood, and whose name has no interest in this narration, was tempted by a mischievous relative and protector to try walking a rounded and slippery log that bridged the chasm, a few feet above the rough rocks and water below; but her nerves failed and her head grew dizzy when she was half way across, her lip quivered and then fluttered out a little cry of alarm, and her mischievous tempter retraced his own steps just in time to catch her and keep her from an ice-cold bath and limbs bruised on the rough stones lying in the stream underneath.

There was another log spanning the Flume, a little higher up the chasm, and at a very different altitude from terra firma—hanging, in fact, like a stout black fence-rail, not less than eighty or an hundred feet in the air. Encircled by the eternal dampness rising out of the Flume, it could not be otherwise than slimy and slippery; and only a moment before the nameless Blossom tempted the log below, some of the company had looked up and remarked with a shudder that a firm foot and cool head would be necessary for the man who should tread over that frail bridge with its crumbling bark. As if the two had some mysterious connection, the moment *after* Blossom's misadventure, some one heard voices in that direction and looked up again. Two figures stood upon the brink, and not so far away but that at least *some* of the group below recognized them as "H. T." and Halstead Rowan, who had left the rest as they abandoned the wagons and commenced ascending the gorge.

Among those who looked up was Margaret Hayley, and her eyes were among those that recognized the two figures. What those people were to her, or why she said "Look!" in a quick and even agitated voice, probably the young girl could have told quite as little as either writer or reader; but such was the fact, and the motion of her eyes at the moment, accompanied by the word, drew the regards of both Captain Hector Coles and Mrs. Burton Hayley, who stood beside her at the bottom of the Flume. They, too, with the others, heard the words and saw the action that immediately followed.

Halstead Rowan had one foot thrust forward on the log, his other on the firm ground behind. "H. T." stood on the rock beside him, making no motion to cross. There was evidently a banter between them, and though they were probably not aware of the fact, their words were readily distinguishable beneath.

"None of *my* business, I suppose; but it is folly!" they heard spoken by the voice of "H. T."

"I suppose that every thing is folly which goes out of the hum-drum track of every-day life!" they heard Rowan reply. "But I like folly, and so here goes! Will you follow me?"

"Without wanting to go over?—no!" was the answer.

The words had scarcely left his lips when Rowan sprang forward on the log, stepping lightly, but balancing himself with some care, towards the other side. Insensibly all who saw him held their breath. If he should be correct enough in his balance, who could say that the log might not be a rotten shell, ready to fall under the heavy weight of the stout athlete? In fact, he had scarcely reached the middle when the tottering fabric seemed to give way and come toppling down into the chasm below. Not in reality; for had it done so, the career of the Illinoisan, with whom we have by no means finished, would have been ended for all time. The startling appearance was created by the dislodging of a large shell of the rotten bark by his foot, more than half costing him his balance, and bringing out from the group beneath a chorus of cries that might well have disturbed what remained of equilibrium. One cry sounded sharper and higher than all the rest: there were those present who knew from whose lips it came: enough for us to say that it did not come from those of Margaret Hayley, whose eyes were still turned upward with a feeling in them very different from fear. Before the cry had fairly died away, the peril, whatever it might have been, was past, and Halstead Rowan stood on the other side of the chasm, bowing to the group who had been observing him, as he learned from the cries, at the bottom. They saw "H. T." turn and walk away at the same moment; and then, drawing a long breath, Margaret Hayley said, much more to herself than to her immediate companions:

"What a thing beyond all admiration is that courage!"

"Which our other friend does not seem to be troubled with in any great degree!" said Captain Hector Coles, finishing out the sentence with a tone perceptibly sneering. Margaret looked round at him with a look which might have been one of inquiry, then turned away her face again and said:

"No, I suppose not! Not more than half the world can be demigods: the others must be common

people, or worse!"

Whether Captain Hector Coles liked the tone of the reply, or not, is uncertain. At all events he scowled a little and said nothing more, while Mrs. Burton Hayley stole a look into the face of her daughter which had no hypocrisy in it and was full of wonder and trouble.

Five minutes afterwards the company were all again at the mouth of the Flume, and there Halstead Rowan, a second time the hero of the day, joined them. "H. T." did not make his appearance: he had struck across, the Illinoisan said, without waiting for him, over the almost impassable fallen timber and through the spruce thickets, by the cross-path to the Pool. A few minutes more sufficed to re-seat the group in their wagons and to deposit them once more at the door of the Flume House, whence they took their way on foot, straggling in every picturesque variety of locomotion towards that equally-curious pendant of the Flume which is often missed by those who visit the better-known wonder.

The Pool lay all alone, until this somewhat numerous company came to disturb its solitude. A singular object indeed—an exaggeration of all the other mountain amphitheatre fountains, nearly round, a score or more of yards in diameter, with the toe of the horse-shoe scooped out of a solid rock thirty or forty feet in height, smoothed and rounded as if cut by human hands, a bright, clear stream dashing down at that point, the rocks further away from the toe rising broken and jagged to the height of perhaps an hundred feet, and the mode of approach of the passengers a jagged line of ricketty steps, terribly perpendicular, sloping down from that highest point and presenting no temptations to the decrepit or the nervous. At the bottom of this singular basin the water, bright and clear in the few places where it ran shallow over the bleached stones, but under the shadow of the ledge so deep as to seem black as midnight.

"Nobody here!—it doesn't seem like old times!" said an elderly gentleman who had visited the Pool many times in other days,—as the ladies were with some difficulty assisted down the steps. "No boatman, and not even a boat! Where is Charon, I wonder?"

"Oh, yes, where *is* Merrill?" asked another. "The man with the leaky scow and the white muslin awning, who always charged a York shilling for ferrying people over to the Elysian Fields lying among the rocks and logs yonder."

"I remember, once," said the old gentleman, "that while his lieutenant paddled us around under the spray of the fall yonder, and over to the steps which used to hang from the rocks there on the opposite side, Merrill read us an autograph letter from Queen Victoria, dated in the kitchen at Buckingham Palace while the august lady said that she was rolling apple-dumplings,—and also gave us a lecture on geography, in which he proved that this spot was the very centre of the earth, from which all latitude and longitude ought to be calculated."

"Well, he was right in some degree," said Halstead Rowan, who stood near, and who fixed his regards at the same moment on Mrs. Brooks Cunninghame, still looking after the welfare of that interesting child. There was not even the suspicion of a smile upon his face as he went on, and there certainly was not upon the face of the lady for whose benefit the discourse was evidently intended. "I do not know about the latitude and longitude, but this Pool is certainly the centre of the earth and exactly opposite to China, so that a plummet, with *a line long enough*, dropped here, would be certain to come out somewhere on the shores of the Hoangho or the Kiangku."

"Nonsense!" said one grave lady (not Mrs. Brooks Cunninghame) who did not appreciate the joke.

"Not a bit of it, madame!" said the scamp, who thereupon turned his battery at once in her direction. "There is no doubt whatever of the truth of the statement, for I have been here myself when the defunct pig-tailed Chinamen came popping up, who had committed suicide by drowning themselves on the other side of the world, on account of the cruelty of a copper-colored divinity with almond eyes and feet the size and shape of the last dumpling in the pot, or a trifling deficiency in the rat-crop or the dog-census."

"Impudence!" muttered *that* lady, who seemed to regard the "whopper" as a personal insult; but the majority of the company appeared to view the affair in a very different light and to be rather pleased than otherwise with the go-ahead fellow who could walk over verbal and physical bridges with the same charming recklessness. It may be anticipating to say that there was one among them, whose face had paled when he trod the log over the Flume, and who could not even laugh at the light words which she otherwise enjoyed,—so much deep and new and strange feeling lay at the bottom of the interest. And it may *not* be anticipating, in the minds of any who have perused the late foregoing pages with due attention, to say that that silent, thoughtful, observing one was Clara Vanderlyn, between whom and the Illinoisan there yawned a gulf of circumstance and position so wide and deep that no one but a madman (or what is madder still—a mad *woman*) could possibly have dreamed of stepping over it.

CHAPTER XIV.

A Disaster To Master Brooks Brooks Cunninghame—Exit into the Bottom of the Pool—Nobody that could Swim, and Margaret Hayley in Excitement—"H. T." in his element, in two senses—Another Introduction and a new Hero—Scenes in the Profile parlor—

"But what has *become* of the crazy old philosopher?" asked the same elderly gentleman who had first introduced the subject,—only a moment after Halstead Rowan had delivered himself of his speculations concerning the centre of the earth, China and suicide, given at the close of the last chapter.

"Oh," answered Rowan, "I was asking Jennings about him this morning, before we came away from the Profile. Did you ever hear of the mode in which the two Irishmen conducted their little debate, which ended in a couple of broken heads?"

"I do not know!" laughed the old gentleman.

"Well, they debated physically—they held what they called a little 'dishcussion wid sticks'! Poor old Merrill got into a debate with the Sheriff of Coos County, last spring a year, Jennings tells me, and he carried it on with an *axe*, nearly killing the official. The result of all which was that he was lugged off to jail at Wells River and the Pool is bereaved."

"Sorry that his boat is not here, at least," said the old gentleman. "We have just a nice party for circumnavigating the Pool; and I do not know that even the letter from Queen Victoria and the lecture would be so much of a bore, now that there is no danger of them."

"Couldn't manage to get up a boat, unless we improvised one out of a log," said the Illinoisan, "and that would be a little unstable, I fancy. And by the way, I think I never saw a place more dangerous-looking for a sudden tumble than that deep black pool, or one more difficult to get out of than it would prove without something afloat to depend upon. So we must give it up—the glory of the Pool has departed! *Sic transit gloria* big hole in the woods!"

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At that moment, and when the attention of the whole company had been drawn to the peculiar depth and quality of the Pool by the last observations—an event took place which may or may not have been paralleled in the earlier history of that peculiar wonder of nature. Sambo, of those days when the negro only half ruled the great Western republic instead of ruling it altogether,—related a story about a 'coon hunt of his, in which an episode occurred at about the time when he had climbed out upon an extending limb that was supposed to have the 'coon at the end. "Just then," said Sambo, graphically—"just then I heard sumfin drap, and come to look, 'twas dis yer nigger!" The party of visitors at the Pool heard "sumfin drap" about as suddenly and unexpectedly; and when they had time to look around them, they discovered that one of their number was missing—not a very valuable member of the combination, but still one that was supposed to have the usual immortal soul and antipathy to sudden death.

There never was a troublesome boy of an age corresponding to that of Master Brooks Brooks Cunninghame, who did not have the propensity for climbing developed in exact proportion to the incapacity for climbing at all; and Master Brooks Brooks had not done half mischief enough that morning to be content without making another effort. As the party climbed down to the Pool, some of the members had spoken of the clearness of the water and the coolness which it was said to possess even in the heat of midsummer; and one of the ladies had extracted from her reticule one of those telescopic ring drinking-cups of Britannia which are found so convenient in touring or camping-out. Captain Hector Coles had volunteered to play Ganymede to the rest of the company, and stepping down to the edge of the Pool, balanced himself with one foot on a projecting stone, stooped down and dipped up some of the sparkling coolness, which was thereupon passed around from hand to hand and from lip to lip. That done, Master Brooks Brooks had been allowed to possess himself of the cup, very much to the disgust of the owner, but inevitably—and to make various demonstrations with it, around the verge of the water. For a moment every one had lost sight of him—his careful mother included; and during that moment he had climbed round to the western side of the Pool, on the high rocks, where he stood brandishing the cup in a series of motions which varied between mischief and idiocy. Then and there an accident, not uncommon to persons who climb to high places and are not careful of their footing there, had happened to the young scion of the baronial house of Cunninghame, who, losing balance in one of his gyrations, tumbled down some twenty or thirty feet of rock and went splash! into the Pool, just where the waters seemed deepest, darkest and most unfathomable!

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Exit from view Master Brooks Brooks Cunninghame, with a fair prospect, to all appearance, that he would carry out the laughable theory of Halstead Rowan, and if he ever again came to light at all, do so in a drowned condition at the antipodes. Droll enough, in a certain sense, but by no means droll in another, for that he would be drowned, even in that insignificant little puddle of water, was almost beyond doubt, and there were supposed to be maternal feelings even beneath the ridiculous finery of Mrs. Brooks Cunninghame! All heard the cry of fright that he gave in falling, and the splash as he struck the water; and at least a part of the company not only saw him disappear beneath the surface, but caught glimpses of him as he went on down—down—down towards the bottom with the unerring steadiness of a stone.

They saw him sink, but they did not see him rise again—not even in the time which should have secured that result. Mrs. Brooks Cunninghame uttered a scream when she saw the boy strike the water, then yelled out: "Patsey! oh, my poor Patsey!" an exclamation entirely enigmatical as referring to a person bearing no such name,—then finally fell back into the arms of one of the old gentlemen in such a way as seriously to threaten his tumbling in after the boy, and without the least necessity for shamming nervousness to ape the "quality." She had indubitably fainted.

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The situation was a peculiar one. Scarcely twenty seconds had elapsed since the boy's fall, but an

hour seemed to have passed. He did not rise. It was likely that he must have been killed in the fall or struck a rock below and crushed his poor little head. Still other seconds, growing to more than a minute, and he did not rise. It was beyond doubt that he would never rise again, alive. And what could be done to save him? Nothing—literally nothing, as it appeared. All the party were ladies, except five men—Captain Hector Coles, Halstead Rowan and three others, all the latter white-haired and past the day for heroic exposure. Halstead Rowan had his wounded hand wrapped in a heavy bandage which would have disabled him in the water as thoroughly as if he had lost the limb at the elbow. For either of the old men to plunge into the Pool would have been suicide. Margaret Hayley stood beside Captain Hector Coles, the only young and unwounded man, when the accident occurred; and after one moment her eyes turned upon him with a glance that he too well understood.

"I am ashamed to say it, but I cannot swim one stroke!" he replied to that glance of half appeal and half command. The glance—unreasonably enough, of course—expressed something else the instant after.

"Oh, shame!—can nothing be done to save him?" she cried with clasped hands and in a tone that manifested quite as much of the feeling of mortification as of anxiety. At that period nearly all the women present broke out into cries of terror, as if help could be brought to the helpless by the appealing voice.

"Good heavens, ladies, what is the matter?"

It was the voice of "H. T." that spoke, and the man of the initials stood on the other side of the Pool, where he had emerged from his laborious walk over fallen trees and broken rocks from the Flume. He had his hat in his hand and was wiping the perspiration from his hot brow.

Margaret Hayley, more moved beyond herself than any of the others present (the poor mother had not yet recovered consciousness) was the first to answer; though she little thought that perhaps the destiny of a whole life was involved in the few words then to be spoken.

"Oh, sir, if you can swim, for heaven's sake try to save that boy! He has fallen into the Pool, there—there—" and she pointed with her hand to the very depth of the dark water—"and he must be at the bottom!"

"He *is* at the bottom, without doubt, if he has fallen in!" was the answer. "I saw him filling his pockets with bright stones, up at the Flume, and he has probably enough of them about him to keep him at the bottom till doomsday." Then, for the first time, the anxious watchers knew the reason why even in the death-struggle the body had not risen—the poor little fellow had been loading himself down with those tempting, fatal stones, to make more certain the doom that was coming!

"Can you swim, sir? I asked you if you could swim!" Margaret Hayley's voice rung across the Pool, with no little impatient petulance blended with the evident anxiety; and she seemed totally to forget, as people will forget on some occasions, that she had never been introduced to the man whom she interrogated so sharply.

"I *can* swim!" was the answer and the only answer. With the word he threw off his coat and kicked off the convenient Congress gaiters that enveloped his feet; and in ten seconds more he had leaped high into the air and headlong into the dark waters at the spot indicated by the hand of Margaret. So sudden had been all this, that scarcely one realized, until he had disappeared, the whole peril he encountered.

"He will strike the stony bottom and kill himself!" said one of the elderly gentlemen.

"Hot as he was, he will die with the chill, if he ever comes out!" said the second, who had medical warrant for knowing the probable consequences of such an act. Whereupon all began to realize that two deaths instead of one might be the probable event; and Margaret Hayley set her teeth hard and clasped her hands in the agonized thought that perhaps her words had driven him to the rash leap, and that he must be either that thing for which she had been so long looking, a man incarnately brave,—or willing to go out of his own nature at her command, after less than a single day's acquaintance—the latter feeling one not slow to awaken other and warmer companions in the bosom of a true woman!

After those words had been spoken, dead silence reigned except as broken by a sob of deadly anxiety from one of the ladies who could not control the fear that oppressed her. And how long that silence of oppressive anxiety lasted! It might have been a moment—it might have been five years, for any capacity of measurement given to a single member of that waiting group scattered over the rocks. Only the whilome watcher by a sick bed which might be one of death, at the instant when the crisis of disease was reached and the next minute was to decide between a life of love and usefulness and the drear silence of the grave—only the man who has lifted his faint signal of distress on a drifting wreck at sea, when a sail was in sight, the last crust eaten, and night and storm coming to end all,—only one or the other of these can realize the long agony of such moments and the eternity which can be compressed into the merest fraction of time!

They had perhaps waited sixty seconds after the disappearance of the would-be rescuer beneath the dark waters of the Pool, and already every one had given him up for lost,—when a ripple agitated its surface, a white-sleeved arm came up, then a figure bearing another. It battled wearily towards the shoaler part of the Pool, touched bottom and struggled shoreward, dropped

its burthen with one glance upon it, and then toppled over—both out of danger from the water, but both apparently dead alike!

In an instant all those above had rushed down to the margin, and while some caught the drowned boy and attempted to restore the life that seemed so hopelessly fled, others, and the medical man among them, devoted more than equal anxiety to the man who appeared to have paid so dearly for his heroism. He was senseless, but his pulse still beat—the doctor discovered so much; and a fairer hand than that of the doctor sought the heart and found that the motion of that mysterious red current which bears the whole of life upon its bosom was not yet stilled forever. The hand was that of Margaret Hayley, who had drawn the head of the half-drowned man upon one knee while she kneeled on the bare stone with the other, and who seemed to feel that if that man died his blood would be upon her head and upon her soul! A dangerous position, Margaret Hayley, whether he lives or dies, for the woman who but yesterday dreamed that she kept her early love still undimmed in her heart, however the object of it might be clouded in shame and banished from her presence forever! Is that new ideal found already, and found in a man so wrapped in mystery that his very name has never yet been spoken in your presence? Fie! fie! if this is the eternity of love, about which lovers themselves have raved and poets worse raved in their behalf, any time these past five hundred years!

There is no intention of mystifying this scene, or even of prolonging it. Whatever might have been the danger, that danger was past, and the shadow of death did not loom ghastly out of it. The vigorous shaking, rolling and rubbing to which the inanimate Master Brooks Brooks Cunninghame was exposed, under hands which proved themselves expert in that operation if in no other, soon restored the breath to his nostrils, though it left him a limp rag to be taken up in arms and carried away by his now recovered and half-addled mother. There was a sharp cut upon his head, and the blood flowed freely, but the wound had no depth or danger. The insensibility which had fallen upon his preserver, induced much more as was believed by the sudden chill of that ice-cold water acting upon a heated system, than even by his long exertion in recovering the little fellow's body from the bottom of the pool—this soon gave way beneath the continued rubbing bestowed upon wrists and temples, and the warmth induced by the wrapping of all the shawls and mantles in the company about his shoulders and feet. He moaned once, only a few minutes after the efforts for his resuscitation had been commenced, and a moment or two later opened his eyes and saw what face bent over him most closely. Something else than the chafing and the unaccustomed robes then sent blood to cheek and brow; and with a strength which no one had believed him to possess he sprang to his feet, to sink down again the moment after into a sitting posture but unsupported.

In that position he for the first time appeared to glance round upon the company and to recognize the whole situation. Especially his eye fell upon Captain Hector Coles, who stood at a little distance, his arms folded and nothing in his appearance indicating that he had taken any part in the labors of resuscitation, while his face looked undeniably saturnine and ill-humored. Had the mere fact that the head of a half-drowned man lay for a few moments on the knees of a lady supposed to be under his peculiar protection, so much moved the gallant warrior of the Union army, or was something more decided lying at the bottom of his observance? Perhaps words already spoken during the late progress of this narration may have indicated the state of feeling in the breast of the captain: if not, future developments will have the duty of making plain all that may be yet doubtful in that regard. At all events, something in that man's face gave to the brown cheeks of "H. T." a warmer color than they had before attained, and to his frame a strength which sent him once more to his feet, throwing off the shawls and mantles which enveloped him, and standing barefoot and in his shirt-sleeves, his hair yet plastered and dripping, his garments yet clinging to his person, the most unpicturesque of figures, and yet one of the noblest possible to employ the artist's pencil—a man fresh from one of the great perils of disinterested benevolence.

Certainly Margaret Hayley saw nothing antagonistic to romance in that tall, erect figure, half-draped though it was and shivering yet with cold and weakness. It is not impossible that the dusky brown of the face glowed with something of a sacred light, to her eyes—a subject for her waiting hero-worship, after that sad feeling of an opposite character which it had so lately been her duty to manifest. Nothing else than such an estimation could well explain, in a woman of her overweening pride, movements which took place immediately after, and which bore their fruit, at no distant day, in placing her in a position of such terrible conflict with herself that no calamity occurring beneath the waters of the Pool but might have been reckoned a mercy in comparison.

Halstead Rowan, too sure of his admiration of the conduct of his new friend to be in a hurry about expressing it, had done what his wounded hand did not prevent his doing, by springing across the stream below and bringing the discarded shoes and coat from the rock where they lay. All the rest, except poor Mrs. Brooks Cunninghame, yet busy with her partially resuscitated boy, crowded round the new hero of the hour to offer their thanks and congratulations; but it was Margaret Hayley who took him by the hand as he stood, unmindful of the scowl of Captain Hector Coles that gloomed upon her, and said:

"I do not know, sir, by what name to thank you—"

"I believe I am right in calling you Miss Hayley," was the answer, in a voice as yet somewhat weak and tremulous. "My own name is Horace Townsend, and my business is that of a lawyer at —at Cincinnati." So we, like those of the company who had noticed the initials without taking the trouble to possess themselves of the whole name by the arrival-book at the office, have the blanks

filled at last, and may discard the use of the two mysterious letters.

"I was only half intentionally the means, Mr. Townsend," the young girl went on, "of plunging you into a situation of danger without the least right to do so; and yet I do not know that I *can* be sorry for the liberty I have taken, as it may have been the cause of saving a life that would otherwise have been lost, and of my witnessing an act of disinterested generosity which I can never forget, or forget to honor, while I live."

"You do me altogether too much honor," was the reply, in a somewhat steadier voice. "I have really done nothing, except to make an exhibition of myself by my weakness. There was no danger to me in the water, for I am a good swimmer and ought to be able to dive well; but I suppose that I stayed too long under, for I could not find the little fellow at once, and the chill of the water no doubt affected me, after getting warm in climbing over those logs. That is all, and I really hope you will all forget that the unpleasant affair has occurred, as I shall certainly do after I have found a suit of dry clothes."

He spoke pleasantly, but with nothing of the rattling gayety which seemed to characterize his rival of the day—the hero of the bear-stakes; and once again while he was speaking, Margaret Hayley seemed strangely moved and partially shuddered at something in the tones of the voice. As he finished, he bowed and turned away, as if quite enough had been said, and the lady also moved away a step or two and rejoined her escort. Halstead Rowan came up with the coat and shoes, and as he dropped them on the rock at the feet of Townsend grasped his hand with his own unwounded one, with a pressure so warm and manly that it told volumes of respect and regard.

"*I* am nowhere!" he said. "I dared you over that log; but you have gone where I should not like to follow, and done it for something, while mine was merely a prank. And by the way—" they were at that moment a little apart from the others, and Rowan spoke low—"do you know where your head lay when you came to?" [Pg 289]

"Hush! for heaven's sake, hush!" said Townsend, quickly and with something in his face that made the other pause instantly. The conversation, at that point, was not renewed there and then.

A portion of the company had by that time commenced ascending the steps, carrying the abated boy-nuisance and accompanying his mother. Townsend managed to draw on the discarded shoes over his wet stockings, put on his coat and accompanied the rear-guard with very slight assistance, enjoying a continued walking-bath, but no doubt consoled for any discomfort by the reflection that he had been where few men had ever plunged and come out alive,—and perhaps yet more moved by some other reflections of a much more mixed character.

An hour later, the whole party had reached the Profile House once more, and Horace Townsend, as he named himself and as we must continue to name him in deference to his own statement, was the happy possessor of a dry suit, a slight headache and an eventual nap which left him fresh as if he had bathed in the Pool as a hygienic measure. Master Brooks Brooks Cunninghame needed longer renovating, but he came round during the afternoon, with the fatal facility of those who are of no use in the world, and was quite ready for supper. And what a buzzing there was about the Profile all the afternoon, while those who had witnessed the affair at the Pool detailed it, with additions, to those who had remained at the house, and those who had not caught the name or address of the stranger ran to the book to satisfy themselves, and speculations as to his married or single state were indulged in, and the Cincinnati lawyer underwent, without his being thoroughly aware of the fact, all the mental manipulations and verbal remouldings incidental to any one who treads out of the common path, whether creditably or discreditably, among the half idle and more than half ennuyée habitues of a watering place. [Pg 290]

One or two additional peeps at events of that afternoon must be taken, before passing on to those of the evening, which were to prove quite as momentous in some regards.

Peep the first. Margaret Hayley kept her chamber all the afternoon, pleading headache and fatigue, while Mrs. Burton Hayley and Captain Hector Coles "did" Echo Lake and talked very confidentially. A large part of that time the young girl lay on her bed, her eyes closed but by no means sleeping—thinking, thinking, thinking, until her brain seemed to be in a whirl and all the world unreal.

Peep the second. At a certain hour in the afternoon, unknown then to the other members of the Vanderlyn family but too well known to them afterwards, as the sequel proved, Halstead Rowan, rapidly improving if not indeed presuming upon his acquaintance of the morning, enticed Clara Vanderlyn away to the ten-pin alley and inducted her into the art and mystery of knocking down bilstead pins with a lignum vitæ ball, apparently to the satisfaction of that young lady, who should certainly have held herself above such an amusement of the athletic canaille. If the lady, with two hands, beat her instructor with one, he was no more than justly punished.

Peep the third. Mrs. Brooks Cunninghame, walking through one of the corridors, heard two young ladies, accompanied by a gentleman, say: "Patsey! oh, my poor Patsey!" in such dolorous tones and with what seemed so meaning a look towards *her*, as tended to recall an unfortunate exclamation at the Pool very forcibly to her recollection, and to put her into a frame of mind the exact reverse of felicitous. This was not improved by the discovery that Mr. Brooks Cunninghame had fallen into the company of certain stage-drivers, at the bar, and had imbibed whiskey with them to an extent which rounded his brogue but did not assure the steadiness of his perpendicular or add to the respectability of his general demeanor. [Pg 291]

And now to the event of the evening, which seemed eminently fit to close a day so full of adventure that the movements of a dozen ordinary days might have been compressed into it. Most of this, from reasons which will eventually develop themselves, is to be seen through the eyes of one who has been before called "the observer."

When Horace Townsend came out late from supper that evening, after a meal at which the succulent steaks, the flaky tea-biscuit and the sweet little mountain strawberries had not been quite so fully enjoyed as they might have been with a little additional company at table,—harp, horn and violin were again sounding in the long parlors, as they had been the evening before, and much more attention was being paid to them than when the full moon was their momentary rival. Perhaps not less than half the beauty, grace and gallantry then assembled at the Profile, were gathered under the flashing lights, dancing, promenading, flirting, and generally floating down the pleasant stream of moderate watering-place dissipation. The Russian "Redowa" was sounding from brass and string as he entered the long parlor from the hall; and among the figures sweeping proudly by to that most voluptuous of measures, he instantly recognized two whose identity could not indeed have been very well mistaken under any circumstances. The larger and coarser figure wore on one of its hands a glove several sizes too large—one, indeed, that might have been constructed by some glove-maker of the Titan period: Halstead Rowan was whirling Clara Vanderlyn lazily around in the dance.

The strange introduction of the morning, then, had already produced its effect, and the possible romance to be built out of that rescue was coming on quite as rapidly as even a sensation novelist could have anticipated. Horace Townsend, whose eyes seemed to be wandering in search of some face or figure which did not fall under their view, but who had been gazing with undisguised admiration, for some hours the previous day, on those of this very Clara Vanderlyn—Horace Townsend thought, as he saw the manly arm of Rowan spanning the pliant white-robed waist of his partner, that seldom could the old illustration of the rugged oak and the clinging ivy be better supplied,—and that if fate and fortune had set, as they too evidently seemed to have done, an eternal bar between the two, they had predestined to remain apart one couple whom the fitness of nature would certainly have joined. His frank, hearty, manly energy, deficient in some of the finer cultures and at times approaching to roughness, and her gentle, womanly tenderness, with almost too much of delicate refinement, seemed mentally to blend in the thought of the future and of the children likely to spring from such a union, as physically stood in relief and pleasing contrast the close-curled dark hair and the shower of waving gold. [Pg 292]

Passing still further down the room, either in that quest which has before been hinted at, or in the search for a vacant seat among the male and female wall-flowers, Townsend came upon the mother of the young lady. Mrs. Vanderlyn was standing beside a centre-table, under one of the chandeliers, an illustrated book in her hand, and apparently absorbed in the contemplation of some of the engravings after Landseer and Corbould. But books have been known, many times in the history of the world, to be used for the same purpose as fans or fire-screens, (or even spectacles, for that matter), and looked over; and the lawyer felt a sudden curiosity awakened to examine the *eyes*, especially as the lady was standing in such a position as to command the dancers.

He was not at all disappointed in the surmise which he seemed to have formed. The haughty matron had no eyes for her book, but really had her gaze fixed, with a close pressure of the eye-balls against the brows, on her daughter and Halstead Rowan. And no one who had only seen it under more favorable circumstances, would have believed it possible that a face of such matronly comeliness could be brought to look so harshly—even vindictively. The eyes were literally fierce; and the mouth was set with a firm, hard expression which brought the full lower lip perceptibly over the upper. [Pg 293]

Suddenly the observer saw the features relax and the whole expression change. He turned instantly and half involuntarily, and saw that a substitution had taken place in partners. Without quitting the floor, Miss Vanderlyn had accepted the proffered hand of a young Boston exquisite who was already rumored around the Notch to be the heir of a paternal half million,—and was whirling away in another polka. Rowan was gone. A second glance showed that he had not left the room, but that he stood far back in one of the corners, alone and silent, and his eyes, heedless of the amount of observation which their glance might excite, fixed in profound admiration on the beautiful girl whom he had just quitted. Then the expression of his face seemed for the moment to change, and the same emotions might have been read there that had startled at least one of the spectators the evening before at the piazza—the same emotions of contending pride and abasement, hope and fear, but intensified now so that there could be no mistaking their import.

At that stage Horace Townsend left the room, perhaps to pursue the personal search which had so far proved unavailing. He, who had himself been originally observing the young girl with such admiration, saw, or thought that he saw, the materials for a very pretty if not a very painful romance, in which the two would form the chief dramatis personæ. Two or three conditions, he thought, were already evolved: an unmistakable mutual interest—observation and dislike on the part of the aristocratic mother—to be followed by eventual discovery on the part of the weaker and yet more aristocratic brother—an unpleasant *eclaircissement*—coolness born of the very warmth underlying—a parting in pleasant dissatisfaction with themselves and each other—and perhaps a shadow of blended sweet and painful memory over the whole of two after lives! [Pg 294]

Then the lawyer passed out to the piazza and paced with measured step up and down that promenade and the plateau in front, for perhaps more than half an hour. He might have been

entirely absorbed in the contemplation of the possible fortunes of Chicago and Baltimore; and he might have found matter for thought much more personal to himself. At all events the starlight and the coming moon seemed to be company which he failed to find elsewhere; and even the dusky shadows of the bears, deserted by their friends of the sunshine and walking their weary rounds like sentinels, possibly supplied something denied him by humanity. His step was that of a man restless, absorbed and ill at ease; his head had fallen forward on his breast; and once, when he was so far away from the loiterers on the piazza that no ear was likely to catch his words, he muttered something that could scarcely have found an application to the persons of the drama in the parlor. That murmur ran:

"I suppose this is the most dishonorable action in my life—planning to betray confidence and take an unfair advantage. Why did *he* tell me so much before he went to Europe? Pshaw!" and he put his hand to his brow and walked on for a moment in silence. "I will *not* go back—I *will* try the experiment—I *will* win that woman, if I can, under this very name, now that I begin to understand her weakness so well. And if I do—heavens, in what a situation shall I have placed her and myself! And will she ever forgive the deception? No matter!—let the future take care of itself."

Either the stars grew less companionable, then, at the thought that some strange deceit was being wrought beneath them, or the soliloquist felt that there yet remained something worth looking after within the parlor, for he looked up at one of the windows of the second story, said: "Ah, no light there, at last!" stepped back to the piazza and once more entered the house and the dancing-room.

The music was still sounding as merrily as ever, and as he re-entered the room a new set was forming. In the very midst of those who were preparing to join it, full under the blaze of the central chandelier, stood Clara Vanderlyn. She was for the moment motionless, and he had better opportunity than before of scanning her really radiant loveliness. She wore a simple evening-dress of white, with a single wild-flower wreathed in her bright auburn hair and a single jewel of value set like a star at the apex of the forehead, confined by a delicate and almost unseen chain of gold which encircled her head. Frank Vanderlyn, in full evening-dress, was standing a few feet off, in conversation with some young men with whom he had already formed an acquaintance, and did not seem to be preparing to join the set. A hurried glance around the room did not show that either Mrs. Vanderlyn or Halstead Rowan was present. [Pg 295]

The band struck up a schottische, and all began to take partners. At this moment Mrs. Vanderlyn came through the door-way from the hall, sweeping in with more of that pronounced haughtiness which seemed indexed by her face and carriage, than any of the visitors at the Profile had before seen her exhibit, and creating a kind of impression upon those near whom she passed, that they were suddenly taken under proprietorship. She swept very near the lawyer as he stood at the left of the door-way, and passing down the room touched her son on the arm. And the lawyer could not, if he would (which seemed not over probable) have avoided hearing the single word that she uttered, almost in Frank's ear, and in a low, concentrated tone:

"Remember!"

Frank Vanderlyn nodded, with a supercilious smile upon his face, as though he understood the direction; and the stately mother swept down the room and partially disappeared among the crowd of quiet people below.

Clara Vanderlyn stood for the moment alone, as the band struck up. Whether she had received and declined invitations to dance, or whether no one had found the temerity to offer himself with the chance of refusal, seemed doubtful, for she certainly appeared to have no partner. But as the first couple moved forward to take their places, a tall form darkened the door-way for an instant, and Halstead Rowan was again at the fair girl's side, his face literally radiant with pride and triumph. There was no word spoken at that moment, and it would seem that there must have been some previous understanding between them, for her hand was instantly placed within his arm when he offered it, and her face reflected his own with a look of gratification that any close observer could not well avoid noticing. [Pg 296]

Both had taken a step forward to join the set, when an interruption took place of so painful a character as at once to call the attention of every one within hearing; and Horace Townsend, standing very near, had a sudden opportunity to compare the reality with his unspoken foreboding of half an hour before. Frank Vanderlyn suddenly left the group with whom he had been conversing but a few feet away, stepped up to his sister, and before either she or Rowan could have been aware of his intention, drew her hand away from the arm of her escort, and somewhat rudely placed it within his own, with a bold glance at Rowan and the words:

"Miss Clara Vanderlyn, if you wish to dance, your family would prefer that you should select a different partner from the first low-bred nobody who happens to fall in your way—a good enough ten-pin-alley companion, perhaps, but not quite the thing in a ball-room!"

"Oh, brother!"

The face of the poor girl, so foully outraged, first flushed, then whitened, and she seemed on the point of sinking to the floor with the shame of such a public insult and exposure. She might indeed have done so, under the first shock, had not the arm of Frank supported her. The next instant it was evident that all the pride of the Vanderlyns had not been exhausted before her birth, for she jerked away her arm from its compulsory refuge, and stood erect and angry—all the woman fully aroused. Her glance of withering contempt and scorn, then directed at the ill- [Pg 297]

mannered stripling who called himself her brother, was such a terrible contrast to the sweet and almost infantile smile which rested on her face in happier moments, that it would have been no difficult matter to doubt her identity.

As for Halstead Rowan—at the moment when the cruel act was done and the insulting words were spoken, he turned instantly upon the intruder, evidently failing to recognize him in the sudden blindness of his rage. His right hand, though the injured one, clenched as it might have done under the shock of an electric battery, and Townsend saw him jerk it to the level of his shoulder as if he would have struck a blow certain to cause regret for a lifetime. But he had no occasion to interpose, for the outraged girl's "Oh, brother!" came just in time to prevent the commission of the intended violence. Instantly his hand dropped; Clara Vanderlyn's expression of angry contempt, easily read under the full glare of the chandelier, chased the fierce rage from his face if it did not root out the bitterness from his heart; he bowed low to the sister, cast a glance upon the brother which he did not seem likely soon to forget; and in another moment, passing rapidly between the few who surrounded the door-way, he touched Horace Townsend forcibly upon the arm, nodded to him with a gesture which the latter readily understood as a request to follow, and the two passed out from the parlor, the hall and the house.

It is not easy to describe the scene in the parlor which followed the *denouement* that has been so feebly pictured. The music sounded on, but the set remained unformed and no one seemed to heed it. The room was instantly full of conversation in regard to the strange event, more or less loud in its tone. Frank Vanderlyn, calculating upon the sympathies of a company principally composed of wealthy and fashionable people, looked around him as if for approbation of what he had done, but did not appear to receive it. It was not difficult for him to read in the faces near him that the sympathies of the whole company were with the insulted person, most of the members of it, if they had no other reason for the feeling, remembering the event of the bear-stakes in the morning and thinking that if the Illinoisan was to receive any thing from the Vanderlyn family that day, it should have been gratitude instead of insult. Made painfully aware of this state of feeling, the young man paled, bit his lips, then passed rapidly out of the room and disappeared, leaving his sister still in the attitude of outraged sensibility and mortification, which she retained, uttering no word to any one and not even casting a glance around the room, until Mrs. Vanderlyn, who had apparently constituted herself the reserve force for the attack upon her daughter's dignity which Frank had so gallantly led, swept up from below and led her unresistingly away up the stair-case to their apartments.

The set was finally formed, and a few more figures were danced in the parlor of the Profile that evening; but the painful incident just recorded had dulled the sense of enjoyment, and the company thinned out and eventually dispersed to earlier beds than they might have found under other circumstances.

CHAPTER XV.

How Halstead Rowan arranged that expected Duel—Ten-pins versus Bloodshed—Some anxiety about identity—The "H. T." initials, again—A farewell to the Brooks Cunninghames—An hour on Echo Lake, with a rhapsody and a strangely-interested listener.

This chapter must be unavoidably as fragmentary, not to say desultory, as some that have preceded it at considerable distance, the course of events in it seeming to partake in some degree of the broken, heaped and heterogeneous quality of the mountain rocks amidst which they occurred.

It has been seen that Halstead Rowan, quitting the room in which he had met with so severe a mortification, touched Horace Townsend on the arm and made him a signal to follow, and that the latter obeyed the call. Of course this obedience was a matter of courtesy that could not well be refused, and yet it was accorded with a feeling so painful that it would scarcely have been asked had the torture been foreseen. Rowan, as the lawyer knew, had been insulted before a company of mark and numbers, in so deadly a manner that more than usual forbearance would be necessary to forgive the outrage; and the insulted man belonged, as the lawyer also knew, to a class of Western men not much more prone than those of the South and Southwest, to smother down a wrong under good-feeling or expediency. He had refrained from striking the insulter on the spot; but that forbearance might have been merely the effect of a recollection that ladies were present, and the one lady of all among them; and Horace Townsend no more doubted, during the moment that elapsed while the two young men stepped into the reception-room and secured their hats from the table, that he was being called upon in the sacred name of friendship to act in an affair that would probably cost the life of one or both the antagonists, than he questioned the fact of his own existence. It is doubtful whether he did not believe, before the affair was concluded, that so strange a task had never been set for his friend, by any man incensed to the necessity of mortal combat, since the day when duelling proper had its origin in two naked savages going out behind their huts with knives and a third to look on, for the love of a dusky she-heathen with oblique eyes—down through all the ages, when Sir Grostete set lance in rest and met Sir Maindefer in full career, over a little question of precedence at the table of King Grandpillard; when Champfleury and St. Esprit, beaux of the Regency of Orleans, with keen

rapiers sliced up each other like cucumbers, between two bows and a dozen of grimaces, because one did not appreciate the perfume used by the other; until Fighting Joe of Arkansas and Long Alick of St. Louis culminated the whole art of single combat by a little encounter with rifles, followed by a closer embrace with bowies, at one of the Mississippi landings, instigated by the unequal division of the smiles of Belle Logan, of Western Row, Cincinnati. All which means, if the reader has not entirely lost the context, that the course pursued by Halstead Rowan, as a combatant, was eventually found to be something out of the common order. [Pg 300]

"You saw that, of course—I know that you did!" said rather than inquired Rowan, when they had reached the piazza and were out of hearing of any of the promenading groups.

"I did," answered Townsend, with some hesitation and a wish that he could deny the fact and thus escape the duties certain to be forced upon him. "Yes, I saw it all, and it was most disgraceful. But I hope—"

That intended lecture was lost to the world, as so many others have been; for Rowan interrupted him:

"Are you poor?"

"No, I cannot say that I am, in money!" was the surprised reply.

"Were you ever?"

"No—I must answer in the negative a second time. I have never been what the world calls poor, since I can remember."

"Then you do not know how it feels," said the Illinoisan. "I am poor—I have never been rich, and I do not know that I have ever really wished to be so until a few moments ago. I wanted to buy a puppy, so that I could tie a stone to his neck and drown him; but I felt that I had not money enough."

Townsend, still surprised and in a good deal of doubt whither the conversation was tending, murmured something about the fact that however decided the insult of the brother had been, evidently the sister did not share in the feeling. [Pg 301]

"She? oh no, heaven bless her brown eyes!" he replied, rapidly and earnestly, while the other could see, in the light of the now fairly risen moon, that there was a strange sparkle in his own dark orbs. "As for the rest—well, heaven need not be particular about blessing them—that is all! But this gabble is not what I drew you out here for. I want you to do me a great favor, at once, and I ask *you*, because I seem to be better acquainted with you, after a very short time, than with any other person just now at the Notch."

"Now it is coming—just what I dreaded!" said Townsend to himself; but he answered very differently, in a feeble attempt to stave off the trouble.

"Than *any* other person?"

"Hold your tongue!—you know what I mean!" was the reply. "Answer my question, yes or no—are you the man upon whom I can depend, to do me an immediate personal service that may involve some sacrifice of bodily comfort and perhaps of feeling?"

"I hope so—yes!" answered Townsend. "But before you take any steps in this matter—"

"Conditions already?" asked Rowan. "I thought it was to be an unconditional yes or no!"

"Well, it is!" said Townsend, apparently satisfied that expostulation would after all be useless.

"Enough said!" replied Rowan, catching him by the arm. "Come along with me to the alley, then, and roll me not less than five games of ten-pins."

"But the business you wished me to do?" asked Townsend. "If it is to be done at all—"

"Why, confound the man!—what ails you? *That* is the business!"

"To roll you five games of ten-pins?"

"Exactly! Why, what else should it be? Oh, I see!" and Rowan chuckled out a low laugh from his great throat. "I understand your tragic face, now. You thought that I wanted you as a friend, to—" [Pg 302]

"To challenge Frank Vanderlyn—precisely what I thought," said the lawyer, "and I consented to act because I thought that I might be better able than some other person to prevent any serious result."

"To shoot *her brother*, merely because he is a fool?—Oh, no, Townsend—you could not think *that*! Duelling is murder nearly always, and folly always when it is not a crime; and if I should ever be driven into another duel, be sure that it would not be with an inexperienced boy who probably does not know half so much about a pistol as at pen-knife or a tooth-pick."

"You are a true man, as well as a sensible one, and I honor you!" said the relieved lawyer, grasping him by the hand, and his face at the same time wearing a look, which, though unseen by the other, seemed actually to express personal gratitude.

"I do not know about the 'true man,' though I have tried to be so," answered Rowan, as they

neared the door of the ten-pin alley. "But I suppose that perhaps I am the oddest mortal on the globe, and that may answer the same purpose. And now you are dying to know why I wish to roll ten-pin balls at this particular moment? Simply because I need some way of working off this excitement that might lead me to commit a violent act if it did not find that very harmless physical vent. I have tried the experiment before, and I know what ten-pins are with a man of fiery temperament. Here, boy, set 'em up!"

The alley was alone, except as to the sleepy boy; but the loud call of the Illinoisan soon put the machinery of the place into operation and the momentous games commenced. No matter how they progressed or how they ended in regard to winning or losing: it is only with some of the conversation which took place while the match was under way, that we have at present to do.

"You are a lawyer and belong to Cincinnati, you said," observed Rowan, as he paused a moment to wipe his brow after thundering down half a dozen of the ponderous globes. [Pg 303]

"Yes, I said so," answered Townsend; but he did not enlarge upon the answer, as he was obviously expected to do; and one or two other questions, having the same scope, being parried at every point beyond the mere name, occupation and place of residence, the Illinoisan began to suspect that there must be some motive for reticence, which he was at least bound to respect while he held the catechumen impressed in his own service. With reference to himself, a theme upon which the conversation seemed to turn very easily, (many of the stout, bluff, frank, go-ahead Rowans whom one meets in society have the same characteristic, fault or the reverse),—he manifested no corresponding nervousness; and one moment strangely silent as if under the influence of some thought which kept him too busy for speech, the next he would rattle on almost as glibly as the polished balls rolled down the pine floor.

"You called yourself odd a little while ago, and I fancy that if you *are* odd you have the excuse of very wide experience for a man of your age," said Townsend, a little later in the quintette of games, and certainly displaying a bit of the prying nature of the lawyer, if not the subtlety of the Jesuit, in the suggestion. "To tell you the truth, I cannot quite place you in profession. A while ago I thought you possibly a steamboat-captain, but you have just upset that hypothesis by proving that you are nearly all the while on land; and yet you seem to be perpetually flying about from one town to another. What the deuce *are* you?"

"Oh, you cannot place me, eh?" laughed Rowan, who was getting fairly soothed and mellowed by his creditable substitute for duelling. "Well, I am a conductor on the —— Railroad, which you know has its terminus in Chicago, and I am off on a couple of months leave of absence from the Company. As to experience, I suppose that I may have had a little of it. I have been a civil-engineer, employed at laying out some of the worst roads in the West, and of course laying them out the worst. Have crossed the plains to California twice, and back again, including a look at Brigham and his wives at Salt Lake City, very nearly getting my throat cut, I fancy, in that latter operation. Did a little at gold-mining, for a short time, but soon quitted it out of deference to a constitutional backache when stooping. Have been here at the East a good many times, and once lived in New York, (a great deal worse place than Salt Lake City, and with more polygamy!) for a twelvemonth, telegraphing. Once ran down to Santa Fe with a train, and came very near to being speared by the Comanches. Then concluded to stay among those amiable savages for a while, to learn to ride, and spent six months in the study. No man knows how to ride a horse—by the way—except an Arab (I take the word of the travellers for that, as I have never been across), a Comanche or an Arapahoe, or some one they have taught. There, have I told you enough?" [Pg 304]

"Humph!—yes," answered the lawyer, eying the strange compound with unavoidable admiration and no little wonder. "Yes, except one thing."

"And that is about this scar?"

"I confess that my curiosity lay in that direction!" laughed Townsend. "I think that scar has not been long healed—that you have been taking a turn in the present war."

