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Aikenside

by Mary J. Holmes

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CHAPTER I.
THE EXAMINING COMMITTEE.

The good people of Devonshire were rather given to quarreling—sometimes about the minister's wife, meek, gentle Mrs. Tiverton, whose manner of housekeeping, and style of dress, did not exactly suit them; sometimes about the minister himself, good, patient Mr. Tiverton, who vainly imagined that if he preached three sermons a week, attended the Wednesday evening prayer-meeting, the Thursday evening sewing society, officiated at every funeral, visited all the sick, and gave to every beggar who called at his door, besides superintending the Sunday school, he was earning his salary of six hundred per year.

Sometimes, and that not rarely, the quarrel crept into the choir, and then, for one whole Sunday, it was all in vain that Mr. Tiverton read the psalm and hymn, casting troubled glances toward the vacant seats of his refractory singers. There was no one to respond, unless it were good old Mr. Hodges, who pitched so high that few could follow him; while Mrs. Captain Simpson—whose daughter, the organist, had been snubbed at the last choir meeting by Mr. Hodges' daughter, the alto singer—rolled up her eyes at her next neighbor, or fanned herself furiously in token of her disgust.

Latterly, however, there had come up a new cause of quarrel, before which every other cause sank into insignificance. Now, though the village of Devonshire could boast but one public schoolhouse, said house being divided into two departments, the upper and lower divisions, there were in the town several district schools; and for the last few years a committee of three had been annually appointed to examine and decide upon the merits of the various candidates for teaching, giving to each, if the decision were favorable, a little slip of paper certifying their qualifications to teach a common school. Strange that over such an office so fierce a feud should have arisen; but when Mr. Tiverton, Squire Lamb and Lawyer Whittemore, in the full conviction that they were doing right, refused a certificate of scholarship to Laura Tisdale, niece of Mrs. Judge Tisdale, and awarded it to one whose earnings in a factory had procured for her a thorough English education, the villagers, to use a vulgar phrase, were at once set by the ears, the aristocracy abusing, and the democracy upholding the dismayed trio, who, as the breeze blew harder, quietly resigned their office, and Devonshire was without a school committee.

In this emergency something must be done, and, as the two belligerent parties could only unite on a stranger, it seemed a matter of special providence that only two months before, young Dr. Holbrook, a native of modern Athens, had rented the pleasant little office on the village common, formerly occupied by old Dr. Carey, now lying in the graveyard by the side of some whose days he had prolonged, and others whose days he had surely shortened. Besides being handsome, and skillful, and quite as familiar with the poor as the rich, the young doctor was descended from the aristocratic line of Boston Holbrooks, facts which tended to make him a favorite with both classes; and, greatly to his surprise, he found himself unanimously elected to the responsible office of sole Inspector of Common Schools in Devonshire. It was in vain that he remonstrated, saying he knew nothing whatever of the qualifications requisite for a teacher; that he could not talk to girls, young ones especially; that he should make a miserable failure, and so forth. The people would not listen. Somebody must examine the teachers and that somebody might as well be Dr. Holbrook as anybody.

"Only be strict with 'em, draw the reins tight, find out to your satisfaction whether a gal knows her P's and Q's before you give her a stifficut. We've had enough of your ignoramuses," said Colonel Lewis, the democratic potentate to whom Dr. Holbrook was expressing his fears that he should not give satisfaction. Then, as a bright idea suggested itself to the old gentleman, he added: "I tell you what, just cut one or two at first; that'll give you a name for being particular, which is just the thing."

Accordingly, with no definite idea as to what was expected of him, except that he was to find out "whether a girl knew her P's and Q's," and was also to "cut one or two of the first candidates," Dr. Holbrook accepted the office, and then awaited rather nervously his initiation. He was not easy in the society of ladies, unless, indeed, the lady stood in need of his professional services, when he lost sight of *her* at once, and thought only of her disease. His patient once well, however, he became

nervously shy and embarrassed, retreating as soon as possible from her presence to the covert of his friendly office, where, with his boots upon the table and his head thrown back in a most comfortable position, he sat one April morning, in happy oblivion of the bevy of girls who must, of course, ere long-invade his sanctum.

"Something for you, sir. The lady will wait for an answer," said his "chore boy," passing to his master a little three-cornered note, and nodding toward the street.

Following the direction indicated, the doctor saw, drawn up near his door, an old-fashioned one-horse wagon, such as is still occasionally seen in New England. A square boxed, dark green wagon, drawn by a sorrel horse, sometimes called by the genuine Yankee "yellow," and driven by a white-haired man, whose silvery locks, falling around his wrinkled face, gave to him a pleasing, patriarchal appearance, which interested the doctor far more than did the flutter of the blue ribbon beside him, even though the bonnet that ribbon tied shaded the face of a young girl. The note was from her, and, tearing it open, the doctor read, in the prettiest of all pretty, girlish handwriting:

"Dr. Holbrook."

Here it was plainly visible that a "D" had been written as if she would have said "Dear." Then, evidently changing her mind, she had with her finger blotted out the "D," and made it into an oddly shaped "S," so that it read simply:

> "Dr. Holbrook—Sir: Will you be at leisure to examine me on Monday afternoon, at three o'clock?
>
> "MADELINE A. CLYDE.
>
> "P. S.—For particular reasons I hope you can attend to me as early as Monday. M. A. C."

Dr. Holbrook knew very little of girls, but he thought this note, with its P. S., decidedly girlish. Still he made no comment, either verbal or mental, so flurried was he with knowing that the evil he so much dreaded had come upon him at last. Had it been left to his choice, he would far rather have extracted every one of that maiden's teeth, than to have set himself up before her like some horrid ogre, asking what she knew. But the choice was not his, and, turning to the boy, he said, laconically, "Tell her to come."

Most men would have sought for a glimpse of the face under the bonnet tied with blue, but Dr. Holbrook did not care a picayune whether it were ugly or fair, though it did strike him that the voice was singularly sweet, which, after the boy had delivered his message, said to the old man, "Now, grandpa, we'll go home. I know you must be tired."

Slowly Sorrel trotted down the street, the blue ribbons fluttering in the wind, while one little ungloved hand was seen carefully adjusting about the old man's shoulders the ancient camlet cloak which had done duty for many a year, and was needed on this chill April day. The doctor saw all this, and the impression left upon his mind was, that Candidate No. 1 was probably a nice-ish kind of a girl, and very good to her grandfather. But what should he ask her, and how demean himself toward her? Monday afternoon was frightfully near, he thought, as this was only Saturday; and then, feeling that he must be ready, he brought out from the trunk, where, since his arrival in Devonshire, they had bean quietly lying, books enough to have frightened an older person than poor little Madeline Clyde, riding slowly home with grandpa, and wishing so much that she'd had a glimpse of Dr. Holbrook, so as to know what he was like, and hoping he would give her a chance to repeat some of the many pages of geography and "Parley's History," which she knew by heart. How she would have trembled could she have seen the formidable volumes heaped upon his table and waiting for her. There were French and Latin grammars, "Hamilton's Metaphysics," "Olmstead's Philosophy," "Day's Algebra," "Butler's Analogy," and many others, into which poor Madeline had never so much as looked. Arranging them in a row, and half wishing himself back again to the days when he had studied them, the doctor went out to visit his patients, of which there were so many that Madeline Clyde entirely escaped his mind, nor did she trouble him again until the dreaded Monday came, and the hands of his watch pointed to two.

"One hour more," he said to himself, just as the roll of wheels and a cloud of dust announced the approach of something.

Could it be Sorrel and the square-boxed wagon? Oh, no; far different from grandfather Clyde's turnout was the stylish carriage and the

spirited bays dashing down the street, the colored driver reining them suddenly, not before the office door, but just in front of the white cottage in the same yard, the house where Dr. Holbrook boarded, and where, if he ever married in Devonshire, he would most likely bring his wife.

“Guy Remington, the very chap of all others whom I’d rather see, and, as I live, there’s Agnes, with Jessie. Who knew she was in these parts?” was the doctor’s mental exclamation, as, running his fingers through his hair and making a feint of pulling up the corners of his rather limp collar, he hurried out to the carriage, from which a dashing looking lady of thirty, or thereabouts, was alighting.

“Why, Agnes, I beg your pardon, Mrs. Remington, when did you come?” he asked, offering his hand to the lady, who, coquettishly shaking back from her pretty, dollish face a profusion of light brown curls, gave him the tips of her lavender kids, while she told him she had come to Aikenside the Saturday before; and hearing, from Guy that the lady with whom he boarded was an old friend of hers, she had driven over to call, and brought Jessie with her. “Here, Jessie, speak to the doctor. He was poor dear papa’s friend,” and a very proper sigh escaped Agnes Remington’s lips as she pushed a little curly-haired girl toward Dr. Holbrook.

The lady of the house had spied them by this time, and came running down the walk to meet her rather distinguished visitor, wondering, it may be, to what she was indebted for this call from one who, since her marriage with the supposed wealthy Dr. Remington, had rather cut her former acquaintances. Agnes was delighted to see her, and, as Guy declined entering the cottage just then, the two friends disappeared within the door, while the doctor and Guy repaired to the office, the latter sitting down in the very chair intended for Madeline Clyde. This reminded the doctor of his perplexity, and also brought the comforting thought that Guy, who had never failed him yet, could surely offer some suggestions. But he would not speak of her just now; he had other matters to talk about, and so, jamming his penknife into a pine table covered with similar jams, he said: “Agnes, it seems, has come to Aikenside, notwithstanding she declared she never would, when she found that the whole of the Remington property belonged to your mother, and not your father.”

“Oh, yes. She got over her pique as soon as I settled a handsome little income on Jessie, and, in fact, on her too, until she is foolish enough to marry again, when it will cease, of course, as I do not feel it my duty to support any man’s wife, unless it be my own, or my father’s,” was Guy Remington’s reply; whereupon the penknife went again into the table, and this time with so much force that the point was broken off; but the doctor did not mind it, and with the jagged end continued to make jagged marks, while he continued: “She’ll hardly marry again, though she may. She’s young—not over twenty-six—-

“Twenty-eight, if the family Bible does not lie; but she’d never forgive me if she knew I told you that. So let it pass that she’s twenty-six. She certainly is not more than three years your senior, a mere nothing, if you wish to make her Mrs. Holbrook;” and Guy’s dark eyes scanned curiously the doctor’s face, as if seeking there for the secret of his proud young stepmother’s anxiety to visit plain Mrs. Conner that afternoon. But the doctor only laughed merrily at the idea of his being father to Guy, his college chum and long-tried friend.

Agnes Remington—reclining languidly in Mrs. Conner’s easy-chair, and overwhelming her former friend with descriptions of the gay parties she had attended in Boston, and the fine sights she saw in Europe, whither her gray-haired husband had taken her for a wedding tour—would not have felt particularly flattered, could she have seen that smile, or heard how easily, from talking of her, Dr. Holbrook turned to another theme, to Madeline Clyde, expected now almost every moment. There was a merry laugh on Guy’s part, as he listened to the doctor’s story, and, when it was finished, he said: “Why, I see nothing so very distasteful in examining a pretty girl, and puzzling her, to see her blush. I half wish I were in your place. I should enjoy the novelty of the thing.” “Oh, take it, then; take my place, Guy,” the doctor exclaimed, eagerly. “She does not know me from Adam. Here are books, all you will need. You went to a district school once a week when you were staying in the country. You surely have some idea, while I have not the slightest. Will you, Guy?” he persisted more earnestly, as he heard wheels in the street, and was sure old Sorrel had come again.

Guy Remington liked anything savoring of a frolic, but in his mind there were certain conscientious scruples touching the justice of the thing, and so at first he demurred; while the doctor still insisted, until at

last he laughingly consented to commence the examination, provided the doctor would sit by, and occasionally come to his aid.

"You must write the certificate, of course," he said, "testifying that she is qualified to teach."