"Yes, a short one," said the Illinoisan, "and that scar is one mark of it. I was a private in the ranks of the Ninth Illinois for a few months last year, and got pretty badly slashed with a Mississippi bowie-knife, with Grant, two or three days before they took Fort Donelson. *They* took it—*I* did not—I suppose that I did not amount to much at about that period, with a little hack in the jugular that came pretty near letting out life and blood together!"

Before this conversation had concluded, and long before the specified five games were accomplished, half a dozen persons from the hotel, male and female, came strolling in. Among them was Captain Hector Coles, with Margaret Hayley upon his arm. They stood at the head of the alley, looking at the game; and Townsend, as he was about to make one of his most difficult rolls, recognized the lady and her slight nod and was sufficiently agitated by the presence of that peculiar spectator, to miss his aim entirely and roll the ball off into the gutter—a fact which did not escape the quick eye of the Captain. [Pg 305]

Directly, as the game still went on, some conversation occurred between the lady and her attendant, which, if overheard, might have produced a still more decided trembling in the nerves of the ten-pin player.

"I *know* that I have seen that face before, more than once, and not in Cincinnati," the Captain said. "I believe that he is a Philadelphian, and that his name is no more Horace Townsend than mine is Jenkins."

"What motive could any one possibly have for coming to a place like this in disguise and with a feigned name?" asked Margaret Hayley.

"Humph!" said the Captain, in a tone by no means good-humored, though it was low, as the previous words had been, "there are plenty of men who find it necessary to disguise names and faces now-a-days, for the very best of reasons."

"Traitors?" asked the lady.

"Yes, traitors!" answered the Captain.

"And *that* reason he has not, I know!" said Margaret. "The man who uttered the words that *I* heard last night, is no traitor, and I do not think that I should believe the very angels of heaven if they should come down to make the assertion!"

"You seem strangely interested in the man!" said the Captain, his voice undeniably querulous.

"And I have a right to be so if I choose, I suppose!" answered the lady, in a voice that if it was not querulous was at least signally decided. [Pg 306]

"Oh, certainly! certainly!" was the reply, coming out between set teeth.

Silence fell for a moment thereafter, except as the crashing balls made music among the pins. Then it was interrupted by Rowan calling out to the lawyer, who seemed to stand abstracted and forgetful of the game.

"Townsend!"

No motion on the part of the person addressed, or any sign that he heard the utterance.

"Townsend! I say, Townsend!"

Still no motion, or any recognition whatever of the name; and it was not until the Illinoisan, who had just been making three ten-strikes in succession with his left hand, and who was naturally anxious to call the attention of his opponent to the exploit, touched him on the shoulder and literally shouted the word into his ear, that he paid any attention whatever.

"Me? Oh!"

"Did you notice that?" asked the keen-witted Captain, returning to the charge, as a repulsed soldier should always do. "His name is *not* Townsend, and he has not been long in the habit of being called by it; for it was forgetfulness that made him wait for it to be repeated three times!"

There was triumph in the tone of the Captain, now; and there was every thing but triumph in that of Margaret Hayley as she leaned heavily on his arm and said:

"Pray do not say any thing more about it! That man is nothing to me. Let us go back to the house."

"Wait one moment! I am going to do something to satisfy myself. Do you see that handkerchief? Sometimes initials tell a story that trunks and hotel-books do not."

The lawyer had thrown off his coat upon the chair behind him—a blue flannel coat, half military, which both remembered to have seen him wear after changing clothes from the accident at the pool. From the breast-pocket a white handkerchief hung temptingly almost half way out, and it was towards that that the hand of the officer dived downward. The owner of the coat was some distance away, following up one of his flying balls, and was not likely to see the examination made of his personal property, if it was done with quick hand and eye. [Pg 307]

"Hector Coles, you would not do *that*!"

But she spoke too late. With the stereotyped lie on his lips that has been made the excuse for so many wrongs and scoundrelisms during all this unfortunate struggle, "All is fair in war-time!" the Captain whipped out the handkerchief, turned it quickly from corner to corner, glancing it to the light as he did so, and then as quickly returned it to the pocket, long before the owner had returned from watching the effect of his shot. Margaret Hayley had not intended to join in the reprehensible act, but she involuntarily did so, and she as well as the officer saw the initials "H. T." elaborately embroidered in red silk in one of the corners. It is not too much to say that a pang of joy went through her heart at that refutation of the Captain's mean suspicions and that evidence to her own mind that the man in whom she had become so suddenly and unaccountably interested was playing no game of deceit and treachery. "H. T." were the initials, Horace Townsend was the name that he had given her, and there could be no doubt whatever of the truth of his statement.

Captain Hector Coles did not seem by any means so well satisfied with the result of his researches. Something very like a scowl answered the look of indignation upon Margaret Hayley's face, as he said:

"Humph! well, he has been keen enough, it seems, to mismark his handkerchief too!"

"And you are ungenerous enough, Captain Hector Coles, first to do an improper action and then to find fault with your own discomfiture!" was the reply, as the lady once more took the proffered arm of the officer and left the alley, the combatants still pursuing the concluding game of that

most memorable match of left hand against scanty practice. Whither one of them went, an hour or two later, may possibly be discovered at no distant period of this narration.

There were stormy times, that night, in the chamber of connubial bliss occupied by Mr. and Mrs. Brooks Cunninghame; and poor Caudle, belabored as he was in the imaginative mind of Douglas Jerrold, never suffered as much in one hour as on that occasion did the ex-contractor, ex-Alderman and ex-purveyor of mettled steeds for the United States cavalry service. Shoddy was in an ill-humor, and Shoddy had a right to be in an ill-humor. Every thing had gone wrong, specially and collectively, from the moment of their entering those fatal mountains. Mishap the first: Mrs. Brooks Cunninghame had fainted and been called "Bridget," before company. Mishap the second: Master Brooks Brooks Cunninghame had overeaten himself and come near to leaving the whole family in mourning as loud as his own wails. Mishap the third: Master Brooks Brooks had badgered the bears, in plain sight of all, caused a serious accident, and been visited, both loudly and silently, with objurgations not pleasant to remember. Mishap the fourth: Mrs. Brooks Cunninghame had been herself badgered, worse than the bears, by an irreverent scamp who threw discredit at once upon her foreign travels and her geography. Mishap the fifth: Master Brooks Brooks had tumbled into the Pool, been nearly drowned, and come out a limp rag requiring some washing and several hours wringing before recovering its original consistency. Mishap the sixth: Mrs. Brooks Cunninghame, in the agitation of that serious accident, had called the dear boy by a name, that of "Patsey," which would be likely to stick to him, in taunting mouths, during his whole stay at the Profile. Mishap the seventh: Mr. Brooks Cunninghame had fallen in, that day, with the before-mentioned certain stage-drivers, who consented to drink brandy, wine and punch at his expense, enticing him thereafter into low stories of the days when he drove a horse and cart about town, and leaving him eventually in a state of fuddle amusing to their hard heads and harder hearts but by no means conducive to his standing in fashionable watering-place society. Mishap the eighth: Miss Marianna Brooks Cunninghame had passed two evenings in the parlor and one day among the guests in their rides and walks, bedizened in successive fineries of the most enticing order; and not one person had desired the honor of her acquaintance out of doors, asked her to dance in the parlor, or paid her any more attention than might have been bestowed upon a very ungraceful lay-figure carried around for the showing off of modes and millinery.

All this in thirty hours; and all this was certainly enough to disturb more equable pulses than those which beat under the coarse red skin of Mrs. Brooks Cunninghame.

And when, that night while the moon was high in heaven and nearly all the guests had left parlor and piazza to silence after such an eventful day—while poor Marianna in her chamber wept over the cruel neglect which had made mockery of all her rosy anticipations, and Master Brooks Brooks moaned out at her side his petulant complaints born of ill-breeding, fright and weakness, —when Mrs. Brooks Cunninghame opened upon her not-yet-sobered husband the battery of her tongue, and accused him of being the author of all the mishaps before named, those with which he had nothing to do quite as much as those in which he had been really instrumental,—then and there, for the moment, the Nemesis of the outraged republic was duly asserting the power delegated to her by the gods, and Shoddy, in the person of one of its humblest representatives, was undergoing a slight foretaste of that eternal torture to be hereafter enforced.

Mrs. Brooks Cunninghame, on that occasion, declared her intention of not remaining another day among "such low people," and she further intimated to Mr. Brooks Cunninghame that if he did not learn to behave himself in a manner more becoming to his high position (or at least the high position of his wife and children!) she would "take him home at once and never bring him out agin into respectable society while her head was warrum."

At the end of which exordium the berated husband not unnaturally remarked, in a brogue nearly as broad as it had ever been:

"And fwhat the divil did ye come trapesin here for at all at all? Ye'd be doin' well enough at home, if ye'd only sthay there, Bridget—I mane Julia. Ye'r no more fit to be kapin company wid dhe quality, nor meself; and I'm as much out of place here as a pig 'ud be goin' to mass! Sure Mary Ann 'il niver be gettin' a husband among these people wid dhe turned-up noses, and poor little Pat'll be dhrouned and kilt and murthered intirely! You'd betther be gettin' out of this as soon as ye can, and I'd be savin' me hard-earned money!"

"The money you have cheated for, ye mane, Pat Cunningham," said Mrs. Brooks, who when alone with the object of her devoted affection and in a temper the reverse of amiable, could unveil some of the household skeletons of language and history quite as readily as he. "Pretty things them was that ye sold for horses to the government! and there's a good dale of the money ye made when ye was Alderman, that they'd send ye to the State Prison for if they knowed all about it!"

"Thrue for ye, Bridget!—and who but yer oogly self put the worst o' thim things into me head, dinnin' at me o' nights when ye ought to been aslape?—answer me that, will ye? And now ye'r sthruttin' like a peacock wid dhe money I made to plase ye, and divil the bit can ye kape a civil tongue between yer lanthern jaws. Take that and be hanged" [or some other word] "to ye, Bridget Cunningham!"

"Pat Cunningham, ye'r a coarse, miserable brute—a low Irishman, and money can't make any thing else out of ye! Away from this we go to-morrow morning, mind that, before ye'r drunk again with yer low stage-drivers and thim fellers."

A snore was the only reply. Mrs. Brooks Cunninghame had secured the last word, according to her usual habit; but she had only done so at the expense of not having her rejoinder heard by the ears for which it was intended. [Pg 311]

The lady kept her word, in the one important particular. Those who shared in the early breakfast of the next morning, before the starting of the stages, had the pleasure of seeing the whole family at table all bedizened for the road—Mrs. Brooks Cunninghame red-faced, stately and snappish; Miss Marianna subdued and unhappy, with red rings around her eyes, as if she had been crying all night; Mr. Brooks Cunninghame with his coarse face yet coarser than usual and his eyes suggestive of a late fuddle, piling away beef-steaks, eggs and biscuits into the human mill, as if he had some doubts of ever reaching another place where they could be procured to the same advantage; and Master Brooks Brooks, the freckles showing worse than ever on his pale and sickly-looking face, whining between every two mouthfuls, and vociferating: "Mommy, mommy, I've got a pain!" and, "Mommy, mommy, I tell you I want some more o' them are taters and gravy!"

They were pleasant company at the meal, very!—as they had been at all previous times when beaming on the horizon of other travellers, and as people out of place always prove to be to those who surround them! But the meal came to an end, the trunks that held the remaining finery of the two ladies were safely stowed, the stage-drivers bellowed: "All aboard!" and the three more precious members of the Brooks Cunninghame family were stowed within the coach without personally causing more than ten minutes of hindrance, while Mr. Brooks Cunninghame himself, with a bad cigar in mouth and a surreptitiously-obtained bottle of raw whiskey in the pocket of his duster, occupied a seat on the top and felt, for the time, almost as happy as he had once done when surmounting his loaded dirt-cart.

So Shoddy, or that particular manifestation of it, at least, rolled away from the Profile House. Whither, is no matter of consequence, for the incidental connection of the Brooks Cunninghames with this veracious history is concluded with the exit of that morning. But let no one suppose that the travelling world was thereafter rid of them, or of others to whom they only supply a type and index, during the remainder of the summer. For did not some of us meet them at Niagara later in the season, resident at the Clifton as the most aristocratic (because on monarchical ground) of all the houses, Mrs. Brooks Cunninghame a little more querulous and redder in the face than when at the Notch; Mr. Brooks Cunninghame a little trembly, as if whiskey and idleness were beginning to tell upon his system; Miss Marianna still un-cavaliered and hopelessly unexpectant in the wreck of her silks, laces, and jewelry; and Master Brooks Brooks pulling the curtains and drumming on the keys of the piano with his unwashed fingers, pending his greater opportunity to frighten a pair of horses into plunging over the bank, or to relieve the future of a dreary prospect by himself falling off Table Hock? [Pg 312]

There was another departure from the Profile House the same morning. Whether the event of the night before had done anything to bring about that consummation, or whether previous arrangements and the pressure of time dictated such a movement—Halstead Rowan and the two friends in his company were among the passengers by one of the coaches that went through to the Crawford, bearing such as contemplated an immediate ascent of Mount Washington from that direction. It may be the pleasant duty of writer and reader to overtake them at the Crawford, at a very early period. Nothing more can now be said of the situation in which the Vanderlyn imbroglio and the Townsend friendship were left, than that the departing man saw nothing of the lawyer after they parted on the evening previous, and that his early stage rolled away long before the luxurious Vanderlyns were likely to have opened their eyes at the summons of the first gong rolling through the corridors to awaken them for the regular breakfast.

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It was nearly noon of that morning of the departures—a cloudless, glorious morning, the sun just warming the chill of the Notch to a pleasant May air, and not a fleck of mist to dim the view of the peaks on the very extreme verge of the line of vision, when Horace Townsend strolled down the half mile of road northward from the Profile, to Echo Lake, intent upon entering on those mysteries which specially belong to that haunted little sheet of water—the mysteries of the boat, the horn, and the cannon. He was alone, as he had been from the first moment of his coming to the Notch, except as the newly-formed intimacy between Halstead Rowan and himself had temporarily drawn them together. He seemed to have formed no other new acquaintance, but that was to be, perhaps, formal and distant; and there was no certainty that the incident would not add to rather than take away from any feeling of positive loneliness which had before oppressed him.

As he turned down the by-road shooting sharply away to the right, with the Lake glimmering silver in the sunlight through the trees, there was a great crash of sound, a deafening reverberation from the rocks of Eagle Cliff, hanging immediately over the Lake, a fainter

following, and then another and another, dying away among the far-off hills in the infinite variety of the highland echo. There were already visitors at the Lake; and the factotum who blended the triple characters of keeper, guide, and boatman, had been discharging the little old cannon on the wharf, as a crowning proof to some party with whom he was just finishing, of the capacity of *his* lake for dwarfing all the travelled ones' recollections of Killarney and the Echo Rocks of Superior.

Such was indeed the fact, and as the lawyer emerged upon the Lake immediately at the wharf, he met the party who had "done" the Lake strolling away, while the boatman was re-arming himself with his long horn, and beginning to turn his attention to certain new-comers, a part of whom had already taken their seats in the big paddle-wheeled boat of which the steam was to be supplied by cranks and hand-labor, for a trip around the pond with the dignified name, and a new development of the capacities of echo. He had indeed dropped the stipendiary sum in currency into the hand of the factotum, and was about stepping into the boat to join the party already miscellaneous, before he discovered that any acquaintance was numbered among them. When he did so, for one instant he hesitated as if about to defer his trip, then muttered below his breath the few words: "No!—I must take my chances—now as well as ever!" stepped in from the little wharf and took one of the few empty seats remaining near the stern of the boat. He sat looking backward, and he was consequently brought face to face with the three occupants of the stern seat, who were necessarily looking forward. Perhaps his fate *was* upon that stern seat, for its three occupants were Mrs. Burton Hayley, her daughter, and Captain Hector Coles.

Margaret Hayley paled a little, then flushed the least in the world and finally smiled a proud but pleasant smile and returned a nod and a "good-morning," in response to Townsend's comprehensive bow and salutation, which were intended to take in all three. Captain Hector Coles sat bolt upright, as if he had been riding his horse on parade, and moved no inch from his perpendicular as he returned the greeting in so formal a voice that it constituted no recognition whatever; and Mrs. Burton Hayley, to whom the lawyer had not been introduced, had some excuse for the supercilious but puzzled stare with which she honored him. The young girl saw the glance, and remembered the position.

"Oh, ma, I forgot," she said, introducing. "Mr. Townsend, of Cincinnati, whose acquaintance I made yesterday when he saved the poor little boy from drowning, at the Pool."

Her eyes were fixed very closely upon the face of Townsend as she said these words, and so were those of Captain Hector Coles. If either saw, or thought that they saw, a momentary red flush pass over the dark countenance, coming as quickly and fading as rapidly as one of the flashes of the Northern Lights,—did they see any corroboration of the suspicions of the evening before, or was that flush merely the natural expression of a sensitive man whose good deeds were mentioned in his presence?

Mrs. Burton Hayley nodded, as she could not avoid doing under such circumstances, but there was very little cordiality in the nod; and there was something quite as lofty and uncongenial in the manner of the words with which she accompanied it:

"I remember hearing my daughter speak of Mr. Townsend's having been made the means, under Providence, of preventing an accident."

The ostentatious Bible yet lay upon its carved stand, oh, Mrs. Burton Hayley, did it not!

No farther conversation followed at that moment, though there may have been one, and mayhap two, in that mixed boat-load of fifteen or twenty, who would have been glad to pursue it under more favorable auspices. Certain it is that the lawyer kept his gaze upon the proudly sweet face of Margaret Hayley, quite as steadily as propriety would by any means allow, and that her face answered back something more of interest, under the shade of her wide leghorn jockey, than either of her immediate companions might have been pleased to see. She was interested in her new acquaintance, beyond a question: was she something more? Answer the question—oh, heart of woman!—could it be possible that the by-gone love, once so truly a part of her very being, had already so faded, in one short month, that a feeling warmer than friendship could centre around a mere stranger of two days' beholding? Was that "ideal," once believed to have been found, then lost again, presenting itself in another and still more enticing shape, to make constancy a myth and womanly truth a by-word? Small data, as yet, from which to judge; but stranger things than this have chanced in the rolling years, and the faith of humanity still survived them!

Out on the Lake by this time the burlesque upon a steamboat had floated, and the sheet of water lay under as well as around the passengers—perhaps a quarter of a mile in width and a mile in length, shut in on the side of approach by the woods, and beyond on all sides by the eternal hills. Never was silver jewel dotting the green bosom of nature more beautiful—never one more sweetly nestled away near the very heart of its mountain nurse. The proverbial winds of the Notch for once were still, and only a gentle ripple stirred the glassy surface here and there as a breath touched it like the skimming wing of a wild bird. The meridian sun lay lovingly on the side and crest of the mountain rising eastward from the edge of the water, touching its bald, scarred brow with ruddy gold; and if the first on the cliffs nodded at times, they nodded sleepily with the very expression of repose. Spirit of calm, delicious quiet!—was there ever a spot more truly sacred to thee, than Echo Lake at such moments, when a few gentle, loving hearts, close bound to each other and shut in from the world, are beating with slow pulses as the life and centre of the great mystery of nature? Other boat-loads than that of this July noon, have grown quiet beneath such a feeling, as the boatman ceased his paddling, the boat drifted lazily on, lips grew

silent, eyes closed, and human thought floated away on a very sea of dreams.

They had swept over, in rapt silence for the last few moments, until they lay beneath the very brow of the eastern mountain. Then that silence was broken by the boatman rising from his seat and blowing a long, steady blast on his six-foot tin horn, in size and shape like those used on the Western canals, but sadly dinted by careless use and frequent falling. The company were reminded, then, that they were floating on Echo Lake and no stream of the land of faerie. The long, low note died on the car, and an appreciable instant of silence followed. Then it came back from the brow of the mountain above, a little louder than before, and yet a little mellowed by distance. Another instant, and the same sound reverberated from the opposite hill, the back of Eagle Cliff. Were there still more echoes to be added to the two that had already made the place notable? Yes, a third came back from the range that sloped away from the head of the Lake, northward—a little fainter, and broken now; and then the more distant hills caught the sound, as if each had a right, which it jealously claimed, to some portion of that greeting from the human breath; and far as the eye could trace the blue peaks rising behind each other through the gaps beyond, the ear could catch a corresponding reverberation, fainter—fainter—fainter,—till it died away in a drowsy murmur and silence followed. Then the horn passed from hand to hand and from mouth to mouth, some of the gallants perhaps forming kisses of the touch of red lips which had preceded theirs; and some blew round, full strains that awakened admiration, and some made but a melancholy whistle which excited merry laughter. Among the many experiments tried upon that horn, there must have been some horrid discords startling the Dryads in the wooded shades up the mountain, where the gazers sometimes seemed to see the echo leaping from cliff to cliff and from bough to bough. But they soon came willingly back to the practised notes of the boatman; and some of the party shut their eyes and dreamed, as his quick, sharp peals rang merrily up among the hills,—of noble lord and gentle lady, hunting in the days of old, and of the bugle blasts of outlaws sounding through gloomy Ardennes or merry Sherwood. Anon he would end his strain with a long, low falling note, and they heard some old cathedral hymn wailing through solemn arches and bending the spirit to reverence and prayer. But through all that succession of sounds the hard, dry, practical, exigeant Present was rolled away and the romantic, easy Past stood in its stead; so easily does the mind, like the body, cast off its burthen, whenever permitted, and lie down, if only for a moment, upon the lap of indolence!

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Scarcely a word had been spoken, in the boat, for some minutes, under the influence of that spell of the hour. But the normal condition of humanity, when awake, is to keep the tongue in motion; and not even the spell of Echo Lake could keep that busy member still beyond the customary period. Comparisons of other echoes, in our own and other lands, were made, and as the boatman rowed on to complete the circuit of the Lake, the conversation became nearly general.

"Echo Lake looks very smiling and quiet to-day," said one of the company—the same old habitue of the mountains who had commenced the conversation the day before with Halstead Rowan, at the Pool. "But I have seen it look very differently, sometimes when a gale came roaring and singing up through the Notch, and the saucy little thing got a black frown upon its face, reflected from the leaden sky and the wind-tossed trees up yonder. Echo is blown away, at such times, as any one would be who dared the perils of this sea of limited dimensions; and you would be surprised to know how hard the wind *can* blow just here, and what little, tumbling, dangerous waves of rage the dwarf can kick up, trying to make an ocean of itself."

"The most singular view that *I* ever had of it," said another, "I caught half way up the Cannon Mountain one afternoon. It looked like a wash-bowl, and I had a fancy that I could toss a piece of soap into it from where I stood! But I knew that it must be Echo Lake, for somebody was blowing a horn; and I believe there has never been an hour of daylight, since creation, when a horn has not been blowing somewhere in the neighborhood."

"There is one more point of view in which to see it," said Horace Townsend, who had not before joined at any length in the conversation. "I mean by moonlight, for any one who is part night-hawk."

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"Ah, have you seen it so?" asked the last speaker, with interest.

"Yes—last night," answered the lawyer.

"As often as I have been here," said the first old habitue, "I have never come down to see it by moonlight. What is it like?"

"Like something that I cannot very well describe," was the answer. "You had better all come down and see it for yourselves, before you leave the Notch."

"Still, you can give us some idea," pursued the old gentleman.

Horace Townsend hesitated and was silent for a moment, when Margaret Hayley said, her eyes just then fixed full upon his: "I *think* you can, Mr. Townsend, if I am not mistaken in the voice that I heard speaking for the Old Man of the Mountain, by the same moonlight, not many evenings ago."

The dusky cheek of the lawyer was full of red blood in an instant. He had been overheard, then, in his half-mad rhapsody to Rowan and himself. And *she* had heard him, of all women!—*she* had spoken with such frankness, not to say boldness, and that frankness appreciation at least, if not admiration! He might have uttered something more about "taking his chances" then, and had full warrant for the self-gratulation!

"I do not suppose that I can tell you either what I saw or felt," said Townsend, when that momentary flush had died away a little from his face. "I will try, however. I had been rolling ten-pins till past eleven, and it must have been midnight when I strolled down towards the Lake. I was in hopes that I should find no one here, for I wished to see it alone as well as by moonlight; and I had my wish. I saw no one and heard no one, on my way to the Lake or while here; and I do not suppose that any foot but my own pressed the damp green velvet that bordered the edge, or that any eye except my own and the All-seeing one that looks down over all the world at all midnights, saw the placid sheet lying in its solemn repose, with the shadows of the great cliff yonder reflected on its bosom, and here and there a little ripple as a puff of wind sighed through the branches, kissed the silver surface and passed over." [Pg 320]

The eyes of the speaker were full of humid light as he spoke, and at least one of the company marked the influence which seemed to be upon him—a mood of high imagination, sometimes seen in the ardent lovers of nature when revelling in their chosen study, and though less dangerous not less decided than the madness which habitually fell upon Saul. There was something fascinating in it, to all who saw and heard, even to those who held an intuitive dislike to the seer: what must the fascination have been to Margaret Hayley, who remembered one so unlike in personal appearance and yet so like in voice and apparently in habits of mind, loving nature so intently and describing it with the same fervor, while his love for *her* made a sacred undertone to all and completed the charm of look and word!

The lawyer needed no further urging, but went on:

"The little dock there, with the boats moored beside it, and the hut where our friend here keeps his horn and cannon,—all lay in a melancholy quiet which struck me like death—as if those who frequented them had gone away at some nightfall years ago, like the workmen who left their trowels in the mortar of unfinished Pompeii on the morning of its destruction,—never to return again and yet ever to be waited for, while the earth kept its course in the heavens. I was alone, and I suppose that imagination ran riot with me and made me partially a maniac. The hush was so awful that I dared not break it, even by a loud breath. I saw the Indians there, under yon sweeping trees to the left, whose branches bend down and almost kiss the water—saw an Indian canoe lying there, faces within it smeared with war-paint and the pointed arrow ready to twang from the bow-string. I expected to hear the war-whoop every instant—expected it, perhaps not in my human mind but in that other and more powerful mind for which we are none of us quite responsible. Then I saw—yes, I was sure that I saw the dusky shadow of a robber flitting along from pine to pine, far up on the side of the cliff there, silent and dangerous as death, and ready to drop down on the first living thing that passed beneath him. Then I saw fiery eyes through the branches, and thought that the panther and the catamount that lurked in these tangled woods two hundred years ago, divided possession once more with the Indians and were prowling about for some late banquet. I do not think that it was fear that I felt, for I would not have gone away if I could, any more than I could have gone away if I would; but it appeared to be the very silent haunt of nature in her hour of rest, wherewith nothing but the wild and the savage had any business; and it seemed impossible to throw aside the idea that even the tread of a civilized foot must be a sacrilege that only life could atone. Then there was a sudden plunge from the bushes into the water, a few yards up the bank, and a ripple following some large dark object swimming away towards the other shore. This was more real, and the feeling of awe began to pass away, for I knew that the swimmer must be a water-rat or otter that had been paying a midnight visit like myself and was now going homeward by the cool and refreshing marine route. That was the first noise I had heard, but others followed, for an owl began to hoot over yonder in the bushes and a young eagle—I suppose it must have been a young eagle—indulged in a scream from the top of the Cliff, where I believe he has a habit of nesting. Then the supernatural and the imaginative rolled away after they had held me an hour or two, and I was simply alone at two o'clock or a little later, beside Echo Lake, only half a mile from the bed that had been all that time waiting for me. I took the warning of the night-owl and the eagle, who no doubt intended to order me off as an intruder, and strolled back to the house. That is all, and perhaps quite enough of such rambling nonsense as it is!" [Pg 321]

"Rambling nonsense?" Whatever the other members of the company may have thought, evidently Margaret Hayley did not so regard it as she leaned anxiously forward, the presence of others apparently forgotten, her eyes fascinated in a sort of strange wonder by something in the face of the speaker, while her mind seemed not less singularly under the control of the utterance itself. [Pg 322]

Five minutes afterwards the parody on a steamboat touched the little wharf again and the company disembarked. Five minutes after that secondary period they separated from the close communion into which they had been transiently thrown during the preceding half-hour, many of them never to meet again in the same familiarity of intercourse, and perhaps some of them, though as yet inmates of the same abode, never to see each other's faces again in life! Such are the meetings and the partings of summer travel and watering-place existence, to which the nameless rhymer no less truly than touchingly referred when he spoke of those friendships quickly made and as quickly broken:

"——In hostels free to all commands
Save penury's and pity's;—

"In common rooms, where all have right
To tread with little heed or warning,
And where the guests of overnight

Are gone at early morning;—

"By tables where we sit at meat—
Sit, with our food almost untasted
Because we find some vacant seat
From which a friend has hasted;—

"In parlors where at eve we sit,
Among the music and the dancing,
And miss some lip of genial wit,
Some bright eye kindly glancing.

"————the haunted chambers left,
That almost choke us as we ponder,
And leave *us* quite as much bereft
As dearer ties and fonder."

CHAPTER XVI.

CLOUD AND STORM AT THE PROFILE—SIGHTS AND SENSATIONS OF A RAINY-DAY RIDE TO THE CRAWFORD—HORACE TOWNSEND AND HALSTEAD ROWAN ONCE MORE TOGETHER—UNEXPECTED ARRIVALS—A CAVALCADE OF MISERABLES—AN ASCENT OF MOUNT WASHINGTON, WITH EQUESTRIANISM AND WAR-WHOOPS EXTRAORDINARY.

Calms at sea are not more proverbially treacherous than pleasant mornings in the mountains; and long before that day closed which had opened so auspiciously, the heavy clouds came driving up through the Notch with the south-east wind. By nightfall a storm was inaugurated. Thenceforward, for two days, excursions to the Cannon, to Bald Mountain, to Mount Lafayette, or to any other of the points of scenery so plentiful in the Franconia Notch, and in which excursions all the visitors, however slightly acquainted, are more or less closely thrown into speaking intercourse with each other,—were things to be thought of but not attempted. The stages came in with smoking horses and moisture dripping alike from the hat of the driver and the boot of the coach; but few passengers arrived or departed. The bears walked sullenly their little round, or retired periodically to winter quarters in their narrow kennels. The valleys were filled with driving mist, varied by heavy down-pouring rain, and the mountains hid themselves sullenly from view, so that sometimes not even the brow of Eagle Cliff, hanging immediately over the house, could be distinguished through the dense clouds that swept down to the very roofs. Fires became prevalent, and those so fortunate as to possess rooms where the birchen wood could be set ablaze, remained closely sequestered there, dozing, or playing cards or backgammon, or once more turning over the leaves of books from which all the novelty had long before been extracted. Desultory groups met at meals, even the eaters coming down sluggishly. Some of the men patronized the billiard-room or the bowling-alley, but they rarely found lady partners or spectators, as in sunnier days. Even the hops in the parlor at evening were thinly attended, the weather seeming to have affected alike the nerves and muscles provocative of dancing, and the strings of the harp, violin and piano. Those who happened to possess copies of "Bleak House," and who remembered the marvellous phenomena of rainy weather existing at a certain time in and about the domain of Sir Leicester Dedlock, read the description over again and thought that nothing could be more beautifully applicable to the experience of storm-stayed sight-seers at a caravanserai among the mountains.

During those two days of storm and sluggishness, Horace Townsend, merely an excursion acquaintance of the Hayleys and Captain Hector Coles, and not such an intimate as would be likely to be invited to backgammon or chat in one of their private rooms,—never once met Margaret Hayley more nearly than within bowing distance when passing in or out of the dining-room or the parlor. One or both may have desired to continue the acquaintance without quite so much of distant familiarity; but if so, one or both knew the antagonistic influences surrounding them and did not think proper to raise an arm for buffeting the waves of separation.

There were not less than a dozen persons remaining at the Profile, who had the ascent of Mount Washington yet to make at an early day, and who intended to make it in the good old traditional way of horseback from the Crawford instead of acknowledging modern utility and bowing to the destruction of all romance by going up in carriages from the Glen. Some of these, beginning to be pressed for time, saw the steady rain and mist with impatience and found very little comfort in the assurances of the hotel-keepers, guides and stage-drivers, that the clouds were not likely to break away under a week, at least.

Monday brought this feeling to a culmination, and that morning, spite of all predictions, the impatient dozen ordered a stage and determined to drive over to the Crawford; bespeaking clear weather on the morrow, or on the next day at farthest, for their especial accommodation. Horace Townsend, whether wearied by circumstances which placed him "so near and yet so far" in his acquaintance with Margaret Hayley, or really touched with the prevailing madness for forcing Mount Washington to smile when that great mountain wished to be sullen,—Horace Townsend joined the malcontents and formed one of the closely-packed stage-load that on Monday morning

rolled off from the Profile on their way to the Crawford.

The voyagers were pursued by no small number of jokes and jeers from the piazza, as they drove away, on the folly of plunging out into a storm to accomplish an impossibility. But if any one of the number felt for a moment sore in mind and faint-hearted, they were soon consoled. Most of them (mixed male and female, though the former predominating) were true Nature-lovers who had recognized that however Fame and Fortune sometimes play cruel tricks upon their most ardent votaries, the kind Mother seldom failed to unveil her bosom at the coming of one of her true children. They had faith in the future, and that faith was at once repaid in the glory of the present.

For those who have only made the twenty-five miles of stage-ride between the two places, in fair weather, can have no idea of the peculiar charms of that day of capricious rain and floating mist. Closely shut in the lumbering coach, and well enveloped in shawls and dread-noughts and blankets, but with the windows open to allow looking back on the Franconia range they were leaving,—they enjoyed at intervals, during all the earlier portions of the ride, such splendid glimpses of cloud-land as never fall to the lot of mere fair-weather travellers.

At times the shroud of mist which had enveloped them would roll away, as they ascended the high land rising from Franconia towards Bethlehem; and then they would have the peaks of the Franconia range flecked and dotted with swales and waves and crests of transparent white that seemed alternately to be thousands of colossal sheep lying in the mountain pastures,—and again great masses of the purest and softest eider-down which had floated there and rested, from millions of birds filling the whole air above. Mount Lafayette at one moment, as some of the voyagers of that lucky morning will well remember, seemed to be capped and crowned with a wreath of untrodden snow, miles in extent and hundreds of feet in depth—such as no mountain ever wore upon its brow as a coronet, from the first morning of creation.

Exclamations of pleasure filled the coach, and jest and appreciative remark blended in pleasant proximity. "I shall always remember the air of this morning," said one, "as an atmosphere of bridal veils," and more than he treasured up the comparison as one worth remembering. "See here, Cora!" said another, to the only child in the coach, who nestled half asleep on the shoulder of her mother, pointing her attention meanwhile to a little pyramidal hill separate from the mountain range and at that point relieved against it: "See here, Cora! There is a little baby mountain!" "So there is!" answered Cora, with a world of drollery in her young eyes, "I wonder how long before it will grow to be as big as the rest of them!" Whereupon Cora was voted to have the best of the argument, and manhood once more worshipped childhood.

Away past Bethlehem and along the Ammonoosuc, an exaggeration, in its rocks, upon all the other mountain streams, with its few inches of water finding way among a perfect bed of boulders, and making the mere word "navigation" suggest so droll an image in that connection as to draw a loud laugh from the whole coach-load. Then past a couple of fishermen, heedless of the rain, rod in hand and creel at side, standing on the boulders in the middle of the river and practising the mysteries of the Waltonian art, report alleged with more "flies" assisting than those which they carried in their pocket-books! Then on, with the mist again closed down heavily, past the White Mountain House, that once, before the days of glory of the Glen, supplied the only so-called "carriage-road" to the top of Washington.

A mile or two more, and there was a space clear from trees on the left. As the coach swept up to it the mists seemed to shrink low for a moment. A heavy, dark line loomed on the sky, with almost the true sweep of a wide Gothic arch, a little sharpened at the top. "How graceful!" was the exclamation of one. "How high!—look!—why that is higher than any of the others that we have seen!" exclaimed a second. "Mount Washington," calmly said a habitue who caught a glimpse through the curtain from the back corner of the coach; and every voice joined in the cry.

The habitue was right—cloud and mist had rolled away for an instant, just at the opportune moment, and they had caught that magnificent first near view of the monarch, throned amid his clouds, glorious in the grace of form and the awe of majesty—seeming to bridge the very space between earth and heaven! Some of those favored gazers will dream of that first glance, years hence, when they have been straining the mental vision upward, in waking hours, to that unattainable and dim which rises above the mists of common life. Some of them will throne the great mountain in their hearts, and stretch out pleading arms to it in remembrance, in the dark days of shame and sorrow,—as if the treading of their feet upon its rocky pinnacle would be indeed an escape from the world—as if they might become sharers, indeed, in the majesty of its great solitude. Some of the travellers felt the solemnity of the hour and the scene, that day; and there was not even a sneer or a word of misappreciation for the adventurous genius who quoted, heedless of all that made it inappropriate:

> "Mount Blanc is the monarch of mountains:
>   They crowned him long ago,
> On a throne of rocks, in a robe of clouds,
>   With a diadem of snow!"

There was a brief ride remaining, then, till they rolled in over a level road, through thick overhanging woods, to the Crawford House in the White Mountain Notch. The mist had closed almost hopelessly down for the time, and they could only see occasional glimmers through it of the rough sides of old Mount Webster, dark-browed and massive as its namesake. It was only in

the brighter air of morning that they were to take in the whole location and see in front, to the right, Mount Willard, wooded on the side exposed to view, but bald and rugged farther down the Notch, like the Cannon at Franconia; with Mount Jackson to the left in front, beyond it the still higher peaks of Mount Webster, and rising at the left in the immediate foreground the long wooded slopes of Mount Clinton, over which the foot of every pilgrim to Mount Washington from the Crawford must make its first ascent.

The dull weather had driven almost all the visitors within doors, at the Crawford as at the Profile; but as the splashed coach rolled up there was at least one recognition—that of Halstead Rowan by Horace Townsend, the former, without any apparent reference to the humidity of the atmosphere, lying at lazy length on three chairs on the piazza and occupied with a cigar and a cheap novel. He had "shed" (that word seems to express the fact better than any other) his over-sized glove from his wounded hand, and seemed entirely to have recovered the use of that important member.

New acquaintances become old and ripen into friendships, very soon when all other surroundings are totally strange; and the two men, each so odd in his way, greeted each other as if they had been friends for a decade instead of intimates of less than a week. There may have been some bond in common, in the guess which each could make of the thoughts and entanglements of the other, calculated to force that friendship forward, even if it would have progressed more slowly under other circumstances.

The first inquiry of Townsend, as they shook each other warmly by the hand, was:

"Been up Mount Washington yet?"

"Not *this time*!" answered the other, significantly. "The fog has been nearly thick enough to swim in, ever since I have been here, and I do not know, if I had been as good a swimmer as you, Townsend, whether I should not have tried going up by water, as our friend Mrs. Brooks Cunninghame went up the Alps; but by land the thing has been impossible."

"Many waiting to go up?—or do they nearly all go around to the Glen, this season?" was the next inquiry.

"No, there are a good many sensible people left," was the reply, in the same tone of vivacious rattle. "Think of going up Mount Washington in a carriage! It is worse than making a mill-race out of Niagara, or approaching Jerusalem, as they will do one of these days, I suppose, amid the rumble and whistle of a railroad-train."

"Don't undervalue your own employment!" said Townsend.

"Oh, I do not," was the reply. "Railroad trains, as well as mills, are very good things in their places; but I suppose that a prejudice will always exist in favor of the fiery chariot instead of the balloon, as a means of making ascents into the celestial regions."

Horace Townsend laughed. "But you have not yet told me how many are waiting, or when you are really going up."

"Oh, there must be nearly or quite twenty of them, moping around the house, running out to look at the sky every ten minutes, and asking the clerk and the guides questions that they are about as fit to answer as a prairie-chicken to solve a problem in geometry! As to when we are going up—do *you* know?"

"*I* am going up to-morrow, whether any one else goes up or not," said the lawyer. "And by the way, I have bespoken a clear day for that especial occasion."

"Have you? Thank you! Then I suppose we can *all* go up!" replied the Illinoisan, as if the information had been the most serious in the world. "By the way—how are they all, over yonder!"

There was something very like a blush on the face of the questioner, and there was something varying very little from that phenomenon on the brown cheek of the other as he answered:

"I have not seen much of either," (what did he mean by "either," a word peculiarly applying, in common parlance, to *two*?) "but I believe that they are well."

"Still at the Profile?"

"Yes, and likely to remain there, for any thing that I know to the contrary."

"Any news of any kind? Any more accidents or startling events?"

"None—yes, there is one startling event. The Brooks Cunninghames came away the same day that you left. Have you got the old woman here?"

"Here? heaven forefend! No!" was the response. Then he added: "Why, by Jupiter, Townsend, you must be a wizard or in some kind of collusion with Meriam! See!—I'll be hanged if there is not the top of a mountain! It *is* clearing away! Hurrah for Mount Washington!"

He darted in at once from the piazza to the office, and Townsend, who had not yet even registered his name as an arrival, followed him. Most of the other passengers from the Profile were by that time registered and scattered away to their rooms for sartorial renovation.

A separate book was kept at the office, as usual at such places, over the head of each page of

which was printed: "Horses for Mount Washington," and in which, every day, those who wished to secure horses and guides for the succeeding or the first favorable day, registered their names, with the number of animals required and how many of them were to be ridden by ladies. A good many queer autographs might be observed in that book and some of its predecessors, for there was almost always some mischievous clerk behind the counter, amusing himself by telling immense stories to some of the other initiated, just as the un-initiated were coming up to register their names,—about the perils of the ride and how near he or some other person had come to falling over precipices of indefinite thousands of feet. This description of jocular practice very often shook the nerves of young travellers at the moment of booking, even when the frightened person was too far committed or too shame-faced to abandon his project; and there is no doubt that the original collection of chirography thus secured would prove only less interesting, on exhibition, than the original draft of the Declaration of Independence, or——the Emancipation Proclamation!

Several names had already been booked at hap-hazard on the day in question; and others of the storm-stayed, aware of the prospect of a "clearing-up," were by that time flocking around the book to secure their places. To the collection already made were very soon added the signatures of Townsend and Rowan, who intended, as neither would have a lady in charge, to make a great part if not all the trip together, while the two friends of Rowan, who were also to be of the ascending party, would "pair off" in the same manner.

This done, and supper-time approaching, Rowan, who had been lounging about in a sort of wet-weather box-coat undress which would have driven an ultra-fashionable to desperation, ran off to his room to make himself somewhat more presentable; while Horace Townsend, after patronizing the barber-shop for five minutes and providing himself with that inevitable cigar, stepped out once more upon the piazza to glance at the weather and satisfy himself how kind Mother Nature really intended to be on the morrow. He had but just emerged from the door when a close light carriage with two pairs of foaming horses—horses and carriage well covered with mud,—whirled around the corner of the Crawford and drew up at the door. The driver sprung from his seat and the carriage door was opened. Out of it stepped first Frank Vanderlyn, then Mrs. Vanderlyn and her daughter, who, as it afterwards appeared, had left the Profile after dinner and driven through post in that manner, under the impression that the next morning might after all be a fine one, and anxious (two of the three, at least) to join any party which would be likely to make the ascent.

"Whew!" said the lawyer to himself, between two puffs of his cigar, as he recognized the new-comers without their seeming to be aware of his presence. "Here is more of the Rowan romance and there may be more ten-pins necessary. I wonder whether that haughty woman and her son have any idea of the presence here of their friend from Chicago, and whether they have driven at that slapping pace through the mud, especially to be in his way! I wonder, too, whether Rowan's room is on the front, so that he has seen their arrival. I have half a notion to go up and apprize him of it; and then I have a whole notion to let him find it out for himself, and finish my cigar before supper comes in to spoil it."

Whatever might have been the amount of knowledge of the movements of Rowan possessed by the Vanderlyns, and whether in making a new entry on the books the old names were or were not always looked over,—certain it is that half an hour afterwards the lawyer found two more names booked for the ascent—those of "Mr. Francis Vanderlyn" and "Miss Clara Vanderlyn," the mother evidently not intending to expose herself to a fatigue which had lost its novelty, but to await their going and return at the Crawford.

It was very evident, to Townsend, eventually, that Rowan did not know any thing of the new arrival until he came down to supper. The Vanderlyns had taken their places at the table, very nearly opposite the lawyer, and returned with a nod of pleasant recognition the bow which he felt compelled to give them under the circumstances. Halstead Rowan, as he came in, took a seat on the same side of the table with the new-comers, and it was only as he gave the customary glance down after he had seated himself, that he seemed to recognize the sudden addition to the social circle. When he did recognize it, the lawyer (that man seems to be eternally watching the other, does he not?) caught one instant's blank surprise on his face, and he even put up his hand to rub his eyes, as if he fancied himself dreaming; but the surprise seemed to fade in a moment, and he pursued his supper with that fine appetite which is usually vouchsafed to such physical men. He left the table before the Vanderlyns had finished, and apparently without their having observed him. Townsend rose immediately and followed him, with a smile upon his face of which he was himself unconscious. He saw the Illinoisan go into the office and do precisely what he [the lawyer] would have laid a heavy stake that he would do—step to the counter and look over the list of "Horses for Mount Washington." Then a queer expression, nearer to malicious pleasure than any thing the other had before seen upon his face, flitted over it as he recognized the names. It might have been merely satisfaction—it might have been defiance blended with it in equal proportions; but at least it seemed to be capable of translation into words like these, which the very lips moved as if they would utter:

"So, Baltimore people, you are running yourselves into my way again, after I had gone off and left you alone, like a good fellow! You had better be poorer and less proud, or I richer; or you had better keep the distance which I put between us!"

A few moments after he approached Townsend with a laugh of deprecation and invited him to another game of ten-pins, which seemed to be quite as necessary to him when in a good humor as when in a rage. The invitation was accepted, and the important contest began once more. It

would have been a very unequal one, for Rowan had fully recovered the use of his right hand, but that the alleys themselves had something to say in the matter. Worse apologies for alleys than those of the Crawford no man ever saw; and such a thing as a "ten-strike" had never been recorded on the black-boards, as made on those long lines of uneven and floor-laid planks. Both the combatants had quite enough to do in getting down a "frame" with three balls; and for some time not a word outside of the game escaped either. [Pg 334]

Suddenly, and when he had rolled two of the three balls at the defiant pins, Rowan stopped short with one of the lignum-vitæ globes, of about the size of a human head, in his hand—twirling it the while as if it had been a paper balloon,—and said, in a short, curt tone:

"They have come!"

"Yes," answered Townsend, not pretending for a moment to be doubtful about the meaning of the personal pronoun. "Yes, I saw them at supper."

"Going up with us to-morrow, I believe!" added the Illinoisan.

"Ah, indeed, are they?" was the jesuitical inquiry of the lawyer.

"Yes, and they will have good company, won't they!" was the response.

Then he bowled away at the ten-pins, more energetically than ever, and with something in his manner and the nervous jerk of his arm, that once more recalled Townsend's idea of his feeling, while in the act, like shooting some one down a mountain precipice like a pebble-stone, or sweeping away a fate like a cobweb with one of those polished globes of iron wood.

Only a couple of games, and then they went in to bed with a mutual reminder that the motto in the morning would be "to horse and away!" and that above all things they must be watchful against that phase of indolence vulgarly known as "oversleeping." The house was nearly silent, all the prospective riders having retired for the night, and soon slumber fell upon that hive of human bees wandering in search of the honey of unlaboring pleasure, gathered under the roof of Gibb and Hartshorne at the Crawford. [Pg 335]

Fell, but not too deeply, for that which is to be brief has a right to be intense; and the hours of repose were relentlessly numbered. Neither Townsend nor Rowan need have been anxious about waking in the morning; for such a blast and roar of horrible sound as swept through the corridor at about seven, A. M., from the big Chinese gong in the hands of an enthusiastic negro who probably felt that he had no other opportunity of making his requisite "noise in the world," would have been sufficient to awaken any thing short of the dead! For once, every one obeyed the summons while anathematizing the mode, and the breakfast-table was soon surrounded.