"Yes, certainly, Guy, if she is; but maybe she won't be, and my orders are, to be strict—very strict."

"How did she look?" Guy asked, and the doctor replied: "Saw nothing but her bonnet. Came in a queer old go-giggle of a wagon, such as your country farmers drive. Guess she won't be likely to stir up the bile of either of us, particularly as I am bullet proof, and you have been engaged for years. By the way, when do you cross the sea again for the fair Lucy? Rumor says this summer."

"Rumor is wrong, as usual, then," was Guy's reply, a soft light stealing into his handsome eyes. Then, after a moment, he added: "Miss Atherstone's health is far too delicate for her to incur the risks of a climate like ours. If she were well acclimated, I should be glad, for it is terribly lonely up at Aikenside."

"And do you really think a wife would make it pleasanter?" Dr Holbrook asked, the tone of his voice indicating a little doubt as to a man's being happier for having a helpmate to share his joys and sorrows.

But no such doubts dwelt in the mind of Guy Remington. Eminently fitted for domestic happiness, he looked forward anxiously to the time when sweet Lucy Atherstone, the fair English girl to whom he had become engaged when, four years before, he visited Europe, should be strong enough to bear transplanting to American soil. Twice since his engagement he had visited her, finding her always lovely, gentle, and yielding. Too yielding, it sometimes seemed to him, while occasionally the thought had flashed upon him that she did not possess a very remarkable depth of intellect. But he said to himself, he did not care; he hated strong-minded women, and would far rather his wife should be a little weak than masculine, like his Aunt Margaret, who sometimes wore bloomers, and advocated women's rights. Yes, he greatly preferred Lucy Atherstone, as she was, to a wife like the stately Margaret, or like Agnes, his pretty stepmother, who only thought how she could best attract attention; and as it had never occurred to him that there might be a happy medium, that a woman need not be brainless to be feminine and gentle, he was satisfied with his choice, as well he might be, for a fairer, sweeter flower never bloomed than Lucy Atherstone, his affianced bride. Guy loved to think of Lucy, and as the doctor's remarks brought her to his mind, he went off into a reverie concerning her, becoming so lost in thought that until the doctor's hand was laid upon his shoulder by way of rousing him, he did not see that what his friend had designated as a go-giggle was stopping in front of the office, and that from it a young girl was alighting.

Naturally very polite to females, Guy's first impulse was to go to her assistance, but she did not need it, as was proven by the light spring with which she reached the ground. The white-haired man was with her again, but he evidently did not intend to stop, and a close observer might have detected a shade of sadness and anxiety upon his face as Madeline called cheerily out to him: "Good-by, grandpa. Don't fear for me; I hope you have good luck;" then, as he drove away, she ran a step after him and said; "Don't look so sorry, for if Mr. Remington won't let you have the money, there's my pony, Beauty. I am willing to give him up."

"Never, Maddy. It's all the little fortin' you've got. I'll let the old place go first;" and, chirruping to Sorrel, the old man drove on, while Madeline walked, with a beating heart, to the office door, knocking timidly.

Glancing involuntarily at each other, the young men exchanged meaning smiles, while the doctor whispered softly: "Verdant—that's sure. Wonder if she'll knock at a church."

As Guy sat nearest the door, it was he who held it ajar while Madeline came in, her soft brown eyes glistening with something like a tear, and her cheeks burning with excitement as she took the chair indicated by Guy Remington, who unconsciously found himself master of ceremonies.

Poor little Madeline!

CHAPTER II.
MADELINE CLYDE.

Madge her schoolmates called her, because the name suited her, they said; but Maddy they called her at home, and there was a world of unutterable tenderness in the voices of the old couple, her grandparents, when they said that name, while their dim eyes lighted up with pride and joy when they rested upon the young girl who answered to the name of Maddy. Their only daughter's only child, she had lived with them since her mother's death, for her father was a sea captain, who never returned from his last voyage to China, made two months before she was born. Very lonely and desolate would the home of Grandfather Markham have been without the presence of Madeline, but with her there, the old red farmhouse seemed to the aged couple like a paradise.

Forty years they had lived there, tilling the rather barren soil of the rocky homestead, and, saving the sad night when they heard that Richard Clyde was lost at sea, and the far sadder morning when their daughter died, bitter sorrow had not come to them; and, truly thankful for the blessings so long vouchsafed them, they had retired each night in peace with God and man, and risen each morning to pray. But a change was coming over them. In an evil hour Grandpa Markham had signed a note for a neighbor and friend, who failed to pay, and so it all fell on Mr. Markham, who, to meet the demand, mortgaged his homestead; the recreant neighbor still insisting that long before the mortgage should be due, he certainly would be able himself to meet it. This, however, he had not done, and, after twice begging off a foreclosure, poor old Grandfather Markham found himself at the mercy of a grasping, remorseless man, into whose hands the mortgage had passed. It was vain to hope that Silas Slocum would wait. The money must either be forthcoming, or the red farmhouse be sold, with its few acres of land. Among his neighbors there was not one who had the money to spare, even if they had been willing to do so. And so he must look among strangers.

"If I could only help," Madeline had said one evening when they sat talking over their troubles; "but there's nothing I can do, unless I apply for our school this summer. Mr. Green is committeeman; he likes us, and I don't believe but what he'll let me have it. I mean to go and see;" and, ere the old people had recovered from their astonishment, Madeline had caught her bonnet and shawl, and was flying down the road.

Madeline was a favorite with all, especially with Mr. Green, and as the school would be small that summer, the plan struck him favorably. Her age, however, was an objection, and he must take time to see what others thought of a child like her becoming a schoolmistress. Others thought well of it, and so before the close of the next day it was generally known through Honedale, as the southern part of Devonshire was called, that pretty little Madge Clyde had been engaged as teacher, she receiving three dollars a week, with the understanding that she must board herself. It did not take Madeline long to calculate that twelve times three were thirty-six, more than a tenth of what her grandfather must borrow. It seemed like a little fortune, and blithe as a singing bird she flitted about the house, now stopping a moment to fondle her pet kitten, while she whispered the good news in its very appreciative ear, and then stroking her grandfather's silvery hair, as she said:

"You can tell them that you are sure of paying thirty-six dollars in the fall, and if I do well, maybe they'll hire me longer. I mean to try my very best. I wonder if ever anybody before me taught a school when they were only fourteen and a half. Do I look as young as that?" and for an instant the bright; childish face scanned itself eagerly in the old-fashioned mirror, with the figure of an eagle on the top.