Here, those who labored under some kind of indefinite impression that the summit of Mount Washington was somewhere beyond the Desert of Arabia—that nothing eatable or drinkable could ever be discovered on its top—and that the more they ate the better able they would be to endure the fatigue of the ascent,—made vigorous attacks on the steaks, eggs and chickens, and drank coffee, milk and cold water without limit. Those better advised (and the fact is here set down as a bit of practical experience worth heeding),—those who knew the painful effect of attempting to climb a mountain when gorged to repletion (the traveller, not the mountain—the mountain is always full of "gorges")—those, we say, confined themselves to an egg or two and a small slice of rare steak, and drank lightly.

When the party one by one dropped out from breakfast, the scene in front of the house was at once picturesque and singular—worth remembering by those who shared in it or who have shared in one similar,—and worth the feeble attempt at verbal daguerreotype which may do something to preserve it against that day when the Crawford decays and Mount Washington is either levelled off or ascended by means of a locomotive or a dumb-waiter.

More than twenty names—somewhat more than half of them belonging to ladies—were on the book for the ascent; and a corresponding number of horses were scattered over the broad open space in front of the door. All were saddled and bridled; but among them moved half-a-dozen guides in rough coats, thick boots and slouched hats, inspecting and tightening the girths, looking to the cruppers and bridles, and paying especial attention to the animals provided for the female portion of the cavalcade, for whose safety they ever hold themselves and are ever held by the hotel-proprietors, peculiarly responsible. [Pg 336]

By way of back-ground to this singular scene, under a clump of trees to the right walked two full-grown black bears (no mountain resort can be thoroughly complete without its bears!)—chained and surly, ever keeping their weary round and grunting out their disapprobation at being confined to such narrow quarters without an occasional naughty youngster for lunch.

But what a spectacle was presented when the mount was ready and the riders had all emerged from the door of the Crawford! Were these the belles and beaux of previous days, captivating and being captivated by perfection of raiment as well as charm of face and grace of figure? If so, never had such a metamorphosis taken place since long before Ovid. Every man wore some description of slouched hat, brought in his baggage or hired in the hotel wardrobe,—bad, very bad, atrocious, or still worse, and each tied down over the ears with a thick string or a handkerchief. Coarse and old trowsers were turned up over heavy boots; and the roughest and coarsest of box-coats that could be provided were surmounted in the majority of instances by striped Guernsey shirts still rougher. All the dilapidated gloves and coarse tippets that could be

mustered, with a few shawls and blankets, completed the equipment of a set of men who certainty looked too badly even for brigands and seemed the enforced victims of some hideous masquerade.

But if the men looked badly, what shall be said of that which should have been the fairer portion of the cavalcade? [Pg 337] Salvator Rosa never dreamed of such objects, and Hogarth would have gone stark mad in the attempt to depict them. Ringlets were buried under mob-caps and old woollen-hoods, and smothered in bad straw hats and superannuated felt jockeys, tied down in the same ungraceful manner as those of the men. Hoops had suddenly ceased to be fashionable, even in advance of the sudden Quaker collapse in the cities; and every shape, bulky or lank, showed in its own undisguised proportions—here a form of beauty, there a draped lamp-post, and yonder a bedizened bolster. In short, the very worst riding-dresses possible to achieve seemed to have been carefully gathered from all the old-clothes shops in the universe; and if the men were the ugliest brigands of the dark souled Italian painter, the women were the drollest witches that ever capered through the brain of the master-dramatist.

And yet there were sparkling eyes showing occasionally from under those hideous bonnets, that perhaps looked the brighter for the contrast; and it is not sure that one or two of the sweet auburn curls of Clara Vanderlyn, which had strayed away from their confinement and lay like red gold on the neck of her shabby black riding-dress, could ever have shown to more bewitching advantage.

Every one laughed at the appearance of the other, as the mount was taking place, and as Hartshorne, of the Crawford, who seemed to have measured the capabilities of every horse and calculated the weight and skill of every rider, called off the names from the roll-book, and gave place to each in turn.

Of the material of the mount, it is only necessary to specify three or four of the horses, which have to do with the subsequent details of that eventful excursion. Miss Vanderlyn had a neat little black pony, apparently very careful in step, and an "old-stager" at ascending the mountains. Her brother Frank rode a tall bay, of high spirit and better action than any other horse on the ground. Rowan had asked Hartshorne (some of the others heard him, with a sensation of genuine horror) [Pg 338] to give him the worst-tempered horse in the stable; and as he was known to be an old habitue of the mountains, he had been accommodated according to request. So far as could be discovered by his action, his horse, a bay of fifteen and a half or sixteen hands, with blood, foot and bottom, would kick, bite, strike, run away, shy to one side, and do every thing else wicked and unsafe that should taboo a horse from being ridden at all,—except stumble, from which latter fault he was remarkably clear. Townsend was accommodated with a gray mare of moderate size and a dash of Arab blood, that had been unused for nearly a month from having nearly broken the neck of one of the proprietors, on his personal allegation that he was at least a fair rider, and that the breaking of his own neck would be the least damage that could be inflicted on any member of the party.

Thick morning mists still hid the tops of Mount Webster and Mount Willard, visible from the house, and hung amid the heavy woods of Mount Clinton, although the storm had really passed away with the night,—as at nine o'clock, all mounted, the guides took their places, one at the head of the cavalcade and the others scattered at intervals through it, and the whole line moved off up the mountain. It should be mentioned here, however, that Townsend (the observer again) saw during the mount the only recognition which took place between the two principal persons of his outside drama—Halstead Rowan and Clara Vanderlyn. Frank was mounting his horse, after having assisted his sister to her saddle, when Rowan brushed by her on his vicious bay, very near her and to the left. He saw their eyes meet, and saw Rowan bend so low that his head almost touched the neck of his horse. Clara Vanderlyn replied by a gesture quite as mute and quite as unlikely to be observed by any one not especially watchful. She nodded her head quickly but decidedly, and threw the roughly-gloved fingers of her left hand to her lips. That was all, and of course unobserved by Frank Vanderlyn, who may or may not have been aware that the man [Pg 339] whom he had insulted was a member of the ascending party; but it was quite enough, beyond a doubt, to set the blood boiling in the veins of the Illinoisan with all the fury of the water surging up in flame and smoke in the Iceland Geysers.

Rowan and Townsend had places assigned them near the middle of the line, but as the cavalcade began to move, the human demon of unrest was missing from his place. He was to be seen at the end of the piazza at that moment, talking to Hartshorne, and no doubt making a few additional inquiries as to the character of the amiable animal he bestrode. The lawyer called out to him to "Come on!" but he answered with a wave of the hand and a shout:

"Go ahead! don't wait for me! I will be with you directly!"

Through the thick woods of Mount Clinton they swept up, over a bridle-path so rough as to have made the most laborious if not the most dangerous walking—over great boulders of stone lying in the very path, and apparently impossible to get over or around—over patches of corduroy road utterly defying description, except to the men who isolated Fort Donelson and planted the Swamp Angels in the marshes of Charleston—over and through gutters and gulches of slippery stone and more slippery mud—but ever ascending at a painful acclivity. The horses breathed heavily; and their riders, in the thick and foggy air, did little better. They caught occasional glimpses through the trees, down the sudden slopes at the left, of the thick mist rolling below, but could see nothing else to remind them of the height they were attaining; and as the dense fog swept in their faces, and the trees dripped moisture on them when they swept beneath their branches, and

the path grew more and more desolate and difficult, they grew silent, the whole cavalcade, apparently by common consent. There are aspects in which Nature looks and feels too solemn for the light word and the flippant jest; and the man who cannot be awed beyond his ordinary mood when standing under the edge of the sheet of Niagara, or beside the sea when it is lashed into resistless fury, or in gale and mist on the bleak, bare, desolate mountains of the North, should never insult the grand and the terrible by going into their presence! [Pg 340]

And yet all persons, who have true reverence in their hearts, are not always awed beyond themselves, even in the most impressive of situations: as witness, to some degree, the incidents following.

They had surmounted the first acclivity, perhaps a mile from the Crawford, and were commencing a slight descent which made every rider look to the horse's feet and ride with a slight tremor,—when the stillness was suddenly broken in a manner which almost curdled the blood of the timid and needed a second reassurance for even the boldest.

"Pop-pop-pop-pa-hoo! Hoo-hoo-oo-oo!" came from the path below, with that hideous power and distinctness of lungs that have chilled so many hearts and whitened so many faces since the white man first intruded on the hunting-grounds of the American Indian. A shrill, dissonant, horrible yell, combining the blind ferocity of the beast with the deadlier rage of man, such as made the poor mother clasp her babe closer to the breast when it rang around the block-houses of Massachusetts and New York in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries—such as less than three years ago proved that it was undying in the savage throat, by pealing over the mangled bodies and burned dwellings of the Minnesota massacres.

"Good heavens!—what is that?" cried half a dozen of the ladies in a breath.

"An Indian war-whoop, certainly!" said one of the gentlemen, his face white as wax at the sudden shock.

"It is war time, and they tell me that the rebels yell terribly!" said one of the ladies. "Can it be—" but then the absurdity of the idea struck her and she paused.

"Albert Pike was a New England man: perhaps he is here with his Arkansas savages!" said another, whether in jest or earnest no one could well discover. [Pg 341]

It was surprising how in that one instant the cavalcade had shortened its length—the foremost stopping and the rearmost closing up. Man *is* a gregarious animal, especially when a little surprised or frightened!

Perhaps Horace Townsend had been as badly startled as any of the others, at the first instant; but he possessed some data which the others lacked for discovering the source of the warlike yell.

"Do not be alarmed, ladies!" he said, after an instant. "I think there is only one Indian uttering that horrible sound, and you may depend upon it that he is white and no rebel. Yes—see!—here he comes!"

They had been, as already indicated, descending a quarter of a mile of most difficult and dangerous path, in which every rider experienced more or less of tremor, and over which the horses were picking their careful way as if they realized that human necks were in peril. At the instant when the attention of the company was thus directed backwards, Halstead Rowan had reached the top of the rise, behind, and was just giving vent to a second and supplemental yell which rang through the woods as if a dozen throats had taken part in it, and which must have been heard half way down the Notch.

"Pop-pop-pop-pa-hoo! Hoo-hoo-oo-oo!"

The rider was commencing the descent, too, but not precisely like the rest, picking his way, on a careful half-trot, half-walk; on the contrary his horse had his ears laid back and was going over the broken stones at such a gallop as he might have held on an ordinary highway! The reins seemed to be lying loose on his neck, and—could those horrified people believe their eyes?—so surely as they were threading the tangled woods of Mount Clinton, with thankful hearts for every rood passed over without broken necks, so surely Halstead Rowan, a novel description of Mazeppa unknown even to Frank Drew or Adah Isaacs, sat his horse in what might be called "reverse order," his back towards them and his face to the animal's tail! [Pg 342]

"Good heavens!" "The man is mad!" "Oh, do stop the horse!" "It is running away with him!" "He will be killed!"—such were the exclamations that broke from the party as Rowan's equestrianism was recognized—most of them from the female portion of the cavalcade. What would it not have been worth to see sweet Clara Vanderlyn's face at the moment when she first realized who was the reckless rider, and to know whether she cared for his welfare at all and whether anxiety or confidence predominated in her thought!

But the rider did not pause, or seem very much in peril. His horse kept his feet quite as well as any of the others; and Townsend remembering the Comanches and the Arapahoes, was forced to believe that the wild equestrian must have the alleged Indian power of communicating his own will to his horse, and that he could ride almost anywhere and in any manner, in safety.

Rowan drew the reins (which he *had* in his hands, after all) as he came up with the cavalcade,

and said:

"I hope I did not startle any of you ladies with my Indian whoop. Upon my honor I did not mean to do so, if I did; for I hate practical jokes that cause pain, quite as much as any of the other fellows, the—gentlemen. But the woods tempted me, and I have not enjoyed such an opportunity for the use of the lungs, this many a day."

"I believe some of us were a little frightened for a moment, but no harm done," said Horace Townsend. "But let me ask you—is not your riding just a little bit careless?"

"Well, yes, just the very least bit in the world, perhaps, for *some* people!" answered the wild fellow; and Townsend fancied that he caught him trying, at the moment, to catch a glimpse, unseen by Frank Vanderlyn, under the hood of Clara, who was not very far from him. If he did make the attempt, he failed, for the young girl dared not or would not expose her face. "But come, Townsend," Rowan added, "will you not push on with me a little further ahead and let these slow coaches come up at their leisure?" [Pg 343]

"At *your* rate of progress? No," laughed Townsend. "I am not a very bad rider, I believe, but I have never practised in a circus or on a prairie. Go ahead, if you are in a hurry; that is, provided you know which end is going foremost!"

"Found another place where you will not follow me, eh, old boy!" rattled the Illinoisan, with a reference which the other easily understood. "Well, I will see you by-and-bye, then. Go along, Bay Beelzebub!" and the next moment, darting by the centre line and taking precedence even of the leading guide, in a path that was literally nothing but a three-cornered trough, he was to be seen ascending the next rise, his horse trotting along riderless, and himself springing from crag to crag beside the path, his hand upon the animal's back and the reins lying loose on its neck. He had alighted, of course, without checking the speed of the horse in any degree.

But a few minutes later, and when the cavalcade had reached the top of Mount Clinton and was coming out from the gloom of the heavy woods into the partial sunshine,—they saw the odd equestrian riding over a portion of road that was only moderately bad, standing erect on his horse's back, supported by the reins and his own powers of balancing,—and heard his deep, cheery voice ringing out in a song that seemed as complete a medley as his own character. It may be permissible to put upon record one of the stanzas, which some of those nearest him caught and remembered:

"The heart bowed down by weight of wo—
  When comin' thro' the rye?
If I had a donkey wot wouldn't go—
  Good-bye, my love, good-bye!
I see them on their winding way:
  Old clothes, old clothes to sell!
So let's be happy while we may—
  Lost Isabel!"

[Pg 344]

Still later, the riders were all thrown into momentary horror by coming upon him, as they rounded the head of a gorge near the top of Mount Prospect,—his horse on a walk, and himself hanging over one side, apparently by the heels. The impression prevailed that he must have been knocked senseless by a limb, in some of his pranks, and got his feet fatally entangled in the stirrups,—the result of which impression was that a sudden scream, in a woman's voice, burst out from some portion of the line, but so instantaneously suppressed that no one could trace it. It turned out that in this last operation, so far from being killed, he was only practising the Indian mode of hanging beside his horse, supported by one hand at the neck and one foot over the saddle, after the manner of the wild tribes of the Plains when throwing the horse as a shield between themselves and the shot of a pursuer!

After a time, however, the reckless fellow seemed to have grown tired of his humor; for, as the long line crossed over the peak of Prospect to Monroe, and the north wind and the sun had so driven away the clouds that the riders began to realize the glorious prospect opening upon them on every hand,—he took his place in the line, next to his deserted comrade Townsend, sat his horse like a Christian, and joined in the bursts of admiration vented on all sides, with an enthusiasm which showed that the scenery had never palled upon him by familiarity.

And what views indeed were those that burst upon them as they crossed from Franklin to Monroe, and that sea of which the stiffened waves were mountains stretched out for an hundred miles in every direction! Some there were, in that line, who had stood on the prouder and more storied peaks of Europe, and yet remembered nothing to diminish the glory of that hour. How the deep gorges slept full of warm sunlight, and how the dark shadows flitted over them, and flickered, and thinned, and faded, as one by one the light clouds were driven southward by the wind! With what a shudder, passing over the narrow ridge or back-bone connecting Monroe and Franklin, they looked down into "Oakes' Gulf" on the right and the "Gulf of Mexico" on the left, only separated by a yard of bushy rock from a descent of three thousand feet on one side, and by less than three yards of slippery stone from more than two thousand feet on the other! [Pg 345]

The path is a sort of narrow trough, rough enough, but quite as safe, and to those who keep it there is not the least possible danger. Indeed the rider, half hidden in the trough, scarcely knows the fearful narrowness of the bridge over which he is passing; and thousands cross this pass and

recross it, and bring away no idea of the sensation that may be gained by a little imprudent hanging over the verge on either side! None of the riders in that cavalcade went back to their beds at the Crawford without a much more intimate knowledge of the capabilities of that situation; but of this in due time.

It is impossible for any one who has never made a similar ascent, or who has only ascended with a much smaller number, to conceive the appearance made by that score of equestrians at various points when crossing the open but uneven peaks in the last approach to Washington. Varied in stature, sex and costume, and all sufficiently outre to astonish if not to horrify,—what views the leading riders of the line could catch at times, looking back at the motley line! Some half buried in the trough of the path or midway in a gulch, so that only the head would be visible; others perched on the very top of a huge boulder, ascending or descending; some clinging close to mane or neck as the horse scrambled up an ascent of forty degrees; others lying well back on the saddle when descending a declivity of the same suddenness. What dreams of the Alps and the Apennines there are in such ascents—dreams of the toilers over St. Gothard and the muleteers of the Pyrenees—dreams of memory pleasant to those who have such past experiences to look back upon, and substitutes no less pleasant to many who long for glances at other lands but must die with only that far-off glimpse of the fulness of travel which Moses caught from the hills of the Moabites over that inheritance of his race upon which he was never to enter.

It yet wanted half an hour to noon, and Mount Washington towered full before them as they came out on the top of Franklin, by the little Lake of the Clouds which lay so saucily smiling to the sun and coquetting with the mists. The peak, a huge mass of broken and naked stone, half a mile up on every side and so sheer in pitch that foot-hold seemed hopeless, would have looked totally discouraging but for the white line of path which, winding around it on the north-west, showed that it must before have been achieved.

Up—up—over broken and slipping stones of every size and description, from the dimensions of a brick-bat to those of a dining-table—stones gray and mossed, without one spoonful of earth to prove that the riders had not surmounted the whole habitable globe and lost themselves in some unnatural wilderness of rock! And feeling joined with sight to enhance the desolate fancy, for though so nearly high noon the wind blew at that dizzy height with the violence of a gale, and the Guernsey wrappers and the clumsy gloves had long before proved that the rough and homely may be more useful than the beautiful.

Two or three hundred yards from the Tip-Top House, the rough stone walls of which were glooming above—the party were dismounted, the horses picketed by the guides, and over the broken stones and yawning fissures the dismounted riders struggled up, strong arms aiding weaker limbs, and much care necessary to prevent heedless steps that might have caused injuries slow of recovery. Up—up, over the little but difficult remaining distance—till all stood by the High Altar on the top of Mount Washington.

Above the clouds, swales of which they saw sweeping by, half way down the mountain—above the earth, its cares and its sorrows, it seemed to them for the moment that they stood; and only those who have made such a pilgrimage can realize the glory of that hour. The mountains of Vermont North-westward, those of Canada North-eastward, those of Massachusetts to the South and the Franconia range full to the West; lakes lying like splashes of molten silver at their feet and rivers fluttering like blue silken ribbons far away; towns nestled in the gorges and hamlets glimmering up from the depths of the ravines; long miles of valleys filled with sunlight, as if the very god of day had stooped down and left them full of the warmth of his loving kiss; peak upon peak rising behind and beyond each other, and each tinted with some new and richer hue, from gold to purple and from sunny green to dark and sombre brown; beyond all, and on the extreme verge of the sight-line to the East, one long low glint of light that told of the far Atlantic breaking in shimmering waves on the rocky coast of Maine; the world so far beneath as to be a myth and an unreality, distance annihilated, and the clear, pure air drank in by the grateful lungs appearing to be a foretaste of that some day to be breathed on the summit of the Eternal Hills,—these were the sights and these the sensations amid which the dark cheek of Horace Townsend seemed touched with a light that did not beam upon it in the valleys below, with his eyes grown humid and utterance choked by intense feeling; while all the heart of glorious womanhood in Clara Vanderlyn fluttered up in the truest worship of that God who had formed the earth so beautiful; and even Halstead Rowan once more forgot pride, poverty, insult, and the physical exuberance which made either endurable, to fold his strong arms in silence, lift the innate reverence of his thoughts to the Eternal and the Inevitable, and vow to submit with childlike faith to all of triumph or humiliation that might be ordained in the future.

CHAPTER XVII.

Horace Townsend with a Lady in Charge—An adventure over the "Gulf of Mexico"—Clara Vanderlyn in deadly peril—A Moment of Horror—Halstead Rowan and a display of the Comanche riding—Townsend's eclipse—The return to the Crawford—Margaret Hayley again, and a Conversation overheard.

It was perhaps two o'clock before the meetings and partings were over between the large party whom we have seen ascending from the Crawford, and the yet greater number who had come up

from the Glen House by the belittling novelty of the mountain, the "carriage road,"—before the dinner at the Tip-Top House was discussed, hearty and plentiful enough, if not remarkably varied, —before the guides of the cavalcade had done "chaffing" the carriage drivers from the Glen, whom they seemed to regard very much as "old salts" do "fresh-water sailors,"—before every member of the party had viewed the magnificent scenery from every conceivable point, drank their fill of a beauty that might not be duplicated for years or excelled in a lifetime, and filled pockets and reticules equally full of all the maps and books that could be bought and all the geological specimens that could be picked up, as memorials of the visit. By that hour the warning of the guides was heard, reminding all that there was no more time remaining than would suffice to carry themselves and their tired horses back to the Crawford by nightfall. At once, then, the descent began—supposed, in advance, to be so uneventful and merely a pleasant diminished repetition of the experiences of the ascent.

As they climbed down the broken rocks of the peak to their patiently-waiting horses (they would probably have waited patiently until they dropped with hunger, if by that means the rider and his saddle could have been avoided; for your mountain horse does *not* find unalloyed pleasure in his occupation!)—when near the "corral," as it may be called, Frank Vanderlyn left his sister for a moment and stepped over to Horace Townsend, who was descending alone, Halstead Rowan (as usual) at some distance ahead and already preparing to mount and away. [Pg 349]

"Would you have any objections, sir," the young man asked, "as I believe that you have no lady in charge, to ride in company with my sister on the way down?"

"Certainly not!" replied Townsend, though a little surprised at the salutation and request from one of the haughty Vanderlyns to whom he had not even been introduced. "I shall be proud of the charge, if your sister and yourself feel like placing so much confidence in an entire stranger."

"Oh, *we* know a gentleman when we see him!" replied the young man, not a little arrogantly, as it appeared to the lawyer, and with a sinister glance at the Illinoisan which indicated that it would have been some time before *he* was entrusted with the same responsibility.

"I am flattered!" said Townsend, with the bow which the speech demanded and yet did not deserve. "Do you remain on the top yourself?"

"No," answered the young man. "But the fact is that my horse kicks. He kicked my sister's pony twice in coming up; and I am afraid of some trouble in going down, if she rides behind me. It will be better for me to drop into the rear of all, where the ill-tempered devil cannot do injury to any one."

A few words of quasi-introduction and explanation between Vanderlyn, Clara and the lawyer followed; and Horace Townsend, who had come up the mountain without any lady and only in the casual companionship of a man who continually rode away and left him alone, found himself ready to go down it with the fairest member of the company in charge! Had nothing else intervened since the ride up from Littleton to the Profile and that long, steady glance of admiration which had then been bestowed upon the sweet face and auburn hair,—what a dangerous proximity this might have proved! But the human heart, expansive as it may be, has not quite the capacity of a stage-coach or a passenger-car; and to prevent falling in desperate love with one fascinating woman thrown in one's way, there is perhaps no guard so potent as being in real or fancied desperate love with another! [Pg 350]

Halstead Rowan and the lady whom Townsend had reason to believe the object of his hope and his despair, had not been flung together and apart from others, for one moment during the day—Mr. Frank Vanderlyn had taken especially good care in that respect; though the lawyer had little cause to doubt that if both could have had their choice of companionship, they would have stood side by side and without others too near, by the High Altar which crowned the summit of the mountain, and spoken words difficult to unsay again during the lifetime of either. But if he had not been alone with Clara Vanderlyn, there is equally little doubt that he had looked at her much oftener than at the most admired point of scenery on the route. And as Frank Vanderlyn strolled away to his horse, and Townsend, with the lady obviously under his charge, was preparing to mount, he saw Rowan, with one foot in the stirrup and the other on the ground, looking over at him and his companion, with the most comical expression of wonder on his face that could well have been compressed into the same extent of physiognomy. The heart of the new knight-errant, which must have been a soft one or he would never have labored under that weakness, smote him at the thought of his apparent desertion; and with a word of apology he stepped away from the lady and approached the dismounted amateur Comanche.

"You don't mean to say that you are going to——" said the latter, and he nodded his head comically and yet a little pitifully towards Clara Vanderlyn.

"Ride down with Miss Vanderlyn? Yes!" answered the lawyer. [Pg 351]

"And who the deuce asked you to do it, I should like to know?"

"Her brother."

"Phew-w-w!" A prolonged whistle, very characteristic and significant.

Townsend, in a word, explained the affair.

"All right!" said the Illinoisan. "But, look here, old fellow! You haven't arranged this affair

yourself, eh? No meetings on a single track, you know!"

"Not a bit of it!" laughed Townsend at the professional illustration. "Confidence for confidence! Have you not seen more closely than *that*?"

"Yes, I thought I had!" answered Rowan. "Well, all right! Go ahead! But by Jupiter, if you do not take the best care of that girl, and she gets into any kind of a scrape by riding with a man who *can't* ride, there will be somebody challenged to something else than ten-pins!"

Townsend laughed and turned away. The time had been, he thought, when incapacity to ride would scarcely have been set down as among his short-comings. But every thing, even equestrianism, was to be reckoned by comparison!

A moment after, all the party were in the saddle; and then commenced a descent still more laborious than the ascent, at least to the tired horses that groaned almost humanly as they slid down the sudden declivities, and to the more timid of the riders. Horace Townsend rode immediately before Miss Vanderlyn, a little forward of the centre of the Indian file (the only possible mode of riding in those narrow bridle-paths)—Rowan half-a-dozen further behind, then two or three others, and Frank Vanderlyn, with his dangerous bay, bringing up the rear.

The lawyer found his fair companion all that her face had indicated, in the desultory conversation which sprung up between them as they made their way downward from the summit, descending the peak of the monarch and riding back over the broad top of Monroe towards Franklin. Clara Vanderlyn conversed genially and easily, and had evidently (in spite of some restrictions already suggested,) enjoyed the day with the full warmth of an ardent nature. She seemed an excellent horsewoman, easy and self-possessed in the saddle, and Townsend observed that she found leisure from the care of picking her way, to look back several times over her shoulder. For a long time he may have been undecided whether her regard was directed at her brother, at the extreme end of the line, or at some one in the middle distance. The one glance of anxiety would have been very natural: the other, compounded of interest only, may have been likewise natural enough—who can say? [Pg 352]

They were crossing Monroe to Franklin, over the narrow back-bone of land that has been mentioned in the ascent, and at the very point where Oakes' Gulf, now on the left, and the scarcely less terrible Gulf of Mexico on the right, narrowed the whole causeway to not much more than a dozen of feet,—when Townsend heard a sudden and sharp cry behind him. At that point the descent of the path was very precipitous, and over stones so rugged that the horses kept their feet with great difficulty; and in his anxiety to insure safe footing he had for the moment lost sight of his fair companion—a poor recommendation of his ability as an escort, perhaps, but not less true than reprehensible! At the cry he turned instantly, though he could not so suddenly check the course of his horse down the path without danger of throwing him from his feet; and as he looked around, through the olive brown of his cheek a deadly whiteness crept to the skin, and his blood stood still as it had probably never before done since the tide of life first surged through his veins.

It has been the lot of many men to look upon a horror accomplished or so nearly accomplished that any reversal of the decree of fate seemed to be beyond hope. Such is the gaze upon the strewn dead of the battle-field, before the life has quite gone out from a few who are already worse than dead, and when the groans and the cries for "water!" to cool the lips parched in the last fever, have not yet entirely ceased. Such is the hopeless glance at the windrow of dead strewing the shore when a ship is going to pieces in the surf, in plain sight and yet beyond the aid of human hands, and when every moment is adding another to the drowned and ghastly subjects for the rough-coated Coroner. Such is the stony regard at the crushed victims of a railroad catastrophe, or the charred and blackened remains of those who were but a little while ago living passengers on the steamboat that is just burning at the water's edge. Such, even, is the shuddering glance at the brave and unconscious firemen who stand beneath a heavy wall, when that wall is surging forward and coming down in a crushing mass upon their very heads, with no power except a miracle of Omnipotence to prevent their being flattened into mere pan-cakes of flesh, and blood, and bone. All these, and a thousand others, are horrors accomplished or beyond hope of being averted; and they are enough to sicken the heart and brain of humanity brought into sudden familiarity with them. But perhaps they are not the worst—perhaps that yet unaccomplished but probable horror is still more terrible, because uncertainty blends with it and there is yet enough of hope to leaven despair. The life not yet fully forfeited, but going—going; the form not yet crushed out of the human semblance, but to be so in a moment unless that one chance intervenes; the face—especially if the face be that of woman, a thousand times more beautiful in the relief of that hideous mask of death which the gazer sees glooming behind it,—this is perhaps the hardest thing of all to see and not go mad. [Pg 353]

None of these conditions may have been quite fulfilled in the glance cast backward by Horace Townsend at that moment; but let us see how far the situation varied from the most terrible of requirements.

Going over that back-bone in the morning, the lawyer, who chanced to be for the moment alone, had swung himself from his horse, leaving the animal standing in the trough, peered through the bushes to the right, down into Oakes' Gulf, and walked to the edge of the broad stone that formed the projection over the Gulf of Mexico. He had found that stone smooth and rounded, a little slippery from the almost perpetual rains and mists beating upon it, not more than eight to ten feet wide from the path to the verge, and with a perceptible slope downwards in the latter [Pg 354]

direction. He had thought, then, that it needed a clear head and a sure foot (both of which he possessed) to stand in that position or even to tread the stone at any distance from the path. And so thinking, he had swung himself back into the saddle and ridden on,—the incident, then, not worth relating—now, a thing of the most fearful consequence.

For as he glanced back, at that sudden cry, he saw Clara Vanderlyn sitting her horse on the very top of that smooth plateau of stone overlooking the two thousand feet of the Gulf of Mexico, at what could not have been more than four or five feet from the awful verge, and certainly on the downward slope of what was an insecure footing even for the plastic foot of man—much more for the clumsy iron-shod hoof!

What could have induced her trained pony to spring out from the path a few feet behind and rush into that perilous elevation, must ever remain (in the absence of an equine lexicon) quite as much of a mystery as it seemed at that moment. Perhaps it was in going down some such declivity of path as that before him, that he had been kicked by the vicious bay of Frank Vanderlyn while making the ascent, and that he had concluded to wait on this convenient shelf until all the rest had gone by, before he consented to make the passage with his fair burthen. Perhaps the movement was merely one of those unaccountable freaks of sullen madness in which horses as well as men sometimes have the habit of indulging. At all events, such was the situation; and the recollection of it, as thus recalled to those who were present, will be quite enough, as we are well aware, to set the heart beating most painfully. What, then, must have been the feeling of all who saw, and especially of that man who had promised to *protect* the fair being thus placed in peril! What thoughts of the playful threat of Halstead Rowan must have rushed through his brain—that "if she got into any kind of a scrape by riding with a man who *couldn't* ride," such and such fatal results would follow! Not a duel with the Illinoisan—oh, no!—but a black, terrible, life-long duel with his own self-reproaches and remorse for heedlessness and want of judgment—this would be the doom more fearful than a thousand personal chastisements, if danger became destruction. One clumsy movement of the horse's feet, one slip on the stone, and she would as certainly go over that dizzy precipice and fall so crushed and mangled a mass into the gulf below that her fragments could scarcely be distinguished from those of the pony she rode—as certainly as she had grace and love and beauty crowning her life and adding to the possible horror of her death. He did not know, then, how many of the cavalcade saw the situation, or how the blood of most who saw stood still like his own, with dread and apprehension.

The inconceivable rapidity of human thought has been so often made a matter of comment, that words could but be wasted in illustrating it. It shames the lightning and makes sluggard light itself. All these thoughts in the mind of Horace Townsend scarcely consumed that time necessary to draw rein and turn himself round in the saddle in a quick attempt to alight, rush up the side of the rock and seize her horse by the bridle or swing her from her seat. He had no irresolution—no moment of hesitation—he only thought and suffered in that single instant preceding action.

"For God's sake do not move! I will be there in one instant!" he said in a low, hoarse, intense voice that reached her like a trumpet's clang.

"Oh yes—quick! quick!" he heard her reply, in a convulsive, frightened voice. "Oh, quick!—you don't know where I am!"

Poor girl!—he *did* know where she was, too well.

She was braver than most women, or she would probably have jerked the bridle or frightened her horse by frantic cries, and sent him slipping with herself down the ravine; for the situation was a most fearful one, and there are few women who could have braved it without a tremor. A *man*, let it be remembered, if cruel enough, might have alighted and left the horse to its fate; but to a woman, encumbered by her long clothes, the attempt must have been almost certain destruction for both.

Perhaps not sixty seconds had elapsed after the first cry, when the lawyer succeeded in checking his horse without throwing him headlong, swung his foot out of the stirrup, and attempted to spring to the ground. But just then there was a sudden rush over the rock; a wierd and unnatural sweeping by, something like that of the Demon Hunt in "Der Freischutz;" a cry of terror and fright that seemed to come from the whole line in the rear and fill the air with ghastly sound; a closing of the eyes on the part of the incapable guardian, in the full belief that the noises he heard were those of the accomplishment of the great horror; then sounds nearer him, and a jar that almost prostrated himself and the horse against which he yet leaned; then a wild cry of exultation and delight which seemed—God help his senses!—was he going mad?—to be mingled with the clapping of hands like that which follows a moment of intense interest at the theatre!

Then silence, and the lawyer opened his eyes as suddenly as he had closed them. And what did he see? On the rock, nothing; in the path, ahead of him, Clara Vanderlyn still sitting her horse, though in a half fainting state, and Halstead Rowan, also on horseback, ahead of her, and with his hand holding her bridle!

Of course Horace Townsend, at that moment of doubt whether he stood upon his head or his heels—whether he had gone stark mad or retained a fair measure of sanity—whether the earth yet revolved in its usual orbit or had gone wandering off into cometary space, beyond all physical laws—of course at that moment he could not know precisely what had occurred to produce that sudden and singular change; and he could only learn, the moment after, from those who had been on the higher ground behind at the moment of the peril. According to their explanations, at

the moment when they all saw the danger with a shudder and a holding of the very breath, Rowan had been heard to utter a single exclamation: "Well, I swear!" (a rough phrase, and one that he should by no means have used; but let his Western life and training entitle him to some consideration)—dashed spurs into the side of his horse—crowded by the five or six who preceded him, in a path considered impassable for more than one horse at a time—and then, with a wild Indian cry that he apparently could not restrain, spurred up the side of the rock, between Clara Vanderlyn and the verge of the precipice, certainly where the off feet of his horse could not have been thirty inches from the slippery edge, and literally jerked her horse and herself off into the path by the impetus of his own animal outside and the sudden grip which he closed upon her bridle as he went by, himself coming down into the path ahead, and neither unseated! Miss Vanderlyn's pony had struck the lawyer's horse as he came down in his enforced flying leap; and thus were explained all the sights, sounds, and physical events of that apparently supernatural moment.

The scene which followed, only a few moments after, when the leading members of the cavalcade (Clara Vanderlyn in the midst of it, supported by Rowan, who managed to keep near her)—the scene which followed, we say, when they reached a little plateau where the company had room to gather, will not be more easily effaced from the memory of those who were present than the terrible danger which had just preceded it. The overstrung nerves of the poor girl gave way at that point, and she dropped from her horse in a swoon, just as Halstead Rowan (singular coincidence!) had slipped from the saddle and was ready to catch her as she fell! What more natural than that in falling and being caught, she should have thrown her arms round the stout neck of the Illinoisan? And what more inevitable than that he should have been a considerable time in getting ready to lay her down upon the horse-blankets that had been suddenly pulled off and spread for her,—and that finally, the clinging grasp still continuing, he should have dropped himself on one corner of the blanket and furnished the requisite support to her head and shoulders?

Frank Vanderlyn and those who had been farthest behind with him came up at that moment; and Horace Townsend, if no one else, detected the sullen frown that gathered on his brow as he saw his sister lying in the arms of the man whom he had so grossly insulted. But if he frowned he said nothing, very prudently; for it is indeed not sure that it would have been safe, just then, for an emperor, there present, to speak an ill word to the hero of the day.

Be all this as it may, the usual authorial affidavit may be taken that Halstead Rowan retained Clara Vanderlyn, brother or no brother in the way, in his arms until some one succeeded in obtaining water from a clear deposit of rain among the rocks; that no one—not even one of the ladies—attempted to dispossess him of his newly-acquired human territory; that when the water had been brought, and she first gave token of the full return of consciousness, she did so by clasping her arms around Rowan's neck (of course involuntarily) and murmuring words that sounded to Townsend and some others near, like: "You saved me! How good and noble you are!" and that even under that temptation he did not kiss her, as he would probably have sacrificed both arms and a leg or two, but not his manliness, to do.

It was a quarter of an hour after, when Miss Vanderlyn, sufficiently and only sufficiently recovered to ride, was placed once more in the saddle and the cavalcade took its way more slowly down the mountains. The scenery, under the western sun, was even more lovely than that of the morning, the mists had all rolled away from every point of the compass, and there were some views Franconia-wards that they had entirely missed in the ascent. But there was scarcely one of the company who had not been so stirred to the very depths of human sympathy, by the event of the preceding half-hour, that inanimate nature, however wondrously beautiful, was half forgotten. So quickly, in those summer meetings and partings, do we grow attached to those with whom we are temporarily associated, especially amid the surroundings of the sublime and beautiful,—that had that fair girl lost her life so strangely and sadly, not one of all who saw the accident but would have borne in mind through life, in addition to the inevitable horror of the recollection, a memory like that of losing a dear and valued friend. And yet many of them had never even spoken to her, and perhaps only one in the whole cavalcade (her brother) had known of her existence one week before!

Even as it was, there were not a few of that line of spectators from whose eyes the vision of what might have been, failed to fade out with the moment that witnessed it. Some of them dreamed, for nights after, (or at least until another occurrence then impending dwarfed the recollection) not only of seeing the young girl sitting helpless on that perilous rock, but of beholding her arms raised to heaven in agony and the feet of her horse pawing the air, as both disappeared from sight over the precipice. Some may still dream of the event, in lonely night-hours following days of trouble and anxiety.

In the new arrangements for descending the mountains, made after the recovery of Clara Vanderlyn, Horace Townsend was not quite discarded, but he could not avoid feeling that very little dependence was placed upon his escort. It was of course as a mere jest, but to the sensitive mind of the lawyer there seemed to be a dash of malicious earnest at the bottom,—that Rowan took the first occasion as he passed near him, immediately after the young girl had been removed from his arms, to give him a forcible punch in the ribs, with the accompanying remark:

"Bah! I told you that you couldn't ride; but I had no idea that you could not do any better at taking care of a woman, than that!"

Townsend quite forgave him that remark, jest or earnest, for he saw the new sparkle in his eye,

remembered how likely he was to have had his mind a little disordered by all that sweet wealth of auburn hair lying for so many minutes on his breast, and formed his own opinions as to the result. If those opinions were favorable, well; if they were unfavorable, he was taking a world of trouble that did not belong to him; for there is always a "sweet little cherub" sitting "up aloft" to keep watch over the fortunes of such rattle-pates and dare-devils as Halstead Rowan—to supervise their getting into scrapes and out of them!

But there was nothing of jest, he thought, in the air with which Clara Vanderlyn, when re-mounting her horse, replying to an earnest expression of regret that one moment of inattention on his part should have allowed her to be placed in serious peril,—very kindly denied that he had been guilty of any neglect whatever, threw the whole blame upon her horse, thanked him for the promptness with which he was coming to her relief when forestalled, but then said, looking at Rowan with a glance which came near setting that enthusiastic equestrian entirely wild:

"It seems that I am a very difficult person to take care of; and if you have no objection to my having two esquires, and will allow Mr. Rowan to ride with me as well as yourself, and if *he* is willing to do so, I think that I shall feel" (she did not say "safer", but) "a little more like keeping up my spirits."

Frank Vanderlyn had looked somewhat sullenly on and scarcely said a word, since his coming up. But at this speech of his sister's he must have felt that the dignity of the Vanderlyn family was again in serious peril, for he put his mouth close to her ear and spoke some words that were heard by no other than herself. They could not have been very satisfactory or convincing, for Horace Townsend, and others as well, heard her say in reply:

"Brother, your horse is dangerous—you said so yourself; so just be good enough to ride as you did before, and my friends here will take care of me."

Whereupon the young man went back to his horse, looking a little discomfited and by no means in the best of humors. Such little accidents *will* occur, sometimes, to mar the best-laid schemes of careful mothers or anxious brothers, for preserving the ultra-respectability of a family; and whether the origin of the intervention is in heaven or its opposite, there is nothing to be done in such cases but to look wronged and unhappy, as did Frank Vanderlyn, or smile over the accomplished mischief and pretend that the event is rather agreeable than otherwise, as persons of more experience than Frank have often had occasion to do at different periods during the current century.

The result of all this was that Horace Townsend really rode down with Clara Vanderlyn in the mere capacity of an esquire, while Halstead Rowan assumed the spurs and the authority of the knight. The latter rode in advance of her, as near her bridle-rein as the roughness of the path would allow; and no one need to question the fact that *he* kept his eyes on the young girl quite steadily enough to secure her safety! What difficulty was there in his doing so, when he had already proved that he could ride backward nearly as well as forward and that the footing of his horse was the least thought in his mind? They seemed to be conversing, too, a large proportion of the time; and there is no doubt that Halstead Rowan, carried away by the events of the day, uttered words that he might have long delayed or never spoken under other circumstances,—and that Clara Vanderlyn wore that sweet flush upon her face and kept that timid but happy trembling of the dewy under-lip, much more constantly than she had ever before done in her young life. Horace Townsend, who rode behind the lady, did not hear any of those peculiar words which passed between her and her companion; and had *we* heard them they would certainly not be made public in this connection.

The lawyer, as has been said, rode behind; and, as has *not* been said, he did so in no enviable state of feeling. He had done nothing—been accused of nothing—in any manner calculated to degrade him; but one casual event had thrown a shadow across his path, not easily recognized without some recollection of characteristics before developed. The reader has had abundant reason to believe that this man, profiting by some intelligence obtained in a manner not open to the outer world, of the peculiar madness of Margaret Hayley after that abstraction, courage,—had more or less firmly determined to win her through the exhibition of certain qualities which he believed that he possessed in a peculiar degree. One opportunity had been given him (that at the Pool), and he had succeeded in interesting her to an extent not a little flattering and hopeful; but envious fate could not allow a week to pass without throwing him again into disadvantageous comparison with a man who had no occasion whatever of making any exhibition of such qualities!

That Margaret Hayley would yet remain for some days and perhaps weeks in the mountains, and that she would probably visit the Crawford before her departure, he had at least every reason to believe; and he had quite as much cause for confidence that the story of the adventure over the Gulf of Mexico, roundly exaggerated to place himself in a false position and to deify the Illinoisan, would reach her ears, whether at the Profile or the Crawford, through stage-drivers or migratory passengers, within the next forty-eight hours. This (for reasons partially hinted at and others which will develop themselves in due time) was precisely that state of affairs which he would have given more to avoid than any other that could have been named; and this it was that made a dark red flush of mortification rise at times to his dusky cheek and give an expression any thing but pleasant to his eyes, as he rode silently behind the two who were now so indubitably linked as lovers, once more over the top of Prospect and down the rugged declivities of Clinton. Those who have ever been placed in circumstances approaching to these in character, can best decide whether the lawyer was sulking for nothing or indulging in gloomy anticipations with quite sufficient reason.

It was nearly sunset and the light had some time disappeared from the valleys lying in the shade of the western peaks, when the last stony trough and the last corduroy road of Mount Clinton was finally repassed, and the whole cavalcade, each member of it perhaps moved by the one idea of showing that neither horse nor rider was wearied out—broke once more into a trot as they caught the first glimpse of the Crawford through the trees, dashed merrily out from the edge of the woods, and came up in straggling but picturesque order to the door of the great caravanserai. The difficult ride of eighteen miles had been accomplished; the golden day (with its one drawback of momentary peril) was over; and more than half a score who had before only thought of the ascent of Mount Washington as a future possibility, suddenly found that they could look back upon it as a remembrance.

As they rode up to the front of the Crawford, the whole end of the piazza was full of new-comers and late sojourners, watching the return of those who had preceded or followed them—an idle, listless sort of gathering, showing more curiosity than welcome, such as the traveller by rail or steamboat sees crowding every platform at the expected time of the arrival of a train and every pier at the hour for the coming in of a boat. Cries of: "All safe, eh?" "Glad to see you back again!" "Hope you had a pleasant day!" and "Well, how did you like Mount Washington?" broke from twenty lips in a moment, mingled with replies and non-replies that came simultaneously: "Oh, you ought to have gone up with us!" "My horse carried me like a bird!" (the last remark, presumably, [Pg 364] from a fat man of two hundred and sixty, whom not even an elephant could have borne in that suggestively buoyant manner), "Never *was* such a day for going up, in the world!" "Safe, eh? Yes, why not?" (that from a person, no doubt, who had really been prodigiously scared at some period of the ride), and the one inevitable pendant: "Oh, you have no idea what an adventure we have had!—one of the ladies came near being killed—tell you all about it by-and-bye," etc., etc.

Horace Townsend, who had been riding the last mile very much like a man in a dream and really with the formal charge of Clara Vanderlyn entirely abandoned to her chosen protector—Horace Townsend heard all this, as if he heard through miles of distance or at a long period of time after the utterance. For his eyes were busy and they absorbed all his sensations. He had recognized, at the first moment of riding up, among the crowd of persons on the piazza, the dark, proud eyes and beautiful face and stately form of Margaret Hayley, leaning on the arm of that man whom he had not by any means learned to love since his advent in the mountains—Captain Hector Coles, V. A. D. C. They had waited clear weather before starting from the Profile, and come through that day while his party had been absent up the mountains: he realized all at a thought, and realized that whatever he was himself to endure of trial lay much nearer than he had before believed. Disguised and indeed disfigured as the lawyer was, in common with all the other members of the cavalcade, to such a degree that only observation and study could penetrate the masquerade,—it was not at all strange that the lady failed to meet his eye with an answering glance of recognition; and he felt rather grateful than the reverse, for the moment, that his disguise was so effectual. While Clara Vanderlyn, a third time within one week the passive heroine of the mountains, was being lifted from her saddle by half a dozen officious hands, and while the rest of the party were gabbling as they alighted,—he slipped quietly from his horse behind one corner of [Pg 365] the piazza, threw his rein to one of the stable-boys, and disappeared through the hall, up-stairs to his chamber.

He did not again make his appearance until supper was on the tables and the battle of knives-and-forks going on with that vigor born of mountain air. Most of the visitors at the house, the voyagers of the day included, were already seated; and among them was Clara Vanderlyn, apparently no whit the worse for her day's adventure, her brother at one and her mother at the other side. A little further down the table, on the same side, sat Halstead Rowan, occupying the same seat of the evening before. He had evidently dropped back from his familiar standing with the lady, the moment they came within the atmosphere of Mrs. Vanderlyn and the great republic of voices at the Crawford; but quite as evidently he had not yet fallen away from his last-won position as a hero, for his face was continually flushing, as he ate, with the modesty of a girl's, when the whispers and nods and pointings of interest and admiration were made so plain that they reached his eye and ear. The adventure of the day was undeniably the topic of the evening, and Halstead Rowan was the hero; and it may be imagined how much this knowledge and the inevitable corollary that some one else was *not* the hero, added to the comfort of the late-comer at table.