She did look very young, and yet there was something womanly, too, in the expression of the face, something which said that life's realities were already beginning to be understood by her.

"If my hair were not short I should do better. What a pity I cut it the last time; it would have been so long and splendid now," she continued, giving a kind of contemptuous pull at the thick, beautiful brown hair on whose glossy surface there was in certain lights a reddish tinge, which added to its beauty.

"Never mind the hair, Maddy," the old man said, gazing fondly at her with a half sigh as he remembered another brown head, pillowed now beneath the graveyard turf. "Maybe you won't pass muster, and then the hair will make no difference. There's a new committee-man, that Dr.

Holbrook, from Boston, and new ones are apt to be mighty strict."

Instantly Maddy's face flushed all over with nervous dread, as she thought: "What if I should fail?" fancying that to do so would be an eternal disgrace. But she should not. She was called by everybody the very best scholar in school, the one whom the teachers always put forward when desirous of showing off, the one whom Mr. Tiverton, and Squire Lamb, and Lawyer Whittemore always noticed so much. Of course she should not fail, though she did dread Dr. Holbrook, wondering much what he would ask her first, and hoping it would be something in arithmetic, provided he did not stumble upon decimals, where she was apt to get bewildered. She had no fears of grammar. She could pick out the most obscure sentence and dissect a double relative with perfect ease; then, as to geography, she could repeat whole pages of that, while in the spelling-book, the foundation of a thorough education, as she had been taught, she had no superiors, and but a very few equals. Still she would be very glad when it was over, and she appointed Monday, both because it was close at hand, and because that was the day her grandfather had set in which to ride to Aikenside, in an adjoining town, and ask its young master for the loan of three hundred dollars.

He could hardly tell why he had thought of applying to Guy Remington for help, unless it were that he once had saved the life of Guy's father, who, as long as he lived, had evinced a great regard for his benefactor, frequently asserting that he meant to do something for him. But the something was never done, the father was dead, and in his strait the old man turned to the son, whom he knew to be very rich, and who he had been told was exceedingly generous.

"How I wish I could go with you clear up to Aikenside! They say it's so beautiful," Madeline had said, as on Saturday evening they sat discussing the expected events of the following Monday. "Mrs. Noah, the housekeeper, had Sarah Jones there once, to sew, and she told me all about it. There are graveled walks, and nice green lawns, and big, tall trees, and flowers—oh! so many!—and marble fountains, with gold fishes in the basin; and statues, big as folks, all over the yard, with two brass lions on the gateposts. But the house is finest of all. There's a drawing-room bigger than a ballroom, with carpets that let your feet sink in so far; pictures and mirrors clear to the floor—think of that, grandpa! a looking-glass so tall that one can see the very bottom of their dress and know just how it hangs. Oh, I do so wish I could have a peep at it! There are two in one room, and the windows are like doors, with lace curtains; but what is queerest of all, the chairs and sofas are covered with real silk, just like that funny, gored gown of grandma's up in the oak chest. Dear me! I wonder if I'll ever live in such a place as Aikenside?"

"No, no, Maddy, no. Be satisfied with the lot where God has put you, and don't be longing after something higher, Our Father in heaven knows just what is best for us; as He didn't see fit to put you up at Aikenside, 'tain't noways likely you'll ever live in the like of it."

"Not unless I should happen to marry a rich man. Poor girls like me have sometimes done that, haven't they?" was Maddy's demure reply.

Grandpa Markham shook his head.

"They have, but it's mostly their ruination; so don't build castles in the air about this Guy Remington."

"Me! Oh, grandpa, I never dreamed of Mr. Guy!" and Madeline blushed half indignantly. "He's too rich, too aristocratic, though Sarah said he didn't act one bit proud, and was so pleasant, the servants all worship him, and Mrs. Noah thinks him good enough for the Queen of England. I shall think so, too, if he lets you have the money. How I wish it was Monday night, so we could know sure!"

"Perhaps we both shall be terribly disappointed," suggested grandpa, but Maddy was more hopeful.

She, at least, would not fail, while what she had heard of Guy Remington, the heir of Aikenside, made her believe that he would accede at once to her grandpa's request.

All that night she was working to pay the debt, giving the money herself into the hands of Guy Remington, whom she had never seen, but who came up in her dreams the tall, handsome-looking man she had so often heard described by Sarah Jones after her return from Aikenside. Even the next day, when, by her grandparent's side, Maddy knelt reverently in the small, time-worn church at Honedale, her thoughts, it must be confessed, were wandering more to the to-morrow and Aikenside, than to the sacred words her lips were uttering. She knew it was wrong, and with a nervous start would try to bring her mind back from decimal fractions to what the minister was saying; but Maddy was

mortal, and right in the midst of the Collect, Aikenside and its owner would rise before her, together with the wonder how she and her grandfather would feel one week from that Sabbath day. Would the desired certificate be hers? or would she be disgraced forever and ever by a rejection? Would the mortgage be paid and her grandfather at ease, or would his heart be breaking with the knowing he must leave what had been his home for so many years? Not thus was it with the aged disciple beside her—the good old man, whose white locks swept the large lettered book over which his wrinkled face was bent, as he joined in the responses, or said the prayers whose words had over him so soothing an influence, carrying his thoughts upward to the house not made with hands, which he felt assured would one day be his. Once or twice, it is true, thoughts of losing the dear old red cottage flitted across his mind with a keen, sudden pang, but he put it quickly aside, remembering at the same instant how the Father he loved doeth all things well to such as are His children. Grandpa Markham was old in the Christian course, while Maddy could hardly be said to have commenced as yet, and so to her that April Sunday was long and wearisome. How she did wish she might just look over the geography, by way of refreshing her memory, or see exactly how the rule for extracting the cube root did read, but Maddy forebore, reading only the Pilgrim's Progress, the Bible, and the book brought from the Sunday school.