Margaret Hayley, Mrs. Burton Hayley and Captain Hector Coles were also at supper, but they had nearly finished when Townsend took his seat. They rose the moment after, and as they did so the lawyer, now once more so arrayed as to display his own proper person, caught the eye of Margaret. She nodded and smiled, yes, smiled!—in answer to his bow across the table; and he could almost have taken his professional oath that a quick sparkle came to her eye when she saw him, then died away as quickly as if compelled back by a strong will. Mrs. Burton Hayley did not seem to see him at all; but Captain Coles signified that *he* did so, by a glance of such new-born [Pg 366] contempt blended with old hatred, as he should never have wasted upon any one except a national enemy whom he had just defeated in arms. The party swept down the room, and very soon after the others whom we have noted also rose and disappeared, leaving Horace Townsend discussing his supper with what appetite he might. It may be consoling to some curious persons to know that that appetite was by no means contemptible, and that he did not falter in physique if restless unquiet and anxiety made a prey of his mind.

Half an hour after, he was smoking his cigar on the piazza, none whom he knew within view; and he strolled out into the edge of the wood to the right of the house, to enjoy (if enjoyment it could

be called) solitude, gloom and darkness. The path he followed led him eventually round in a circle and brought him back to the edge again, only a few yards from the house and near the spot where the two huge bears were moving about, dense black spots in the twilight. There was a rude bench beneath the trees not far from what might have been called their "orbit" (especially as they are sometimes "stars" at the menageries); and on that bench he discovered three figures. He was but a little distance away when he first saw them and that they were two ladies and a gentleman; and he was still nearer before he became aware that they were the Hayleys, mother and daughter, with their inevitable attendant and cavalier.

They were in conversation, not toning it so low as if they had any particular anxiety against its being overheard; and yet Horace Townsend, much as he might have wished to know every word that came from the lips of at least one of the three, might have passed on without listening intentionally to one utterance, if he had not chanced to hear that they were discussing the event of the day. That fact literally chained him to the root of the tree near which he was standing—he was *so* anxious to know what version of the affair had already been circulated and given credence among the three or four hundred visitors at the Crawford, and especially among the particular three of that number. [Pg 367]

It has before been said, we fancy, by that widely-known writer, "Anonymous," that listeners do not always hear any notable good of themselves. And Horace Townsend, in stopping to play the eaves-dropper, at least partially illustrated the saying. He heard a version of the Gulf of Mexico affair, from the lips of Captain Coles, calculated to make him, if he had any sensitiveness of nature and a spark of the fighting propensity, kill himself or the narrator.

"I think I have heard enough of it," Margaret Hayley was saying, as Townsend came within hearing. "I really do not know that Miss Vanderlyn, though a pleasant girl enough, is of so much consequence that the whole house should go crazy over one of her little mishaps in riding."

"A little mishap!" echoed the Captain. "Phew!—if I am not very much mistaken it was a *big* mishap—just a hair's-breadth between saving her life and losing it!"

"Is it possible?" said Mrs. Burton Hayley. "Why dear me, Captain Coles!—that is very interesting, especially if her being saved was providential. Did you hear the particulars, then?"

"Shall we go in, mother?" asked Margaret.

"No, my dear, not yet!" answered Mrs. Burton Hayley. "Captain Coles is just going to tell us what really happened to the young lady who was so mercifully spared. Go on, Captain, please."

"Well, the story is a short one, though thrilling enough, egad!—to put into a romance!" said the Captain. "Young Waldron, that we met at the Profile, was one of the party, and he told me about it while you were dressing for supper. It appears that Miss Vanderlyn went up with her brother, and that something happened to his horse—it got lamed, or something,—so that he could not ride down with her. He was fool enough, then, to put her under the charge of that friend of yours, Margaret—" [Pg 368]

"Captain Coles, will you be kind enough to confine yourself to your story, if you must tell it, and leave *my* name out of the question?" was the interruption of the young lady—no unpleasant one to the listener,—at that point of the narration.

"Humph! I do not see that you need be so sensitive about it!" sneered back the Captain. "Well, then, not that friend of yours, but that man, who has not less than a dozen names and who lives in Philadelphia and Cincinnati and several other cities."

"Yes, the man whose handkerchief you took out of his pocket the other night, in the ten-pin alley, to see whether his initials were correct!" again interrupted Margaret in a tone of voice not less decided than that of the other was taunting and arrogant.

It was much too dark, under the shade of the trees, at that moment, to see the face of Captain Hector Coles, or he might have been discovered, even under his moustache, biting his lip so sharply that the blood came. An eye keen enough to have seen this, too, would have been able to see that Horace Townsend trembled like an aspen leaf, that great beads of sweat started out on his brown forehead, while he muttered a fierce word of anger and indignation that died away on the night air without reaching any human ear.

Captain Hector Coles choked an instant and then went on:

"He entrusted her to the care of that adventurer, who managed, before they had ridden a mile, to lose his way and his presence of mind at the same time—got her and her pony on the top of a slippery rock where there were ten thousand chances to one that she would fall a thousand feet over the precipice—and then sat on his horse, white as a sheet and too badly scared to attempt rescuing her, yelling like a booby for help, until that coarse fellow from somewhere out West came up and grasped her just as she was going over."

What would not Horace Townsend have given for a grip of the throat of Captain Hector Coles at that moment? And what would he not have given to hear Margaret Hayley say: "I do not believe the story! The man who leaped into the Pool the other day, is not the booby and poltroon you would make him, just because you are jealous of him, Captain Hector Coles!" What, we say, would the listener not have given to hear *that*? Alas!—he had no reason to expect any such word, and no such word was spoken. Margaret Hayley merely rose from her seat, saying: [Pg 369]

"Now, if you have finished that rigmarole, in which nobody, I think, is in the least interested, we will go to the house, for I am taking cold."

The others rose, and the three moved towards the house. Horace Townsend did not move towards the house, but in another direction, his heart on fire and his brain in a whirl. But as they went off he heard the Captain say, apparently in response to some remark of Mrs. Burton Hayley's which was not caught at that distance:

"Of course I believe him to be a coward as well as a disreputable character. Any man who would flinch from *any* exposure, especially like that on a mere edge of a cliff, to save life, is the basest kind of a coward. Such men ought to stand a little while among bullets, as *we* have to do, and they would soon show themselves for what they are worth."

Horace Townsend saw nothing more of either that night, or of any of the others with whom this narration has to do. There was no music, other than that of the piano, in the parlor of the Crawford, and early beds were in requisition. Many, who had not ascended the mountains, had ridden hard and long in other directions; and for the people of the Mount Washington cavalcade themselves—they were very tired, very much exhausted and very sleepy, and romance and flirtation were obliged to succumb to aching bones and the invitations of soft pillows. Halstead Rowan, even, did not roll a single game of ten-pins before he retired to his lonely chamber—physico-thermometrical proof of the general worn-out condition!

CHAPTER XVIII.

Horace Townsend and Margaret Hayley—A strange Rencontre in the Parlor—Another Rencontre, equally strange but less pleasant—How Clara Vanderlyn faded away from the Mountains—And how the Comanche Rider disappeared.

Breakfast was nearly over, the next morning, and many of the guests had left the tables, when Horace Townsend strolled into the parlor, attracted by the ripple of a set of very light fingers on the piano—something not usual at that early hour. He found the great room entirely unoccupied, except by the player; and he had half turned to leave the room in order to avoid the appearance of intrusion, when he ventured a look at the pianist and discovered her to be Margaret Hayley! Then he hesitated for a moment, bowed, and was again about to retire, when the young girl rose from the piano and advanced towards him. He was a man, past those years when the blood should rush to the face with the rapidity of that of a school-girl; but the dark cheek was certainly flame in an instant as she came nearer, and when she spoke his name his whole appearance evinced some feeling so much like terror that the object of it seemed to start back with a corresponding emotion. That was the first instance in which he had chanced to be alone for one moment with the lady, from the time of their first meeting at the Profile, and something might be forgiven a bachelor on that account; but some cause beyond this must have moved that man, accustomed alike to society, to the company of women and the making of public appearances.

If he tried to speak, his breath did not shape itself into audible words; and Margaret Hayley was very near him and had herself spoken, before he in any degree recovered from that strange confusion.

"Good-morning, Mr. Townsend," she said; and—mingled surprise and rapture to the man who had heard himself so denounced in her presence the night before!—she held out those long, slight, dainty white fingers to shake hands with him! An advance like that, and from her! That thought seemed almost to take away his breath, and he really permitted those tempting fingers to be extended for quite a moment before he took them.

"Good-morning, Miss Hayley," at length he uttered, in a voice low and perceptibly husky, taking the offered hand at the same instant, but scarcely holding it so long as even the briefest acquaintance might have warranted.

One instant's pause: the lady was not doing as ladies of her delicacy and gentle breeding are in the habit of doing under corresponding circumstances—she was looking the lawyer steadily and still not boldly in the face, penetrating inquiry in her eyes, as if she would read the soul through the countenance, and yet with an interest shown in her own which made the act a compliment instead of an insult.

"I am afraid that you are not a very cordial friend," at last she said. "I hoped that I had made one, the other day, after nearly drowning you; but last night you merely bowed without speaking, and this morning when you see me you attempt to run away!"

There was warm, genial, kindly pleasantry in her tone—pleasantry a little beyond what the proud face indicated that she would bestow upon any casual acquaintance; and perhaps that recognition did something to unlock the tongue that had been silent.

"You are very kind to remember me at all!" he said. "Some of us poor fellows of the rougher sex have reason to be glad to form new acquaintances or remember old ones; but beautiful women like yourself, Miss Hayley, are much more likely to wish to diminish the list than to increase it."

"What!—a compliment already!" she said, in the same tone of gayety. "But I forgot—you told me

that you were a lawyer, and I believe that you all have a sort of license to say words that mean nothing."

"Oh, you paid the first compliment!" answered Townsend, catching her tone, as they turned in the unconscious promenade into which their steps had shaped themselves, and walked down the still lonely parlor.

"I? How?" she asked.

"By noticing me at all!" was the reply.

"Very neatly turned, upon my word!—and still another repetition of the same compliment smuggled into it! Decidedly you must be a dangerous man in the presence of a jury."

"Let me hope that *you* will not consider me so, and I shall be content with the other part of the reputation."

Neither said any thing more for a moment, though they were still walking together with any thing rather than the manner of comparative strangers. Then Horace Townsend paused in his walk, and said, his voice falling nearly as low as it had been at first:

"Miss Hayley, this is the first opportunity that I have enjoyed of speaking with you, away from the ears of others. Will you pardon me if I do not deal altogether in complimentary badinage, but speak a few words of earnest?"

"What can you mean, Mr. Townsend?" She looked at him for a moment, as if in doubt, then added: "Yes, certainly!"

"Then, to be candid—that is, as candid as I dare be," said the lawyer, "I have taken the great liberty of being very much interested in you, since the first day we met. I had no reason to expect you to be correspondingly impressed, but—"

"What am *I* to expect at the end of this, Mr. Townsend?" she interrupted him. "Are you sure that you are not about to say very imprudent words, out of time, out of place, and that may do much evil while they cannot accomplish any good?"

 He saw her put her left hand to her heart, when she made the interruption, as if some sudden pang had pierced her or some organic pain was located there; and all the past gayety of her manner was gone.

"I am perfectly sure, Miss Hayley!" he said, bowing; and the assurance was received with a nod of confidence. "I have only said what any gentleman of respectability ought to be able to say to any lady without offence—that I have been very much interested in you; and I was about to say that while I had no reason to expect my impression to be returned, yet I felt that I had a *right* to fair-dealing and no unfavorable prejudgment."

"Fair-dealing? prejudgment?" she uttered, in a not unnatural tone of surprise. "Does my conduct of this morning—oh, what am I saying?—Mr. Townsend, I do not understand you!"

"Of course you cannot, until I explain," said the lawyer. "I have just said that *you* honored me too much, but I cannot extend that remark to some of your most intimate friends—Captain Coles, for instance—who may be—I hope you will excuse what may sound like an impertinence but is certainly not intended to be such—more nearly connected with yourself and your future plans in life than I have any right to know."

There was respectful inquiry in his tone, though he by no means put the remark as a question. Margaret Hayley recognized the tone but did not see the keen interrogation in his eyes at that moment, for her own—those proud, magnificent eyes—were drooped to the floor.

"By which you mean," answered the lady, "that you think it possible that Captain Coles is my betrothed husband."

"I am sorry to say—yes!" said the lawyer, his voice again dropped very low.

"Well, the remark, which amounts to a direct question, is certainly a singular one to come from a man who has no right—even of old acquaintance—to make it," responded Margaret. "And yet I *will* answer it, a little more frankly than it was put! Captain Hector Coles is not, and never will be, any nearer in relationship to myself than you see him to-day."

"I thank you very much for the confidence, to which, as you say, I have no right," said Townsend. "It makes what I have yet to say a little easier. I beg you not to misunderstand me when I tell you that I was last evening an accidental listener to the story of my disgraceful conduct coming down the mountains, as told by the Captain at second-hand, as well as to his allegations that I was a coward and an adventurer."

Margaret Hayley did not say "What, eaves-dropping?" as the heroine of sensation romance or melo-drama would certainly have been called upon to do. She did not even question how he had heard what he alleged. She merely said:

"I am sorry, indeed, if you heard words that should never have been spoken."

"I did hear them," pursued the lawyer, "and I really did not suppose, this morning, that after hearing the statements made by the Captain, you would even have cared to pursue the very slight

speaking acquaintance you had done me the honor to form with me."

"Had I believed them, I would not!" spoke the lady, frankly.

"And you did *not* believe them?" Tone very intense and anxious.

"Not one word of them!" Tone very sharp and decided.

"God bless the heart of woman, that leaps to the truth when the boasted brain of man fails!" said Townsend, fervently. "Not every word that he said was a falsehood, but every *injurious* one was so, if I know myself and what I do. May I tell you what really occurred yesterday on the mountain, so that you may better understand the next version?"

"I shall be very happy to hear your account," she replied, "for the incident must at all events have been a thrilling one."

"It was thrilling indeed, as you suppose," said the lawyer. "People form romances sometimes out of much less, I fancy!" The two stood by the window, looking at the hurrying to and fro of drivers and passengers preparing for some late departures; and so standing, Horace Townsend briefly and rapidly related the facts of the adventure. Margaret Hayley did not turn her eyes upon him as he spoke, and a part of the time she was even drumming listlessly and noiselessly on the glass with those dainty white fingers; but that she was listening to him and to him only was evident, for the speaker could catch enough of her side-glance to know that eye and cheek were kindling with excitement, and he could hear the quick breath laboring in throat and nostrils almost as if she herself stood in some situation of peril. She was interested—he felt and knew it,—not only in the danger of Clara Vanderlyn and the rash bravery in riding of Halstead Rowan, but in *him*—in the scape-goat of the occasion; and he was stirred by the knowledge to a degree that made a very cool and clear head necessary for avoiding a plunge quite as fatal in its effects as would have been that from the brow of the precipice over the gulf.

"And that is the whole story—a dull one, after all, I am afraid!" he said, not altogether candidly, perhaps, in conclusion.

"Dull? oh no, Mr. Townsend, every thing but dull!" was her reply. "I have seldom been so much interested in any relation. And the facts, so far as they relate to yourself, are very nearly what I should have supposed after hearing the story floating about the hotel."

"You seem to have something of the legal faculty—that of sifting out truth from falsehood, grain from chaff!" said the lawyer, looking at her a little searchingly.

"I? No, not always, though I may be able to do so sometimes," she said, somewhat sadly, and with a sigh choked in its birth. "I have made some terrible mistakes in the judgment of character and action, Mr. Townsend, young as my life is; but perhaps the effect of all that is to make me a little more careful in the reception of loose statements, and so I may have lost nothing. And now—"

"—I have occupied as much of your time as you can spare me this morning," the lawyer concluded the sentence for her, with a smile calculated to put her at her ease in the dismissal.

"Well, *you* draw conclusions pretty rapidly!" she said, turning her eyes upon him curiously. "I *was* going to excuse myself; and yet I should not be afraid to make a small woman's-wager that you err in at least half of your calculation?"

"As how?" asked the lawyer, somewhat surprised.

"Why, Mr. Townsend," answered Margaret Hayley (and what woman who held less true pride and less confidence in herself would ever have spoken so singularly, not to say boldly?) "it is at perhaps a rather early period in our acquaintance for me to return your candor with any thing that corresponds, and yet I feel disposed to waive the woman's right of reticence and do so. You think that I am already tired of your company and conversation, and that when you leave me I may go into pleasanter company. You are mistaken—I think you will not misunderstand me, any more than I did you a while ago, when I say that I quite reciprocate the interest and friendship you have expressed, and that I shall *not* go into more congenial associations when I leave you! There, will *that* do?"

Her eyes were smiling, but there was a tell-tale flush on either cheek, as she said this and extended those taper fingers, bending her proud neck the while, it must be confessed, a *little* as a queen might do when conferring knighthood upon one of her most favored nobles. Horace Townsend, in strict propriety, should have taken that offered hand in the tips of his own fingers, bowed over it, and let it fall gently back to its place. He was not playing strict propriety, as, indeed, the lady had not been for the past few minutes; and whether he took that chance before the surprised owner of the hand could draw it away, or whether there was very little surprise or offence in the matter, certain it is that though he did bow over the hand, he bowed too low—so low that his still warmer lips touched the warm fingers with a close, clinging pressure, and that the breath from those lips sent a tingle through every pulse of that strange girl, who was either dangerously frank or an arrant coquette.

That rape of the fingers perpetrated, Townsend turned away, too suddenly to notice whether his action had planted yet deeper roses on the lady's cheek. Margaret Hayley went back towards the piano, without another word, apparently to re-commence her suspended musical exercises, and the lawyer passed through the door leading into the hall. He did not do so, however, sufficiently

soon to escape the notice of Captain Hector Coles, who, apparently on a voyage of discovery after the truant Margaret, strode into the parlor just as the other was leaving it, and as he nodded managed at the same time to stare into the lawyer's face in so supercilious and insulting a manner that he fairly entitled himself to what he did not receive—a mortal defiance or a blow on the spot! It was plain that he recognized Margaret Hayley at the piano, and that he saw she must have been alone with the object of his suspicion and hatred: was there not indeed some cause for the face of the gallant Captain assuming such an arrogant ferocity of aspect as might have played Gorgon's head to a whole rebel army? But the awkward meeting did not seem seriously to disturb the young lady: she looked up from her keys, saw the foes in the door-way, saw the glance they interchanged, and then dashed those bewitching fingers into a German waltz of such startling and impudent brilliancy that it seemed to accord almost premeditatedly with certain points in her own character.

Here, to Horace Townsend, the curtain of that morning shut down. He passed on and did not see the meeting between Captain Hector Coles, and "the lady" (more or less) "of his love," which may or may not have been cordial and agreeable to an extreme!

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Another of those inevitable dashes, here. They are very useful, as they prevent the necessity of a steady and unbroken narration which would not be at all like real life—that thing most unsteady and most constantly broken into fragments.

The reader, who is perhaps by this time somewhat sated with White Mountain scenery (though, sooth to say, no gazer, however old a habitue, ever was so)—the reader is to be spared any further infliction, except as one remaining point of personal adventure may require the advantage of appropriate setting; and the mountains themselves are soon to fade away behind writer and reader, as they have faded away amid longing and lingering looks from the eyes of so many, losing their peaks one by one as they swept up Northward by rail from Gorham or rolled down Southward by coach through the long valley of the Pemigawasset to Plymouth. The thousand miscellaneous beauties of the White Mountain Notch, grander than those at the Franconia but far less easy of intelligent description—the magnificent long rides down the glen and over the bridges that span the leaping and tumbling rock-bedded little Saco—the Willey House with its recollections of a sad catastrophe and its one-hundred-and-fifty-eighth table being cut up and sold in little chips at a dime each, as "the one used by the unfortunate Willey Family,"—all these must wait the eye that is yet to see them for the first time, or linger unrecounted in the memories of those who have made them a loving study in the past. Personal adventure must hurry on, like the ever accelerating course of the goaded and maddened nation, and eliciting the same inquiry—*whither*?

Two days following the events already recorded, and all the different characters involved in this portion of the life-drama, yet lingered at the Crawford. On one of the two days another ascent of Mount Washington had been made; but with the exception of Mrs. Burton Hayley, her daughter and Captain Hector Coles, all those people peculiarly belonging to us had already made the ascent, and it was the intention of the Philadelphia matron (perhaps a little influenced by the story of the Vanderlyn peril) to go up herself and take up her small party from the Glen House by carriage, when her stay at the Crawford should be completed. [Pg 379]

In all that time we have no data whatever for declaring the state of affairs existing between Halstead Rowan and the lady whose auburn hair had lain for those few blissful moments on his breast. Probably no explicit love-declaration had passed between them; and Mrs. Vanderlyn and her arrogant son were sufficiently familiar with all the modes by which those who wish to be together can be kept apart, to prevent any of those dangerous "opportunities" which might otherwise have brought an immediate *mesalliance* upon the stately house of Vanderlyn. If the would-be lovers met, they only met beneath watchful eyes; and Halstead Rowan, who had already displayed that amount of dash and recklessness in personal exposure indicating that an elopement down the mountain roads, with a flying horse beneath him and his arm around the lady's waist, would have been the most congenial thing in life to his nature,—even had Clara Vanderlyn been weak enough to yield to such a proposal, bore all the while within him too much of the true gentleman to lower himself by a runaway alliance, or to compromise the character of the woman he wished to make his wife by wedding her otherwise than in the face of all who dared raise a word of opposition. So there seemed—heigho, for this world of disappointments, hindrances, and incongruities!—little prospect that any thing more could result from the meetings that had already been so eventful, than an early and final parting, and two lives shadowed by one long regret that the fates had not ordained otherwise.

But little more can be said of the fortunes, during those two days, of Horace Townsend and the lady of the proud eyes and the winning smile. Two or three times they had met and conversed, but only for a moment, and they had by no means ever returned again to the sudden cordiality and confidence of that first morning. Something in the manner of Margaret Hayley seemed to give token that she was frightened at the position she had assumed and the emotions of her own heart (might she not well have been—she who but a month or two before had been clasped to the breast of an accepted lover and believed that she held towards him a life-long devotion?); and something in the demeanor of Horace Townsend quite as conclusively showed that he was treading ground of the solidity of which he was doubtful, and impelled to utter words that could not be spoken without sacrificing the whole truth of his manhood! Captain Hector Coles had [Pg 380]

believed his name an assumed one and looked after the initials on his handkerchief to satisfy himself of the fact; and the reader has found reason to believe that there was really an assumption: did that departure from truth already begin to assert its penalty, when he was brought into contact with a woman who showed her own candor so magnificently? Strange problems, that will be solved eventually without any aid from the imagination.

Once during that two days there had been a collision between the lawyer and the V. A. D. C., not one word of which, probably, had reached the ears of the lady in whose behalf it had occurred, from the lips of the politic Captain, or from any of those who saw and heard it,—as it certainly had not been hinted to her by the other party in the rencontre.

That collision had happened in this wise.

On the afternoon of the same day on which the very pleasant interview with Margaret Hayley took place in the parlor of the Crawford, Horace Townsend strolled into the billiard-saloon. Since the night before, in one particular direction, he had been decidedly ill-tempered, not to say ferocious; and however he might have been softened for the moment by the encounter of the morning, in one respect that encounter had left him much more likely to assault the man who had calumniated him so foully, than he could have been before a certain assurance had been given him on that occasion. Then the officer's stare into his face, when leaving the room, had not tended to remove any of his bile; he did not believe, it is probable, that he would stand any the worse with the peculiarly constituted Margaret Hayley, in the event of an insult to the man who had insulted *him* coming to her knowledge; and in short he had been all day prepared, at any time when he could do so with most effect, to repay him, interest included, in his own coin of ill-treatment. How soon or how effectually his opportunity was coming—*the* opportunity of all others for a stab in a vital part,—he had no idea when he entered the billiard-room. [Pg 381]

Several gentlemen were there, some playing and others smoking and in conversation. In one corner of the room, conversing with two or three others, Captain Hector Coles was giving a graphic account of the Battle of White Oak Swamp, in the retreat from the Peninsula, during one period of which, according to his account, General —— was wounded and all the field officers of a whole division cut up, so that he, though only on the staff and without positive command, was obliged to direct all the movements and eventually to head three different charges by which the enemy, four or five times superior in numbers in that part of the field, were finally repulsed with great slaughter. The story, as told, was a good one, and Captain Hector Coles played the part of Achilles in it to perfection, especially as there did not happen to be present (and there is strong reason to believe that he had assured himself of the fact in advance) a single officer who had shared in the Peninsular campaign. He was emphatically, just then, the hero of the hour, in that most assured of all points of view, a military one. It does not follow that Horace Townsend had been an actor in the Peninsular campaign, but he certainly arrogated to himself some knowledge of very small details that had taken place at Glendale, for he was guilty of the great rudeness of breaking in upon a conversation in which he was not included, with a question that served as a sort of pendant to the story of the Captain:

"Let me see—it was in one of those charges, Captain, or was it while carrying some order, that you had that bad attack of giddiness in the head and were obliged to dismount and lie behind one of the brush-heaps in the swamp for an hour?" [Pg 382]

"Who the——." The Captain, who had not recognized the voice or seen the intruder, began to ask some question which he never finished, for he checked himself as suddenly as if he had been about committing a serious blunder. But he recovered himself very quickly, and pieced-out the remark so that it seemed very much as if he had pursued his original intention.

"Who the —— are *you*, Horace Townsend as you call yourself, to put in your remarks when *gentlemen* are in conversation?"

"Oh, I beg pardon, I did not know that you were ashamed of it. I happened to hear Colonel D—— relate the little circumstance not long after the battle; and I thought, from your leaving it out, that you might possibly have forgotten it."

The gentlemen present stared from one to the other and said nothing. Such plain speaking was a novelty even among the excitements of mountain life. The Captain began by having a very white face, and ended with having a very red one.

"Colonel D—— lied, if he said any thing of the kind!" he foamed.

"I will tell him you say so, the next time I meet him," was the cool reply, "and you can try the little question of veracity between yourselves."

"No, I will try it with *you*!" the Captain almost shouted. "You are the liar—not Colonel D——, and I will shoot you as I would a dog."

"You will be obliged to do it by waylaying me, then," answered the lawyer. "Apart from any objection I may have to duels in the abstract, I certainly am not going out with a *gentleman*," and he laid a terrible stress upon the word—"a *gentleman* who picks pockets." [Pg 383]

"Gentlemen! gentlemen!" expostulated one or two at that period.

"Recall that word, or I will shoot you on the spot!" cried the Captain, his face now fiery as blood itself, and his hand moving up to his breast as if he really followed the cowardly practice of

carrying a revolver there, while meeting in peaceful society. If he had a weapon and momentarily intended to draw it, he desisted, however.

"I will not recall the word, but I will explain it," answered the lawyer. "I heard you confess last night, Captain Hector Coles, in the midst of about half an hour's falsehoods about my poor self, that you had picked my pocket of a handkerchief, the night before in the ten-pin alley. After that and the little indisposition at White-Oak Swamp, I think you will all agree with me, gentlemen, that I am under no obligations to afford that person any satisfaction."

"Coward!" hissed the Captain. At the word a shiver seemed to go over the lawyer's frame, but he only replied:

"Yes, that was what you called me last night! Excuse me, gentlemen, for interrupting a very pretty little story, but I am going away and the Captain will no doubt continue it."

He did go away, walking down towards the house, a little flushed in face but otherwise as composed as possible. Captain Hector Coles did not tell out his story, for some reason or other; and the moment after he too went away.

"What the deuce is it all about?" asked one of the gentlemen when they had both departed.

"Haven't the least idea," said another. "Though, by the way, the Captain has a very pretty woman with him—I wonder if there should not be a lady at the bottom of the trouble, as usual?"

"Seemed to be some truth in that story about getting giddy in the head, by the way it hit!" said a third.

"Don't look much like cowards, either of them," said a fourth. "And, now that I think of it—wasn't that the name—Townsend—of the fellow who leaped into the Pool the other day over at the Profile?"

"Don't know—shouldn't wonder—well, let them fight it out as they please—none of *our* business, I suppose!" rejoined one of the others; and the party dispersed in their several directions.

Such was the scene in the billiard room; and it was not strange that more than a day after, no report of it had come to the ears of Margaret Hayley or her mother, through the medium of any of the bye-standers; for the persons most nearly interested are not those who first hear such revelations of gossip. That neither the Captain nor Horace Townsend should personally have spoken of it to Margaret is quite as natural, for reasons easily appreciated. That young lady, with two lovers more or less declared, was accordingly very much in the dark as to the peculiarly volcanic character of her admirers and the chances that at some early day they might fall to and finish each other up on the Kilkenny-cat principle, leaving her with none!

The third day after the ascent of Washington by our party witnessed its disruption in some important particulars. The morning stage down the Notch took away the Vanderlyns, on their way to Lake Winnipiseogee and thence to Newport. They had been in the mountains little more than a week, but seen most of the points of interest at the Franconia and White Notches; and other engagements, previously formed, were hurrying them forward, as humanity in the New World is always hurried, whether engaged in a pleasure tour or a life labor. They left a vacancy behind them, and foretold the gradual flight of all those summer birds who had made the mountains musical, and the coming of those long and desolate winter months when the rooms then so alive with life and gayety should all be bare and empty, the snow lying piled in valley and on mountain peak so deeply that no foot of man might venture to tread them, and the wild northern blast wailing through the gorges and around the deserted dwellings as if sounding a requiem for the life and love and hope fled away.

They left a blank—all the three; and yet how different was the vacancy caused by each of the three departures! Mrs. Vanderlyn, a lady in the highest fashionable acceptance of the term, but so proud and stately that her better qualities were more than half hidden beneath the icy crust of conventionalism,—had dazzled much and charmed to a great degree, but won no regard that could not be supplied, after a time, by some other. Her son Frank, handsome and gifted but arrogant beyond endurance, had won no friends wherever he moved, except such friends as money can mould from subservience; and his going away left no regrets except in the breasts of the landlords whom he lavishingly patronized and the servants whom he subsidized after the true Southern fashion. But Clara Vanderlyn, who seemed to have fallen among the mountains with the softness, innocence and tenderness of a snow-flake—Clara with her gentle smile, her sweet, low voice and wealth of auburn hair,—the friends *she* had formed from the rough ore of strangerhood and then from the half-minted gold of mere acquaintance, were to be numbered only by counting the inmates of the houses where she made her sojourn; and there was not one, unless the exception may have been found in some spiteful old maid who could not forgive her not being past forty, angular and ugly, or some man of repulsive manners and worse morals who had been intuitively shunned by the pure, true-hearted young girl—not one but lifted up a kind thought half syllabled into breath, as they caught the last glimpse of the sunny head—"God bless her!"

It is a rough, difficult world—a cold, hard world, in many regards. The brain is exalted at the expense of the heart, and scheming intellect counted as the superior of unsuspicious innocence and goodness. "Smart"—"keen"—"sharp"—these are the flattering adjectives to be applied even

to the sisters we love and the daughters we cherish, while in that one word "soft" lies a volume of depreciation. And of those educated with such a thought in view, are to be the mothers of our land if we have a land remaining to require the existence of mothers. Is not a little leaven of unquestioning tenderness necessary to season the cold, hard, crystallizing mass? Will womanhood still be that womanhood which has demanded and won our knightly devotion, when all that is reliant and yielding becomes crushed or schooled away and clear-eyed Artemis entirely usurps the realm once ruled by ox-eyed Juno? Will there be any chivalry left, when she who once awoke the spirit of chivalry stands boldly out, half-unsexed, the equal of man in guile if not in bodily strength, and quite as capable of giving as of requiring protection? And may we not thank God for the few Clara Vanderlyns of the age—the gentle, impulsive, unreasoning souls, who make the heart the altar upon which the first and best tribute of life is to be laid—who love too soon, perhaps, and too irrevocably, but so escape that hard, cold mercantile calculation of the weight of a purse and the standing of a lover in fashionable society, upon which so many of their sisters worse wreck themselves than they could do by any imprudent love-match that did not bring absolute starvation within a twelvemonth?

This is something of a rhapsody, perhaps; and let it be so. It flows out, unbidden, under the impulse of a gentle memory; and sweet Clara Vanderlyn, when she goes to her long rest, might have a worse epitaph carved upon the stone above her head, than the simple legend: "She lived to love."

But if the going away of Clara Vanderlyn left a blank in the social circle at the Crawford, what must have been the effect produced by it upon Halstead Rowan, the chivalrous and the impressible, with a heart as big as his splendid Western physique, who could have little prospect of ever meeting her again except under circumstances of worse disadvantage than had fought against him in the mountains, and who could entertain no more hope of ever wedding her without bringing her painfully down from her position in society, than he could of plucking one of the stars harmlessly from its place in heaven!

The Illinoisan was not upon the piazza when the coach drove away. If any farewell had been made, it had been made briefly and hurriedly, where no eye but their own could see it. Horace Townsend thought of all that has been here set down, and looked around for Rowan at the moment of their departure; but he was invisible. The lawyer had himself a pleasant word of farewell and shake of the hand as she stepped to her seat in the coach, from the young girl whose dangerous perch upon the pinnacle of the mountains he was not likely soon to forget; and then the door closed and she disappeared from his sight perhaps forever in life, leaving him thinking of the pleasant afternoon, so few days before, when he gazed for the first time upon her sweet face as they came up from Plymouth and Littleton,—and of the romance connected with her which had since been crowded into so brief a space.

He saw nothing of Rowan for an hour after. Then he met him walking alone up the road north of the house, with his head bent down a little and something dim and misty about the eyes that even gave a suspicion of the late unmanliness (that is what the world calls it!) of tears. He raised his head as he recognized the lawyer, and held out his hand in a silence very unlike his usual bold, frank greeting. Townsend, who may all the while have had quite enough matters of his own to demand his whole attention, could not help pitying the subdued manner and the downcast look that sat so strangely upon the usually cheerful face. There had been nothing like it before, within his knowledge—not even on the night when he had been so foully insulted by Frank Vanderlyn at the Profile.

The lawyer knew, intuitively, what must be the subject of conversation to which the mind of Rowan would turn, if his lips did not; and he felt quite enough in his confidence to humor him.

"I did not see you this morning," he said.

"When they went away?—no!" was the answer. No fear that his listener could misunderstand who "they" were, and he did not display the cheap wit of pretending to do so.

"You look down-hearted! Come—that will never do for the mountains—especially for the boldest rider and the most dashing fellow that has ever stepped foot among them!" and he laid his hand somewhat heavily on the shoulder of the other, as if there might be power in the blow to rouse and exhilarate. It did indeed produce the effect of making him throw up his head to its usual erect position, but it was beyond any physical power to lighten the dark shadow that lay upon his face.

"You are a good fellow as well as a gentleman, Townsend," he said. "I wish *I* was a gentleman—one of the miserable dawdling things that know nothing else than small talk and the use of their heels. Then, and with plenty of money, I should know what to do."

"And what *would* you do?" asked the lawyer.

"Marry the woman I loved, in less than a month, or never speak to a woman again as long as I lived!" was the energetic reply. "As it is, I am a poor devil—only a railroad conductor! What business have *I*, with neither money in my pocket nor aristocratic blood in my veins, to think of a woman who has white hands and knows nothing of household drudgery?"

"A woman, however," said Townsend, "who could and would learn household drudgery, and do it, for the sake of the man she loved—well, there is no use in mincing the matter—for *you*,—and think it the happiest thing she ever did in all her life!"

"God bless her sweet face! do you think so? do you really believe that personally she likes me well enough to marry me if my circumstances were nearer her own?" He had grasped Townsend by the hand with one of his own and by the arm with the other, with all the impetuosity of a school-boy; but before the latter could answer he dropped the hand and the tone of inquiry, and said: "Pshaw! What use in asking that question?—I *know* she could be happier with me than with any other man in the world, and that makes the affair all the more painful." [Pg 389]

"Heigho!" said the lawyer, "you are not the only man in the world who does not see his way clearly in matrimonial affairs, and you must not be one of the first to mope."

"I suppose not," replied the Illinoisan. "But then you, with your wealth and education—you can know nothing of such a situation except by guess; and so your sympathy is a little blind, after all."

"Think so?" asked Horace Townsend. "Humph! well, old boy, confidence for confidence, at least a little! Look me in the face—do you see any thing like jest or trifling in it?"

"No, it is earnest, beyond a doubt."

"Then listen for one moment. Halstead Rowan, I do not believe that there is any barrier between Clara Vanderlyn and yourself, that cannot be removed if you have the will to remove it. Now for myself. What would you think—" He stopped and seemed to consider for a moment, while the other watched him narrowly and with much interest. Then he went on: "You saw me meet—well, we will mention no names—the lady down at the house, the same night on which you chanced upon your own destiny."

"Yes," answered the Illinoisan.

"You thought, no doubt, that it was a first meeting. And so it was, on her part, for she had never before met Horace Townsend, to know him. But what would you think if I should tell you that I had seen and loved *her*, many months before—that she was then engaged to be married to a very different person, though a man in the same profession—that I love her so madly as to make my life one long torture on her account—that I am throwing myself into her company, under circumstances that if she knew them would make her shrink away from me with loathing—and that such a barrier exists between us that I have not much more hope of winning her than of bending down one of yon mountain peaks to kiss me, while I can no more avoid the trial than the drunkard can keep away from his glass or the madman escape his paroxysm!" [Pg 390]

"Is all that true?" asked Rowan, who had been looking at the speaking face with still increasing wonder.

"Every word of it, and more!" was the reply.

"Then *my* situation is nothing, and I have been whining like a school-boy before I was half whipped!" exclaimed the Illinoisan. The effect intended by the other had been produced: he had been made to see that there could be even worse barriers between man and woman, than differences of family and fortune. And once teach any man that there is something worse that might have happened to him, than that which has indeed happened—much is achieved towards bringing him to resignation if not to content.

"I have told you all this," said the lawyer, "partially because I felt that I had no right to be acquainted with so much in your situation while you knew nothing of mine, and partially because I was really anxious to show you that others than yourself sometimes find rocks in the bed of that pleasant stream which the poets call 'true love.' And now that I have gone so far, involving reputation as well as happiness, I know that you will do me the only favor I ask in return, and forget that I have said a word on the subject."

"I have forgotten it already, so far as repeating it to any mortal man is concerned," replied the Illinoisan. He paused an instant, as his friend had done before, and then he added: "Meeting you has been the pleasantest—no, one of the pleasantest incidents of my days among the mountains, and I am glad that you have made me feel so much nearer to your confidence at the moment of parting."

"Parting? What, are you going away already?" asked Townsend.

"At once," answered Halstead Rowan. "I should think, though, that you would scarcely need to ask the question! My friends and myself are going to start back for Littleton immediately after dinner, and on to Montreal to-morrow. Do you think that I could sit at that table, as I feel just now, more than one meal longer, and think of the vacant chairs? No—I am a baby, I suppose, and God knows whether I shall ever grow any older and wiser!" [Pg 391]

"God forbid that you ever *should* grow so old and so wise as to be able to master your heart altogether!" said the lawyer. "I am sorry to part with you, for I too, have made a pleasant acquaintance. But you are right, no doubt. Try a little change of scene; and you will be calmer next week, if not happier."

They were now near the house, and walked on for a moment in silence. Suddenly Rowan, catching up the last words at some distance, turned short around and said:

"Townsend, I am going to change something besides scene—*life*! I am going back into the army again, not for a frolic this time, but as a profession. Officers are *gentlemen*, are they not, even in fashionable society?—and would not a pair of shoulder-straps make somebody even out of a

railroad conductor?"

His tone was half badinage, but oh, what a sad earnest lay at the bottom of it! His companion understood him too well to reply, and the conversation was not renewed. They parted at the piazza a moment after. Two or three hours later, after a long grasp of the hand which went far to prove that strong friendship between men has not become altogether a myth since the days of David and Jonathan, of Damon and Pythias, they parted at the same piazza once more and for a period that no human calculation could measure. Horace Townsend and Halstead Rowan were almost as certain never to meet again after that parting moment, as if one of the two had been already done with life and ticketed away with the dead Guelphs and Bourbons!

CHAPTER XIX.

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A Strange Character at Breakfast—"The Rambler" and his Antecedents—What Horace Townsend heard about Fate—Going up to Pic-nic on Mount Willard—The Plateau, the Rope and the Swing—Spreading the Banquet—The Dinner-call and a Cry which answered it—A Fearful Situation.

At breakfast, the next morning after the departure of the Illinoisan, a somewhat strange character was called to the attention of the guests at the Crawford; and a few of them, sitting near him, entered into conversation with him when they discovered the peculiar habits of life and mind which had for years made him an object of interest to visitors among the mountains. He had been absent southward of the range, in Pinkham Notch, at Glen Ellis Falls and other wild localities lying north of Conway, for the preceding two or three weeks, only arriving the night before; and very few of the persons then present at the Crawford had seen him except in half-forgotten meetings in previous years. He called himself and was called by others who knew him (very few of whom, probably, knew him by any other name) "The Rambler," and his habits of life were said to justify the appellation most completely, as his appearance certainly accorded with the preconceived opinions of an itinerant hermit.

He was a man evidently past fifty, with a face much wrinkled by time and roughened by exposure—with a high forehead bald nearly to the apex of the head, long grizzled hair, rapidly approaching to white, tumbled about in careless profusion, beard straggling and ungraceful and graying as fast as the hair, and something melancholy and unsettled in the eye which indicated that his wandering habits might have had an origin, many years before, in some loss or misfortune that made quiet a torture. In figure he was rather below than above the middle height, with a certain wiriness in the limbs and a hard look in the bones and tendons of the hand, suggestive of unusual activity and an iron grip.

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But when they came to know more of him from the explanations of the servants and a little listening to his own conversation, those who on that occasion first met him had reason to confess that the Rambler needed all the iron nerve and hard endurance indicated by his physique. They believed him to be a man of means, and he certainly spent money with freedom if not with lavishness, the supply seeming to be as slight and yet as inexhaustible as that of the widow's cruse. He spent very little of it upon his own person, however: such a suit of coarse gray woollen as he wore that morning, with a slouched hat and strong brogan shoes, usually completing his outer equipment. Sometimes he carried a heavy cane, but much oftener went armed with a stout staff of his own length, cut with ready hawks-bill jack-knife from a convenient oaken or hickory sapling and trimmed from its superabundance of knots by the same easily-managed substitute for a whole "kit" of carpenters'-tools.

This man, as it appeared, had never missed coming to the mountains for a single summer of the preceding fifteen years. Whence he came, no one knew; and whither he went when his season was over (*his* season had very little to do with the fashionable one, in commencement or duration), was known quite as little. He might be looked for, they said, at the Profile, the Crawford, the Glen, the Alpine, the White Mountain or down in Pinkham Notch, at any time after they began to paint up and repair the houses for the reception of visitors, in early June; and he might be expected to make his appearance at any or all of those places, any day or no day, during the fall season and even up to the time when the last coach-load rolled away in September and the first snows began to sprinkle themselves on the brows of Washington and Lafayette. He never remained at any one of the houses more than a few hours at a time, carrying away from each a few sandwiches, a little dried tongue, some cheese and crackers in a small haversack, and sleeping nine nights out of ten in the open air, with no pillow but a stone or a log of wood, and his slouched hat. Most of the time he was alone on the tops of the most difficult peaks or at the bottom of gorges where no foot but his own would be likely to tread; or he was to be seen dodging across a path, staff in hand and haversack on side, as a party was making some one of the ascents,—rather shunning any company then seeking it, and yet evidently neither misanthropic nor embarrassed when thrown into society and forced into conversation. Wherever he wished to go he went on foot, even when thirty or forty miles of rough mountain roads and paths were to be measured; and no man, they averred, had ever seen him set foot over the side of a vehicle or recognize the right of the animal man to be drawn about from place to place by his brother animal the horse.

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So far the Rambler, according to the accounts given of him, was merely a harmless monomaniac

—harmless even to himself, as all monomaniacs are *not*. But beyond that point, the servants and some of the old habitues averred, came positive madness. He had been mad, since the first day of his coming to the mountains and perhaps long before, on the idea of *climbing*. Many had seen him go up to those peaks and down into those ravines before mentioned, and found as little disposition as ability to follow him. He seemed to climb without purpose, except his purpose might be the mere reckless exposure of himself to danger at which every one except himself would draw back with a shudder. And that he did this without any motive outside of himself for the action—that he had no thought of awakening admiration by such exhibitions,—was evident from the fact that he was just as likely to make some ascent or descent of the most reckless fool-hardiness, when he did not know of the presence of any other person within possible sight, as when he had groups of horrified spectators; and that loneliness was not a condition precedent to such an attempt, was just as evident from the fact that he never seemed to desist because one person or fifty came suddenly upon him and "caught him in the act." He seemed to live in a climbing world of his own, in which he was the only resident and all the others merely chance visitors who might or might not be in the way when he found it necessary to hang himself like a fly on the crags between heaven and earth.

We are making no attempt whatever at analyzing the mentality of this singular man, whom many will remember as having met him during some period of the last dozen years, at one or more of the Notches of the White Mountains. As well might the attempt be made to survey one of his own mountain tops or discover the superfices of one of the mighty masses of perpendicular rock that so often afforded him a footing at which the chamois would have given up in despair and Hervio Nano (that human "fly on the ceiling") writhed his boneless limbs in a shudder! We are only roughly daguerreotyping the man as he appeared, preparatory to one terrible incident which made him an important character in this narration. Were any effort to be made at explaining his strange and apparently purposeless predilection, perhaps one word would come as near to furnishing the explanation as five hundred others—*excitement*. One man drinks liquors until he goes beyond himself; another invites to his brain the tempting demons of opium, hasheesh or nicotine; another perils his prosperity and the very bread of his family at play; still another plunges into pleasure so deeply that the draught is all the while maddening agony; and yet another claps spur on heel and takes sword in hand and rides into the thick of the deadliest fight, without one motive of patriotism or one thought of duty: and all these are seeking that which will temporarily lift them above and beyond themselves (alas!—that which will just as assuredly plunge them *below* themselves, in reaction!)—excitement. Who knows that the poor Rambler, bankrupt in heart, hope and memory, had not tasted all the other maddening bowls and found them too weak to wean him from his hour of suffering, so that when the frequent paroxysm came he had no alternative but to place himself in some position where the hand and the foot could become masters of every thought and feeling, that the rude minstrelsy of deadly danger might thus charm away the black moment from his soul!

All this is mere speculation—the man may have been nothing more nor less than a maniac; and yet his conversation, which was coherent and marked by entire propriety, did not create any such impression.

No one who has made any study of the scenery of our Northern Mountains fails to know that many of them (and almost all the White Mountains that have full descent on either side to either of the Notches) in addition to the bald scarred brows of cliff that on one side or another seem like faces lifting themselves in stern defiance to the storm,—have chased down them, from brow to foot, channels or "schutes" from which the torrent or the lightning has originally shorn away trees, herbage and at last earth, every year wearing them deeper and making more startling the contrast of the almost direct line of bluish gray cliff, seeming the very mockery of a path that no man can walk, with the green of the living grass and foliage and the white skeletons of the dead birches, that border them on either side. Perhaps no feature of the mountain scenery is more certain to awake a shudder, than such "schutes," as looked up to from below or down upon from above; as the thought of a passage-way is inevitable, followed by the remembrance of the headlong fall of any man who should attempt a progress so nearly perpendicular, and that followed by the imagination that the gazer has really attempted it and is falling. Mount Webster and Mount Willard, at the White Mountain Notch, are more marked than almost any of the others, by such features; and certain terrible adventures along those "schutes" make part of the repertoires of guides and the boasting stories of old habitues. With one of those descending Mount Willard, and the points of scenery immediately surrounding it, we shall have painful occasion to make more intimate acquaintance in this immediate connection.