With the earliest dawn, however, she was up, and her grandmother heard her repeating to herself much of what she dreaded Dr. Holbrook might question her upon. Even when bending over the washtub, for there were no servants at the red cottage, a book was arranged before her so that she could study with her eyes, while her small, fat hands and dimpled arms were busy in the suds. Before ten o'clock everything was done, the clothes, white as the snowdrops in the garden beds, were swinging on the line, the kitchen floor was scrubbed, the windows washed, the best room swept, the vegetables cleaned for dinner, and then Maddy's work was finished. "Grandma could do all the rest," she said, and Madeline was free "to put her eyes out over them big books if she liked."

Swiftly flew the hours until it was time to be getting ready, when again the short hair was deplored, as before her looking-glass Madeline brushed and arranged her shining, beautiful locks. Would Dr. Holbrook think of her age? Suppose he should ask it. But no, he wouldn't. If Mr. Green thought her old enough, surely it was not a matter with which the doctor need trouble himself; and, somewhat at ease on that point, Madeline donned her longest frock, and, standing in a chair, tried to discover how much of her pantalets was visible.

"I could see splendidly in Mr. Remington's mirrors," she said to herself, with a half sigh of regret that her lot had not been cast in some such place as Aikenside, instead of there beneath the hill in that wee bit of a cottage, whose rear slanted back until it almost touched the ground. "After all, I guess I'm happier here," she thought. "Everybody likes me, while if I were Mr. Guy's sister and lived at Aikenside, I might be proud and wicked, and—"

She did not finish the sentence, but somehow the story of Dives and Lazarus, read by her grandfather that morning, recurred to her mind, and feeling how much rather she would rest in Abraham's bosom than share the fate of him who once was clothed in purple and fine linen she pinned on her little neat plaid shawl, and, tying the blue ribbons of her coarse straw hat, glanced once more at the formidable cube root, and then hurried down to where her grandfather and old Sorrel were waiting for her.

"I shall be so happy when I come back, because it will then be over, just like having a tooth out, you know," she said to her grandmother, who bent down for the good-by kiss without which Maddy never left her. "Now, grandpa, drive on; I was to be there at three," and chirruping herself to Sorrel, the impatient Madge went riding from the cottage door, chatting cheerily until the village of Devonshire was reached; then, with a farewell to her grandfather, who never dreamed that the man whom he was seeking was so near, she tripped up the flagging walk, and, as we have seen, soon stood in the presence of not only Dr. Holbrook, but also of Guy Remington.

Poor, poor little Madge!

CHAPTER III.
THE EXAMINATION.

It was Guy who received her, Guy who pointed to a chair, Guy who seemed perfectly at home, and, naturally enough, she took him for Dr. Holbrook, wondering who the other black-haired man could be, and if he meant to stay in there all the while. It would be very dreadful if he did, and in her agitation and excitement the cube root was in danger of being altogether forgotten. Half guessing the cause of her uneasiness, and feeling more averse than ever to taking part in the matter, the doctor, after a hasty survey of her person, withdrew into the background, and sat where he could not be seen. This brought the short dress into full view, together with the dainty little foot, nervously beating the floor.

"She's very young," he thought; "too young, by far," and Maddy's chances of success were beginning to decline even before a word had been spoken.

How terribly still it was for the time, during which telegraphic communications were silently passing between Guy and the doctor, the latter shaking his head decidedly, while the former insisted that he should do his duty. Madeline could almost hear the beatings of her heart, and only by counting and recounting the poplar trees growing across the street could she keep back the tears. What was he waiting for, she wondered, and, at last, summoning all her courage, she lifted her great brown eyes to Guy, and said, pleadingly:

"Would you be so kind, sir, as to begin?"

"Yes, certainly," and electrified by that young, bird-like voice, the sweetest save one he had ever heard, Guy knocked down from the pile of books the only one at all appropriate to the occasion, the others being as far beyond what was taught in the district schools as his classical education was beyond Madeline's common one.

Remembering that the teacher of whom he had once been for a week a pupil, in the town of Framingham, had commenced operations by sharpening a lead pencil, so he now sharpened a similar one, determining as far as he could to follow that teacher's example. Maddy counted every fragment as it fell upon the floor, wishing so much that he would commence, and fancying that it would not be half so bad to have him approach her with some one of those terrible dental instruments lying before her, as it was to sit and wait as she was waiting. Had Guy Remington reflected a little, he would never have consented to do the doctor's work; but, unaccustomed to country usages, especially those pertaining to schools and teachers, he did not consider that it mattered which examined that young girl, himself or Dr. Holbrook. Viewing it somewhat in the light of a joke, he rather enjoyed it; and as the Framingham teacher had first asked her pupils their names and ages, so he, when the pencil was sharpened sufficiently, startled Madeline by asking her name.

"Madeline Amelia Clyde," was the meek reply, which Guy quickly recorded.

Now, Guy Remington intended no irreverence; indeed, he could not tell what he did intend, or what it was which prompted his next query:

"Who gave you this name?"

Perhaps he fancied himself a boy again in the Sunday school, and standing before the railing of the altar, where, with others of his age, he had been asked the question propounded to Madeline Clyde, who did not hear the doctor's smothered laugh as he retreated into the adjoining room.

In all her preconceived ideas of this examination, she had never dreamed of being catechised, and with a feeling of terror as she thought of that long answer to the question, "What is thy duty to thy neighbor?" and doubted her ability to repeat it, she said: "My sponsors, in baptism gave me the first name of Madeline Amelia, sir," adding, as she caught and misconstrued the strange gleam in the dark eyes bent upon her, "I am afraid I have forgotten some of the catechism; I did not know it was necessary in order to teach school."

"Certainly, no; I do not think it is. I beg your pardon," were Guy Remington's ejaculatory replies, as he glanced from Madeline to the open door of the adjoining room, where was visible a slate, on which, in huge letters, the amused doctor had written "Blockhead."

There was something in Madeline's quiet, womanly, earnest manner which commanded Guy's respect, or he would have given vent to the

laughter which was choking him, and thrown off his disguise. But he could not bear now to undeceive her, and, resolutely turning his back upon the doctor, he sat down by that pile of books and commenced the examination in earnest, asking first her age.

"Going on fifteen," sounded older to Madeline than "Fourteen and a half," so "Going on fifteen" was the reply, to which Guy responded: "That is very young, Miss Clyde."

"Yes, but Mr. Green did not mind. He's the committeeman. He knew how young I was," Madeline said, eagerly, her great brown eyes growing large with the look of fear which came so suddenly into them.

Guy noticed the eyes then, and thought them very bright and handsome for brown, but not so bright or handsome as a certain pair of soft blue orbs he knew, and feeling a thrill of satisfaction that sweet Lucy Atherstone was not obliged to sit there in that doctor's office to be questioned by him or any other man, he said: "Of course, if your employers are satisfied it is nothing to me, only I had associated teaching with women much older than yourself. What is logic, Miss Clyde?"

The abruptness with which he put the question startled Madeline to such a degree that she could not positively tell whether she had ever heard that word before, much less could she recall its meaning, and so she answered frankly, "I don't know."

A girl who did not know what logic was did not know much, in Guy's estimation, but it would not do to stop here, and so he asked her next how many cases there were in Latin!

Maddy felt the hot blood tingling to her very fingertips, the examination had taken a course so widely different from her ideas of what it would probably be. She had never looked inside a Latin grammar, and again her truthful "I don't know, sir," fell on Guy's ear, but this time there was a half despairing tone in the young voice usually so hopeful.

"Perhaps, then, you can conjugate the verb *Amo,*" Guy said, his manner indicating the doubt he was beginning to feel as to her qualifications.

Maddy knew well what "conjugate" meant, but that verb *Amo*, what could it mean? and had she ever heard it before? Mr. Remington was waiting for her; she must say something, and with a gasp she began: "I amo, thou amoest, he amoes. Plural: We amo, ye or you amo, they amo."

Guy looked at her aghast for a single moment, and then a comical smile broke all over his face, telling poor Maddy plainer than words could have done, that she had made a most ridiculous mistake.

"Oh, sir," she cried, her eyes wearing the look of the frightened hare, "it is not right. I don't know what it means. Tell me, teach me. What is it to amo?"

To most men it would not have seemed a very disagreeable task, teaching young Madeline Clyde "to amo," as she termed it, and some such idea flitted across Guy's mind, as he thought how pretty and bright was the eager face upturned to his, the pure white forehead, suffused with a faint flush, the cheeks a crimson hue, and the pale lips parted slightly as Maddy appealed to him for the definition of "amo."

"It is a Latin verb, and means 'to love'" Guy said, with an emphasis on the last word, which would have made Maddy blush had she been less anxious and frightened.

Thus far she had answered nothing correctly, and, feeling puzzled to know how to proceed, Guy stepped into the adjoining room to consult with the doctor, but he was gone. So returning again to Madeline, Guy resumed the examination by asking her how "minus into minus could produce plus."

Again Maddy was at fault, and her low-spoken "I don't know" sounded like a wail of despair. Did she know anything, Guy wondered, and feeling some curiosity now to ascertain that fact, he plied her with questions philosophical, questions algebraical, and questions geometrical, until in an agony of distress Maddy raised her hands deprecatingly, as if she would ward off any similar questions, and sobbed out:

"Oh, sir, no more. It makes my head so dizzy. They don't teach that in common schools. Ask me something I do know."

Suddenly it occurred to Guy that he had gone entirely wrong, and mentally cursing himself for the blockhead the doctor had called him, he asked, kindly:

"What do they teach? Perhaps you can enlighten me?"

"Geography, arithmetic, grammar, history, and spelling-book," Madeline replied, untying and throwing off her bonnet, in the vain hope

that it might bring relief to her poor, giddy head, which throbbed so fearfully that all her ideas seemed for the time to have left her.

This was a natural consequence of the high excitement under which she was laboring, and so, when Guy did ask her concerning the books designated, she answered but little better than before, and Guy was wondering what he should do next, when the doctor's welcome step was heard, and leaving Madeline again, he repaired to the next room to report his ill success.

"She does not seem to know anything. The veriest child ought to do better than she has done. Why, she has scarcely answered half a dozen questions correctly."

This was what poor Maddy heard, though it was spoken in a low whisper; but every word was distinctly understood and burned into her heart's core, drying her tears and hardening her into a block of marble. She knew that Guy had not done her justice, and this helped to increase the torpor stealing over her. Still she did not lose a syllable of what was saying in the back office, and her lip curled scornfully when she heard Guy remark: "I pity her; she is so young, and evidently takes it so hard. Maybe she's as good as they average. Suppose we give her the certificate."

Then Dr. Holbrook spoke, but to poor, dazed Maddy his words were all a riddle. It was nothing to him—who was he that he should be dictating thus? There seemed to be a difference of opinion between the young men, Guy insisting that out of pity she should not be rejected; and the doctor demurring on the ground that he ought to be more strict. As usual, Guy overruled, and seating himself at the table, the doctor was just commencing: "I hereby certify—" while Guy was bending over him, when the latter was startled by a hand laid firmly on his arm, and turning quickly he confronted Madeline Clyde, who, with her short hair pushed from her blue-veined forehead, her face as pale as ashes, save where a round spot of purplish red burned upon her cheeks, and her eyes gleaming like coals of fire, stood before him.