These "schutes" and their topography were the subject of conversation at the breakfast-table that morning, not alone on account of the presence of the Rambler, which might have provoked it, but from the fact that a pic-nic on the top of Mount Willard, in the near vicinity of one of those tempting horrors, had been for some days in contemplation and the wagons were being prepared for going up and the cold food packing away in baskets and hampers at the very moment of that discussion.

"You must know the mountains remarkably well," one of the gentlemen at the table was saying to the Rambler.

"I ought to do so," was the reply. "There is scarcely a spot from Littleton to Winnipiseogee that my foot has not touched; and I may almost say that there is not a spot where I have not eaten or slept." He said this in a manner as far removed from any desire to make a display of himself as from any thing like modesty—merely as the fact, and therefore a matter of course.

"I heard you speaking of climbing the schutes a moment ago, but I did not quite catch what you said," spoke another. "You certainly cannot hold on to the rocks alone, when they are so nearly perpendicular, can you?"

"Oh, no," answered the Rambler, "of course that would be impossible. I suppose I have a sure foot and a steady hand, and those schutes always have trees and shrubbery beside them, all the way down. It is no trouble to hold on to *them*—at least it is not so to *me*."

"Ugh!" said yet another—"rather you than me! Such exposures are terrible!" and he shuddered at the picture his imagination had been drawing.

"They may be terrible, and I suppose that they are so, to some people," was the quiet reply. "Habit is every thing, no doubt. Some of you might walk into battle, if you have been there before, a good deal more coolly than I could do, even though you had a good deal more to sacrifice in life than myself in the event of a bullet going astray." [Pg 398]

"Bullets never go astray, nor do men fall down the rocks accidentally!" put in a breakfaster who wore a white neckcloth but no mock-sanctimonious visage. "I am afraid, brothers, that you all forget the Overruling Hand which guides all things and prevents what thoughtless people call 'accidents.'"

"Ah!" said Horace Townsend. "Domine, do you carry fatalism, or predestination, if you like the word any better,—so far as to believe that every step of a man is supernaturally protected?"

"It is supernaturally *ordered*, beyond a doubt: it may be *protected*, or quite the opposite," was the minister's smiling reply. "And I might go a step further and say that every man is supernaturally *upheld*, when doing a great duty, however dangerous, so that that result may follow, whether it come in life or death, in success or failure—which may be eventually best for *him* as well as best for the interests of heaven and earth, all men and all time."

"A sublime thought, and one that may be worth calling to mind a good many times in life!" was all the reply that the lawyer made, and he took no further part in the conversation. He sat back in his chair, the moment after; and Margaret Hayley (who had now become to some extent his "observer," as he had erewhile filled the same office to Halstead Rowan and Clara Vanderlyn)—Margaret Hayley, sitting at a considerable distance up the table on the opposite side, saw that his face seemed strangely moved, and that there was intense thought in the eye that looked straight forward and yet apparently gazed on vacancy.

Meanwhile the Rambler had not yet ceased to be an object of interest; and a little warning (such as he had undoubtedly heard a good many times during his strange life) was to follow the inquiries and the speculations. [Pg 399]

"Then you probably do not think, Domine," said one of the interlocutors in response to the remark which seemed to have struck Horace Townsend so forcibly, "that our friend here is under any especial supernatural protection when climbing up and down places where he has no errand whatever except his own amusement."

"I might think so, if I had the power to decide that he was really attempting no good whatever to himself or others," was the reply. "But as I cannot so decide, though I certainly think such exposures of life very imprudent, I shall be very careful not to express any such opinion."

"Well, sir, I certainly wish you no harm," said another, "but if all accounts are true, I think that you expose yourself very recklessly, and I expect, some day, to hear that the pitcher you have carried once too often to the well is broken at last."

"Perhaps so," said the Rambler, without one indication on his features that he was either frightened or moved by the suggestions. "I am long past the middle of life—my limbs are not quite so nimble as they once were—and if I do make a miss-step some time and get killed, I hope that they will allow me to lie peaceably where I fall!"

After which strange wish the conversation went no further. Breakfast was just breaking up; and a few moments afterwards some who were standing on the piazza saw the Rambler stepping away down the road, haversack of bread, cheese, and meats strapped under his left arm, and his weather-beaten slouched hat thrown forward to shield his eyes from the morning sun that came streaming low and broad up the Notch.

It was perhaps an hour afterwards when two wagons drew up at the door, ready to bear some score of the visitors up Mount Willard for the expected pic-nic. A third wagon had started ahead, bearing provisions enough to have supplied a small army—all to be wasted or made into perquisites for the servants by a frolic dictated a little by ennui and not a little by a love for any thing novel or merry. Two or three of the young men staying at the house had been up Mount Willard a few days before, and on their return they had brought such flattering accounts of a magnificent broad, green plateau which they had discovered (how many times it had before been discovered is not stated) not far from the end of the carriage-road, on the southern brow of the mountain and overlooking the cascades and the edge of the Devil's Den,—that the effect produced on the as yet untravelled people at the Crawford by the announcement was very much the same that we may suppose to have been manifested at the Court of Castile and Leon when Columbus came back with the Indians, the birds'-feathers and the big stories. The young men had signalized their own faith in the desirableness of the land as a place of permanent occupation, by possessing themselves of a small coil of inch rope, lying unused in one of the out-houses since the [Pg 400]

re-erection of the Crawford (after the fire of the winter before), in 1859, carting it in a wagon up the mountain and to the tempting plateau, and there using one end of it and a seat-board to make such a stupendous swing between two high trees that stood on one side of the green space, as had probably never been seen before in any locality where the clouds every morning tangled themselves among the branches. One of them had declared that he had the "highest old swing," in that "scup," ever taken by mortal, and a good many believed him. The swing, with its hundred feet or more of super-abundant rope, had remained as a permanence; a few of the ladies at the house had been coaxed into going up Mount Willard especially to indulge in that "scupping" which ordinarily belonged to low lands and lazier watering-places; and for two or three days before preparations and arrangements for a pic-nic had been in progress, destined to culminate on that splendid cloudless morning of early August.

So much premised, nothing more need be said than that all the few persons connected with this relation and yet remaining at the Crawford, were members of the pic-nic party of twenty or twenty-five, a pleasant mingling of both sexes but not of all the ages; that Captain Hector Coles and Margaret Hayley went up especially in each other's company, as was both usual and proper; that Mrs. Burton Hayley, getting ready to go on to the Glen and a little absorbed in one of the ministerial brethren whom she had found, did not ascend a mountain on any such vain and frivolous errand as a mere pic-nic; that Horace Townsend rode up, in a different wagon from that occupied by Margaret and her cavalier, and with no one in charge, or even in especial company—precisely as he had gone up Mount Washington; that the party, in both wagons, was very merry and tuned to the highest possible pitch of enjoyment; that the usual jolts incidental to very bad mountain roads were periodically encountered, and the little screams and jerkings at protecting coats, ordinarily consequent thereupon, were evoked; that a few magnificent views down the Notch and among the sea of peaks were enjoyed, with a few contretemps among the riders adding zest thereto; that nearly every one would have been willing to make oath that they had been "all but upset down the mountain" several times, when they had not really been even once in that threatening predicament; and that after something more than an hour of riding they found themselves and their pic-nic preparations at the end of the carriage-road and very near the diminutive promised land which they had been invited and enticed to come up and occupy. [Pg 401]

It was indeed, as those who had never before visited the place found upon reaching it through a little clump of trees and bushes beyond the termination of the road—a spot well worthy the attention of any visitor to the Notch. Nothing else like it, probably, could have been found in the whole chain of the White Mountains, following them from the head waters of the Androscoggin to the mouth of the Pemigawasset. For the purposes of this veracious narration it becomes necessary to describe some of the features of the spot more closely than they would demand under ordinary circumstances; and the reader may find it equally necessary to make close application of the details of description, in order fully to appreciate that which must inevitably follow, beyond the control of either reader or writer. [Pg 402]

At some day, no doubt many a long year before, whether caused by the melting of the snows at the top of the mountain or by some one of those internal convulsions which the earth seems to share with the human atom who inhabits it,—there had been a heavy "slide" from near the peak on the south-south-western side, coming down perhaps a quarter of a mile before earth and stone met with any check. Then the check had been sudden and severe, from some obstruction below, and as a consequence the slide had gone no farther downward but spread itself into a broad plateau of fifty or sixty feet by one hundred, nearly level though with a slight inclination downward towards the edge. There had chanced to be but few rocks at the top of this mass of earth, and the southern exposure and shelter from the north winds had no doubt tended to warm and fertilize it, so that while much of the top of the mountain was bald, scarred and bare, and all the remainder covered with wild, rough forest—this little plateau had really grown to be covered with grassy sward, of no particular luxuriance but quite a marvel at that bleak height. Behind it, upward, the mountain rose gradually towards the peak, seen through a younger growth of trees that had found their origin since the catastrophe which swept away all their predecessors. On both sides the thick tangled woods closed down heavily, leaving no view in either direction, except through their swaying branches; while in the direction of the slide itself, no tree intervening between the plateau and its edge, one of the most beautiful perspectives of the whole mountain range spread itself out to the admiring gaze.

Looking close as possible down the side of Mount Willard, at that point, the trees and undergrowth of the gorge below, some fifteen hundred or two thousand feet away, could be discerned, through that slight blue haze which marks distance and faintly suggests the great depth of the sky. Lifting the eye, it swept south-westward and took in a terribly rough range of wooded hills and minor mountain peaks, with a broad intervale lying between, through which glittered and flashed the little stream with its white cascades which gave name to the spot, hurrying down in foam and fury to join the Saco in the broad valley below. Further westward and at still greater distance rose the mountains lying behind Bethlehem, with the top of Lafayette, of the Franconia range, rising yet higher and beyond all, touched with the warm light of the noonday sun and supplying a perfect finish to what was truly an enchanting picture. [Pg 403]

But at the edge of the plateau itself lay that which must command the most special notice in this connection. Whether formed before the slide or consequent upon it, one of the most precipitous of all the "schutes" of the mountains had its start at the very centre. It had worn away the earth of the plateau in the middle, until it reduced it nearly to the stone of the first formation; while at the side of the narrow trough thus formed, thick trees and undergrowth clustered as far down as

the eye could extend, with one sharp bend outward at the right, and striking out still beyond that, the massive roots of a fallen tree, of which the trunk lay buried in the earth and covered with undergrowth, while one long thorn or fang of the root hung half way across the chasm and suggested that there of all places, above the dizzy depth beneath, one of those eagles should sit screaming, that are supposed ever to have kept position on some such outpost, shouting hoarse rage and defiance through far away and desolate Glencoe, ever since the massacre of the Macdonalds. Still below this and almost touching the stony bottom of the trough of the schute, another and much smaller fang of root extended, the broad bulk of the side-roots forming a close wall between the two branches and the hedge of undergrowth, almost as impervious to the hand of man and as unfavorable for any purpose of clinging, as the sloping stone itself. It was a dizzy thing to look down—that schute, as some of the stronger-sexed, clearer-headed and surer-footed of the pic-nic party found by venturing near the edge, and as they did not feel it necessary to reassure themselves by any second examination.

The baskets and hampers had been brought over from the baggage-wagon, at the same time that the party themselves made their arrival. Why it is that people who go out upon pic-nics, in any part of the country or indeed in any part of the globe, with high expectations of much enjoyment which is to be found in other modes than the use of the masticative apparatus,—why it is, we say, that all such persons, even though they may have eaten heartily not two hours before, become ravenously hungry the very moment they reach the ground designated and are good for nothing thereafter until they have rendered themselves helpless by over-eating,—why all this is, we say once more, passes human understanding; but the fact remains not the less patent. Let any frequenter of pic-nics think backward and try whether he or she can remember any instance to the contrary,—and whether the conclusion has not been more than once arrived at, in his or her particular mind, that the true aim and object of the pic-nic, as an institution, is to enjoy the eating of a bad dinner away from the ordinary table instead of a good one properly spread upon it.

The party on Mount Willard was mortal, and they bowed at once to this unaccountable weakness of mortality. Five minutes of inspecting the ground and viewing the scenery; and then, while the more selfish members of the company or those who had eaten heartier breakfasts, flirted, strolled, or indulged in the doubtful pleasures of the swing (which hung between two tall trees at the left of the plateau, with a loose hundred feet of rope at the root of one), the less selfish or the more hungry applied themselves to spreading out on the dry sward the half dozen of cloths that had been brought up from the hotel, and to laying out upon it, in various stages and phases of damage and disarrangement, eatables which had been appetizing enough when they left the Crawford, but of which, now, they would have been seriously puzzled to separate the fish from the farina or the maccaroni from the mustard.

The helpful ladies and their male assistants had just succeeded in producing that amount of confusion among the articles on the spread table-cloths which was supposed to represent arranging the lunch,—and the call for volunteers to disarrange it more effectually with forks and fingers was about to be made,—when one of the gentlemen looked up suddenly as a shadow passed him.

"Our friend the Rambler," he said as the other, with a slight nod, recognized his notice and passed on down the plateau towards the thicket at the north-western edge.

"Why yes," said one of the ladies. "He walked and we rode, and yet he seems to have been up before us, for he is coming down from the farthest side of the mountain."

"Shall I call him and ask him to take a share in our dinner?" asked one of the male stewards.

"No, it would be useless: the Rambler, they say, generally chooses his own society, and he probably would not even thank us for the invitation," answered another. The strange man had by that time passed into the thicket bordering the edge of the schute at the right, and was seen no longer. Some of the pic-nickers noticed, as he passed, that he had no stick in his hands and that his almost invariable companion, the haversack, was missing from his side. But there seemed to be no occasion of commenting on so slight a matter, and nothing was said with reference to it.

It must be confessed that among those who had not contributed in any way to the spreading of the miscellaneous dinner upon the ground, were two persons in whom this narration maintains a peculiar interest—Horace Townsend, lawyer, and Margaret Hayley, gentlewoman. The lady had been among the early visitors to the swing; and at the time of the disappearance of the Rambler into the thicket at the edge of the schute, she was being swept backward and forward in the air by that dizzying contrivance, at a rate which sent her loosened wealth of dark hair and her light summer drapery floating about in equal negligence and profusion, while the dainty white hands held fast to the rope with a tenacity which showed them to possess a commendable degree of nerve, and the trim dark gaiter enclosing her Arab foot, and the spotless stocking that rose above it, had both just that measure of display which preserved the extremest bound of delicacy and yet made the whole spectacle strangely bewitching. Perhaps the extraordinary light in her eye as she swung may have been a little influenced by one of the two pairs of hands that supplied the careful impelling force; for those hands certainly belonged to the lawyer, who had been a member of the idle section from the beginning, while she had wilfully attached herself to it in spite of the expostulations of the Captain. That gallant officer, by the way, had been retained among the dinner-purveyors by the wiles and the threats of a little dark-eyed minx from Providence, who cared no more for him than she did for her shoe-lace, but who would flirt with him and make him flirt with her, because she saw that he was arrogant, shoulder-strapped, and very much afraid of being seen for a moment absent from the side of Margaret Hayley. The Captain, who was not

quite fool enough to believe that he had really made a military conquest of the young Yankee girl, probably objurgated her in his heart for her charming impudence; while Margaret, more gratified by the relief than she cared to make manifest, may have made private calculations of hugging that dear little tormentor the first moment when she could catch her alone.

Such was the aspect of affairs—the young girl in the swing, Townsend and another gentleman swinging her, half a dozen merry young men and girls gathered around the trees or lying lazily on the grass, and the other and more industrious half-score kneeling and bending and squatting around the table-cloths at U. C. of the plateau,—when the arrangements (or mis-arrangements) were judged to be complete and one of the male members of the working-detail, a little hungry and disposed to be more than a little witty, made up one hand into the shape of a trumpet and bawled through it:

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"Oh yes,—oh yes!—know all men and several women by these presents that the regal banquet is spread and that those who intend to eat are required to eat now or ever after hold their pieces—if they can find any to hold!"

A merry farce—the very incarnation of thoughtless jollity,—the dinner and the announcement. It rung out over the plateau, heard by all and certain to be heeded by all; to be succeeded the very instant after by a sound that no member of that company will ever forget until his dying day. A scream of mortal agony and terror that seemed to rise from the depths of the schute, nondescript in some respects, as unlike what any one then present had ever heard, but unmistakably human because the last sounds of every repetition shaped themselves into words that could be distinguished:

"Help!—help!—help!"

For one moment that fearful cry ceased and during that moment all was silence among the pic-nickers. For that instant, too, probably more than half the company believed that whatever the sound might be, it was the prank of some unscrupulous joker, hidden away in the undergrowth near the edge of the schute and intended to frighten the ladies out of any appetite for their dinner. The time of its coming, immediately following the dinner-call, was certainly favorable to that supposition. But when it commenced again, the very instant after, louder and more shrill, so evidently coming up from the depth below, the thought of practical jest vanished and every cheek grew deadly white with the certainty that some tragedy was being enacted near them, that human eye must be blasted by seeing and that human hand could probably find no power to avert.

It would have seemed the most unlikely of all things, when that ambiguous banquet on the top of the mountain was spread, that it should never be eaten; and yet the fates had so destined. Old Ancæus had quite as little faith in the prediction of the slave whom he overworked in his vineyard, that he should never taste of the product of the vines; and when he held the cup in his hand and the red wine was bubbling to the brim, ready to show the audacious prophet the fallacy of his prediction, the muttered: "There's many a slip between the cup and the lip!" no doubt fell upon incredulous ears. But even then the cry rang out that called him to the Hunt of the Calydonian Boar, and the spirit of the warrior was higher than the pride of the wine-grower and the hard master. The heavy cup went clanging to the earth, the blood of the grape flowing out to enrich once more the ground from which it had been derived; and the tyrant hero rushed away. The slaves had a new master, thereafter; and though Ancæus may have supped with the gods on Olympus, on the night when the great fight was over, he never tasted of that wine of his vineyard which had once even been lifted to his lips! So tasted not the diners on that mountain in a far distant land from that which held Olympus, even when the feast was spread and the call had been made for their gathering.

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It is impossible to say what point of time elapsed before any member of that horrified company remembered the Rambler, his habits, the conversation of that morning, and the fact that he had only a few moments before been seen going in the direction from which that piteous cry was coming up. It is impossible to measure it, for at such moments ages of sensation pass in the very twinkling of an eye. Some of them did remember him, with a groan, and perhaps the thought was general. At all events the consternation was so—as general as if some one who had come away from the Crawford with them in life and high hope, had suddenly been stricken dead before their eyes. Margaret Hayley, with the frightened cry which even then shaped a feeling: "Oh, Mr. Townsend, what *can* that be!" dropped from the swing and was caught in arms outstretched to receive her. By that time all seated around the table-cloths had sprung to their feet; and at once every member of the party, male and female, impelled by a curiosity that even overmastered fear, rushed down the plateau towards the edge, as if some horrible madness had seized all and they were about to spring off into the great chasm below. But before they had reached the edge all the ladies except two and several of the gentlemen recoiled; and it was only by degrees and under the compelling attraction of that still ascending cry, that some of those remaining could force themselves to the verge. Those who reached it at that moment, and those who closed up the instant after, saw enough to make Blondin and his brother-fools a non-necessity for the balance of their natural lives; and the cry from below was answered, be sure, by a cry that rang from every voice above when the sad spectacle met the eye.

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It was indeed the subject of their past fear who supplied their present horror; and the situation, keeping in view previous descriptions of the locality, may be briefly conveyed.

It will be remembered that at the bend or elbow of the gulch, some thirty feet below, two fangs of

the root of a tree stretched out partially across the chasm, the upper long and at some distance from the rock of the bottom, the other shorter and lying very near it. It will also be remembered that beneath both the schute stretched its long blue jagged line to the foot of the mountain, not less than fifteen hundred or two thousand feet, with the air between the top and bottom looking actually blue from distance,—and that the schute itself was so nearly perpendicular that while any object falling down it would probably touch it all the way from top to bottom, it would go down almost with the velocity of the lightning and be rolled and pounded to a mere ball before it had accomplished half of the descent.

On that lower fang of the root hung the Rambler—those who had seen him at the Crawford recognized him at once, at that short distance; and it was indeed from that throat so little accustomed to call for assistance from any mortal hand, that the terrible cries of agony and appeals for help were ascending. One hand grasped the root near the end, without being able to go nearly round it, and one leg was caught round the root farther towards the tree, with the bend at the knee forming a kind of hook so long as it could retain its tension. The other arm and leg hung down, with the body, below, and the long grizzled hair streamed away from the head that depended downward in the direction towards which it seemed to be so fatally tending. The face could be seen, as that was turned towards the cliff, but its expression could not be recognized at that distance and in the reversed position that it occupied. All that could be known, to any certainty, was that there hung a human being, evidently unable even to recover a safer hold upon the root, screaming for help that was hopeless, and as certain to make the last plunge within a space of time that could be measured by single minutes, or perhaps even by seconds, as the sun was certain to move on in its course and the earth to retain its laws of gravitation! [Pg 410]

Was there not cause, indeed, for that general cry of pitying horror from above, which answered the cry of agony and terror from below?

CHAPTER XX.

Suspense in Danger, in two Senses—Horace Townsend with a New Thought—The use of a Swing-rope—An Invitation to Captain Hector Coles—A fearful piece of Amateur Gymnastics—Going down into the Schute—Success or Failure?—The Event, and Margaret Hayley's Madness—Two Unfortunate Declarations.

We have said that the whole body of the pic-nickers rushed up to the edge of the plateau, and that all, or nearly all, caught glimpses of the situation. Then came that cry, that shutting of the eyes and springing back, until only three or four, of whom Horace Townsend was one and Captain Hector Coles was *not* another, remained on the verge. Margaret Hayley, among those who had gazed down and drawn back, remained a few feet from the edge, and the Captain was either so careful of her safety or so anxious to furnish himself with an excuse for remaining no nearer, that he caught her by the dress and retained his grip as if she had been some bundle of quartermaster's goods that he was fearful of having slip through his fingers! Frightened inquiries and equally frightened replies, mingled with moans and sobs and wringings of female hands, went round the circle thus scattered over the lower part of the plateau; and for a moment those noises made the still-ascending cries for help almost inaudible. [Pg 411]

Horace Townsend stood at the very edge, and except perhaps sharing in the first cry, he had not uttered one word. He no doubt understood, intuitively, like the rest, that the poor man must have been attempting the mad descent, when the undergrowth by which he held fast gave way in his hands, or some stone caved out beneath him, sending him headlong downward for a plunge of two thousand feet, from which he had only been temporarily stopped by striking and gripping the root of the tree as he fell. Beyond this, and with reference to any possibility of saving the perilled man, he was probably quite as much in the dark as any of the others. He stood half bent, his dusky cheek pale and his face strangely contorted, his hands clasped low as if wringing themselves surreptitiously, and the eyes beneath his bent brow looking into the gulf as if he was trying to peer downward into the eternal mystery which that man was so soon to fathom.

Suddenly his face lighted. "Hush! I must speak to that man!" he said, in a low but intense voice, and the behest was obeyed so quickly that almost total silence fell upon the top of the plateau. [Pg 412]

"Hallo, below there!" he cried, as the call of agony ceased for an instant.

"Help! help! oh help! came back from below.

"Do you understand what I say?" again he called.

"Yes!—help! help!" came feebly back.

"Get that rope from the foot of the swing there, quick, some of you!" he cried, and his voice seemed for the time to clear from its hoarseness and ring like a trumpet. "Quick!—cut it away at the bottom and bring it all here!"

Half a dozen of the young men and one or two of the ladies, delighted to aid in any hope of saving the perilled man (for the most thoughtless of us are naturally, after all, kind and averse to death and suffering), sprung for the rope. Two of them reached the foot of the swing ahead of the others, the pocket-knife of one was out in an instant, and in another moment they came up

dragging nearly or quite an hundred feet of strong inch rope.

"We have a rope here that will hold you: can you catch it and hold on or tie it around your body?" the lawyer called down again.

"No!"—the pained and weakening voice came back, and then they all knew what had reduced that athletic and iron-gripped man to such a state that he could make no effort to swing himself up again. He spoke brokenly and feebly, but Horace Townsend and some of the others caught the words: "I can't catch the rope—I put my right shoulder out of joint as I fell—I can't hold on much longer—I shall faint with this pain—oh, can't some of you help me?"

Then passed over the countenance of Horace Townsend one of those sweeping expressions which make humanity something more or less than human. It may have been the god stirring—it may have been the demon. No one saw it—not even Margaret Hayley; for when he turned nothing more was to be seen than that the brow was very dark, and that the lips were set grimly. The powers looking downward from heaven on the falling of leaves and the nesting of young birds may have remarked the whole expression and set it down at its true worth, and that will eventually be found quite sufficient. Before he turned he shouted, much louder and more authoritatively than he had spoken before, to the man hanging between life and death below: [Pg 413]

"Hold on, like a man! We *will* do something to help you!"

Then he spoke to the two young men, one of whom yet held the end of the rope:

"Tie a big loop in that rope, quick—ten or a dozen feet from the end."

They proceeded to do so, with not unskilful hands, and in that instant the lawyer approached Captain Hector Coles, where he stood, only a few feet off, still holding the dress of Margaret Hayley. He did not appear to see *her* at all, but she saw *him*, and there was that upon his face which frightened her so that she literally gasped.

"Captain Coles!" he said, "do you know what you said of me the other night and again the other day? There is a rope, and there is yet a chance to save that man. Go down, if you are as brave as you boast, and save him. Do you hear me?—go!"

"I? Humph!" That was all the reply that the Captain, half-stupefied, could make to what he believed to be the words of a madman.

"No, I thought not!" sneered the voice through the hard lips. With the words coat and vest were thrown off, and the tall, slight, athletic form was developed with no concealment but the shirt and the closely-girt trowsers. The shoes followed, and as they did so Margaret Hayley well remembered where and when she had before seen that disrobing. She had grown white as the collar and cuffs of her gray chambray; and she was so paralyzed with wonder, fear, anxiety, and conflicting thought, that she could not speak, and was on the point of falling. Yet all this time Horace Townsend seemed to pay her no more attention or observation than he might have done had she been a wooden post or a stone monument erected at the same point of the plateau! [Pg 414]

Not sixty seconds had elapsed after the throwing off of his outer garments, when the lawyer, without another word to any one, seized the rope, looked over the edge to see that the Rambler was still hanging to his thorn, lowered down the line until the loop was nearly opposite to him, then carried up the other end and with the volunteered assistance of one of the young men firmly secured it with two or three turns and as many knots, around the trunk of a stout sapling.

All saw the movement, now, and all began to understand it; but oh, with what redoubled agitation was the truth realized! He was going down that frail rope, and into what peril! The rope fastened, he stepped forward to the verge, while a murmur ran round the frightened group, even coming from the lips of those who had never spoken to him: "Oh, don't!" Margaret Hayley was no longer stone: she cast one glance at the face of Captain Hector Coles, saw that the expression on it was every thing rather than fear or anxiety, then jerked away her dress from his hand and darted forward.

"No—do not go!" she said, grasping the lawyer by the arm on the very verge.

"I must!" Then for the first time he appeared to see her.

"No! If I bid you stay for *my* sake, will you do it?"

"For your sake, Margaret Hayley, I would go all the quicker. Stand back, for God's sake!—you may fall!"

She said no other word. Captain Hector Coles sprang forward and grasped her arm to draw her back. She jerked it away, almost angrily, and never stirred so far from the edge as to prevent her looking down the schute. Half a dozen of the others, all gentlemen, had taken the same risk of crowding to the edge, their very breath held; but none of them would any more have thought, just then, of offering to aid *her*, than of tendering the same support to one of the rooted saplings on the cliff. It was a fearful moment, but not the weakest heart on that plateau beat within the bosom of the white-handed Philadelphia girl! [Pg 415]

Horace Townsend threw himself down on his face as he reached the edge, grasped the rope and crawled over backwards in that way, descending it hand-over-hand. Those too far back from the edge to see, heard him call out to the man below as he disappeared from sight: "Hold fast like a

man! I am coming!" Then they saw no more, and for the moment heard no more.

Those who stood on the verge, and Margaret Hayley among them—saw the adventurous lawyer descend the rope with slow and steady care but evident labor, until he reached the loop opposite and nearly under the suspended man. Then they saw him weave his right arm into the loop until the strands of rope seemed to go around it three or four times, throw down his feet to the rock so as to raise his shoulders away from it, and commence gathering in the loose rope below with his left. Directly he seemed to have the end in his hand, and they saw him stretch the left arm as if to throw it around the body of the perilled man. At that moment they saw, with a horror that words can make no attempt at describing, that the hand of the Rambler which had held the end of the root gave way and the body swung to a perpendicular, head downward, only suspended by the hook formed of the leg. All, except one—that *one*—closed their eyes, confident that the leg too must give way and the poor climber plunge headlong, perhaps bearing down the would-be rescuer with him. But no!—still the body remained in that position for a moment, and in that moment they saw that the rope passed around it and the hand of the lawyer made an attempt, the success of which could not be seen, to tie the rope into a knot about the waist. But even at that instant the tension of the stiffened leg gave way and they saw the body plunge downwards, head first; *where*, was too sickening a horror to conjecture.

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No one saw any more—not even Margaret Hayley. With one wild cry she sprang back from the verge and tottered half fainting but still erect, into the arms of some of the other ladies who had been watching the whole scene through *her*.

Perfect silence—the silence of untold terror and dread. Their own eyes had seen the Rambler plunge headlong towards the realization of that fearful last wish: what hope was there that the other, entangled with him, had not accompanied him? It must be said that for the moment no one dared look over the edge again, and that no one dared, during the same time, to test, by feeling the rope, whether any weight still remained at the end of it! The cast-off coat, vest, hat and shoes of the lawyer assumed the look of dead-men's clothes unseasonably exhibited; and each even looked upon the other with horror because a spectator of the same catastrophe. What must have been the feelings of Margaret Hayley, if, as we have had reason to believe, her first love had faltered in favor of a new ideal? What those of Captain Hector Coles when he believed that a disgusting and audacious rivalry had been removed at least *two thousand feet*?

All this found relief when it had lasted about ten ages—in other figures, about two minutes and thirty seconds! The rope was seen to tremble at the edge, and two or three of the men gathered strength to dart forward. A head came up above the level, and a faint voice said:

"Give me a hand, here!"

A hand was given, and in one instant more the lawyer was dragged up upon the plateau and staggered to his feet. He was bathed in sweat, trembled fearfully, and his clothes were torn in many places. Personally he had received no injury, except that some hard object (perhaps one of the snags of the root) had struck him near the left temple and ploughed its way in such a manner that the wound would probably leave a scar there during life, more than half way across the forehead and up into the roots of the hair. Even this was shallow and the few drops of blood flowing from it wore already dried, so that probably the receiver had never been aware of the blow or its effect. Most of those things were seen afterwards—they were certainly not seen with this particularity at the time, for not one of the persons on the plateau, from Captain Hector Coles to the least interested of the company, saw any thing else than the proud face of Margaret Hayley radiant with humility, and her tall form cowering down as if to make itself humbler and less noticeable, as she dropped on her knees before the lawyer—yes, dropped on her knees!—took one of the quivering hands in both her own dainty white ones, covered it with kisses that some others would have been glad to purchase for hand or lip by mortgaging a soul, and literally sobbed out:

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"God bless and reward you!—you noblest and strangest man in the world!"

It was a singular position for a proud and beautiful woman—was it not?—especially towards a man whose words had never given her any right to make so complete a surrender of her womanly reticence and dignity? Captain Hector Coles thought so, for he could restrain himself no longer but stepped to her, laid his hand upon her arm and spoke in her ear:

"For shame, Margaret Hayley!"

Perhaps no one else heard the words: she heard them, for she was on her feet in an instant, and the one word which she returned, in the very ear of the Captain and certainly unheard by any other, made him start back and redden like one of the traditional furies. He said no more, but stood sullen as silent. Whether Horace Townsend had not heard the flattering language addressed to him, or whether he had not yet recovered himself sufficiently from his late exertion to attempt reply, he made none, but seemed confused and unnerved. He did not recover until some one near him said:

"Poor fellow!—you lost him after all!"

"Lost him? no!" said the lawyer, arousing himself. "I forgot! He is insensible but not fatally injured. Pray pull up the rope, gently, for I believe that I am too weak to render you any assistance."

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"What!" cried two or three voices in a breath, and more than as many hands seized the rope. It was drawn tight—there *was* something yet remaining below. As the knowledge spread among the company and they began to pull on the rope, such an involuntary cheer burst from nearly all their throats, male and female, as might have roused a man moderately insensible. But they produced no effect on the dead weight at the end of the line; and it was only after more than five minutes of severe but careful pulling, with every breath waiting in hushed expectation lest some sharp angle of the rock might at last cut off or weaken the rope, that a dark mass came up to the edge and the insensible form of the Rambler was landed upon the plateau by the hands that grasped it.

He might have been dead, for all that could be judged, though there was really no reason to believe that he should have expired from any cause except fright. But he presented a most pitiful spectacle—his clothes fearfully torn by abrasion against the rocks in drawing up, the right arm hanging loosely from the shoulder, the eyes closed and teeth set as in a fatal spasm, and the iron-gray hair and straggling beard matted with blood yet flowing from a severe wound in the head that he had received either in falling against the rock from the root or in the perilous passage upward. There was no indication of breath, but he was alive, for the pulse had not stopped its slow movement, and there was at least a chance that he could be recovered.

But even then, and while two or three were hurrying to the table for water to use in bringing back the flitting life and some of the cloths to use as a stretcher in bearing the body to one of the wagons,—even then the general attention was for the moment withdrawn. For just as the poor Rambler was fairly landed and the company gathering around him, while Margaret Hayley was yet standing close to Horace Townsend, with her eyes still reading that face which seemed to be a perpetual puzzle to her,—the brown cheek grew suddenly of a ghastly white, the whole frame [Pg 419] trembled as if from the coming of a spasm, and the lawyer fell heavily forward, without a sign of sensation, just as he had done in the previous instance after rash exposure and severe exertion, at the Pool. Now, as then, reaction seemed to come with terrible force, unnerving the system and literally overmastering life.

As was to be expected under such circumstances, the excitement among the pic-nickers redoubled when they had two insensible people instead of one, and one of the two the hero of so strange an adventure as that which has just been recorded, to look after and bring back to life. Exclamations: "He is dying!" "He is dead!" "He has fainted from over-exertion!" "How dreadful!" and half a dozen others ran round the circle. But Margaret Hayley did not hear or did not heed them. She was again upon her knees, for a very different purpose from that which had thus bowed her the moment before—lifting the head of matted hair upon her lap, chafing the stiffened hands, and uttering words that seemed to have no regard to the delicacy of her position or the hearing of the by-standers. Such words of unmistakable anxiety and fondness the insensible man might have been willing to peril another life to hear; and they were uttered, let it be remembered, when she, however the others may have been alarmed, had no idea that he was dying or in danger, and more as if she wished to pour out a great truth of her nature and be relieved of its weight, than with any other apparent thought in view. Oh, that ideal! Oh, love of woman, a moment checked in its first course, to break away again from all bounds and more than redouble its early madness! Oh, overweening pride of Margaret Hayley, that once had been her most marked characteristic, now cast away like a thing to be loathed and reprobated! Oh, prophet words, spoken by the sorrowing girl but a few hours after the bereavement of her life, now seeming to be so strangely fulfilled! Second love, and an abandonment that even the first had scarcely known, before two months of summer had made the grass green on the grave of the [Pg 420] first! To what was all this tending?

Captain Hector Coles saw, and writhed. His face was dark enough with passion to indicate that had no troublesome people and no restraining law stood in his path, he would have rolled that insensible form over the edge of the plateau, with no rope to impede its progress, and watched with heart-felt delight the bumping of the body from crag to crag until it was crushed out of all semblance of humanity at the bottom! But he said not one word, nor did he again attempt to interfere in the movements of Margaret.

Only a moment or two, and then the eyes of the lawyer opened. He saw the face that was looking down into his own; and though many a man would have pretended weakness and insensibility a little longer, to keep such a position, he made an instant movement to rise and struggled to his feet with but slight assistance. Then the young girl fell back into the group of other ladies, her duty and her paroxysm of feeling both apparently over, and scarcely aware how much or how little the subject of her interest knew of her words or her actions. Nor was it sure whether the lawyer saw, as he staggered up from the ground, the expression which rested on the face of Captain Coles. Time had its task of solving both these important problems.

But a few minutes after Horace Townsend's recovery had elapsed, when the body of the Rambler, showing yet, after every application, but faint signs of life, was carefully conveyed on an impromptu stretcher to one of the wagons—the fragments of the dinner, untasted except as some few of those who would have banqueted in a death-room had snatched little bits in the midst of the excitement, gathered up and huddled together in the baggage-wagon—the whole party more or less comfortably disposed in the conveyances, and all hurrying back to the Crawford with what speed they might. We say "hurrying", advisedly. It might have been natural enough that they should hurry down, to afford more effectual relief to the wounded and tortured man; but let not [Pg 421] humanity "lay the flattering unction to its soul" that they lacked another and a more compelling motive! Such a story as that which could be woven of the events of that day, had probably never been told as of a late actual occurrence, inside the walls of that hostelrie, within the memory of

man; and nearly every one, male and female, was a little more anxious to indulge in the relation as soon as possible, and to his or her own particular set of intimates, than even to succor life or alleviate suffering! Wonder not that newspapers are popular in the latter half of the nineteenth century: man himself is but a newspaper incarnated; and a few friends are not ill-sacrificed, much less perilled without advantage, when the catastrophe affords us plenty of the cheap heroism of the looker-on and narrator!

The providences are equally strange that give opportunity for the great blunders and absorbing agonies of life, with those that afford space to its triumphant successes and its crowning pleasures. Rooms are empty or ears are deaf, sometimes, that we maybe made deliriously happy; but they may have an equally assured mission to make us wretched beyond hope. Three days before, a parlor unoccupied except by themselves had afforded Horace Townsend and Margaret Hayley an opportunity of saying words that seemed to make, each a new being to the other, and that awakened hopes as wild and maddening as the dreams of opium could have originated. One laggard servant-girl with her dusting-brush, or one dawdling visitor lingering in the way, might have prevented all this and kept them on the distant footing they had before occupied. One person more, strolling down the glen below the Crawford at eleven o'clock on the morning following the events on the top of Mount Willard, might have prevented—what? Nothing, perhaps! Are not all these things ordered for us? And must not the event, debarred in one channel, have found inevitable way in another? The fatalists, who believe in a Deity of infinitesimal and innumerable providences, say "Yes!" and argue that the ripping away of a boot-sole or the scorching of the cook's short-cake come within the category. The people of unswayed free-will, who worship a Deity not over-particular as to the every-day habits of his creatures, say "No!" and see nothing providential in any event less important than the breaking out of a pestilence or the downfall of a nation. At which point it may be necessary to discover what connection all this has with the fortunes of two of the people most prominent in this narration. [Pg 422]

At about the hour named, that morning, Horace Townsend strolled alone down the glen, towards the Willey House. Great excitements are always followed by corresponding reaction; and the visitors at the Crawford, after the departure of a few gone up the great mountain, had not made a single collective arrangement to occupy the day. Each was thrown upon personal resources; and the resource of the lawyer was setting out upon a long and lonely morning walk, his legs being the chief actors therein, while his mind, to judge by the bent head and the slow step, was taking its own peculiar and much longer journey.

Suddenly he lifted his head and came to a full stop. He was *not* alone, after all! Half a mile below the house, beside the road and under the edge of a thick clump of woods, lay the trunk of a huge tree, some of the higher branches yet remaining unshorn, though trimmed by the axe. On the point of one of these branches, very easily ascended by the stairway of knots below, some eight or ten feet from the ground, rested a neat foot, while the owner of the figure above it, dressed in a light robe which floated around her with almost the softness of a cloud, had thrown off her jockey-hat (the object first attracting the notice of the lawyer) on the ground below, and was stretching up at full length to pluck a cluster of the great creamy blossoms of the wild northern magnolia, starring the green leaves around it, which had beckoned her from the path. [Pg 423]

Does the reader remember where it was that the first glimpse was caught of Margaret Hayley—standing on the piazza of the house at West Philadelphia, with one arm of Elsie Brand around her waist, but both her own hands employed in the attempt to force open a blush rose that had as yet but half blown from the bud? Roses then—the wild magnolia now: would the dainty white hand that had been so tenderly cruel to the flower-spirit two months before, only gather the blossom to pluck away its shreds one by one and scatter them listlessly on the ground as she walked? Or had those two months taught her something of the meaning of that word "suffering," unknown before, and ripened and softened the proud nature that possibly needed such training?

The lawyer stood irresolute for a moment, doubtful whether the lady would be pleased by his having discovered her in that somewhat girlish situation. Then he remembered some duty or feeling which seemed of more consequence than a mere momentary embarrassment, and came close to the log upon which she was standing, before she was aware of his presence.

"Shall I help you down, Miss Hayley?"

The words were simple, and they did not seem to demand that trembling of tone which really accompanied them. Neither did there appear to be any occasion for the flush of red blood which ran all over cheek and brow of Margaret Hayley in the moment of her first surprise. But the flush was gone before she had cast that inevitable look downward, which womanhood can never forget when caught playing the Amazon however slightly,—stepped lightly down the stairway of knots to the trunk and held out her hand to accept the offer.

"See what a beautiful cluster of my favorites!" she said.

"Beautiful indeed!" The lawyer was looking intently at the blossoms or at the hand which held them—no matter which. The lady seemed to have some impression of the latter, for she flushed again a little and drew back both hands and flowers.

"And you are walking already again this morning?" she said, after a moment of silence which her [Pg 424]

companion did not seem disposed to break.

"Yes," absently.

"Already quite recovered from yesterday?" Margaret Hayley was treading upon dangerous ground: did she know it?

They had walked on together down the road, as if by mutual consent. The lawyer was silent again for a time, looking away, and when he again turned his eyes towards her there was an earnestness in their glance and a sad seriousness in the whole face which denoted that he had thought much and resolved not a little in that moment.

"Recovered from yesterday? From the slight fatigue—yes! From some other effects of the day?—no!"

"I am sorry to hear you say so." The words dropped slowly and very deliberately from her lips, and her head had a wavy nod as she spoke.

"You are sure of the grounds of your sorrow?"

"I fear so—yes!"

"Then I, too, have cause to fear!"

Silence again for a moment, and they walked on, very slowly. Then Horace Townsend spoke again.

"You are going away to the Glen House, to-morrow or the next day, are you not?"

"I believe Captain Coles and my mother have so arranged," was the reply.

"And I am going southward to Winnipiseogee to-morrow."

"*You?*" The exclamation was abrupt and surprised, as if she had not before thought of a separation of routes. Horace Townsend heard the word and recognized the tone; and what the spark is to the magazine was that sudden monosyllable to the half-controlled heart of the man.

"Margaret Hayley, we separate then to-morrow," he said. "This may be and no doubt will be the last time that we shall speak together without listeners. I have something to say that must be spoken. Will you hear me?"

She caught him suddenly by the arm, with a motion like that of one warning or checking another on the brink of a precipice—like that she had used the day before under such very different circumstances,—and said:

"Oh, do not!—do not!"

"What?"

"Do not say words that must separate us instead of bringing us nearer to each other!"

"And would *that* grieve you?"

"On my soul—yes!"

Another spark to the magazine. It exploded. Horace Townsend had caught Margaret Hayley's hand and his eye literally flashed fire into hers, while his brown cheek mantled with the blood that could no longer be restrained.

"I *must* speak, Margaret Hayley, and you must listen. *I love you!* There is not a thought in my mind, not a hope in my soul, that is not yours. Does *that* separate us?"

She did not draw away her hand, and yet it returned no answering pressure to his. Her head was bent down so that he could not see her face, and her words were very few and very sad:

"I am sorry—very sorry! Yes!"

"Stop!" He laid his hand upon her forehead, gently pushing back her head until he virtually compelled her eyes to come up to the level of his own. "Margaret Hayley, too little may be said as well as too much. I am going to say what perhaps no other man in the world *dare* say. I love you, but that is not all. I cite your woman's heart and your immortal soul this moment before the sight of that God whose eye is looking down upon us in this sunshine, and I say that *you* love *me*! You may never forgive me the word, but you must tell me the truth! Do you deny it?"

"No!" The word was louder and clearer than any that she had spoken—louder and clearer than any that had been spoken during the interview. And yet it was not a lover's response.

"You admit this, and yet you say that my opening my heart to you separates us instead of drawing us together. Three days ago you told me that—that man"—he did not mention the name of Captain Hector Coles, nor did there seem to be any occasion—"was not and never could be your betrothed husband. What tie binds you? What am I to fear? What am I to think?"

"Think that what I say is true, Horace Townsend—that I love you, and yet that I do not love you—that your company is dearer to me, to-day, than that of any person on earth—that I respect you in every regard and hold you as one of the bravest and noblest of men—and yet that every word of

love you utter makes it more evident that we must not meet again, and so separates us forever!"

"What *is* this riddle?" He asked the question in a tone of great anxiety, and he did not take away his eyes from the proud orbs that no longer sunk before them as he made the inquiry. How impossible to believe that the man who had but the moment before cited the heart and soul of Margaret Hayley before the very eye of God as a searcher of their entire truth and candor, could himself be guilty of deception at the same instant! And yet was he not? Was the riddle really so obscure to him as he pretended? Was the very name under which he wooed and sought to win, his own? Strange questions—stranger far than that he asked; and yet questions that must be asked and answered!

"Listen, Horace Townsend!" she said after one instant of silence. "You call this a riddle, and you force me to read it to you. I wish you had not done so, but I have no choice. I would have kept you as a friend—a dear friend, but you would not accept the place."

"Never—not for one moment!" he broke in, as if through set lips. Her hand was on his arm, and they were again walking listlessly on. She proceeded without any reference to his interruption.

"I have too many words to say—words that pain me beyond measure; but you have forced me to them, and I must finish, even if you think me mad before I have done. I do not know but I *am* mad—every thing about me sometimes seems to be so unreal and mocking." [Pg 427]

Horace Townsend turned at that moment and looked her sidelong in the face, then withdrew his glance again as if satisfied, and she went on:

"I told you that Captain Hector Coles would never be nearer to me than he is, and he will not. I hate that man, and he knows it. But I *love another*!"

She paused, as if she expected some outburst at this declaration; but no outburst came. All the effect it produced was a quick shudder through the arm that sustained her hand.

"I love another—do you hear me? I who say that I love *you*, say that I love another! For more than a year, before the last two months, I was a betrothed bride, and never woman loved more truly than I the man who filled my whole ideal of manly beauty, grace and goodness. One day, two months ago, I found that man a *coward*. He dared not fight for his native land—not even for his native State when it was invaded. We parted—forever, as I thought; forever, as he thinks, no doubt. I have heard that he has gone to another land: no matter, he has left *me*, with my own will. Then I came to the mountains, for change of scene and for distraction. I met you. I was attracted to you from the first—I have grown more attracted day by day, until I shudder to think that I love you! Do you know *why*?

"Because *my* affection for *you* has given birth to some feeble likeness of itself!" was the response.

"No! The confession may wound your vanity, but the truth must be told. Every throb of my heart towards you, Horace Townsend, has been caused by some dim resemblance of your face to the man I once loved, and something in your voice that came to me like a faint echo. It is not *you* whom I have been seeing and hearing, but the man who was handsomer than you, your superior in so many respects, and yet your inferior in that one which makes me worship you almost as a god—your sublime, dauntless courage when all others quail. Do you understand me now, and know why your words should never have been spoken?" [Pg 428]

"I *think* that I understand you!" was the response, but a bitter smile, unseen by the lady, wreathed the moustached lip as he spoke. "And that other—he will come back, some day, and all except the old love will be forgotten, and you will marry him, of course."

"Horace Townsend, you do not quite understand me, yet!" she said. "I am no child, to be trifled with, but a woman. I loved him, better than my own soul, but I cannot continue to love when I cease to respect. I shall never marry, while I live, unless I marry the man to whom my heart was first given. I thought that perhaps I might find a new ideal, some day, when we first parted; but I know better now. You have taught me how nearly the vacant place can be supplied, and yet how empty all is when the one bond is wanting."