"He need not write that," she said, huskily, pointing to the doctor, "It would be a lie, and I could not take it. You do not think me qualified. I heard you say so. I do not want to be pitied. I do not want a certificate because I am so young, and you think I'll feel badly. I do not want—"

Her voice failed her, her bosom heaved, and the choking sobs came thick and fast, but still she shed no tear, and in her bright, dry eyes there was a look which made both those young men turn away involuntarily. Once Guy tried to excuse her failure, saying she no doubt was frightened. She would probably do better again, and might as well accept the certificate, but Madeline still said no, so decidedly that further remonstrance was useless. She would not take what she had no right to, she said, but if they pleased she would wait there in the back office until her grandfather came back; it would not be long, and she should not trouble them.

Guy brought her the easy-chair from the front room and placed it for her by the window. With a faint smile she thanked him and said: "You are very kind," but the smile hurt Guy cruelly, it was so sad, so full of unintentional reproach, while the eyes she lifted to his looked so grieved and weary that he insensibly murmured to himself: "Poor child!" as he left her, and with the doctor repaired to the house, where Agnes was impatiently waiting for them. Poor, poor little Madge! Let those smile who may at her distress; it was the first keen disappointment she had ever had, and it crushed her as completely as many an older person has been crushed by heavier calamities.

"Disgraced for ever and ever," she kept repeating to herself, as she tried to shake off the horrid nightmare stealing over her. "How can I hold up my head again at home where nobody will understand just how it was; nobody but grandpa and grandma? Oh, grandpa, I can't earn that thirty-six dollars now. I most wish I was dead, and I am—I am dying. Somebody—come—quick!"

There was a heavy fall, and while in Mrs. Conner's parlor Guy Remington and Dr. Holbrook were chatting gayly with Agnes, a childish figure was lying upon the office floor, white, stiff, and insensible.

Little Jessie Remington, tired of sitting still and listening to what her mamma and Mrs. Conner were saying, had strayed off into the garden, and after filling her chubby hands with daffodils and early violets, wended her way to the office, the door of which was partially ajar. Peering curiously in, she saw the crumpled bonnet, with its ribbons of blue, and, attracted by this, advanced into the room, until she came where Madeline was lying. With a feeling that something was wrong,

Jessie bent over the prostrate girl, asking if she were asleep, and lifting next the long, fringed lashes drooping on the colorless cheek. The dull, dead expression of the eyes sent a chill through Jessie's frame, and hurrying to the house she cried: "Oh, Brother Guy, somebody's dead in the office, and her bonnet is all jammed!"

Scarcely were the words uttered ere Guy and the doctor both were with Madeline, the former holding her tenderly in his arms, while he smoothed the short hair, thinking even then how soft and luxuriant it was, and how fair was the face which never moved a muscle beneath his scrutiny. The doctor was wholly self-possessed. Maddy had no terrors for him now. She needed his services, and he rendered them willingly, applying restoratives which soon brought back signs of life in the rigid form. With a shiver and a moan Madeline whispered: "Oh, grandma, I'm so tired," and nestled closer to the bosom where she had never dreamed of lying.

By this time both Mrs. Conner and Agnes had come out, asking in much surprise who the stranger could be, and what was the cause of her illness. As if there had been a previous understanding between them, the doctor and Guy were silent with regard to the recent farce enacted there, simply saying it was possible she was in the habit of fainting; many people were. Very daintily, Agnes held up and back the skirt of her rich silk as if fearful that it might come in contact with Madeline's plain delaine; then, as it was not very interesting for her to stand and see the doctor "make so much fuss over a young girl," as she mentally expressed it, she returned to the house, bidding Jessie do the same. But Jessie refused, choosing to stay by Madeline, whom they placed upon the comfortable lounge, which she preferred to being taken to the house, as Guy proposed.

"I'm better now, much better," she said. "Leave me, please. I'd rather be alone."

So they left her, all but Jessie, who, fascinated by the sweet young face, climbed upon the lounge and, laying her curly head caressingly against Madeline's arm, said to her: "Poor girl, you're sick, and I am so sorry. What makes you sick?"

There was genuine sympathy in that little voice, and it opened the pent-up flood beating so furiously, and roused Maddy's heart. With a cry as of sudden pain she clasped the child in her arms and wept out a wild, stormy fit of weeping which did her so much good. Forgetting that Jessie could not understand, and feeling it a relief to tell her grief to some one, she said, in reply to Jessie's oft repeated inquiries as to what was the matter: "I did not get a certificate, and I wanted it so much, for we are poor, and our house is mortgaged, and I was going to help grandpa pay it."

"It's dreadful to be poor!" sighed little Jessie, as her waxen fingers threaded the soft, nut-brown hair resting in her lap, where Maddy had lain her aching head.

Maddy did not know who this beautiful child was, but her sympathy was very sweet, and they talked together as children will, until Mrs. Agnes' voice was heard calling to her little girl that it was time to go.

"I love you, Maddy, and I mean to tell brother about it," Jessie said, as she wound her arms around Madeline's neck and kissed her at parting.

It never occurred to Maddy to ask her name, so stupified she felt, and with a responsive kiss she sent her away. Leaning her head upon the table, she forgot all but her own wretchedness, and so did not see the gayly-dressed, haughty-looking lady who swept past the door, accompanied by Guy and Dr. Holbrook. Neither did she hear, or notice, if she did, the hum of their voices as they talked together for a moment, Agnes asking the doctor very prettily to come up to Aikenside while she was there, and bring his ladylove. Engaged young men like Guy were so stupid, she said, as with a merry laugh she sprang into the carriage; and, bowing gracefully to the doctor, was driven rapidly toward Aikenside.

Rather slowly the doctor returned to the office, and after fidgeting for a time among the powders and phials, summoned courage to ask Madeline how she felt, and if any of the fainting symptoms had returned.

"No, sir," was all the reply she gave him, never lifting up her head, or even thinking which of the two young men it was speaking to her.

There was a call just then for Dr. Holbrook, and leaving his office in charge of Tom, his chore boy, he went away, feeling slightly uncomfortable whenever he thought of the girl to whom he felt that justice had not been done.

"I half wish I had examined her myself," he said. "Of course she was excited, and could not answer; beside, hanged if I don't believe it was all

humbug tormenting her with Greek and Latin. Yes; I'll question her when I get back, and if she'll possibly pass, give her the certificate. Poor child; how white she was, and what a queer look there was in those great eyes, when she said: 'I shall not take it.'"