"And I say, again, that some day he will come back, and you will marry him."

"Never—if he comes as he was!" was the reply. "If Heaven would work a miracle and give him the one thing that he lacks—bravery and patriotism,—even if he struck but one blow, to prove that he was no coward to fly before the enemies of his country,—I would go barefoot round the world to find him, and be his servant, his slave, if he would not forgive the past and make me his wife!"

With the last words she had broken down almost entirely, and as she ceased she burst into a very passion of tears and sobs. Where was the overweening pride of Margaret Hayley? Gone, all gone; and yet she clung to that one touchstone—her husband, when the country called and he was subjected to the trial, must prove that he dared be patriot and soldier, or her lips should never speak that sacred name!

"I have indeed spoken too far, and it is better that we should not meet again," he said, in a voice quite as low and almost as broken as her own. "I understand you, now: forgive me if I have caused you pain in making the discovery; and good-bye!" [Pg 429]

He wrung the young girl's hand almost painfully and was turning away.

"You are going now? Shall I not see you again?" she asked.

"No matter—I do not know—I cannot tell. I may see you at the house before I leave. If not, and we never meet again, God bless you, Margaret Hayley, the only woman I have ever loved!"

He stooped suddenly and kissed her hand, then turned, drew his hat over his brow and walked rapidly up the road towards the Crawford. Margaret, oppressed by some strange feeling, could not speak. She could only look back and catch a last glimpse of him as he turned a bend in the road; then sink her face in her hands and sob aloud as if she had buried a second love not less dear than the first.

When she returned to the house, half an hour after, Horace Townsend was already gone—flying away towards Littleton with four horses. Captain Hector Coles was in a better humor, being already advised of the fact, than he had exhibited at any time during the previous week. Mrs. Burton Hayley, when his going away was mentioned, made some appropriate remarks on the rashness of any person exposing himself as the young man had done the day before, unless he was fully prepared for death and judgment, and remarked that she was rather glad that so wild a person was not going over to the Glen with them. In both these opinions Captain Coles fully coincided. Margaret spoke of the departure as a very matter-of-course affair indeed, and did not even see the glance by which the gallant Captain intended to convey his full recollection of the scene on the top of Mount Willard.

Next day that trio, with a dozen of others, went on to the Glen House for the carriage-ascent of Mount Washington.

And with that announcement and a single scene following, concludes the somewhat long connection held by the White Mountains, their scenery and summer incidents, with the fortunes of the various personages figuring prominently in this life-history.

That scene was a very brief one and took place three days after the departure from the Crawford, when Margaret Hayley, her mother and Captain Hector Coles, had made the ascent of Washington from the Glen House by carriage and stood beside the High Altar that has before been mentioned. When Mrs. Burton Hayley was signalizing her arrival at the top by repeating certain passages from the big book on the carved stand, which she seemed to have an idea fitted that elevated point in her summer wanderings, and which probably might have done so if she had quoted them with any thing approaching to correctness. When Margaret Hayley, breathing the same air that Horace Townsend had breathed a few days before, and aware that she was doing so, joined to the rapt emotions of the place and the hour, something of the sad glory of human love and grief, stretching out her mental hands to God whose awful majesty stood before her and around her in the great peak lifting itself to heaven, and praying that out of darkness might some day come light, as once it had done on that other and more awful peak of Sinai. When Captain Hector Coles, above all such considerations and with a keen eye to his personal "main chances", fancied that another declaration beside the High Altar on Washington would not only be a "good thing to do" but a proceeding much more likely to meet with a favorable response than if ventured on ground of less altitude.

Then and there, accordingly, Captain Hector Coles, with Mrs. Burton Hayley very near and the granite rocks still nearer, possessed himself suddenly of Margaret Hayley's white hand, drew her close to him, and murmured:

 "Oh, how long I have waited for this hour, Margaret! I love you. I have not before said the same thing in words, for a long time, but I believe that you must have seen and known how the old affection has still lived and strengthened. There have been bitter words between us, occasionally, but they have not affected the true feeling lying beneath, and—"

"Stop, Hector Coles!" said Margaret, before he had concluded. "You say that there have been bitter words between us occasionally. Now let me warn you that no bitter word I have ever said in your hearing, has been any thing more than a baby's whisper to what I *will* say if you ever dare to allude to this subject again!"

"But, Margaret—"

"No, not another word! Mother, come here!"

Mrs. Burton Hayley obeyed.

"Mother, is it with your wish or approbation that Captain Coles has just made me another offer of his heart?"

"Certainly it is," the Captain commenced to answer.

"Stop! it was not to you I put the question, but to my mother!"

"Well, my daughter—I certainly did—that is—I—"

"There, you hear!" said Captain Hector Coles, triumphantly, and confident that the knowledge of such a maternal indorsement must work in his favor.

"You did, did you?" and the right hand of Margaret went suddenly inside the thick shawl that wrapped her from the winds of the peak—and unseen by the Captain a locket—that fatal locket—glittered before the mother's eyes. "Will you promise, and keep that promise, that Captain Hector Coles shall not say one more word to me of love or marriage, while we remain together? If not, as God sees me you know the consequences!"

Mrs. Burton Hayley's face was very white at that moment, but the next she said: "Oh yes, I promise!" and then with a groan, grasping the surprised Captain by the arm: "Captain, if you do not wish to see me drop dead, leave that wild, mad girl to herself! She is crazy, but *I* cannot help it!"

Captain Hector Coles looked from one to the other, in added surprise, but found no explanation; then he muttered something that was not a second love-declaration; and the next moment Margaret Hayley stood alone, isolated as the peak that bore her, and with a heart almost as cold in the dull leaden weight that seemed to lie within her bosom, as the storm-beaten rocks of which that peak was composed.

Thereafter Captain Hector Coles never spoke to her of love again!

CHAPTER XXI.

The Bearer of a Disgraced Name, in England—A Strange Quest and a Strange Unrest—Hurrying over to Ireland—Too Late for the Packet—The little Despatch-steamer—Henry Fitzmaurice, the Journalist—An Unexpected Passage—The Peril of the Emerald, and the end of all Quests save one.

Far back in the progress of this narration, when it had only reached half the distance to which it has now arrived, it was said of one of the principal persons therein involved: "Something indescribably dim and shadowy grows about the character and action of Carlton Brand at this time, * * * motives become buried in obscurity, and the narrator grows to be little more than a mere insignificant, powerless chronicler of events without connection and action without explanation." The same remark will apply with quite as much force, at this stage, to the movements of the bearer of that dishonored name, in his movements on the other side of the Atlantic, which must now be briefly recorded in their due order.

It will be remembered that the American entered his name at Liverpool, on the twentieth day of July, with the place of his residence attached. Thenceforward enough is known, through hotel and other records, to be sure that he spent some two weeks in London, occupying lodgings at one of the respectable houses of the great metropolis, but spending his time, in other regards, in a manner scarcely to have been expected from any previous knowledge of his life and antecedents. Was it the lawyer, *because* the lawyer, who visited Scotland Yard the very next day after his arrival in London, and spent so much time with some of the leading men in charge of that great police-establishment, that he might have seemed to be employed in studying the whole English system of criminal detection? And was it the lawyer, *as* the lawyer and consequently on account of his remembrance of past connection with the ferreting out of crime in his native land, who went immediately afterwards into a continuous and apparently systematic round of visits to the worst haunts of vice in the Modern Babel, becoming, sometimes in disguise and sometimes in his own proper person, but always more or less closely accompanied by some member of the force, the habitue of streets in which burglars and thieves most congregated, and of lanes in which receivers of stolen property, forgers and all disreputable and dangerous characters were known to have their places of business or their dens of hiding?

Or was there, leaving the profession of the lawyer out of the question, something in the peculiar surroundings of this man—something in the relations of character and connection which he had allowed to grow around him, unfitting him for other amusements and researches in a city which he had never before visited, and one supplying such marvellous temptations to the sight-seer and the antiquarian? Or was he paying the penalty of the past in an unrest which left him no peace except he found it in continual motion and in the companionship and the study of those far more outlawed by statute but not more in social position than himself? Strange questions, again, and questions which cannot be answered, at this time, by any thing more than the mere suggestion.

Certain it is, whatever the motive, that Westminster Abbey, with its every stone sacred to the memory of the great dead, seemed to present no attractions to him, commensurate with those of Seven Dials, sacred to every phase of poverty and villany; that the Houses of Parliament were ignored in favor of St. Giles and Bermondsey, noted for debates of a very different character from those heard before the occupant of the Woolsack and the Speaker of the Commons; and that (this seeming so peculiarly strange in a lawyer of admitted character and power) even the Lord Chancellor, rendering one of those decisions calculated to affect not only the laws of property in England but the whole legal system wherever the English language was spoken, seemed to have far less attention paid to him or his dicta, than was given to some gownless libel on the practice of criminal law, who could point out the habits and haunts of Burly Bill, the noted burglar whom he had lately saved from transportation by proving that he was in three different places at once, and neither of them the spot where the crime was committed,—or Snivelling Sall, reputed to be in the near companionship of the most successful utterer of forged notes who had so far escaped

the clutches of the detective birds of prey. Night and day, during all those two weeks, he seemed to eat hastily and to sleep only as if sleep was a secondary necessity of nature, to be thrown overboard whenever some all-absorbing thought should make continual wakefulness necessary.

Then the fancy (might it not be called madness?) seemed to change. He had either exhausted the crime of London or he had skimmed that compound until there was no novelty of rich villainy remaining. Without having examined one work of art or one antiquarian curiosity (so far as could be known), and certainly without having made one effort to find a footing in that society for which education and past associations would so well have fitted him,—he flitted away from London and the name of Carlton Brand was to be found inscribed on the books of one of the leading hotels at Manchester. And what did he there? Precisely what he had been doing in London, it appeared—nothing less and nothing more. Alternately in conversation with one of the detective force or with some one of the wretches whom the detective force was especially commissioned to bring to justice—the Manchester looms (not yet *all* stopped by the dearth of cotton and the "fratricidal war" in America) presented no more charm to him than had been afforded by the high-toned and rational attractions of the metropolis. At times dressed with what seemed a studied disregard of the graces of person, and scarcely ever so arraying himself that he would have dreamed of presenting himself in such a guise in the midst of any respectable circle at home—two or three days ran him through the criminal life of Manchester. Then away to Birmingham, and there—but why weary with repetition when a succeeding fact can be so well indicated by one that has preceded it? The same unsettled and apparently aimless life—if not aimless, certainly with tendencies the most singular and unaccountable. Thence to Bristol, and from Bristol to Liverpool. From Liverpool, with flying haste the whole length of the island and over the border to Edinburgh, paying no more attention, apparently, to the scenes of Scottish song and story by which he dashed, than might have been necessary to remember the cattle-rievers and free-booters who had long before furnished pattern for his late associates,—and seeing in the old closes and wynds frowned down upon by Calton Hill and the Castle, only retreats in which robbers could take refuge without serious risk of being unearthed. Then, strangely enough, away southward again to Dover, with a passage-ticket for Calais taken but countermanded before use, indicating that Paris had been in view but that some sudden circumstance had made a change in the all-the-while inexplicable calculation. What was all this—the question arises once more—the following out of some clue on which the whole welfare of a life was believed to depend, or merely the vague and purposeless pursuit of some melancholy fancy furnishing the very mockery of a clue through that labyrinth which borders the realm of declared madness?

The American had been something more than a month in England, and far away beyond his knowledge all the events before recorded as occurring to Margaret Hayley and her group of society in the White Mountains had already taken place,—when one afternoon, late in August, the train that dashed into Holyhead from Birmingham and Chester, by Anglesey and over the Menai, bore this exemplification of unrest as a passenger. Those who saw him emerge from the carriage upon the platform noticed the haste with which he appeared to step and the eagerness of his inquiry whether the train, which had been slightly delayed by an accident, was yet in time for the boat for Dublin. She had been gone for more than an hour, and the black smoke from her funnel was already fading away into a dim wreath driven rapidly northward before the sharp south-easter coming up the Channel. Night was fast falling, with indications that it would be any thing rather than a quiet one on that wild and turbulent bit of water lying between the two islands; and some of the old Welsh coastmen who yet lingered on the pier, when they saw the impatient man striding up and down and uttering imprecations on the delayed train, shrugged their shoulders with the remark, which he did not hear or did not choose to heed, that "*they* should be much obliged to any train that had kept them from taking a rocking in that cradle the night!"

Brow knit, head bent, tread nervous and almost angry, and manifesting all the symptoms of anxiety and disappointment, the American traversed the wharf, his tall form guarded against the slight chill of the summer evening on the coast by a coarse gray cloak which he drew closely around him as he walked, thus adding to the restless stateliness of his appearance. At one of his turns he was sufficiently disengaged to see a man of middle height, dressed in a somewhat dashing civilian costume, standing at a little distance up the pier and conversing with two or three of the coastmen. One of the latter was pointing towards himself; and the moment after the stranger approached with a bow. He was a young man of twenty-five or thereabouts, side-whiskered and moustached, decidedly good-looking, with quite as much of the Irishman as the Englishman in his face, and seemed at all points a gentleman—more, that much rarer combination, especially on the soil of the mother island, a frank, clever fellow!

"They tell me, sir," said the stranger, "that you were one of the passengers on that delayed train, and that you manifest some disappointment at missing the Dublin boat."

"They are entirely correct, sir," answered the American, returning the bow. "I was very anxious, for particular reasons, to be in Dublin to-morrow; and in fact the whole object of my visiting Ireland at all, just now, may very probably be defeated by the accident that brought in the train that half hour too late."

He spoke in a tone very earnest and not a little agitated. The other remarked the fact, but he thought himself too good a judge of character to suspect, as some other persons under similar circumstances might have done, that the anxious man was a hunted member of the swell-mob or a criminal of some other order, who thought it politic to get off English soil as soon as possible. He determined, at the second glance, that he had to do with a gentleman, and proceeded with the

words that he had evidently intended to say on first accosting the delayed passenger.

"You have made no arrangements for getting over, I suppose?"

"None, whatever!" answered the American. "How can I, until the boat of to-morrow, when—when it may be too late altogether for my purpose? I was walking off my disappointment, a sort of thing that I have been more or less used to all my life!" and the other noticed that he seemed to sigh wearily—"walking it off before going to find a hotel and lying awake all night, thinking of where I ought to have been at each particular hour." [Pg 438]

"Well," said the stranger, "I had a motive not personal to myself, in accosting you, or I should not have taken the liberty. I am Mr. Henry Fitzmaurice, one of the London correspondents of the Dublin *Evening Mail*. I believe that I am not mistaken in supposing that I am speaking to an American?"

"Not at all mistaken!" answered the American, pleased with a frankness so much more like that of his native land than he had been in the habit of meeting during his short sojourn abroad. "I am called Mr. Brand—Carlton Brand, and on ordinary occasions I am a lawyer of the city of Philadelphia."

"That little matter over, which I should not have been able to manage under half an hour had I been a pure John Bull instead of two-thirds Irishman," said the man who had introduced himself as Fitzmaurice, in a vivacious manner very well calculated to put the other at his ease—"now, not being either of us members of the Circumlocution Office, we will get at the gist of the matter at once. I am going over to Ireland to-night, or at least I am going to make a start in that direction, and I believe that I can manage to secure you a passage if you will accept one."

"Certainly, and with many thanks, but how?" was the reply.

"Well, I am not so sure about the thanks," said Fitzmaurice, in the same pleasant tone which had before won his companion. "It is going to be a wild night on the Channel, if I am any judge of weather, and I have crossed it often enough to begin to have some idea. But I *must* cross, and so must you, if you can, as I understand you to say."

"I must, certainly, if any thing in the shape of a vessel does so," said the American. "But you have not yet told me—"

"No, of course not!" the newspaper man ran on. "Always expect an Irishman to begin his story in the middle and tell it out at each end, and you will not be far from the fact. Well, there are some despatches for the Lord Lieutenant that need to be across before noon to-morrow, as the Secretary for Ireland has an insane fancy, and a special train left London to make the connection with the steamer that has just gone. I came in it, and with the Queen's messenger,—with some matters that must reach the *Mail* in advance of the other Dublin papers. They have a little despatch-steamer lying just below, and the messenger telegraphed to fire her up, from one of the back stations, when he found the chances against him. In an hour she will have a full head of steam, and before it is quite dark we shall be clear of the coast. I have no doubt that I can procure you a passage, and if you will step round with me to the wharf where she lies, I will certainly try the experiment. Now you have it." [Pg 439]

"And a very kind and generous thing I have at the same time!" exclaimed the American, warmly.

"As I said before, I do not know about the generosity!" replied the correspondent, as they took their way around the warehouses that headed the packet-wharf, towards the pier below, where the despatch-boat lay. "The fact is that the Emerald is not much bigger than a yawl, and though she is a splendid little sea-boat and never has found any gale in which she could not outlive the biggest of the merchant steamers, she is very much of a cockle-shell in the way of jumping about; and people who have any propensity for sea-sickness, a thing a good deal worse than any ordinary kind of *death*, are very likely to have a little turn at it under such circumstances."

"I have never been very much at sea, but I believe that I am beyond the vulgarity of sea-sickness!" was the answer; and just then they reached the despatch-steamer.

She was indeed a little thing, as compared with the steamers which the American had been in the habit of seeing sent away on sea-voyages—very low in hull, rakish in pipe and masts, looming black in the gathering dusk of evening, and her bulwarks seeming so low as to present the same appearance of insecurity against falling overboard that a landsman's eye immediately perceives in a first glance at a pilot-boat. The steam was already well up and hissing from her escape valves, while the black smoke rolled away from her pipe as if it had a mission to cloud the whole port with soot and cinders. [Pg 440]

A few words with the Queen's messenger and an introduction to the Captain of the little Emerald followed; and the correspondent of the *Mail* had not overrated his influence with either, for in ten minutes the lawyer was booked for a passage over, under government auspices. In half an hour more the despatch-boat steamed away; and when the deep dusk of night fell to shut away the Welsh coast, while the half dozen officers and their two passengers were trifling over a very pleasant supper with wines of antediluvian vintage accompanying, the Emerald was well off the Head, tossing about like a cork in the sea that seemed to be every moment growing more and more violent, but making fine weather through it all, flying like a race-horse, and promising, if every thing held, to land the messenger and her other passengers at Kingstown, at very near as early an hour in the morning as those touched the shore who had left Holyhead two hours before

by the packet.

The American remained long on the deck, in conversation with the newspaper correspondent, delighted with the cordiality of his manner and the extensive scope of his information, as he had before been with the generosity which supplied himself with a passage over at the moment of disappointment. The Hiberno-Englishman seemed to be equally pleased with his new friend, whom he found all that he had at first believed—a gentleman, and neither pickpocket nor madman. Mr. Fitzmaurice, still a young man and a subordinate, had never been in America, but he had something more than the ordinary newspaper stock of information about countries lying beyond sea, and he had the true journalist's admiration for the young land that has done more for journalism within fifty years than all the other countries of the world through all the ages. He listened with pleasure to the descriptions which the lawyer was equally able and willing to impart, of the modes in which the news-gathering operations of the leading American newspapers were carried on, and especially of the reckless exposures of correspondents on the battle-fields of the great war, which have all the while exhibited so much bravery and so stupendous a spirit of enterprise, combined with a lack of judgment equally injurious and deplorable. [Pg 441]

Mr. Fitzmaurice, on his part, resident in London during all the period of our struggle, necessarily present at most of the Parliamentary debates in which the good and ill feeling of Englishmen towards the United States have been shown in such unfavorable proportions—acquainted with most of the leading public men of the kingdom, and with an Irishman's rattle making the conveying of his impressions a thing of equal ease and pleasure,—he had much to say that interested the Philadelphian; and it would have been notable, could he have been fairly behind the curtain as to the character and movements of the other, to mark how the man who during two weeks residence in London had never stepped his foot within the Parliament Houses, could drink in and digest, from another's lips, the story of the debates which he might so easily have heard first-handed with his own ears!

But as the newspaper man could know nothing of this, enough to say that the conversation was a pleasant one, and that hours rolled away unheeded in its continuance, while the little Emerald skimmed over and plunged through the rough waves of the Irish Channel, and while those waves grew heavier, and the sky darker, and the wild south-easter increased every hour in the violence with which it whistled through the scant rigging and sent the caps of the waves whirling and dashing past the adventurous little minnow of the steam-navy, to fall in showers of foamy spray far to leeward. [Pg 442]

It was past midnight when the young men, so strangely thrown together, so different in position and pursuit, but so pleasantly agreeing in all the amenities of social intercourse,—began to feel the demands of sleep overmastering the excitement of the situation, left the deck and went below to the berths in the little cramped cabin which had been prepared for them. The Queen's messenger had already retired and was sleeping so soundly in his four-by-seven state-room, with his despatches under his pillow, that nothing less than the going to pieces of the steamer or an order to start on a new journey could possibly have woke him. To such men, ever flying from one port to another, by sea and by land, bearing the lives of individuals and often the welfare of whole peoples in their hands, with no more knowledge of what they bear than has the telegraph wire of the message that thrills along it—to such men, habituated to excitement, hurry and exposure, that excitement really becomes a sort of second nature; and the art of sleeping on the ground, on a board, bolt upright in a chair or even in the saddle, is one of the accomplishments soonest learned and last forgotten. What are storms to them or to that other class to which reference has before been made—the rough Ariels of the newspaper Prospero? Nothing, except they cause hindrance! What is even the deepest personal peril by sea or land? Nothing, except because in putting a sudden period to the existence of the messenger it may interfere with the delivery of his all-important despatches!

So slept the Queen's messenger, and so, after a time, in their narrow berths, slept the American and his new-made friend. Once falling away into slumber, the very motion of the vessel made that slumber more intense and stupefying, old Mother Nature rocking her children somewhat roughly in the "cradle of the deep." And of what dreamed they? Who knows? Perhaps the handsome and vivacious young Anglo-Irishman of the girl whose miniature he had accidentally displayed to the eyes of the other, filling the back case of his watch,—not yet his wife, but to be so some day when talent and energy should bring their recompense and fortune shower her favors a little more liberally upon him. Perhaps the Philadelphia lawyer of wrongs and shames in his native land, of the apparently mad quest which he seemed to be urging, and of possible coming days when all errors should be repaired, and the great stake of his life won beyond a peradventure. [Pg 443]

How long the lawyer had slept he knew not, when some change in the motion of the boat produced the same effect on his slumbers that is said to be wrought on the sleeping miller by the stoppage of the splashing water-wheel and the rumbling burr-stones. He had slept amidst the violent motion: he partially woke when there was a momentary cessation of it. In an instant after the vessel seemed to be struck one tremendous blow that sent a shiver through every plate and rivet of her iron hull—through every board and stanchion of her cabin-work. There are men who can remain undisturbed by such a sensation on shipboard, but the American was by no means one of them; and the fumes of sleep, partially dissipated before, rolled away almost as suddenly as morning mists before a brisk north-wester. He was broad awake to feel a hand grasping him by the shoulder, and opened his eyes to see Fitzmaurice standing by the berth and holding the joiner-work with one hand to support himself against the fearful lurches of the vessel, while he

had employed the other in arousing the apparently slumbering man.

"Get up and come out at once!" he said, his voice hoarse and agitated.

"What has happened?" asked the American, springing upright in his berth and preparing to leap from it as men will do when such unpleasant announcements are made. He seemed to know, intuitively and without any instruction from the shock which had just startled him, that some marked peril must have sent the journalist down to arouse him in that melodramatic manner. [Pg 444]

"Why, we are in danger, I suppose—serious danger!" was the reply. "Do you not feel the change in the motion of the boat? We are in the trough of the sea, without steam, and as near as I can make out through the mist, driving on the Irish coast with more rapidity than we bargained for!"

"Heavens!" was the very natural exclamation in reply, as the American managed with some difficulty to throw on the one or two articles of clothing of which he had divested himself.

"I suppose that it is a bad job," the journalist continued, "and what just now makes me feel peculiarly bad about it is the fact that I was the means of inducing you to come on board, and that if any thing serious should happen—"

"Hush! not a word of that!" said the lawyer, appreciating fully that chivalrous generosity which after conferring a great favor could take blame to itself for any peril growing out of that favor. "Hush! You have treated me, Mr. Fitzmaurice, with great kindness, and I hope you will believe me man enough not to misunderstand our relative positions in any thing that may occur."

Fitzmaurice, who seemed to be relieved by the words, but who certainly was laboring under an amount of depression not incident alone to any peril in which he stood personally involved,—grasped his hand with something more than the ordinary pressure of brief acquaintance. The motion of the boat, alternately a roll and then a heavy plunge, had now become absolutely fearful, intermingled with occasional repetitions of that crashing blow which had started the American from his slumber; but holding fast of each other and of various substantial objects that fell in their course, the two young men reached the companion way and the deck, the journalist detailing meanwhile, in hasty and broken words, what he knew of the extent of the difficulty in which they were involved. [Pg 445]

Up to fifteen or twenty minutes before, the little Emerald, a capital sea-boat but possessed of but a single engine (which description of single engine boats, by the way, should never be allowed to make voyages by open sea, except under the especial pilotage of one Malthus), had been making good weather, though the blow had increased to a gale and the waves of the Irish Channel increased to such size that they seemed to be opposed to the Union and determined to make an eternal severance of the two islands. Fitzmaurice had himself awoke about an hour before, and gone upon deck because unable to sleep longer; and he had consequently become aware, a little before the American in his berth did so, of an accident to the vessel. One moment of cessation of the plunging roll with which she had been ploughing ahead of the waves breaking on her larboard quarter—a moment of almost perfect stillness, as if the little vessel lay moored in some quiet haven—then a sudden veering round and that terrible crash and shock of the waves under the counter, the wheel, and along the whole side, which told that she was lying helpless in the trough of the sea, a marine Samson as thoroughly disabled as if she had been shorn of all her strength at once by the shears of one of the Fates. A word from one of the officers, the moment afterwards, had told him of some disarrangement of the engine, consequent on the severe strain of the heavy sea upon the boat; and he had then been left to study out for himself the amount of peril that might be involved, and to observe the coolness with which officers and men devoted themselves to a task which might or might not be successful—which might terminate at any moment in one of those terrible seas breaching the little vessel and foundering her as if she had indeed been nothing but a yawl-boat! It was at this stage that he had come down and wakened his friend of a few hours, feeling some responsibility for his safety (as well as a presentiment with regard to him which he by no means expressed in words), and leaving the Queen's messenger to pursue his dreamless sleep until it should end in Kingstown harbor or at the bottom of "Davy Jones' locker." [Pg 446]

By the time all this had been expressed in one tenth the number of words here employed, they had reached the deck, and certainly the prospect there was any thing but one calculated to reassure either. The Emerald was rolling wheel-houses under, in the trough of the sea, but so far mysteriously relieving herself through the scuppers as it seemed impossible that she should do. Two men were at the wheel, but they stood necessarily idle. Forward were half a dozen men, holding on to keep from going overboard at the first lurch. Even above the roar of the storm could be heard the sharp clink of hammers coming up from the engine-room and each sounding yet one pulse-beat of Hope. The south-easter was howling with demoniac fury, wailing through the rigging as if singing requiems for them all in advance, and driving before it the thin mists that shut away any idea of the sky. By the light on deck and on the troubled expanse of water eastward it was evident that day was breaking; and it was through a knowledge of that fact and of the rate of speed at which they had been steaming and driving partially before the wind all night, that Fitzmaurice had made his calculation expressed below, that they must be close on the Irish coast, a lee-shore, in such a blow, of no pleasant character.

Such was the situation—a deplorable one, as any one can readily perceive who has ever seen its precise parallel; yet not entirely a hopeless one, for they might not be so close upon the coast as had been feared, and the engine might yet be thrown again into gear before the little vessel

foundered and in time to claw off from the danger lying to leeward. Fitzmaurice had seen the position before: the American saw it at once through his own eyes and from the explanations given him by the journalist. The moment was not favorable for conversation, in that perilous motion, that roar of wind and wave and that suspense of mind; and the two young men held none except in a few words almost shouted to each other, but stood far aft on the larboard quarter, waiting calmly as two men with human instincts could be expected to wait for—what Heaven only knew! The face of the Anglo-Irishman was almost thoughtlessly calm, in spite of the anxiety which he had so plainly expressed: that of the American was dark, his lips set and his brow contracted, but there was no sign of shrinking and no indication of that basest passion, fear! Who could believe that the man standing there in the gray light of morning and awaiting without one apparent tremor of the muscles what might be an immediate and a painful death, bore a name that had been so lately dishonored by the most abject cowardice? [Pg 447]

Suddenly there was a cry which has blanched many a cheek and made many a lip tremble since Noah made his first sea-voyage in the Ark: "Land on the starboard quarter!" followed by another and yet more startling call: "Breakers to leeward!"

Fitzmaurice and the American both turned instantly in the direction indicated, as was inevitable; and then they saw that the warning cry from the look-out was not the result of any illusion. The daylight was rapidly broadening, the mist had for the moment driven away leeward; and apparently not more than a mile away rose a huge dark headland assuming the proportions of a mountain, while at its base and in the exact direction towards which the doomed vessel was drifting, the sea was breaking in wreaths of white foam over ledges of rock which seemed to be already so near that they must go grinding and crashing upon them before the lapse of five minutes. They felt that the water shoaled, too, for the plunging roll of the disabled steamer grew every moment more terrible, and just as the cry was given she was breached at the waist by a sea from which she did not immediately clear herself. It only needed an eye that had ever scanned peril by sea and shore, to know at that moment that the Emerald and all on board were as certainly doomed, in all human probability, as if the one had been already broken up and scattered along the coast in fragments and the others made food for fishes along the rocks of Ireland's Eye! [Pg 448]

"The Hill of Howth and the rocks at the foot of it!" cried Fitzmaurice as he recognized the position. "Now God help us, for they are dead to leeward, and if we have any accounts to settle we had better settle them rapidly!"

There was little agitation in his tone, now, and there was none in that of the American as he replied two words. They were the last he ever spoke, to mortal ear. May they have been true when he awoke from his long sleep, as they were before he fell into it! Those two words were:

"I see!"

The two men were standing, as has been said, very near the larboard quarter. The Emerald, too, as has also been already said, was very low in the bulwarks, as befitted her rake and her clipper appearance. Just as the lawyer uttered the two words, one of the officers of the steamer came aft, holding on amidst the terrible roll with something of the tenacity of a cat, and took his place at the wheel. The mist had closed down again and the Hill of Howth and the breakers were both for the moment shut away.

There was a jar—a creeping, trembling jar that seemed to run through the little steamer, from stem to stern-post, and yet no blow from the fierce waves and no grinding of her keel upon the dreaded rocks. It was life—motion—the beat of machinery once more! At that critical juncture the engine had moved again for the first time, and if not safety there was yet at least another struggle with destiny. The officer had dashed back to throw the steamer up into the wind, the very instant that he felt the steam once more rushing into the cylinder.

Then followed what cannot be described, because no one living can say precisely what occurred. Gathering way almost in an instant from the mad dash of her wheels into the water, the little Emerald plunged forward as if for her life. She had but a hundred or two yards of vantage ground left, and seemed to know it. As she gathered way and the quick whirl of the wheel swept her head gradually round to the sea, one mighty wave, as if afraid of being baulked of its prey and determined upon a final effort, struck her under the weather bow and port wheel and sent her careening so low to leeward that the starboard wheel-house and even the starboard quarter-rail were under water. She rolled back again in an instant, triumphant over the great enemy, and thenceforward dashed away from the white breakers on her lee as if she had been merely tantalizing them with a futile prospect of her destruction,—to make her way safely two hours afterwards into Kingstown Harbor and to land the Queen's messenger (who had just then awoke) and the correspondent of the *Evening Mail*, only an hour later than the passengers by the packet had disembarked. [Pg 449]

But she did not land the American. When the steamer rolled down with her starboard quarter-rail under water, Fitzmaurice, standing nearest to the larboard quarter, called out to his companion: "Look out and hold on!" then clutched the bulwark with his own hands and obeyed his own injunction. But when the steamer righted he was alone! Whether the lawyer had missed footing and failed to grasp any point of support at the critical moment, or whether he had lost head in the dizzying motion and gone over without even knowing his danger,—certain it is that he had been swept overboard under circumstances in which the whole British navy could have done no more to save him than one child of ten years! Henry Fitzmaurice, missing him and dreading what had

really occurred, thought that for one second he saw a human head, with the hair streaming up, away off in the yeasty water: but that was all. And he said, bitterly, realizing all the painful facts of the event, and taking to himself a thought of regret that was likely to cling to him while his generous heart continued to beat:

"My God!—it was just as I thought! I have been the means of drowning that splendid fellow, after all!"

A few hours later, little Shelah, the barefooted daughter of one of the poor fishermen whose hut stood at the foot of Howth, around northward towards Ireland's Eye—little Shelah, who had gone down over the rocks to the beach when the worst of the storm was over, rushed back to the cabin with terror in her eyes and broken words upon her lips:

"Oh, father!—there bees a man all dead and dhrownded down there by the rocks beyant! And he bees so handsome and so much like a rale gintleman!—how could he dhround? Come down and see till him, father!"

The fisherman went down, and he and his rough mates removed the body and did their humble and ineffectual all to resuscitate a body from which the breath of life had long departed. Then the fisherman and his wife and his mates and little Shelah all mourned over the manly beauty that had been sacrificed, and wondered who he could possibly be, and where his kindred would mourn for him. It was only when Father Michael, the good old priest of the parish was summoned, that they could form any nearer idea of the personality of the drowned man. Then they knew, for Father Michael could read, as they could not, and he told them, from one of the cards in the pocket-book, that "his name had been Carlton Brand, and that he had belonged to Philadelphia, away over in America, where they used to be so free and happy, but where they were fighting, now, all the time, about the naygurs that didn't seem to him worth the throuble!"

They buried him, with such lamentations as they might have bestowed upon "one of their own," in consecrated ground in a little graveyard a mile away from the Hill, westward; and Father Michael gave the dead man the benefit of a benevolent doubt as to his religion, with the remark that "there were good Christians over in America, and this was one of them, maybe!" uttering a prayer for the repose of his soul that, if it bore him no nearer to the Beautiful Gate, certainly left him no farther away from it, while it fulfilled the behest of a simple and beautiful faith! This done, and a note despatched to his favorite journal, giving the name and place of burial of the unfortunate man, Father Michael felt, as he had reason to feel, that he had done his whole melancholy duty.

Whatever the quest of the American, it was ended: whatever had been the secret of his unrest, it was not a secret to the eyes that thenceforth watched over a destiny no longer temporal but eternal.

It has been suggested that Henry Fitzmaurice, the journalist, so strangely thrown into the company of the Philadelphian, so much pleased with his manner and impressed by his conversation, and so suddenly separated from him by an accident which seemed to have something of his own handiwork in its production,—was likely to bear with him, during life, a regret born of that circumstance. Such being the case, it was eminently natural that in giving a description of the accident to the despatch-steamer and the peril to her passengers, on the day following, in the *Mail*, he should have dwelt at some length on the sad fate of Mr. Carlton Brand, the American, alluded in terms of warm respect to the character which had briefly fallen under his observation, and felicitates the far-away friends of the unfortunate man, on the fact already made public in the *Nation*, that the body had been early recovered and received tender and honorable Christian burial.

CHAPTER XXII.

Pleasanton's advance on Culpeper—Crossing the Rappahannock—The Fight and the Calamity of Rawson's Cross-Roads—Taking of Culpeper—Pleasanton's Volunteer Aide—Townsend versus Coles—The Meeting of two who Loved each other—And the little Ride they took together.

On Sunday the thirteenth day of September, 1863, and Monday the fourteenth, but principally on the former day, took place that running fight which displayed some of the very noblest qualities of the federal cavalry shown during the War for the Union, and which is better entitled than otherwise to be designated as the Battle of Culpeper. One of the first conclusive indications was given in that fight, that while the rebel cavalry, which at the beginning of the war was certainly excellent, had been running down from the giving out of their trained horses, and the deterioration of the quality of their riders through forced conscription,—the Union cavalry, at first contemptible in force and inefficient in comparison to their very numbers, had every day

been improving as fast as augmenting, until they had become the superiors of what the best of their foes had been at the beginning of the contest. War can make any thing (except perhaps statesmen) out of a given quantity of American material; but it can unmake as well, when it strains the material existing and creates a forced supply for the vacant places of the dead and the vanquished, out of the infirm and the incapable; and before the end of this conflict the lesson will have been so closely read as never to need a repetition.

The rebels held Culpeper and the south bank of the Rappahannock, and had held the whole of that line for weeks, formidable in their occasional demonstrations, but still more formidable in what it was believed they *might* do by a sudden crossing of that dividing stream at some moment when the Union forces should be deficient in vigilance, preoccupied, or otherwise embarrassed. They were to be driven back if possible, from their threatening front, or if not driven back, at least struck such a blow as would make early offensive operations on their part improbable. These were the intentions, so far as they can be known and judged, which led to the crossing of the Rappahannock at that particular juncture. [Pg 453]

At three o'clock on the morning of that Sunday which was to join with so many other days of battle during the rebellion in proving that "there are no Sabbaths in war,"—at an hour when the thick darkness preceding the dawn hung like a pall over the banks of the rugged stream and the hostile forces that fringed it on either side—the cavalry camps on the north side of the Rappahannock were all astir. All astir, and yet all strangely quiet, in comparison with the activity manifested. No mellow bugle rang out its notes of reveille; there was no rattle of drum or shrieking of fife; the laggard sleeper was awakened by a touch on the shoulder, a shake, or a quick word in his ear. Horses were saddled in silence; and at the commands: "Prepare to mount!" "Mount!" given in the lowest possible tones that could command attention, the drowsy blue-jacketted, yellow-trimmed troopers, all be-spurred and be-sabred as if equal foes to the horses they were to ride and the enemies they were to encounter,—vaulted lightly or swung themselves heavily, according to the manner of each particular man, into their high peaked McClellan saddles that seemed to be all that was left them of their old leader. The squadrons were formed as quietly and with as few words as had accompanied the awakening and the mounting; for if a surprise of the enemy's force was to take place, it was a matter of the highest consequence that no loud sound or careless exclamation should reach the ears of the wary pickets and wide-awake videttes of the rebels hugging close the banks on the south side of the narrow river.

The preparations were at last and hastily completed, long before the gray dawn after the moonless night had begun to break over the Virginia hills lying dark and cool to the eastward. Perhaps that very morning had been selected for the attack because on the night before the new moon had made its appearance and there was no tell-tale lingerer to throw an awkward gleam on an accoutrement and thus tell a story meant to be concealed. Troopers clustered together and formed squadrons, squadrons were merged into regiments which in turn swelled to brigades and brigades to divisions. It was only then that the extensive nature of the movement, which had Pleasanton at the head and Buford, Gregg and Kilpatrick all engaged in the execution, could have been conjectured even by an eye capable of peering through the darkness. It seemed scarcely an hour after the first awakening when the formation was complete and the order to "March!" given; and there was not even yet a gleam of red in the eastern sky when the whole command was in motion. [Pg 454]

This large cavalry force, under Pleasanton as we have said, was composed of three divisions, commanded respectively by Buford, Gregg and Kilpatrick, all Brigadiers. The Rappahannock was crossed at as many different points, Buford with the First going over at Starke's Ford; Gregg, with the Second, at Sulphur Springs, four miles distant; and Kilpatrick, with the Third, at Kelly's Ford, nine miles farther down and thirteen miles distant from the place of crossing of the First. Stuart, the famous "Jeb," with his confederate cavalry, was known to be in force on the elevated ground at and around Culpeper Court House, with his pickets and videttes extending to the very edge of the Rappahannock; and a wide sweep of the Union force was believed to be necessary to circumvent him. Detachments of rebel troops were also known to hold all the prominent points between Culpeper and Brandy Station, where the brigades of Lomax and W. F. H. Lee were lying.

Pleasanton was over the river, with all his force before broad daylight—so rapid and successful had been the movement. The roads were dry and in as good order as Virginia roads are ever allowed to be by the powers that preside over highways; and the force, still in the three divisions, swept southward as silently as iron-shod animals have the capacity for bearing iron-accoutred riders. Napoleon *la Petit* had never yet succeeded in introducing gutta-percha scabbards for the swords of his troopers and gutta-percha shoes for their horses, even into the French cavalry; and the Yankee troops of Pleasanton had all the disadvantages of the usual rattling of bridle-bits, the clattering of sabres within steel scabbards, and the pounding of multitudinous hoofs upon the hard dry earth, the latter occasionally a little muffled by an inch of gray powdery dust, choking the riders as it made their advance less noisy. [Pg 455]

Spite of the clanking of hoof and steel, however, the advance was made with such silence and celerity that the greater portion of the rebel pickets on the southern bank of the Rappahannock were captured, while the remainder—here and there one scenting danger afar off and holding an advantage in knowledge of the roads—fled in dismay to report that the whole Army of the Potomac, sappers and miners, pioneers and pontoniers, horse, foot and dragoons, was closing in upon Culpeper.

As the morning advanced and the light grew stronger, so that the danger and the persons of the

attacking forces could at once be better distinguished, skirmishing commenced with that portion of the rebel force, stationed in more or less strength at various points and called to arms by their pickets being driven in upon them,—to meet and if possible check the advancing columns. Not long before they discovered that any effectual check to the forces which Pleasanton seemed to be pouring down every cross road and throwing out from behind every clump of woods on the roadsides, was impossible; and they fell back, skirmishing.

At Brandy Station (droll and unfortunate name, destined to supply more bad jokes at the expense of the dry throats of the army than almost any other spot on Virginia soil), a junction of the three [Pg 456] divisions of Union troops was effected; and there, while that disposition was being made, a sharp fight took place between the First, under Buford, and the rebel cavalry under Colonel Beale of the Ninth Virginia. But that struggle, though sharp, was only of brief continuance: out-foughten, and it must be confessed, outnumbered, the enemy was driven back from the Station and pursued vigorously.

While the gallant Buford was thus occupied with the First, Gregg, with the Second division was making a detour to the right and pouring down his troopers upon Culpeper from the north by the Ridgeville road, driving before him upon the main body at the Court House a rebel brigade that had held the advance, under General Lomax (an officer whose name, we may as well say, apropos of the bad jokes of war-time, had caused nearly as many of those verbal outrages upon English, as the unfortunate Brandy Station itself).

Kilpatrick, meanwhile, with his Third division had not been idle. (When was he ever known to be idle, except when others held him in check, or ineffective except when some other than himself misdirected his dashing energy?) He had swept around to the left, nearly at the same time that Gregg made the detour to the right, and striking the Stevensburgh road advanced rapidly from the east towards Culpeper and the right of the enemy's position, which rested on Rawson's Cross-Roads, two miles south-east of the Court-House. The rebels here made a stubborn resistance, and steel met steel and pistol-shot replied to sabre-stroke as it had not before done that day; but the odds were a little against them; they were outflanked by that incarnate "raider" of the Sussex mountains of New Jersey, who no doubt could trace back some drop of his blood to Johnny Armstrong the riever of the Scottish border, or the moss troopers of the Bog of Allen in Ireland; and they fell back to the town and beyond it, taking up new positions which they were not destined to hold much longer than those they had abandoned. [Pg 457]

But this brief shock of battle between the division of Kilpatrick and the rebels opposed to it, did not roll away from the little hamlet of Rawson's Cross-Roads without the enacting of one of those sad tragedies, in the shedding of the blood of non-combatants, which seem so much more painful than the wholesale but expected slaughter of the field. Near the crossing of the roads there stood one brick house, of two stories, the only one of that material in the vicinity. This house, when Kilpatrick came up, was occupied by the rebel sharp-shooters, partially sheltered by the thick walls and bringing down the federal cavalry from their saddles at every discharge of their deadly rifles. Such obstructions in the way of an advance, especially when they destroy as well as embarrass, are not apt to be treated with much toleration by those who have the power to sweep them away; and immediately when the imminence of the danger was discovered, one of the federal batteries was ordered up to dislodge the sharp-shooters. It dashed up with all the celerity that whipped and spurred and galloping horses could give it, halted within point-blank range, unlimbered, and sent shell, canister and case-shot into and through the obnoxious edifice in a manner and with a rapidity little calculated upon by the mason who quietly laid his courses of bricks for the front and side-walls, in the quiet years before Virginia secession. The sharp-shooters were soon silenced and dislodged—at least all of them who were left after the last deadly discharge of missiles had been poured in by the battery; and the house was at once occupied, when the firing ceased, by a detachment of Union cavalry dismounted for that service. When those men entered the half-ruined building they first became aware of this extraordinary and deplorable tragedy, in which a little blood went so far in awakening regret and horror. They heard cries of pain and shrieks of distress and fear, echoing through the building, in other accents than those which could belong to wounded soldiers—the tones of women! And in the cellar they found the painful solution of the mystery—more painful far, to them, than a hundred [Pg 458] times the death and suffering under ordinary circumstances. In that cellar, among smoke, and blood and dust, were huddled twenty or thirty non-combatants, men, women and children; and in their midst lay an old man, quite dead and the upper part of his head half carried away by a portion of shell, while fallen partially across his legs was the body of his son of sixteen, his boyish features scarcely yet stilled in the repose of death from a ghastly hurt that had torn away the arm and a part of the shoulder. Two women lay near, one dying from a blow on the temple which had driven in the bones of the skull like the crushing of an egg-shell, and the other uttering the most heart-rending of the cries and groans under the agony of a crushed leg and a foot literally blown to atoms. A sad sight!—a harrowing spectacle, even for war-time! And how had it been occasioned?

It would seem that on the approach of the cavalry and the commencement of fighting in the neighborhood, this party of non-combatants had crowded into this house—no doubt long to be known in the local traditions of the place as that of James Inskip,—and taken refuge in the cellar, believing that in it, as the only brick house in the vicinity, they would be safest from the missiles of the opposing forces. And so they would have been, safe enough beyond a doubt, had not the rebel commander, unaware of the presence of non-combatants in the building, or heedless of the common law of humanity not to expose them to unnecessary danger in any military operation,

recklessly placed his sharp-shooters in shelter there and thus drawn the fire of the fatal battery. Two or three of the shells, crashing through the house, had fallen into the cellar and exploded in the very midst of the trembling skulkers in their place of fancied security,—with the sad results that have been recorded, and which none more deeply deplored than the men who had unwittingly slaughtered the aged and the helpless. Some of the Richmond papers told harrowing stories, a few days after, of the "inhuman barbarity of the dastardly Yankees who wantonly butchered those inoffensive men and helpless women and children in James Inskip's house at Rawson's Cross-Roads"; but they forgot, as newspapers on both sides of the sad struggle have too often done during its continuance, to add one word of the explanatory and extenuating circumstances! [Pg 459]

By the time that Kilpatrick, with the Third, had concluded the episode of Rawson's Cross-Roads and driven the opposing forces back upon the town, Buford, with the First, after chasing the rebel cavalry under Beale to moderate satisfaction, had come up from the south, and the junction of the three divisions was accomplished.

On the elevated site of Culpeper and in the uneven streets of that old town which bears, like so many of its compeers, shabby recollections of English aristocracy that for some cause seem to suit it better than the thin pretence of democratic government,—there Stuart, than whom the rebellion has developed no more restless or more active foe of the Union cause, appeared determined to make a last and effectual stand. With a celerity worthy of his past reputation he placed sharp-shooters in houses that commanded the Union advance, planted batteries at advantageous positions in the streets, and threw up barricades of all the unemployed carts and wagons and all the idle timber and loose fence-rails lying about the town, in a manner which would have endeared him to the Parisians of the time of Louis Philippe. Right and left and on every hand, defending these obstructions and supporting the batteries, dashed his mounted "Virginia gentlemen," once the very Paladins of their knightly class, when Fauquier and the White Sulphur saw the pleasant sport of tilting at the ring in the presence of the bright-eyed Queens of Beauty of the Old Dominion,—now brought down to the level and compelled to contest the fatal advance, of a "horde of Yankee tailors on horseback"!

General Pleasanton, the actual as well as nominal head of the Union advance, held his position on an eminence a short distance east of the town, from which an excellent view of the whole situation could be commanded, and whence he directed all the movements with the rapidity of a soldier and the coolness of a man thoroughly in confidence with himself and well assured of the material of his command. He had won with the same troops before, even when placed at disadvantage: that day he felt that the game was in his own hands and that he could play it rapidly and yet steadily. The thing which worst troubled him as from that little eminence he looked out from under his bent brows, over the scene which was to witness so short, sharp and decisive a conflict,—was the knowledge how seriously the stubborn resistance offered by the rebels was likely to peril the non-combatants in the town, and how inevitably, from the same cause, the old town itself, just tumble-down enough to be historical and picturesque, must suffer from the flying shot and shell that know so little mercy. He had hoped, the first surprise succeeding, to take Culpeper against but slight resistance; and it was no part of his plan (it never *is* part of the plan of any truly brave man!) to batter the town if that measure could be avoided; but the balances and compensations of war are appreciable if not gratifying, musketry on one side is nearly sure to be answered in kind by the other, and artillery (when there happens to be any, and wo to the party without the "big guns" when the other has them at command!)—artillery has a very natural habit of replying to the thunderous defiance sent out by its hostile kinsmen. Culpeper, too well defended, was not the less certain to be taken, while it was the more certain to bear marks of the conflict that only the demolition of half its buildings could erase. [Pg 460]

God pity and help the residents of any town given up to the ruthless passions of a fierce soldiery —to plunder and rapine and murder,—after what is so inadequately described as "taking by *storm*"! When for the moment hell is let loose upon the earth, as if to teach us that if we have yet something of the god lingering in our fallen manhood, we have yet something of the arch-fiend remaining to show how we accompanied him in his fall. When roofs blaze because a reckless hand has dashed a torch therein in the very wantonness of destruction. When the golden vessels of the church service and the sacred little memorials of happy hours in boudoir and bed-room are alike torn from their places, dashed into pieces and ground under armed heels, as if the inanimate objects bore a share of the wrong of resistance and could feel a part of the suffering meted out to it. When murder is for the time licensed and the blood of the defender of his door-stone and his hearth dabbles his gray hair on one or the other of those sacred places, and there is no thought of punishment for the red hand, except as God may silently mete it in the years to come. When—saddest and worst of all,—the matron is outraged before the eyes of her bound and blaspheming husband; and young girls, the peach-bloom of maidenhood not yet brushed from the cheek, are torn shrieking from the arms that would shelter them, to be so polluted and dishonored by a ruffian touch that but yesterday would have seemed impossible to their dainty flesh as the rising up of a fiend from the lower pit to rend the white garments of one of the redeemed in heaven,—so polluted and dishonored that a prayer for the mercy of death bubbles up from the lips at the last word before resistance becomes insensibility. [Pg 461]

This wreck of a "storm" of human license is terrible—so terrible that the effects of the convulsions of nature, the tempest, the tornado and even the earthquake, sink into insignificance beside them. Heaven be praised that during the War for the Union, called by our English cousins so "fratricidal," we have as yet known no Badajos or even a sacking of Pekin! But only second to

such scenes in horror and scarcely second in terror, have been some of those supplied when the battle issue of the two armies was joined near some quiet country town before lying peaceful and inoffensive, or when military necessity has made its houses temporary fortifications and its streets the points of desperate attacks and as desperate defences. Then what crashing of shot and shell through houses; what demolition of all that had before been sacred; what huddling together of the frightened and the defenceless who never before dreamed that, though war was in the land, it would break so near to *them*; what mad gathering of valuables and impotent preparations for flight that would be more dangerous than remaining; what whistling of bullets that seemed each billeted for a defenceless breast; what thunderous discharges of cannon that made every non-combatant limb quiver and every delicate cheek grow bloodless; what shouts in the street and cries of terror and dismay within doors; what trembling peeps through half-closed shutters, with an imagined death even in every such momentary exposure; what cowerings in cellars and hidings beneath piles of old lumber in garrets; what reports of defeat or victory to the party that was feared or favored; what claspings of children and ungovernable weepings of hysteria; what prayers and what execrations; what breakings-up and destructions of all that had been, and what revelations of the desolation that is to be!

Such, since the breaking out of the rebellion, has been the situation of many a before-peaceful town, in many a State that once rested happily under the shadow of the Eagle's wing. And such was the situation of one fated old town that day, when Gregg from the north, Kilpatrick from the east and Buford from the south, came up almost simultaneously and their forces charged recklessly into the streets of Culpeper Court-House. The excitement and confusion in the town at once became all that we have so feebly endeavored to indicate—women shrieking in terror, soldiers groaning with their wounds, children crying from fright; and blended with these and a hundred other inharmonious sounds, the shouts in the street, the bugle calls, the hissing of bullets, the rumble of artillery wheels, the broken thunder of the feet of trampling horses, the occasional crash of half-demolished houses, and the hoarse roar of the batteries as they belched out their missiles of death and destruction. Culpeper, for a short period, was a veritable pandemonium in miniature; and no detail can add to the force of that brief but comprehensive description.

Near the railroad bridge spanning the little stream running nearly through the centre of the town, the rebels had discovered a strategic point of no little consequence, and they had posted there a battery of several pieces, well served and annoying the advance of the Third division very materially. The battery seemed to be placed there, not only to obstruct the advance but to protect a train of cars just then being loaded by the rebels above, with munitions and other articles of consequence, preparatory to a start down the railroad southward. Battery D., Second New York Artillery, ordered for that service, ran up its sections at a gallop, unlimbered and poured in shot and shell, grape and canister upon the train, in such disagreeable rapidity as sent the half loaded cars away towards the Rapidan with all the speed that could be suddenly mustered. Still the battery at the bridge remained, firing rapidly and cutting up the head of Kilpatrick's column in a manner calculated to make the General gnash his teeth in indignation. The space to the bridge was uphill, accordingly raked downward by the rebel fire; the bridge itself was narrow and the footing for horses seriously damaged by the railroad tracks that crossed it with their switches and lines of slippery iron. Still it was known that that bridge must be cleared, at any cost, or the advance through Culpeper would be a most bloody one if accomplished at all. Just as Kilpatrick was about to order a charge of cavalry to clear that bridge and if possible capture the pieces, his intention seemed to be anticipated and a squadron of Stuart's cavalry rode down and took post, dismounted, behind the battery, in position to support, while three or four companies of rebel riflemen followed, ready to do deadly execution with their pieces against any troops attempting to charge, and to fall upon that force with resistless fury at the moment of their weakness, if the guns should be ridden over! No pleasant prospect, as the Sussex raider thought, and for a moment he apparently wavered in intention, while the battery played heavily and every instant saw one or more of his best troopers biting the dust of the causeway below.

But this momentary indecision, whether or not it would have continued much longer of his own volition, was not destined to do so when the will of another came into play. A horseman dashed rapidly over to the spot where Kilpatrick was momentarily halted, from Pleasanton a few hundreds of yards away, running a fearful gauntlet of the enemy's fire, as he did so, from a battery that had just wheeled into position and opened down a narrow cross-street to the left,—spoke a few quick words to the General and then awaited the movement that was to follow. And it was not long that he or the commander who sent him needed to wait. The command had been: "Clear that bridge and take the battery, at all hazards!" and Kilpatrick only needed that support of his own judgment to order a charge which he would have been best pleased, if he could only have gone back to be a Colonel for a few moments, to lead in person. His eye rolled questioningly over the Third for a moment, and then the rapid words of command followed. Only a certain number of cavalry could be employed upon that dangerous service, without making the carnage greater by throwing the troopers literally in the way of each other; and it was the Second New York, Harris Light Guard, a troop which had already won honor on every field touched by the hoofs of their horses,—called out for that quick, sharp, perilous duty that every squadron in the command probably coveted.

The gallant Second received the order with loud cheers that came nigh to imitating the well-known rebel fox-hunting yell, for some of their best fellows had fallen ingloriously and the human tiger was not only unchained but set on horseback. They formed column by fours with a rapidity which told of the fierce hunger of conflict; and when the bugles rang out the charge, the dusty

and smoke-stained riders returned their now-useless carbines to their slings, drew sabres, and driving their spurs rowel deep into the flanks of horses that seemed almost as anxious as themselves, dashed forward towards the bridge. Their ringing shouts did not cease as they galloped on, and their sword-blades, if they grew thinner in number, still gleamed as brightly as ever in the sunlight, as they measured that narrow but fatal space, while round after round of grape and canister, carbine-bullets, musket-balls and rifle-shots, burst into their faces and mowed down their flanks as they swept on. Saddles were emptied, horses went down with cries of pain more fearful than any that man can utter, and brave men went headlong into the dust from which they would never rise again in life. But the progress of the charging squadron did not seem to be delayed a moment. The rebel gunners of the battery were reloading for yet one more discharge, when, just in the midst of that operation, over the bridge and upon them burst the head of that column which seemed as if nothing in the way of human missiles had power to stay it. Before the gray and begrimed cannoniers could withdraw their rammers the troopers were in their midst. Then followed that fierce cutting and thrusting of artillery swords and cavalry sabres, that interchange of revolver-shots and crushing of human bones under the feet of trampling horses, incident to the taking of any battery that is sharply attacked and bravely defended. A little of this, but still under heavy fire from behind,—and the guns were captured, with all their men and horses left alive.

And yet the work of the Second New York in that quarter was by no means finished. That steady and murderous fire continued from up the street, as the infantry and the dismounted cavalry of the support fell back; and it was only by one more sweeping charge that the annoyance could be removed. Scarcely any one knew whence came the voice that ordered that second charge, but the blood of the troopers was up and they made it gallantly. In three minutes thereafter a broken and flying mass, far up the street, was all that remained of the supporting force; but a fearfully diminished number of the cavalrymen rode back to assist in sending the captured battery to the rear. We shall have occasion, presently, to know something more of these two charges, undoubtedly the most spirited events of a day on which all the Union troops and many of the rebels reflected honor upon the causes they supported.

Immediately after the clearing of the bridge a gallant dash was made by Gen. Custer, the "boy general with the golden-locks" (the man who has made a solemn vow, it is said, never to shorten those locks until he rides victoriously into Richmond) leading the charge in person, with portions of the First Vermont and First Michigan cavalry, against a section of a battery, stationed nearly a quarter of a mile beyond the bridge and within a hundred or two yards of the front of Stuart's main body. These pieces were worked by as obstinate a set of gray-backs as ever rammed home a rebel cartridge; and the gunners, defiant of Custer's detour to the left to escape a direct raking fire, and apparently relying upon the main body lying so near them, continued to load and fire until the federal leader and his men were literally on the top of the pieces and fairly riding them under foot. Guns and caissons were taken, while the support relied upon seemed to be so paralyzed by the daring of the whole affair as scarcely to offer any resistance,—the horses hitched to the pieces, the guns limbered up, and the rebel gunners even forced to mount and drive their lost cannon to join the others in the rear!

A considerable rebel force of cavalry, artillery and infantry were by this time in full retreat below the town, along the line of the Orange and Alexandria railroad; and the Fifth New York cavalry were sent in pursuit. The gallant troopers of the Fifth charged at a gallop the moment they came within sweeping distance of the foe, but the high embankment of the road broke the charge, and the detour necessary to make a more advantageous approach deprived the gallant boys of their half-won laurels and allowed the flying enemy to escape.

While Kilpatrick was thus engaged, Buford and Gregg, with the First and Second, had been by no means idle. Dashing into the town, each from his chosen direction, the troopers of each leaped barricades and drove the rebels before them wherever encountered upon open ground; and a part of the force of either division, dismounted, skirmished from corner to corner and dislodged the sharp-shooters one by one from all their holes and hiding-places. Sometimes stubbornly resisted, at others seeming to have no foe worthy of their steel, the three divisions won their way through the old town; and the cavalry of Stuart, up to that time so often declared invincible, were at last driven pell-mell out of Culpeper and back to the momentary refuge of Pony Mountain. Even there they were again dislodged, the First Michigan cavalry accomplishing a feat which might have surprised even Halstead Rowan of this chronicle—routing a whole brigade by charging up a hill so steep that some of the riders slipped backwards over the tails of their horses, their saddles bearing them company!

The town of Culpeper was finally occupied at one o'clock, P. M.; and not many hours after the ridge behind it and Pony Mountain were in the hands of the dashing cavalrymen. Retreating towards the Rapidan, they were pursued towards Raccoon Ford on the left and centre by Buford and Kilpatrick with the First and Third divisions, while Gregg, with the Second, pushed a heavy Rebel force before him to Rapidan Station. By nightfall the rebels had been driven to the north bank of the Rapidan, where both forces bivouacked that night in line of battle.

Monday morning saw the recommencement of hostilities and the retreat of the rebels to the south side of the river, leaving the federal forces to hold the country between the Rappahannock and the Rapidan, with all the strategic points therein, Culpeper included. Stuart, it was said, had often boasted that "no Yankee force could drive *him* from Culpeper!" and if such a boast was really made and afterwards so signally disproved by the "horde of Yankee tailors on horseback," the fact only furnishes one more additional proof to Benedick's declaration that he would live and

die a bachelor, so soon followed by his marriage with Beatrice,—that humanity is very uncertain and that human calculations are fallible to a degree painful to contemplate!

Such were the general features of the crossing of the Rappahannock and the Battle of Culpeper, one of the sharpest cavalry affairs of the war, and perhaps more important as illustrating the reliability to which the Union horse had attained from a beginning little less than contemptible, than from the mere military advantage gained by the movement. It now becomes necessary to descend to a few particulars connected with the event of the day, and briefly to trace the influence on the fortunes of some of the leading characters in this narration, exercised by the advance of General Pleasanton and his dashing brigadiers.

It has been seen that at a certain period of that day the division of Kilpatrick was held temporarily in check by the rebel battery posted at the railroad-bridge, and that for a moment the General, aware of the necessity of removing the obstruction if the direct advance through Culpeper was to be continued, yet hesitated in ordering the charge which must be made in the face of such overwhelming difficulty, until a peremptory direction from Pleasanton left him no option in the matter. And it is to personal movements of that particular period that attention must at this moment be directed.

Just when he made the discovery through his field glass of the havoc being wrought by the rebel battery and the momentary hesitation, Pleasanton, who did not happen to be in the best of humors with reference to it, was placed in the same situation in which Wellington for a few moments found himself on the day of Waterloo, when he employed the button-bagman with the blue umbrella under his arm, to carry some important orders. He was, in short, out of aide-de-camps. One by one they had been sent away to different points, and it so chanced, just then, that none had returned. Something very much like an oath muttered between the lips of the impatient veteran of forty, and one exclamation came out so that there was no difficulty in recognizing it:

"Nobody here when everybody is worst wanted! I wish the d—l had the whole pack of them!"

"Perhaps *I* can do what you wish, General."

The words came from a young man in civilian's dress—gray pants and broad-brimmed felt hat, but with a military suspicion in his coat of light blue flannel,—who stood very near the commander, his horse's bridle over arm and a large field glass in hand, and who had apparently been scanning with much interest a scene of blood in which it was neither his duty nor his disposition to take part.

"You?" and the veteran turned upon him, with something very like a laugh on his lips. "You? Humph! Do you know what I want?"

"Some one to carry an order, I suppose!"

"Exactly! Over that causeway, to Kilpatrick at the bridge. Do you see how that flanking battery to the left is raking every thing, and the one in front is throwing beyond Kil's position? The chances are about even that the man who starts never gets there! Now do you wish to go?"

"No objection on that account!" was the reply of the young man, who seemed to be on terms of very easy intimacy with the General, as indeed he was,—a privileged visitor, who had accompanied him in the advance, but eminently "unattached" and thus far neither fighting nor expected to fight.

"The d—l you haven't! Well, ——, that is certainly cool, for *you*! Never mind—if you like a little personal taste of what war really is, take this," and he scribbled a few words on a slip of paper on his raised knee—"take this and get it to Kilpatrick as soon as you can. If you do not come back again, I shall send word to your family."

"Oh, yes, thank you, General; but I shall come back again!" He had swung himself into the saddle of his gray, while Pleasanton was writing, and the veteran held the paper for one instant in his hand and looked into his face with a strange interest. What he saw there seemed to satisfy him, and he handed the paper with a nod. The volunteer aide-de-camp received it with a bow, and the next moment was flying towards the front of the Third, riding splendidly, running the gauntlet that has before been suggested, but untouched, and delivering his orders in very quick time and at emphatically the right moment. The important movement which immediately followed has already been narrated, in its bearing on the result of the day; but there were other effects not less important when personal destinies are taken into the account.

Gregg, who espied something on the right, that was likely to be hidden from Kilpatrick until it discovered itself by unpleasant consequences, had sent over an aide with a word of warning; and nearly at the same moment when the volunteer messenger from Pleasanton reached the brigadier, the officer from Gregg rode rapidly up from his direction. Both delivered their messages in a breath, and then both fell back at a gesture from the General. The aide from Gregg was turning his horse to ride back again to his post, when he caught a glance at the somewhat strangely attired man who had come in from Pleasanton. From his lower garments that glance naturally went up to his hat, and thence, by an equally natural movement, to his face. The dark brows of the officer bent darker in an instant, and perhaps there was that in his gaze which the other *felt*, (there are those who assert that such things are possible), for the next instant there was an answering glance and another pair of brows were knitted not less decidedly. Those two men were serving (more or less) in the same cause, but they looked as little as possible like two

warm-hearted comrades in arms—much more as if they would have been delighted to take each other by the throat and mutually exert that gentle pressure calculated to expel a life or two! [Pg 471]

Pleasanton was just calling out the Second to take the battery and clear the bridge. While he was doing so, the evil genius of one of those men drove them into collision. The messenger from Gregg, who wore the shoulder-straps and other accoutrements of a Captain on staff service, but with a cavalry sabre at his belt,—after the pause of a moment and while the other was still fixedly regarding him, spurred his horse close up to the side of the gray ridden by the civilian, and accosted him in a tone and with a general manner that he seemed to take no pains to render amiable:

"What are *you* doing here?"

"On staff service, Captain. How is your head?" was the reply, with quite as much of sneer in the tone as the other had displayed of arrogance.

"What do you call yourself just now?—'Horace Townsend' still?" was the Captain's next inquiry.

"To most others, yes: to you, Captain Hector Coles, just now, I am—" and he bent his mouth so close to the ear of the other that he could have no difficulty in hearing him, though he spoke the last words in a hoarse whisper that has even escaped *us*!

"I thought so, all the while!" was the reply, an expression of malignant joy crossing the face. "The same infernal coward—I knew it!"

The face of the man who had been Horace Townsend seemed convulsed by a spasm of mortal agony the instant after, but it gave place almost as quickly to an expression of set, deadly anger, the eyes blazing and the cheeks livid. He leaned close to the Captain and even grasped his arm as if to make sure that he should not get away before he had finished his whole sentence.

"Captain Hector Coles," he said, still in the same low, hoarse voice, but so near that the other could easily hear—"you called me the same name five or six weeks ago at the Crawford House, and I am afraid that I *proved* that it belonged to *you*!" [Pg 472]

"I told you that I would kill you some day for that impertinence, and I *will*!" was the reply of the Captain, terrible anger in his face.

"No—if you kill me at all, and I do not think you will,—it will be because you believe me, with good reason, something more of a favorite with a lady whose name it is not necessary to mention, than yourself!"

This insulting boast of preference and allusion to Margaret Hayley were quite as well understood as they needed to be. There was another livid cheek, just then, and a fierce answering fire in the eye which told how deeply the barb rankled. But before the Captain could speak, to utter words that must have been equally bitter and blasphemous, the civilian continued:

"You challenged me for what I said at the White Mountains, Captain Hector Coles—you man with a swimming in the head! I refused your challenge then, but I accept it now. If you are not the coward you called *me*, you will fight me here and instantly!"

"Here and now?" These were all the words that the surprised and possibly horrified Captain could utter.

"Exactly!" was the reply, the voice still low and hoarse but rapid and without one indication of tremor. "I told you that I was on staff service. So I am. I have just brought General Kilpatrick orders from General Pleasanton to clear that bridge and take the battery yonder that is doing us so much damage. Ah! by George—there goes another of our best fellows!" This as a round shot came tearing into the ranks just ahead, killing one of the troopers and his horse. Then he resumed, in the same low rapid tone: "You see those New York boys forming there, to do the work. Ride with them and with *me*, if you DARE, Captain Hector Coles, and see who goes furthest! That is my duel!"

"*I?*—I am on staff duty—not a mere cavalryman!" There was hesitation in the voice and deadly pallor on the cheek: the civilian heard the one and saw the other. [Pg 473]

"Refuse to go with me and fight out our quarrel in that manner," the excited voice went on, "and by the God who made us both, the whole army shall know who is the coward! More—" and again his mouth was very near to the ear of the other—"*she* shall know it!"

There are spells by which the fiend can always be raised, without much doubt, however troublesome it may be to find any means by which to lay him afterwards. To Captain Hector Coles there was one conjuration irresistible, and that had been used in the present instance. Shame before the whole army was nothing—it may be doubted, in fact, whether he had not known something of that infliction before at least a portion of the army, and survived it without difficulty. But shame before Margaret Hayley, after the boasts he had used, the underrating of others in which he had indulged, and the worship of physical courage which he knew to be actually a foible in her nature?—no, that was not to be thought of for one moment! Better wounds or death, out of the way of both which he had before so skilfully kept, than that! This reflection did not occupy many seconds, and his heavy brow was as black as thunder as he turned short round in the saddle and almost hissed at his tempter:

"Come on, then, fool as well as coward, and see how long before I will teach you a lesson!"

Horace Townsend—as he must still be called—did not say another word in reply. The Light Guard were by that time formed for the charge, and he merely said, in the hearing of all:

"Come—the Captain and I are going to take a ride with the boys! Who will lend me a sword?"

The strange demand for a moment drew general attention to him, and among other regards that of Kilpatrick. The idea of a civilian throwing himself into such a charge seemed to strike him at once, and before one of the orderlies could draw out his weapon and present it, the General had handed his, with the words:

"Here is mine!—Mind that you bring it back again!"

Kilpatrick unslung his sword and held up the scabbard with the blade, but the new volunteer merely drew out the blade with a bow and driving spurs into his gray dashed forward to the head of the column, Captain Hector Coles close beside him. Perhaps no two men ever went into battle side by side, with precisely the same relative feelings, since carving up men with the broadsword became a profession. Neither, it seems almost certain, had the least thought of devotion to the country, of hatred to the rebellion, or even of *esprit du corps*, moving him to the contest. The one was intent upon revenging an insult received long before, by getting the other killed in proving him a coward,—and may have had another but still personal motive: that other was equally anxious to keep up his own reputation in the eyes of a woman, and to get removed out of his way a man whom he believed to be a rival, but who was really no more in his way than Shakspeare's nobody who "died a' Wednesday." Both half blind with rage and hate, and both, therefore—let the truth be told—bad soldiers! Both following a petty whim or facing death as a mere experiment, and neither with the most distant thought of the fate that rode close behind, to protect or to slay, and each alike inevitably!

Just then the bugle rang out, the commands "Column forward! Trot, march! Gallop, march! Charge!" rang out in quick succession, and away dashed the Second, with the results that have already been foreshadowed in the general account of the movement. But though armies and the various smaller bodies that form armies, are great aggregates of manhood, they are something more; and who can measure, in reading an account of that bridge so gallantly carried, that attack so splendidly repulsed, or that point of battle held against every odds, with the conclusion—"Our loss was only two hundred [or two thousand], in killed and wounded,"—who can measure, we ask, the amount of personal suffering involved in that movement and its result?—who can form any guess at the variety of personal adventure, depression, elevation, hope, fear, delirious joy and maddening horror, going to make up that event spoken of so flippantly as one great total?

The rebel battery beyond the bridge had been throwing round shot and shell, as has already been observed, reaching far beyond Kilpatrick's front and doing heavy damage. It was inevitable that as the advance of the attacking column was seen, that fire should be redoubled. And before they had crossed half the intervening distance the rain of bullets from the supporting rebel riflemen began to blend with the fall of heavier projectiles, making a very storm of destructive missiles, more difficult for horsemen to breast than any opposing charge of their own weight could have been, splitting heads, crashing out brains, boring bodies full of holes from which the blood and the life went out together, and hurling horses and riders to the ground with such frequency that wounded men had their little remaining breath trampled out by their own comrades and every fallen animal formed a temporary barricade over which another fell and became disabled. Through the air around them rang the scream of shell and the shrill whistle of bullets, blended with the inevitable cry that rose as some bullet found a fatal mark, and the roar of agony when a horse was hurled desperately wounded and yet living to the ground. The shout with which the troopers had at first broken into their charge, did not die away; and it did not cease, in fact, until the command had done its work—until the battery was taken and the supports scattered by the supplementary onset; but with what sounds it was blent before the cavalrymen reached the rebel guns, only those who have listened to the same horrible confusion of noises can form the most distant idea. To all others the attempt at description must be as vague as the thought of Armageddon or the Day of Falling Mountains!

If those sights and sounds cannot be described, who shall describe the sensations of those who then for the first time rode point-blank into the very face of death? Not we, certainly. The very man who has experienced them can tell no more, one hour after, of what existed at the time, than one moment's rift in a drifting cloud reveals of the starlit heaven above.

What Captain Hector Coles really felt when first meeting that iron and leaden storm so unlike the usual accompaniments of his "staff service," may be guessed but can never be known. He rode on gallantly, at least for a time: that was quite enough.

What the *ci-devant* Horace Townsend experienced may be easily enough indicated, and in one word—*madness*. He was stark, raving mad! The anger felt a few moments before; the novelty of the position; the motion of a horse that bore him nobly: the sword, that was no holiday weapon but a thing of might and death, clasped by his unaccustomed but nervous hand; the shouts of fierce bravery, the groans of anguish and the scream of missiles; above all, the rousing for the first time of that human tiger which sleeps within most of us until the fit moment of awakening comes—no witches' cauldron on a blasted heath ever brewed such a mixture to craze a human brain, as that he was so suddenly drinking; and it may be said that his rational self knew nothing of what followed. He was riding on—it might have been on horseback on the solid earth, in a fiery

chariot through the air, or on the crest of a storm-wave at sea—he could have formed no idea which. When he came within striking distance of the foe, he was swinging that heavy sword of Kilpatrick's, at something, everything, he knew not what, that seemed to stand in his way. Nothing appeared to hurt him, nothing to stop him or the gallant gray he rode. There was a red mist over his eyes, and the thunder of twenty judgments rang in his ears: he knew no more. He was mad, stark mad—so drunk with the wine of human blood and the fiendish joy of battle, that the powers of heaven might have looked down in pity on him as upon a new and better developed descendant of the original Cain, smiting all his brothers to a death that could not satisfy the hot thirst of his evil soul. [Pg 477]

Only once he seemed to be for a moment clearly conscious. It was when they rode full upon the battery, trampling down men and horses and sabring every thing that had life, but under a fire which seemed to rain from the opened windows of hell. He saw a man who had thus far kept at his side, recoil, rein his horse backward, leap over the fallen friends and foes who barred his flight, and dash down the track towards the bridge. He saw, and knew Captain Hector Coles; and in his madness he had reason enough left to shout "Aha! Coward! Coward!" and then the red mist closed again over his eyes and he fought on. He did not see what followed before the flying man reached the bridge—the fragment of a shell that struck him in the back and literally tore him in pieces, horse and rider going down and lying stone dead together.

He could not have told, under oath, who gave the command for that supplemental charge upon the supporting force. And yet *his* tongue uttered it, and he was in the front, still waving his sword through the red mist and letting it fall with demoniac force upon every thing that stood in his way,—when the last hope of the rebels was thus broken. He had known but little, most of the time: after that he knew literally nothing except that his fierce joy had turned to pain. As if through miles of forest he heard the notes of the bugles sounding the recall; and he had a dim consciousness of hearing the soldiers speaking of him in words that would have given him great pleasure had he been alive to appreciate them! Then he was back at the bridge. Kilpatrick was there, somebody cheered, and the General held out his hand to him. He tried to hand him back the sword that had done such good service, said: "I have brought it—back—" and spoke no more. Then and only then, as he fell from his blown and beaten gray, they knew that his first charge had a likelihood of being his last—that a Minie bullet, received so long before that some of the blood lay dried upon his coat, had passed through him from breast to back,—thank God not from back to breast!—so near the heart that even the surgeon could not say whether it had touched or missed it! [Pg 478]

CHAPTER XXIII.

Once more at West Philadelphia—September and Change—Last glimpses of Kitty Hood and Dick Compton—Robert Brand and his Invited Guest—The News of Death—Old Espeth Graeme as a Seeress—The Despatch from Alexandria—The Quest of Brand and Margaret Hayley.

Hurrying rapidly towards its close, this narration must become yet more desultory and at times even more fragmentary, than it has been in the past. The seven-league boots of story must be pulled on, however unwillingly, and many a spot that would have been lingered lovingly over at the commencement of the journey, cleared now with a glance and a bound. The few pages that remain, in fact, may justify a change in the figure, appearing more like lightning glimpses from railroad-car windows than connected and leisurely views of the whole landscape of story.

September on West Philadelphia, where it seems but yesterday, though really three months ago, that we saw the fair June morning and inhaled the perfume of the sweet June roses. Those roses, the companions in life and death of that with which Margaret Hayley was toying on the morning when she met the crushing blow of her life,—had long since sighed out their last breath of fragrance and faded away, to be followed now by the bright green leaves amid which they had clustered and peeped and hidden. The waving grain fields which had formed so pleasant a portion of the June landscape, were changed as much, though less sadly. Bright golden wheat that had formed part of it, lay heaped in the farmer's granaries; and puffed loaves with crisp brown crust, made from that which had still further progressed in its round of usefulness to man, lay on the baker's counter. There was short stubble where the grain had waved, and over it the second growth of clover was weaving its green mantle of concealment. In the peach orchards the fruit hung ripe to tempt the fingers; the apples were growing more golden amid the masses of leaves where they coyly sheltered themselves from the sun; and on the garden trellises there already began to be dots of purple among the amber green of the grape clusters. There was less of bright, glossy green in the foliage—nature's summer coat had been some time worn and began to give tokens of the rain and wind and sun it had encountered. The birds sang in the branches, but their song seemed more staid and less sprightly, as if they too had felt the passage of the months, grown older, and could be playful children no more. Occasionally the long clarionet chirp of a locust would break out and trill and die away upon the air, telling of fading summer and the decline of life so sweetly and yet so sadly that decay became almost a glory. The mellow, golden early afternoon of the year, as June had been its late morning—not less beautiful, perhaps, but oh how immeasurably less sprightly and bewitching—how much more calm, sober and subduing! [Pg 479]

Nature moves onward, and humanity seldom stands still, if it does not outstrip the footsteps of the mother. Something of the changes that had fallen during the preceding three months upon that widely varied group of residents beyond the Schuylkill who have supplied characters to this narration, is already known: what remains may be briefly told at this stage and in the closing events soon to follow. Of those changes to Eleanor Hill, Nathan Bladesden and Dr. Pomeroy, directly; of those to the members of the Brand household, yet sooner; of those to two minor characters who will make no further appearance upon the stage during this life-drama, at once. [Pg 480] Let that two be Dick Compton, farmer, and Kitty Hood, school-mistress. The latter yet managed her brood of troublesome children, who still sailed their vessels that had succeeded to the evanescent three-master "Snorter, of Philadelphia," at playtime, in the little pond before the rural school-house, and performed other juvenile operations by sea and shore; but a great change had fallen upon the merry, self-willed little girl with the brown eyes and the wavy brown hair. The school had a mistress, but that mistress had a *master*—a sort of "power behind the throne" not seldom managed by one sex or the other, towards all persons "in authority." No bickerings at the school-house door, to be afterwards forgotten in explanations and kisses, now. Richard Compton found his way there, occasionally and perhaps oftener, but he always came in at once instead of the school-mistress going out to meet him with a bashful down-casting of the eyes and a pretty flush of modesty upon the cheek; and he made so little concealment about the visits that he often managed them so as to wait until school was dismissed and then walked all the way home with her! If the young lovers yet had secrets, they found some other place than the neighborhood of the school-house door, for their utterance. And the big girls and the bigger boys, who used to enjoy such multitudes of sly gibes at the school-mistress and her "beau," had lost all their material of amusement. The very last attempt at jocularity in that direction had been some time before effectually "squelched" by the dictum of the biggest boy in school: "You boys, jest stop peeking at 'em! He ain't her beau no more—he's her husband; and you jest let 'em do what they're a mind to!"

That is the fact, precisely—no less assured because approached with a little necessary circumlocution. Dick Compton had come back from Gettysburgh with the Reserves, unwounded and a hero. Carlton Brand was gone, and the only object of jealousy removed. And before Kitty had quite emerged from her "valley of humiliation" at the unfortunate slap and unpatriotic [Pg 481] upbraiding, she found it too late to emerge at all. The wedding-day had been set and the marriage taken place, almost before she had any idea that such things were in immediate contemplation! Kitty Hood was "Mrs. Richard Compton," and that was the secret of the visits no longer stolen and the unabashed walking home together. Not that the visits of the young farmer to the school excited no commotion, now-a-days, but that the commotion was of a different character. All the big boys and some of the big girls hated him, as he strode up the aisle with his broad, hearty: "'Most ready to go home, Kitty?" and his proprietary taking possession of her with his eyes: hated him because he had to some extent come between her and them, and because there was a rumor that "after November he was not going to allow her to keep school any more." Perhaps there were good reasons for this resolution, into which we shall certainly make no more attempt to pry than was made by the big boys themselves! God's blessing on the young couple, with as much content in the farm-house as can well fall to the lot of a small indefinite number,—and with as few misunderstandings, coldnesses and jealousies as may be deemed necessary by the powers that preside over married life, to fit them for that life in which "they neither marry nor are given in marriage!" And so exit Mr. and Mrs. Richard Compton, for whom we have done all that the friend and the minister could do, leaving Providence and the doctor to take care of the remainder.

That matter properly disposed of, it becomes necessary to visit the house of Robert Brand once more, on the morning of Friday the eighteenth day of September, after an absence from it of nearly the three months before designated. Change here, too. Besides whatever might have been wrought in the master of the house during that period, of which we shall be soon advised, there had been a marked difference wrought in the relations sustained by good, warm-hearted, sisterly, darling little Elsie. [Pg 482] There had been no return to the house, of the old family physician, first expatriated, so to speak, by word of mouth, and then bull-dogged and threatened with the protrusion of loaded muskets from convenient windows and the application of the strong arms of old Elspeth Graeme who could handle the bull-dog. The doctor's-bill had long before been settled, and (let us put the whole truth upon record) spent! Then Robert Brand had been again seized with terrible illness and suffering, rendering a physician necessary; and what resource was left except the before-despised professional services of Dr. James Holton? None whatever. So the old man thought and so Elsie Brand *knew*. Result, Dr. James Holton had suddenly found himself, in July, the medical adviser of the Brands, and the adviser, mental, moral and medical, of Elsie. He had since so remained, seeming to do marvels at re-establishing the shattered constitution of the invalid and setting him once more on his natural feet, and with a pleasant prospect that all the difficulties were smoothed out of the way of his eventual union with Elsie, when a little more time and a little enlarged practice should make their marriage advisable. And Elsie had grown almost happy once more—quite happy in the regard of a good man whom she loved with all the warmth of the big heart in her plump little body, and yet restless, nervous and tearful when she thought of the brother cherished so dearly, of his broken love, his alienated father, his absence in a strange land, and the probability that she could never again lay her golden head upon his breast and look up into his eyes as to the noblest and most godlike of them all.

At a little before noon on that September morning, a single figure was moving slowly backward and forward, up and down, the length of the garden walk in the rear of the house of Robert Brand, the trellises of the grapery above and on either side, for nearly the whole distance, flecking the autumn sunshine that fell on the walk and on the moving figure, while from the vines themselves peeped the thick clusters of amber fruit upon which the purple bloom was just [Pg 483] beginning to throw a hint of October and luscious ripeness. Late flowers bloomed in the walks and borders on either side; occasionally a bird sent up its quiet and contented twitter from the top of the vine where it was tasting a premature grape; a cicala's chirp rang feebly out, swelled up to a volume that filled the whole garden, then died away again, an indefinable feeling of stillness seeming to lie in the very sound. The sunlight was golden, the sky perfectly cloudless, the air balmy and indolent; beneath the trellis and beside the walk two long rustic settees combined with the wooing air and beckoned to closed eyes, day-dreams and repose; and yet the very opposite of repose was expressed in the appearance and movement of that single figure.

It was that of Robert Brand, three months older than we saw him in the early summer, far less an invalid than he had been at that time, as evidenced by the absence of his swathed limb and supporting cane, yet more broken within that period than most men break in ten twelvemonths—more than he had himself broken before in the same period of his severest years of bodily suffering. Something of the iron expression of the mouth was gone, and in its place were furrowed lines of suffering that the torture of the body could scarcely have imprinted there without the corresponding agony of the mind; he was more stooped in the shoulders than he had been when before observed; and down the side-hair that showed from beneath his broad hat—hair that had been fast but evenly changing from gray to white, there now lay great streaks of finger thickness, white as the driven snow and in painful contrast with the other,—such streaks as are not often made in hair or beard except by the pressure of terrible want, a great sorrow, or a month of California fever. This was not all—he walked with head dejectedly bent, and hands beneath the skirts of his coat; and when he glanced up for a moment it could be seen that his lip trembled and the eye had a sad, troubled expression that might have told of tears past, tears to [Pg 484] come, or a feeling far too absorbing for either. Alas!—the old man was indeed suffering. The shame of a life had been followed by its sorrow. He had erred terribly in meeting the one, and paid the after penalty: how could he muster fortitude enough to meet the other?

To him old Elspeth Graeme, large-faced, massive-framed, and powerful looking as of old, with a countenance no more changed during the preceding three months than a granite boulder in the mountains might have been affected by a little wind and storm during the same lapse of time. Behind her Carlo, who since the disappearance of his young master seemed to have found no one else except the old Scottish woman who could pretend to exercise any control over him, and who consequently had attached himself to her almost exclusively. The master, who was making one of his turns up the walk, saw her as she emerged from the house, and met her as she approached, with inquiry in face and voice.

"Well?"

"Stephen has just come ben with the carriage, and the leddy is in the house, though the Laird kens what ye'r wantin' of her here, ava!"

"Hold your tongue, woman! When I need your opinion I will ask you for it!" This in a tone very much like that of the Robert Brand of old, in little squabbles of the same character. Then with the voice much softened: "Is Margaret Hayley in the house, do you say?"

"'Deed she is, then, and she'll just be tired of waiting for ye, as the lassie's gone, gin ye dinna haste a bit!"

"I will come—no, ask her to step into the garden; I will see her here."

"He's gettin' dafter than ever, I'm thinkin', to invite a born leddy out into the garden to see *him*, instead of ganging in till her as he should!" muttered the old serving-woman as she turned away to obey the injunction, and in that way satisfying, for the time, her part of the inevitable quarrel. The moment after the back door of the house opened again, and Margaret Hayley came out [Pg 485] alone. Stately as ever in step, though perhaps a little slower; the charm of youth and budding womanhood in face and figure, with the broad sun flashing on her dark hair and seeming to crown her with a dusky glory; but something calmer, softer, sadder, ay, even older, visible in her whole appearance and manner, than could have been read there in that first morning of June, upon the piazza of her own house. She, too, had been living much within a brief period: it may be that the course of this narration has furnished the reader with better data for judging *how* much, than any that lay in the possession of Robert Brand.

She approached the end of the arbor from which he was emerging, and he met her before she had reached it. Her face, as they met, wore an unmistakable expression of wonder—his an equally unmistakable one of pain. Neither spoke for one moment, then the old lawyer held out his hand and said:

"You wonder, Margaret, why I sent for you?"

"Did *you* send, really, Mr. Brand? I thought that perhaps Stephen had made a mistake and that Elsie wished to see me for some reason."

"No, Elsie has been absent all the morning, and may not return for an hour or two yet," was the reply. "*I* sent for you. I had a reason. Old men do not trifle with young women, perhaps you are

aware." There was that in his voice which displayed strong suffering and even an effort to speak. The young girl saw and heard, and the wonder in her eyes deepened into anxiety as she said:

"You surprise me by something in your manner, Mr. Brand. You almost alarm me. Pray do not keep me in suspense. I think I am not so well able to bear anxiety and mystery as I used to be. Why did you send for me?"

"Poor girl!" the lips of Robert Brand muttered, so low that she did not catch the words. Much less did she hear the two words that followed, in little more than a whispered groan: "Poor girl!—poor father!" Then he took one of the white hands in his, the eyes of the young girl deepening in wonder and anxiety all the while,—led her a little down the path to one of the rustic seats under the trellis, dropped down upon it and drew her down beside him, uttering a sigh, as he took his seat, like that of a person over-fatigued. [Pg 486]

"You loved my son." He did not look at her as he spoke the words.

"Mr. Brand—I beg of you—" and then Margaret Hayley paused, her throat absolutely choked with that to which she could not give utterance. He did not seem to heed her, but went on.

"You loved my son. So did I. God knows how *I* loved him, and I believe that your love was as true as heaven."

"Mr. Brand—for that heaven's sake, why do you say this, to kill us both? I cannot listen—" she rose from the seat with a start and stood before him as if ready to fly; but he yet retained her hand and drew her down again.

"We both loved him, and yet we killed him! You drove him from you. I cast him off and cursed him. We killed him. He is dead!"

"Dead?" The word was not a question—it was not an exclamation—it was not a cry of mortal agony—it was all three blended. Then she uttered no other word but sat as one stupefied, while he went on, his lip quivering with that most painful expression which has before been noticed, and his hand fumbling at his pocket for something that he seemed to wish to extract from it.

"Yes, he is dead. I have known it for two hours—for two long hours I have known that I had *no son*." Type cannot indicate the melancholy fall of the last two words, and the heart-broken feeling they conveyed. "My son loved you, Margaret Hayley, better than he loved his old father. You loved him. You should have been his wife. When I knew that he was dead, I tried to conceal it from all until I could send for you, for I felt that it was only here and from my lips that you should learn the truth. Some other might have told you with less thought for your feelings, perhaps, than I who—who—who was so proud of him. I have not been rough, have I? I did not mean to be—I meant to be very gentle, to *you*, Margaret! See how broken I am!" [Pg 487]

So he was, poor old man!—broken in heart and voice, for then he gave way and dropped his head upon one of his failing hands, overpowered, helpless, little more than a child.

Who shall describe the feelings of Margaret Hayley as she heard the words which told her of that one bereavement beyond hope—as she heard them in those piteous tones and from that agonized father—a father no more? Absence, silence, shame, separation of heart from heart upon earth, hope against hope and fear without a name—all were closed and finished at once and forever, in that one great earthquake of fact, opening and swallowing her world of thought—dead! Tears had not yet come—the blind agony that precedes them if it does not render them impossible, was just then her terrible portion.

"How did he—when—where—you have not told me—" A child just learning to speak might have been making that feeble attempt at asking a connected question. But Robert Brand understood her, too well. His hand, again fumbling at his pocket, brought out that of which it had been in search, and his trembling fingers half opened a newspaper and put it into hers, to blast her sense with that greater certainty which seems to dwell in written or printed intelligence than in the mere utterance of the lips—to destroy the last lingering hope that might have remained and put the very dying scene before the eyes so little fitted to look upon it. A line of ink was drawn around part of one of the columns uppermost, and the reader had not even the painful respite of looking to find what she dreaded. And of course that paper was a copy of the *Dublin Evening Mail*, sent to Robert Brand by one of his distant relatives in England who had chanced to see what it contained—the graphic account of the drowning of Carlton Brand from the deck of the despatch-steamer, of the finding of the body and the burial in the little graveyard back of the Hill of Howth, written by that attached friend of a night, Henry Fitzmaurice. [Pg 488]

Margaret Hayley read through that account, every word of which seemed to exhaust one more drop from the life-blood at her heart,—in stony silence and without a motion that could have been perceived. Then the paper slid from her hands to the ground, she turned her head towards Robert Brand with that slow and undecided motion so sad to see because it indicates a palsying of the quick natural energies; and the instant after, that took place which told, better than any other action could have done, how much each had built upon that foundation of an expected near and dear relationship. Robert Brand met that hopeless gaze, reading her whole secret even as his own was being read. Then he opened his arms with a cry that was almost a scream: "My daughter!" and the poor girl fell into them and flung her own around his neck with the answering cry: "Father!" Both were sobbing then; both had found the relief of tears. And a sadder spectacle was never presented; for while Margaret Hayley, in the father of the man she had so loved, was

striving to embrace something of the dead form that never could be embraced in reality, Robert Brand was still more truly clasping a shadow—trying to find his lost son who could never come to his arms again, in the thing which had been dearest to that son while in life!

"My son is dead! Come to me; live with me; be a sister to Elsie and a daughter to me, or I shall never be able to bear my punishment!" sobbed the broken old man, his arms still around the pliant form bowed upon his shoulder; but there came no answer, as there needed none. Another voice blended with those that had before spoken, at that moment, and again old Elspeth Graeme stood under the trellis. But was it said a little while since that no change had come upon her since the fading of the roses of June?—certainly there had been a change startling and fearful to contemplate, even in the few moments elapsing since her former speech with her master. The rough, coarse face had assumed an expression in which bitter sorrow was contending with terrible anger; the bluish gray eyes literally blazed with such light as might have filled those of a tigress robbed of her young; and it would have needed no violent stretch of fancy to believe that she had revived one of the old traditions of her Gaelic race and become a mad prophetess of wrath and denunciation. Strangely enough, too, Carlo was again behind her, his eyes glaring upon the two figures that occupied the bench, and his heavy tail moving with that slow threatening motion which precedes the spring of the beast of prey! Was old Elspeth Graeme indeed a wierd woman, and had the brute changed to be her familiar and avenging spirit? [Pg 489]

The serving-woman held something white in her hand, but neither Robert Brand nor his visitor saw it. They but saw the tall form and the face convulsed with wild feeling; and both seemed to shrink before a presence mightier than themselves. The strange servitor spoke:

"Robert Brand, tell me gin I heard aright! Did ye say that Carlton Brand was dead?"

"Who called you here, woman? Yes, he is dead! He was drowned on the Irish coast three weeks ago," answered the bereaved father, oddly blending the harsh authority of the master with the feeling which really compelled him to make response.

"Then ye had better baith be dead wi' him—the father who banned his ain flesh and bluid and wished that he would dee before his very eyne, and the fause woman who had nae mair heart than to drive him frae her like a dog!"

"Woman!" broke out the master, but the interruption did not check her for an instant. She went on, broadening yet more in her native dialect as she grew yet more earnest:

"Nae, ye must e'en bide my wull and tak' it, Robert Brand! It has been waiting here for mony a day, and I can haud it nae longer! He was my braw, bonnie lad, and puir auld Elsie loed him better than ye a'! I harkit till ye, Robert Brand, when yer curse went blawin' through the biggin like an east win', and I ken'd ye was sawin a fuff to reap a swirl! Ye must ban and dom yer ain bluid because it wad na fecht, drivin' the bairn awa frae kin and kintra, and noo ye hae *my* curse to stay wi ye, sleepin' and wakin'—ye an' the fause beauty there that helpit ye work his dool!" [Pg 490]

"Elspeth Graeme, if you say another word to insult Miss Hayley and outrage me, I will forget that you are a woman and choke you where you stand!" cried Robert Brand, no longer able to restrain himself, starting to his feet and drawing Margaret to the same position, with his arm around her waist. But the old woman did not flinch, or pause long in her denunciation.

"Nae, ye'll do naething of the kind, Robert Brand!—ye'll tak what must come till ye!" And indeed it looked as if the great dog behind her would have sprung at the throat of even the master if he had dared to lay hands on his strange servitor. "Ye'll tak the curse, baith o' ye, and ye'll groan under it until the day ye dee! Gin Carlton Brand is dead, ye murdered him, and his eldritch ghaist shall come back and haunt ye, by night and by day, in the mist o' the mountain and the crowd o' the street, till yer blastit under it and think auld Hornie has grippet ye by the hearts! Ye'll sing dool belyve, baith of ye! Auld Elsie tells ye so, and slight her if ye daur!"

Before these last words were spoken, Margaret Hayley had slipped from the grasp of the old man and was on her knees upon the ground, her proud spirit fairly broken, her hands raised in piteous entreaty, and her lips uttering feebly:

"Oh, we have both wronged him—I know it now. But spare me, good Elspeth, now when my heart is broken; and spare *him*!"

But Robert Brand, as was only natural—Robert Brand, feeble as he was, viewed the matter in a somewhat different light. Sorrow might have softened him, but it had by no means entirely cured his temper; and the serving-woman had certainly gone to such lengths in her freedom as might have provoked a saint to something very much like anger. He grasped Margaret from her kneeling position, apparently forgetting pain and weakness,—set her upon the seat and poured out a volley of sound, strong plain-English curses upon the old woman, that had no difficulty whatever in being understood. Dog or no dog, it seemed probable that he might even have given vent to his rage in a more forcible manner, when another interruption occurred which somewhat changed the posture of affairs. [Pg 491]

Elsie Brand came out from the house, hat upon head, and dressed as for a ride. She had been taking one, in fact, with Dr. James Holton, who had driven her over for a call upon one of her friends; and she looked radiant enough to proclaim the truth that she had just left very pleasant company. Her plump little form as tempting and Hebe-ish as ever; her bright yellow hair a little "touzled" (it could not be possible that those people had been laying their heads too near

together in the carriage as they came across the wood road!); and her blue eyes one flash of pleasure that had forgotten all the pain and sorrow in the world,—she was a strange element, just then, to infuse into the blending of griefs within that garden. She came out with hasty step, calling to Elspeth.

"Elspeth! Elspeth! What keeps you so long? The boy is waiting to know if father has any answer." Then seeing the others: "What, Margaret here with father? How do you do, Margaret?" It was notable how the voice fell slowed and softened, in speaking the last five words, and how the light went out from her young eyes as she spoke. Though friends always, Margaret Hayley and Elsie Brand had never been the same as before to each other, since that painful June morning on the piazza. How could they be? But Margaret was softened now, and she said, "Dear Elsie!" took the little girl in her arms and kissed her, so that something of the past seemed to have returned. [Pg 492]

But meanwhile another incident of importance was occurring. It may have been noticed that Elspeth Graeme had something white in her hand when she came out into the garden the second time. So she had, indeed—a folded note addressed to Robert Brand, and with a wilderness of printing scattered over the edges and half the face of the envelope; but she had quite forgotten the fact in the sudden knowledge of the death of her young master and the necessity of becoming an avenging Pythoness for the occasion. Now, Elsie's words called the attention of the old lawyer to that something in her hand, and he took it from her with a motion very much like a jerk, and the words:

"If you have a letter for me, why did you not give it to me instead of standing here raving like a bedlamite—you old fool?"

"It is na a letter; it's what they ca' a telegraph, I'm thinkin'!" muttered the old woman, a good deal taken down from her "high horse" by this reminder of her delinquency, and with some sort of impression that this must be a sufficient apology for not being in a hurry. "Somebody else dead, belike!—we're a' goin' to the deevil as fast as auld Clootie can drag us, I ken!"

It *was* a telegraphic despatch which the old woman had delivered with such signal celerity, and which Robert Brand tore open with celerity of a very different character. He read, then read again, then his face paled, and a strange, startled look came into his eyes, and he put one hand to his forehead with the exclamation:

"What *is* all this? Am I going mad?"

"What *is* it, father?" and little Elsie pressed up to his side and took the despatch from his unresisting fingers. And it was she who read it aloud to the other wonderers, herself the most startled wonderer of all: [Pg 493]

Alexandria, *Sept. 17th, 1863*.

> *Robert Brand, West Philadelphia*,
>
> *Care Messrs. ——, No. — Market St. Philadelphia*.
>
> Your son, Carlton Brand, dangerously wounded at Culpeper. Lying in hospital here. If well enough, wish you would come down and see him. He does not know of this.
>
> E. H.

"Well, I'll be——!"

It was a plump, round oath that Robert Brand uttered—very improper under any circumstances, and especially so in the presence of ladies,—but about as natural, when all things are considered, as the air he breathed. In order to realize the exact position and the blind astonishment that must have lain in that telegraphic despatch, it is necessary to remember that once before he had heard of the death of the young man, from one who had just seen his lifeless body (Kitty Hood), and that only two hours afterwards his house had been visited by the enraged Dr. Pomeroy to reclaim a girl that the man just before dead was alleged to have stolen! Now, only an hour or two before, he had a second time been informed of his son's death at sea, and burial in Ireland, under such circumstances that mistake seemed to be impossible; and yet here was a telegraphic despatch quite as likely to be authentic if not originating in some unfeeling hoax—informing him that he had been nearly killed in battle, and was lying in one of the Virginia hospitals! At short intervals the young man seemed to die, in different places, and then immediately after to be alive again in other places, under aspects scarcely less painful and yet more embarrassing. There was certainly enough in all this to make the old man's brain whirl, and to overspread the faces of the others with such blank astonishment that they seemed to be little else than demented. There was one, however, not puzzled one whit. That was old Elspeth, who muttered, loudly enough for them all to hear, as she abandoned them to their fate, resigned her temporary position as seeress, and went back to the mundane duties of house-keeping: [Pg 494]

"It's not the bairn's ainsel at all that's lying down amang the naygurs where they're fechting. It is his double that's come bock frae the auld land to haunt ye! Come awa, Carlo, lad, and let them mak much of it!"

There is no need to recapitulate all that followed between the three remaining people, surprised in such different degrees—the words in which little Elsie was made to understand the first

intelligence, followed by her reading of the whole account in the Irish paper—the hopes, fears, fancies and wild surmises which swept through the brains and hearts of each—the thoughts of Robert Brand over the initials appended to the telegraphic despatch, which for some reason made him much more confident of its authenticity than he would otherwise have been, while they embarrassed him terribly in another direction which may or may not be guessed—the weaving together of three minds that had been more or less separated by conflicting feelings with reference to that very person, into one grand total and aggregate of anxiety which dwarfed all other considerations and made the whole outside world a blank and a nothing in comparison. All this may be imagined: until the perfecting of that invention by which the kaleidoscope is to be photographed in the moment of its revolution, it cannot be set in words. But the result may and must be given.

"I shall go to Washington by the train, to-night," said Robert Brand, when the discussion had reached a certain point, with the mystery thicker than ever and the anxiety proportionately increasing.

"You, father? Are you well enough to go?" and little Elsie looked at him with gratified and yet fearful surprise.

"No matter, I am going!" That was enough, and Elsie knew it. Within the last half hour much of his old self seemed to have returned; and when he assumed that tone, life granted, he would go as inevitably as the locomotive.

"I am glad to hear you say so, Mr. Brand—father!" said Margaret Hayley, very calmly. "It will make it much better, no doubt, for *I* am going."

"You!" This time there were two voices that uttered the word of surprise.

"Yes, *I*! If Carlton Brand is lying wounded in a Virginia hospital, I know my duty; and if I must miss *that*, to *him*, or Heaven, henceforward, I shall be among the lost!" Strange, wild, mad words; but how much they conveyed!

"God bless you, *my daughter*!" "My dear, dear *sister*!" And somehow three people managed to be included in one embrace immediately after. This was all, worth recording, that the grape trellis saw.

That evening when the Philadelphia, Wilmington and Baltimore train left Broad and Prime, it bore Robert Brand and Margaret Hayley, going southward on that singular quest which might end in so sad and final a disappointment.

CHAPTER XXIV.

In the Hospital at Alexandria—The Wounded Man and his Nurse—Sad Omens—A Reunion of Three—Brave Man or Coward?—Who was Horace Townsend?—A Mystery Explained—How Eleanor Hill went back to Dr. Pomeroy's—One word more of the Comanche Rider—Conclusion.

Glimpses now, only glimpses—with great breaks between, which the imagination may fill at pleasure. Events, few in number, not less strange, perhaps, than those which have already occurred, but less enwrapped in mystery, and gradually shaping themselves towards the inevitable end.

The military hospital at Alexandria. Outside, dingy and yet imposing, fit type of the State that held it, in the days before secession was any thing more than a crime in thought. Within, a wilderness of low-ceilinged rooms, comfortable enough but all more or less dingy like the exterior. Nine out of ten of them filled with cot-bedsteads arranged in long rows with aisles between; sacred at once to two of the most incongruous exhibitions of human propensity—the blood-thirsty cruelty which can kill and maim,—the angelic kindness which can make a dear child or brother out of the merest stranger and bind up the hurts of a rough, hard-handed, blaspheming ruffian, of blood unknown and lineage uncared for, with all that tender care which could be bestowed upon the gentlest and loveliest daughter of a pampered race when sick or disabled. One of the many places scattered over the loyal States and many portions of the disloyal, made terrible to recollection by the suffering that has been endured within them and the lives that have gone out as a sacrifice to the Moloch of destructive war,—but made holy beyond all conception, at the same time, by the patriotic bravery with which many of their lives have been surrendered to the great Giver for a glorious cause; by the patience with which agony has been endured and almost reckoned as pleasure for the nation's sake; and by the footsteps of the nobler men and if possible still nobler women of America, who have given up ease and comfort and domestic happiness and health and even life itself, to minister to those stricken down in the long conflict.

No need to draw the picture: nothing of war or its sad consequences remains a mystery in this age and to this people. Too many eyes have looked upon the wards of our hospitals, the forms stretched there in waiting for death or recovery, the figures moving around and among them in such ministration as the Good Samaritan may have bestowed upon the bruised and beaten Jew of the parable;—too many ears have listened to the moans of suffering rising up continually like a

long complaint to heaven, the sharp screams of agony under temporary pang or fearful operation, the words of content under any lot, blending like an undertone with all, and the words of prayer and Christian dependence crowning and hallowing all;—too many of the men of this time have seen and heard these things, and too many more may yet have the duty of looking upon them and listening to them, to make either wise or necessary the closer limning of the picture that might otherwise be presented. We have to do with but a little corner of the great building that had been made so useful in the care of the sick and wounded, just as this narration holds involved the interests of a poor half-dozen among the many millions affected by the colossal struggle. [Pg 497]

A small room, on the second floor of the building, the walls once white and even now scrupulously clean but dingy from smoke and use. Two windows in it, opening to the west, the tops shaded by paper curtains with muslin inside, while at the bottoms streamed in the soft September afternoon sunlight that lay like a glory over the Virginian woods, so fair to the eye but so foul and treacherous within, stretching away towards the bannered clouds before many hours to shroud the setting of the great luminary. Not one of the common rooms in which, perforce from their number, sick and wounded soldiers must be more or less closely huddled together,—but one devoted to the care of wounded officers, with four beds of iron, neatly made and draped, and at this time only one of them occupied.

We have more than once before had occasion to notice the occupant of that one bed near the head of the room, with a stream of sunshine pouring in at the window and flooding the whole foot. We have before had occasion to remark that tall, slight but sinewy form distending the thin covering as it settled to his shape. Something of his appearance we have *not* seen before—the head of hair of an indescribable mixture, half pale gold or light blonde and the other or outer half dark brown or black, scarcely seeming to belong to the same growth unless produced by some mad freak of nature. Nor have we before remarked the splendidly-chiselled face so pale and wan, the life-fluids seeming to be exhausted beneath the skin, from loss of blood and severe suffering. Nor yet that other anomaly—a moustache with the outer ends very dark, almost black, strangely relieved by a crop of light brown beard starting thick and short, like stubble, on the chin. Like this picture in some regards, unlike it in others, the occupant of that bed has before presented, as at this moment, an anomaly equally interesting and puzzling. Wherever and whenever seen, at earlier periods, the last time he met the gaze he was dropping from his horse, a bullet through the body just above the heart, a red sword slipping from his hand and insensibility succeeding to delirium, near the railroad-bridge and the captured rebel battery at Culpeper. [Pg 498]

The wounded man lay with his eyes closed and seemed to be in sleep. Beside the bed on a low stool and partially resting against it, was one who slept not—a woman. One elbow resting on the bed-clothes supporting her head, and the other hand holding a book in which she was reading. This was evidently the nurse, and yet scarcely an ordinary nurse charged with the care of all patients, or she could not have afforded the time for watching one convalescent while he slept. She, too, may have been seen before; for something there was in that tall and lithe form, that mass of rich silky brown hair, that face with its mournful eyes and painfully delicate features—something that, once seen, lingered like a sweet, sad dream in the gazer's memory. And yet here, too, if there was an identity, change had been very busy. The form had always been lithe—it was now thin to fragility; the hands had always been taper and delicate—now they were fleshless almost to emaciation; the face had always conveyed the thought of gentleness, helplessness and needful protection—now it seemed less helpless but more mournful, the cheeks a little sunken, and the red spot burning in the centre of either not a close enough semblance of ruddy health to deceive an eye quickened by affectionate anxiety. She was dying, perhaps slowly, it might be rapidly, but dying beyond a peradventure, with that friend or foe which has ushered more human beings into the presence of God than any other disease swayed as an agency by the great destroyer—consumption! [Pg 499]

A few moments of silence, unbroken by any sound within the room except the thick breathing of the sleeper: then the girl who sat at his side choked a moment, seemed to make violent efforts to control the coming spasm, but at last yielded, clapped both hands to her left side just above her heart, and broke into one of those terrible fits of coughing which tear away the system as the earthquake rives the solid ground, and which are almost as hard to hear as to endure. Instantly, as the spasm relaxed, she hurriedly drew a white handkerchief from the pocket of her dark dress and wiped her lips. It was replaced so suddenly that the awakened sleeper did not see what stained it—blood, mingled frightfully with the clear white foam.

The eyes of the wounded man opened; and there was something more of himself that came back in the light of their warm hazel, only a little dimmed by suffering, and in the play of all the muscles of the face when awake. Both hands lay outside the bed-clothing; and as she saw the opening of his eyes the girl stretched out her own and took one of them with such gentleness and devotion as was most beautiful to behold. She seemed to be touching flesh that she held to be better than her own—a suggestive rarity in this arrogant world! Something that man had been to her, or something he had done for her, beyond a doubt, which made him the object of a feeling almost too near to idolatry. And yet what had he given her, to win so much? Not wealth—not love: merely true friendship, respect when others despised, and a little aid towards rescue when others turned away or labored to produce final ruin! How easily heaven may be scaled—the heaven of love and devotion if no height beyond,—by that consideration which costs so little, by that kindness which should be a duty if it even brought no recompense!

"There—I have woke you! I am so sorry!" she said, as she met his eyes and touched his hand.

"What consequence, if you have?" was his reply, in a voice low and somewhat feeble, while his thin hand made some poor attempt at returning her kind pressure. "Ever generous, Eleanor—ever thinking of others and not of yourself! They make angels of such people as you—do you know it?"

"Angels? oh, my God, have I lived to hear that word applied to *me*?" Such was the answer, and the mournful eyes went reverently upward as she invoked the one holy Name.

"Angels? yes, why not?" said the invalid. "Every light-tongued lover calls his mistress by that name sometime or other, and—"

"Hush, Carlton Brand, hush!"

Some painful chord was touched, and he appeared to understand, as well he might, by what word with two meanings he had lacerated a feeling. He went back to what he had evidently intended to say at first.

"You do not think of yourself, I say. You have been coughing again."

"A little."

"A little? Loudly enough to wake me, and I am a sound sleeper. Eleanor Hill, you are nursing me, when you more need a nurse yourself. I am almost well, you know. You are growing thinner and your cough is worse every day."

"No, Carlton, better—much better!"

"Are you sure? Stop, let me see your handkerchief!" He was looking her steadily in the face, and she obeyed him as if in spite of her own will and because she had always been in the habit of doing so.

"I thought so," he said. "Eleanor, you are very ill. Do not deceive yourself or try to deceive *me*."

"Carlton Brand," she answered, returning that look, full in the eyes, and speaking slowly—calmly—firmly. "I am dying, and no one knows the fact better than myself. Thank God that the end is coming!"

"Oh no, you are very ill, but not beyond hope—not dying," he attempted to urge as some modification of the startling confession she had made.

"Yes—the whole truth may as well be told now, Carlton, since we have begun it. I am dying of consumption, and I hope and believe that I shall have but few more days left after you get well enough to leave this hospital."

"Heavens!" exclaimed the wounded man. "If this is true, do you know what you are making of me? Little else than a murderer! I meant it for the best—the best for the country and yourself, when I took you away from the house of your—of Philip Pomeroy, and sent you into this new path of life; but the sleepless hours and over-exertion, the exposures to foul air and draughts and anxiety to which you have been subjected—oh, Eleanor, is *this* what I have done?"

She slid from her chair and kneeled close beside the bed, bending over towards him with the most affectionate interest.

"Oh no," she said, no agitation in her voice. "Do you think that three months has done this? My family are all consumptive—my father died of the disease. What was done to *me*"—her voice faltered for just one moment, then she calmed it again by an obvious effort—"What was done to *me*, was done long before and by another hand."

"Stop!" he interrupted her as she was evidently about to proceed. "I *must* say one word about *him*. Did you ever know all the reason why each of us feared and hated the other so much?"

Merely a sad shake of the head was the negative.

"I will tell you, now. I was a coward, and he knew it. You knew so much before, but nothing else, I believe. He was present once when I fainted at the very sight of blood—something that I believe I always used to do; and he knew of my refusing a challenge because I really dared not fight. He could expose and ruin me, and I feared him. I knew him to be a scoundrel in money affairs as well as in every other way: as a lawyer I could put my finger on a great crime that he had committed to win a large part of his fortune. He knew that I knew it, and that I would have exposed him if I dared. So he feared and hated *me*, and each held the other in check without doing more. It is time that you should know that crime: it was his robbing you of every dollar left you by your father, and putting them all into his own pocket, through the pretended machinery of that Dunderhaven Coal and Mining Company, of which he was President, Director and all the officers!"

"Carlton! Carlton! can this be true, even of *him*?" asked the young girl, horrified at this crowning proof of a depravity beyond conception and yet not beyond *fact*.

"It is true, every word of it, and if I had not been a wretch unfit to live, I would have exposed and punished him long ago. Lately I think I must have gone through what they call 'baptizing in fire,' and the very day I am able to crawl once more to Dr. Pomeroy's house, I shall force him to meet me in a duel or shoot him down like a dog!"

"This from *you*, Carlton Brand!" The tone was very piteous.

"Yes—why not?" The tone was hard and decided, for a sick man.

"May heaven forgive you the thought. Now listen to me. You have been the dearest friend I ever had in the world. You have been better and truer to me than any brother; and you have done me the greatest of all favors by sending me here to nurse the sick and wounded, to win back something of my lost self-respect and close up a wasted life with a little usefulness before I die! But after all this I shall almost hate you—I shall not be able, I am afraid, to pray for you in that land I am so soon going to visit,—if you do not make me one solemn promise and keep it as you would save your own soul."

There was an agonized earnest in her words and in her manner, as she thus spoke, kneeling there and even clasping her hands in entreaty. Carlton Brand looked at her for one instant with a great pity; then he said:

"Eleanor Hill, if the promise is one that a man can make and a man can keep, I will make it and keep it!" [Pg 503]

"Then promise me neither in word nor act to harm Philip Pomeroy. Leave him to *me*."

"To *you*, poor girl?"

"To *me*! *I* will so punish him as no man was ever punished."

"*You* punish him? *You*, feeble and dying? How?"

"By going back to his house—if they will obey my last wish when the hour comes,—*dead*."

"That *will* be punishment enough, perhaps, even for *him*, if he is human!" slowly said the invalid as he took in the thought. "I promise."

"God bless you!" and poor Eleanor Hill fell forward on the bed and burst into sobs that ended the moment after in a fit of still more violent coughing than that which had racked her half an hour previously. And this did not end like the other, but deepened and grew more hoarse until the white froth flew from the suffering lips, followed by a gush of blood that not only dyed the foam but spattered the bed-covering.

"Heavens! see how you are bleeding, my poor girl! You must have help at once!" The face of the speaker, deadly pale and sorely agitated, told how bad a nurse was this choking, dying girl, in his enfeebled condition, with a terrible wound scarcely yet commenced healing.

"No, I do not need help—I shall be better in a moment. But I agitate *you*, and I will go away until I have stopped coughing."

Which would be, Carlton Brand thought, perhaps a few moments before she went into that holy presence from which the most betrayed and down-trodden may not be debarred! Ever weakly-loving—ever thoughtless of her own welfare and childishly subservient to the good of others—lacking self-assertion, but never wantonly sinful,—had not that strange thinker, yet under the influence of the fever of his wound, some right to remember Mary's tears, and the blessing to the "poor in heart," promised in the Sermon on the Mount?

[Pg 504] But there was real danger to the invalid in this agitation, and the will of another stepped in to remove the danger. Before the poor girl had quite ceased coughing, one of the physicians of the hospital, a gray-haired, benevolent-looking man, stood by the bedside and touched her upon the shoulder.

"Coughing again, and so terribly! What, blood? Fie, fie!—this will never do!" he said. "If the sick nurse the sick, both fare badly, you know. If the scripture doesn't say so, it ought to. You must go away to Mrs. Waldron, Nellie, and keep quiet and not stir out again to-day."

"Yes, Doctor," she answered, rising obediently. "Good-night, Carlton!" She stooped and pressed her lips to the thin hand so touchingly that the doctor, who could scarcely even guess the past relation between the two, almost felt the tears rising as he looked.

"Good-night, and God bless you, Eleanor."

The doctor's eyes followed her as with slow, weak steps she passed out of the room, her pale, mournful face with its hectic cheeks and sad eyes looking back to the bed for an instant as she disappeared. Then he turned away with a sigh—such a sigh of helpless sorrow as he had no doubt often heaved over the living illustrations of those two heart-breaking words—"fading away."

"I am sorry she was here," he said, when she had gone. "I am afraid that she has used up strength that you needed. There are visitors to see you."

"To see *me*?"

"Yes—now keep as cool as possible, or I will send them away again. I hate mysteries and surprises; but poor Eleanor does not, and she sent for them, I believe."

"She sent for them? She? Then they are—"

"Keep still, or I will tell you no more—they are two from whom you have been estranged, I think—

your father and—"

"My sister?"

"No, the lady is not your sister, I think. She is tall, dark-haired, very beautiful and very queenly. Is that your sister?"

"No—no—that is not my sister—that is—heavens, can this be possible, or am I dreaming? Doctor, this agitation is hurting me worse than any presence could do. Send them in and trust me. I will be quiet—I will husband my life, for if I am not mad and you are not trifling, there may yet be something in the world worth living for." [Pg 505]

The doctor laid his hand on the pulse of his patient, looked for a moment into his face, and then left the room. The next, two stepped within it—an old man with gray hair rapidly changing to silver, and a woman in the very bloom of youth and beauty. The eyes of the wounded man were closed. What was he doing?—collecting strength, or looking for it where it ever abides? No matter. Only one instant more, and then the two were on their knees by the bedside, where Eleanor Hill had just been kneeling—the father with the thin hand in his and murmuring: "Carlton! my brave, my noble son!" and Margaret Hayley leaning far over the low couch and saying a thousand times more in one long, tender, clinging kiss, light as a snow-flake but loving and warm as the touch of the tropic sun,—that shunned cheek and brow and laid its blessing on the answering lips!

Some of the words of that meeting are too sacred to be given: let them be imagined with the pressure of hands and the hungry glances of eyes that could not look enough in any space of time allotted them. But there were others, following close after, which may and must be given. Whole volumes had been spoken in a few words, and yet the book was scarcely opened,—when Margaret Hayley rose from her knees and bending over the bed ran those dainty white fingers through the strangely mottled hair on the brow of the invalid. Then she seemed to discover something incongruous in different portions of the face; and the moment after, stooping still closer down, she swept away the hair from the brow and scanned the texture of the skin at its edge. A long, narrow scar, its white gloss just relieved on the pallid flesh, crossed the forehead from the left temple to the centre of its apex. She seemed surprised and even frightened; then a look of mingled shame and pleasure broke over that glorious face, and she leaned close above him and said, compelling his eyes to look steadily into hers: [Pg 506]

"Carlton Brand, what does this mean? I know that scar and the color that has once covered that hair and moustache! You are Horace Townsend!"

"I *was* Horace Townsend once, for a little while, Margaret," was the reply. "But it won me nothing, and you see for what a stern reality I have given up masquerading."

"And *you* plunged into the Pool to save that drowning boy. *You* went down into that dreadful schute and brought up the Rambler! *You* spoke to the Old Man of the Mountain at midnight and carried me away with your words on Echo Lake. And *you*—heaven keep my senses when I think of it!—*you* made love to me along the road down the Glen below the Crawford!

"I am afraid I was guilty of all those offences!" answered the invalid, with something nearer to a smile of mischief glimmering from the corner of his eye than had shone there for many a day.

"I did hear something in your voice the first night that I saw you there, and afterwards," Margaret Hayley went on, "which made me shudder from its echo of yours; and more than once I saw that in your face which won me to you without my knowing why. Yet all the impression wore off by degrees, and—only think of it!—I was nearly on the point, at one time, of believing that I had found a truer ideal than the one so lately lost, and of promising to become the wife of Horace Townsend! Think where *you* would have been, you heartless deceiver, if I had fallen altogether into the trap and done so!"

"I think I might have endured *that* successful rivalry better than any other!" was the very natural reply.

"And this man," said Robert Brand, standing close beside the bed, looking down at his son with a face in which pride and joy had mastered its great trouble of a few days before, and apparently speaking quite as much to himself as to either of his auditors—"this man, capable of such deeds of godlike bravery in ordinary life, and then of winning the applause of a whole army in the very front of battle,—I cursed and despised as a coward! God forgive me!—and you, my son, try to forget that ever I set myself up as your pitiless judge, to be punished as few fathers have ever been punished who yet had the sons of their love spared to them! Margaret—how have we both misunderstood him!" [Pg 507]

"The fault was not all yours, by any means," said the invalid. "How could either of you know me when I misunderstood and belied *myself*!"

And in that remark—the last word uttered by Carlton Brand before he yielded to the exhaustion of his last hour of imprudent excitement and fell away to a slumber almost as profound as death, just as the old doctor stepped back to forbid a longer interview, and while the shadows of evening began to fall within the little room, and Margaret Hayley sat by his bedside and held his hand in hers with what was plainly a grasp never to be broken again during the lives of both, and Robert Brand, sitting but a little farther away, watched the son that had been lost and was found, with a deeper tenderness and a holier pride than he had ever felt when bending over the pillow of his

sleeping childhood,—in that remark, we say, lay the key to all which had so affected his life, and which eventually gave cause for this somewhat singular and desultory narration. *He had misunderstood himself*; and only pain, suffering and a mental agony more painful than any physical death, had been able to bring himself and those who best knew him to a full knowledge of the truth. Only a part of that truth he knew even then, when he lay in the officers' ward of the Alexandria hospital: it is our privilege to know it all and to explain it, so far as explanation can be given, in a few words.

Carlton Brand had been gifted, and cursed, from childhood, with an intense and imaginative temperament, never quite regulated or even analyzed. His sense of honor had been painfully [Pg 508] delicate—his love of approbation so strong as to be little less than a disease. Some mishap of his weak, hysterical and short-lived mother, no doubt, had given him one terrible weakness, entirely physical, but which he believed to be mental—*he habitually fainted at the sight of blood*. (This fact will explain, parenthetically, why he fell senseless and apparently dead at that period in the encounter with Dick Compton when the blood gushed over the face of the latter from his blow; and why after each of the excitements of the Pool and Mount Willard he suffered in like manner, at the instant when his eyes met the fatal sign on the faces of the rescued.) High cultivation of the imaginative faculty, the habit of living too much within himself, and a constitutional predisposition in that direction, had made him painfully *nervous*—a weakness which to him, and eventually to others, assumed the shape of cowardice. Recklessly brave, in fact, and never troubled by that nervousness for one moment when his sympathies were excited and his really magnificent physical and gymnastic powers called into play,—that fainting shudder at the sight of blood had been all the while his haunting demon, disgracing him in his own eyes and marring a life that would otherwise have been very bright and pleasant. One belief had fixed itself in his mind, long before the period of this narration, and never afterwards (until now) been driven thence—that *if he should ever be brought into conflict among deadly weapons, this horror of blood would make him run away like a poltroon, disgracing himself forever and breaking the hearts of all who loved him*. This belief had made his commission in the Reserves a melancholy farce; this had placed him in the power of Dr. Philip Pomeroy and prevented that exposure and that punishment so richly deserved; this had made his life, after the breaking out of the war, one long struggle to avoid what he believed must be disgraceful detection. Once more, so that the matter which informs this whole relation may be fairly understood,—Carlton Brand, merely a [Pg 509] high-strung, imaginative, nervous man, with the bravery of the old Paladins latent in his heart and bursting out occasionally in actions more trying than the facing of any battery that ever belched forth fire and death,—had all the while mistaken that nervousness for cowardice;—just as many a man who has neither heart, feeling nor imagination, strides through the world and stalks over the battle-field, wrapped in his mantle of ignorance and stolidity, believing himself and impressing the belief upon others, that this is indomitable bravery.

What Carlton Brand had believed himself to be when untried—what Carlton Brand had proved himself to be when hatred to Captain Hector Coles and a despairing hope of yet winning the love of Margaret Hayley moved him to the trial—how thorough a contrast!—how exact an antagonism! And how many of us, perhaps, going backward from the glass in which we have more or less closely beheld our natural faces, forget, if we have ever truly read, "what manner of men" we are!

And here another explanation must follow, as we may well believe that it followed between the three so strangely reunited, when rest and repose had worn off the first shock of meeting and made it safe for the petted invalid to meet another pressure from those rose-leaf lips that had forsaken all their pride to bend down and touch him with a penitent blessing—safe to speak and to hear of the many things which the parted always treasure against re-union. That explanation concerns the mystery of the passenger by the Cunarder, the American in England, and the man who under the name of Carlton Brand perished from the deck of the Emerald off Kingstown harbor? Had he a double life as well as a double nature? Or had there been some unaccountable personation? The latter, of course, and from causes and under circumstances not one whit surprising when the key is once supplied.

It will be remembered that Carlton Brand, very soon after his purchase of a ticket for Liverpool by the Cunard steamer and his indulging that nervousness which he believed to be cowardice [Pg 510] with a little shuddering horror at the mass of coal roaring and blazing in the furnaces of the government transport, early in July,—had a visiter at his rooms at the Fifth Avenue Hotel—Henry Thornton, of Philadelphia, a brother lawyer and intimate friend. It will also be remembered that the two held a long and confidential conversation, very little of the purport of which was then given. The facts, a part of them thus far concealed, were that Carlton Brand, flying from his disgrace, really intended to go to Europe as he had informed Elsie; that he made no secret of that disgrace, to Thornton; that the latter informed him, incidentally, of what he had heard of the summer plans of Margaret Hayley and her mother, whom he knew through his family; that the passage-ticket, lying upon the table, came under the notice of Thornton, inducing the information that he was also on his way to England, in chase of a criminal who had absconded with a large sum of money belonging to one of the Philadelphia banks, and whom he had means, if once he could overtake him, of forcing to disgorge; that Thornton half-jestingly proposed, remembering their partial resemblance, that if his friend had grown ashamed of his name, he would take that and the ticket and pursue the criminal with less chance of being evaded, his own cognomen being kept in the dark; that Brand, suddenly taken with the idea and struck with the facility which the use of his name by the other would furnish for creating the belief that he had himself gone abroad, and thus concealing his identity while remaining at home, adopted the suggestion and supplied his friend at once with name and ticket, for his travelling purposes; that it was Henry

Thornton and not Carlton Brand who ran that mad quest about England, a hidden criminal always in view, and frequenting the most doubtful places and the most disreputable society to accomplish the object of his search; and that it was poor Thornton and not Carlton Brand who perished in the Irish Channel and met that lowly grave in the Howth church-yard. All this while the real owner of that name, shaving away his curling beard, tinging his fair skin with a very easily-obtained chemical preparation, dyeing black his hair and moustache and making himself up as nearly as possible like Thornton, under the assumed designation of Horace Townsend, suggested by the initials of his "double," was carrying out that long masquerade which we have been permitted to witness. [Pg 511]

The peculiarities which he developed in that masquerade, should by this time be reasonably well understood; the motives which kept him near the woman who had once loved him but afterwards cast him off forever, may easily be guessed by many a man, correspondingly situated, who has thus fluttered moth-like around his destroying candle; the half-maddening effect produced upon him by the magnificent scenery of the mountains, the displays of reckless courage made by Halstead Rowan and the marked admiration of Margaret Hayley for those displays, was no matter for surprise when such surroundings for such a temperament were considered; the attempt to become his own rival and win the woman he so wildly worshipped from himself, was not crazier than might have been expected from the man who could have exhibited all the preceding anomalies; and after Margaret had declared her unalterable love but her invincible determination never to marry the man who dared not fight for his native land,—the feeling compounded of hope and despair, which sent him down to the Virginia battle-fields, first as a mere spectator under the favor of his old friend Pleasanton and then as a mad Berserk running a course of warlike fury which made even gray-bearded veterans shudder,—this need astonish no one who has seen how human character changes and develops its true components in the crucible of love, shame and sorrow!

Be sure that Margaret Hayley, too, in that day of the clearing away of mists and mysteries, made one explanation—not to the ears of Robert Brand, but to those of Carlton alone. An explanation that was really a confession, as it told him of the means through which the property held by her family (oh, how the magnificent face alternately flushed and paled when opening this sore wound of her pride!) had been acquired many years before. But be sure that all this was made a recommendation rather than a shame in the eyes of Carlton Brand, when he knew that from the day of his own dismissal her knowledge of that family stain had been used to keep Mrs. Burton Hayley quiet and subservient, to hold Captain Hector Coles at a safe distance, and to enforce what she had truly intended if *he* should never honorably beckon her again to his bridal bed—a life of loneliness for his sake! [Pg 512]

Something that occurred a month later—in October, when nature had put on those gorgeous but melancholy robes of gold and purple with which in America she wraps herself when Proserpine is going away from Ceres to the darkness and desolation of winter.

One day during that month a close carriage drove down the lane leading from the Darby road past the house of Dr. Pomeroy. It was drawn by a magnificent pair of horses, but they were driven much more slowly than we have once seen them pursuing the same course. A single figure was seated in it, with face at the window, when it drew up at the doctor's gate; and out of it stepped Nathan Bladesden, the Quaker merchant.

The face was calm, as beseemed his sect, but very stern. A little changed, perhaps, since the early summer, with a shadow more of white dashed into the trim side-whiskers and one or two deeper lines upon the brow and at the corners of the mouth. A step, as he said a word to the driver and entered the gate, which comported with the stern gravity of the face and the slow rate at which he had been driven. Something in the whole appearance indicating that he had come upon a painful duty, but one that he would do if half the powers of both worlds should combine to prevent him. [Pg 513]

He saw no one as he approached the piazza and the closed front door; but as he was about to ring, a female servant came out, closed the door again behind her and stopped as if surprised at seeing him.

"Is Doctor Philip Pomeroy at home?" he asked.

"Yes," was the answer, after one instant of hesitation,—"yes, but—"

"That was all I asked thee, woman!" answered the Quaker, sternly. "I came to see him and I must do so. Show me to him at once."

The girl hesitated again, looked twice at him and once at the one open window of the parlor, then obeyed the behest, opened the front door, pointed to that leading into the parlor from the hall, and said:

"He is there, Mr. Bladesden. If you *must* see him, you had better knock, for he may not like to be disturbed."

She went out at once, leaving the front door half open, and glancing back, as she passed it, at the tall, powerful man with the gray hair and side-whiskers, just applying his knuckles to the panel. There was something strange and even startled in her look, but she said no more, left him so and went on upon her errand.

The Quaker knocked twice or three times before there was any answer from within. Nor was the door opened even then, but the voice of the doctor said: "Come in!" and he entered. Doctor Philip Pomeroy sat alone in the room, in a large chair, leaning far back, his arms folded tightly on his breast and his head so thrown forward that he looked up from beneath bent brows. He evidently saw his visitor and recognized him, and yet he did not rise or change his position. And quite a moment elapsed before he said, in a voice frightfully hoarse:

"What do you want here, Nathan Bladesden?"

"I have business with thee, Doctor Philip," was the reply.

"And I do not choose to do business to-day, with any one, nor with *you* as long as I live!" said the same hoarse voice.

"And I choose that thee *shall* do business to-day and with *me*!" was the second reply, still equable in tone but still terribly earnest.

Doctor Philip Pomeroy unfolded his arms and rose slowly from his chair. The Quaker, as he did so and was thus thrown into a better light, saw that his face was haggard, that his sharp, scintillant eyes were wild, and that he looked years older than when he had beheld him last, four months before. Standing, and with one hand on the chair as if he needed support, he said:

"Nathan Bladesden, I told you, the last time that you visited this house, never to come near it again, and I thought that you knew me too well to intrude again uninvited."

"It is because I know thee very well indeed, that I *have* intruded, as thee calls it!" answered the Quaker, with what would have been a sneer on another face and from other lips. "I remember the last time I came here, Doctor Philip, quite as well as thee does, and I promised thee some things then that I am quite as likely to fulfil as thee is to carry out any of thy threats. Besides, thee may be sure that I have business, or I should not have come, for thy company is not so attractive as that men of good character seek it of their own will!"

The Quaker had no doubt expected that by that time he would break out into rough violence, as before; but he had misjudged. From some cause unknown he did not, though the wild eyes grew more than scintillant—they glared like those of a wild beast at once in pain and at bay. And he made no answer except a "Humph!" that seemed to be uttered between closed lips—half an expression of contempt and half a groan.

Nathan Bladesden, intent upon his "business," went on.

"I will not trouble thee long, Dr. Philip, but thee had better pay attention to what I say, for I am very much in earnest and not to be trifled with, to-day, as thee will discover. If thee remembers, I came here the last time to rescue Eleanor Hill from thy villainous hands—"

"Eleanor Hill!" This was not an exclamation of surprise, but a veritable groaning-out of the name.

"Yes, Eleanor Hill," pursued Bladesden,—"after thee had broken off my marriage with her by poisoning my mind against the poor girl thee had ruined in body and soul and I believe robbed in fortune. The morning of that day I had been weak, and driven away by thee: that afternoon I had been moved to do my duty and to take her away from the hands of a seducer and a scoundrel—to shelter the lamb from the wolf, though it was torn and bleeding—to make her my sister if I could not make her my wife."

"Is that all—all? If not, go on!" groaned out the hoarse voice through the set teeth.

"No, there is somewhat more, Dr. Philip—and that of the most consequence," the Quaker continued. "When I came, the poor girl was gone—gone from thee as well as from me. Then I heard that she had gone among the soldiers of the army, doing the work of the Master and healing the sick. She was away from *thee* and doing the duty of merciful woman, and I was content to wait until she had finished. But to-day I learned that yesterday she came back again."

"Oh, my God!—he will kill me!" groaned the answering voice, deeper and more hoarse than ever. But the Quaker went mercilessly on.

"No, I think that I shall not have need!" he said. "Thee is cowardly as well as base, and thee will obey and save thy life. I heard, I say, that she had come back to this house of pollution, and I have come to take her away. Give her up to me, at once, that I may place her where thee can never harm her and never even see her more, and that is all I ask of thee: refuse me or try to prevent my removing her, and I will take thee by the throat, here, now, with these hands that thee sees are strong enough to do the duty of the hangman—and strangle thee to death!"

There was fearful intensity, very near approaching momentary madness, in the voice and whole manner of Nathan Bladesden, before he had concluded that startling speech; but if he could have looked keenly enough he might have seen on the face of the doctor something more terrible than any word he had uttered or any gesture he could make. His eyes rolled wildly with a glare that was only one remove from maniacy; his whole countenance was so fearfully contorted that he might have seemed in the last agony; and his frame shook to such a degree that the very chair he held jarred and shivered on the floor with the muscular action.

"God of heaven, Nathan Bladesden!" he said, the hoarseness of his voice changed into a wild cry. "Are you mad, or am *I*? You know that Eleanor Hill came back here yesterday, and you have come

to take her away from me to-day?"

"I have come for that purpose, and I will do it, Doctor Philip," replied the Quaker. "Thee has my warning, and thee had better heed it. Let me see her at once, and then if she does not herself ask to be left with thee and the disgrace of thy house, thee shall see her no more, if I can prevent it, until the judgment!"

For one moment, then, without another word, Dr. Philip Pomeroy looked at the speaker steadily as his own terrible situation would permit. Then he seemed to have arrived at some solution of a great mystery, or to have sprung to a desperate resolution, for he sprang forward, grasped the Quaker so suddenly that the latter for the moment started in the expectation of personal violence, dragged him to the door separating the parlor from a smaller one at the rear, and dashed it open, with the words:

"There is Eleanor Hill! Ask her if she will go with you or remain with *me*!"

The room was partially shaded by heavy curtains; and Nathan Bladesden, stepping hastily therein, did not at first see what it contained. But when he did so, as he did the instant after, no wonder that even his stern, strong nature was not quite proof against the shock, and that he recoiled and uttered an exclamation of affright. For Eleanor Hill was there indeed, but scarcely within the reach of human wish or question—coffined for the grave, the glossy brown hair smoothed away from a forehead on which rested neither the furrow of pain nor the mark of shame, the sad eyes closed in that long peaceful night which knows no waking from sleep until the resurrection morning, the thin hands folded Madonna-like upon the breast, and one lingering flush of the hectic rose of consumption in the centre of either pale cheek, to restore all her childish beauty and carry the flower-symbol of human love into the very domain of death. [Pg 517]

"That is Eleanor Hill—why do you not ask her the question?" Oh, what agony there was in that poor attempt at a taunt!

"No, thee has made her what she is—thee may keep her, now!"

The Quaker's words were a far bitterer taunt than that which had fallen from the lips of the doctor. Then he seemed to soften, went up to the coffin, looked steadily on the dead face for a moment, stooped and pressed his lips on the cold, calm brow, and said, with a strange echo of what Carlton Brand had uttered in the hospital but a few weeks before:

"They have such people as thee in heaven, Eleanor! Farewell!"

He turned away and seemed about to leave the room and the house, but the hand of Dr. Philip Pomeroy was again upon his arm, grasping it and holding him while the frame shivered with uncontrollable emotion and the broken voice groaned out:

"Nathan Bladesden, you hate me, and perhaps you have cause. You are a cold, stern man, with no mercy, and my tortures must be pleasure to you. Enjoy them all! And if any man ever doubts the existence of hell in your presence, tell him that you have seen it with your own eyes in the house of Philip Pomeroy, when the only woman he ever loved in the world lay dead before him, murdered by his own hand, and a devil stood by, taunting him with his guilt!" [Pg 518]

"I will taunt thee no more, Doctor Philip!" fell slowly from the Quaker's lips. "I hate thee no longer. I pity thee. Thy Maker is dealing with thee now, and thy punishment is enough!"

He turned away, then, and left the suffering man still within the room beside the dead. Once as he passed into the hall he looked back and saw through the still open door a dark form fall forward with a groan, the head against the coffin and the arms clasping it as if it had been a living thing.

There are two endings to the story of "Faust"—that marvellous wierd history of human love and demoniac temptation which alike in drama and opera enraptures the world, and once before alluded to in this narration. In the older and coarser version, when the ruin is full accomplished and the hour of penalty full ripe, Marguerite is seen ascending heavenward, while Mephistopheles laughs hoarsely and points downward to the lower pit, whence arise blue flames and horrible discords, and into which the doomed Faust is seen to be dragged at the last moment by the hands of the swarming and gibbering monsters. In the other and yet more terrible version, Maguerite is seen ascending, and the laugh of the demon is heard, but it is only a faint, fading, mocking laugh, as even *he* flies away and leaves the man accursed kneeling in hopeless agony over the dead form from which the pure spirit has just gone upward—condemned, not to the pit and the flame, but to that worse hell of living alone and without hope, racked by love that has come in its full force when too late, and by a remorse that will worse clutch at his heart-strings than all the fiends of perdition could do at the poor body which coffers his soul of torment. Who does not know how much the more dreadful is that second doom? Who does not—let him never tempt God and fate by making the rash experiment!

Nathan Bladesden was right—even for such sins as those Doctor Philip Pomeroy had committed, the reckoning was fearful! [Pg 519]

Poor Eleanor Hill had been right, too, when she said: "Leave him to me! * * * I will so punish him as no man was ever punished!"

Shall there not be one glimmer more of sunshine after the dark night and the storm? Thank heaven, yes!—in a far-off glance at fortunes left long in abeyance but not forgotten.

Lying on the sofa at Mrs. Burton Hayley's, one evening when the first fires of winter had not long been lighted,—still taking the privilege of the invalid though no longer one, and making a pillow of the lap of Margaret Hayley, her dainty white fingers playing with his clustering golden blonde hair as they had erewhile done among the summer rose-leaves,—a quick, warm, happy kiss stolen now and again when the dignified lady, of the mansion was too busy with the devoutly-religious work that she was reading, to be horrified by such immoral practices,—lying thus, and the two talking of dear little Elsie's coming happiness and their own which was not to be much longer deferred; of the restored pride and renovated health of Robert Brand—quite as dear to Margaret, since that day in the garden, as to the son and daughter of his own blood; of the delirious joy and dreadfully broad Scotch of old Elspeth Graeme since the return of her "bonny bairn;" of poor Eleanor Hill and Captain Hector Coles, dead so differently on the fatal Virginian soil; of these and others, and of all the events which had been so strangely crowded within the compass of little more than half a year,—lying thus and talking thus, we say, Carlton Brand drew from his pocket a little fragment clipped from a newspaper, and said:

"By the way, Margaret, here is something that I found in one of the Baltimore papers yesterday. It concerns some friends of ours, whom we may never meet again, but whom neither of us, I think, will ever quite forget. Read it."

Margaret Hayley took the slip and read, what writer and reader may be pardoned for looking over her fair rounded shoulder and perusing at the same moment—this satisfactory and significant item:

> MARRIED. Rowan—Vanderlyn.—On Wednesday the 9th inst., by Rev. Dr. Rushmore, Major Halstead Rowan, of the Sixth Illinois cavalry, to Clara, daughter of the late Clayton Vanderlyn, Esq., and Mrs. Isabella Vanderlyn, of Calvert St.

"She was a sweet girl, and he was one of nature's gentlemen," said Margaret. "I saw enough to know how dearly they were in love with each other before they left the mountains; and I am glad to know that they have had their will, in spite of"—and here she lowered her voice, so that Mrs. Burton Hayley could not possibly hear her—"a proud, meddling mother and a brother who should have been sent back to school until he learned manners!"

"Oh, Rowan told me that he was going into the army, before he left the Crawford," answered the happy lounger. "You see he has done so and become a Major, and that makes him gentleman enough even for the Vanderlyns. George!—what a dashing officer he must make! Some day, when I go back to the army—"

"When *I let you* go back, mad fellow!"

"Some day I want to ride a charge with him, side by side. He was the boldest rider and the most daring man I ever knew."

"The bravest that *I* ever knew, except *one*!" said Margaret Hayley, stooping down her proud neck and for some unexplainable reason stopping for an instant in the middle of her speech. "And he had even the advantage of that *one* in a very important respect."

"And what was that, I should like to be informed, my Empress!"

"He *knew it*!"

THE END.

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