Never in his life before had Dr. Holbrook been as much interested in any female who was not sick as he was in Madeline, and determining to make his call on Mrs. Briggs as brief as possible, he alighted at her gate, and knocked impatiently at her door. He found her pretty sick, while both her children needed a prescription, and so long a time was he detained that his heart misgave him on his homeward route, lest Maddy should be gone, and with her the chance to remedy the wrong he might have done her.

Maddy was gone, and the wheel ruts of the square-boxed wagon were fresh before the door when he came back. Grandpa Markham had returned, and Madeline, who recognized old Sorrel's step, had gathered her shawl around her and gone sadly out to meet him. One look at her face was sufficient.

"You failed, Maddy?" the old man said, fixing about her feet the warm buffalo robe, for the night wind was blowing cool.

"Yes, grandpa, I failed."

They were out of the village and more than a mile on their way home before Madeline found voice to say so much, and they were nearer home by half a mile ere the old man answered back:

"And, Maddy, I failed too."

CHAPTER IV.
GRANDPA MARKHAM.

Mrs. Noah, the housekeeper at Aikenside, was slicing vegetable oysters for the nice little dish intended for her own supper, when the head of Sorrel came around the corner of the building, followed by the square-boxed wagon containing Grandpa Markham, who, bewildered by the beauty and spaciousness of the grounds, and wholly uncertain as to where he ought to stop, had driven over the smooth-graveled road around to the front kitchen door, Mrs. Noah's spacious domain, as sacred as Betsey Trotwood's patch of green.

"In the name of wonder, what codger is that? and what is he doing here?" was Mrs. Noah's exclamation, as she dropped the bit of salsify she was scraping, and hurrying to the door, called out: "I say, you, sir, what made you drive up here, when I've said over and over again, that I wouldn't have wheels tearing up turf and gravel?"

"I—I beg your pardon. I lost my way, I guess, there was so many turnin's, I'm sorry, but a little rain will fetch it right," grandpa said, glancing ruefully at the ruts in the gravel and the marks on the turf.

Mrs. Noah was not at heart an unkind woman, and something in the benignant expression of grandpa's face, or in the apologetic tone of his voice, mollified her somewhat, and without further comment she stood waiting for his next remark. It was a most unfortunate one, for though as free from weakness as most of her sex, Mrs. Noah was terribly sensitive as to her age, and the same census-taker would never venture twice within her precincts. Glancing at her dress, which was this leisure afternoon much smarter than usual, grandpa concluded she could not be a servant; and as she seemed to have a right to say where he should drive and where he should not, the meek old man concluded she was a near relation of Guy—mother, perhaps; but no, Guy's mother was dead, as grandpa well knew, for all Devonshire had heard of the young bride Agnes, who had married Guy's father for money and rank. To have been mistaken for Guy's mother would not have offended Mrs. Noah particularly; but how was she shocked when Grandpa Markham said:

"I come on business with Squire Guy. Are you his gran'marm?" "His gran'marm!" and Mrs. Noah bit off the last syllable spitefully. "Bless you, man, Squire Guy, as you call him, is twenty-five years old."

As Grandpa Markham was rather blind, he failed to see the point, but knew that in some way he had given offense.

"I beg your pardon, ma'am; I was sure you was some kin—maybe an a'nt."

No, she was not even that; but willing enough to let the old man believe her a lady of the Remington order, she did not explain that she was simply the housekeeper, she simply said:

"If it's Mr. Guy you want, I can tell you he is not at home, which will save your getting out."

"Not at home, and I've come so far to see him!" grandpa exclaimed, and in his voice there was so much genuine disappointment that Mrs. Noah rejoined, quite kindly:

"He's gone over to Devonshire with the young lady his stepmother. Perhaps you might tell your business to me; I know all Mr. Guy's affairs."

"If I might come in, ma'am," he answered, meekly, as through the open door he caught glimpses of a cheerful fire. "It's mighty chilly for such as me." He did look cold and blue, Mrs. Noah thought, and she bade him come in, feeling a very little contempt for the old-fashioned camlet cloak in which his feet became entangled, and smiling inwardly at the shrunken, faded pantaloons, betokening poverty.

"As you know all Squire Guy's affairs," grandpa said, when he was seated before the fire, "maybe you could tell whether he would be likely to lend a stranger three hundred dollars, and that stranger me?"

Mrs. Noah stared at him aghast. Was he crazy, or did he mean to insult her master? Evidently neither. He seemed as sane as herself, while no one could associate an insult with him. He did not know anything. That was the solution of his audacity, and pityingly, as she would have addressed a half idiot, Mrs. Noah made him understand how impossible it was for him to think her master would lend to a stranger like him.

"You say he's gone to Devonshire," grandpa said, softly, with a quiver on his lip when she had finished. "I wish I'd knew it; I left my granddarter there to be examined. Mabby I'll meet him going back, and can ask him."

“I tell you it won’t be no use. Mr. Guy has no three hundred dollars to throw away,” was Mrs. Noah’s rather sharp rejoinder.

“Wall, wall, we won’t quarrel about it,” the old man replied, in his most conciliatory manner, as he turned his head away to hide the starting tear.

Grandfather Markham’s heart was very sore, and Mrs. Noah’s harshness troubled him. He could not bear to think that she really was cross with him, besides that he wanted something to carry Maddy besides disappointment, so by way of testing Mrs. Noah’s amiability and pleasing Maddy, too, he said, as he arose: “I’m an old man, lady, old enough to be your father.” Here Mrs. Noah’s face grew brighter, and she listened attentively while he continued: “You won’t take what I say amiss, I’m sure. I have a little girl at home, a grandchild, who has heard big stories of the fine things at Aikenside. She has a hankerin’ after such vanities, and it would please her mightily to have me tell her what I saw up here, so maybe you wouldn’t mind lettin’ me go into that big room where the silk fixin’s are. I’ll take off my shoes, if you say so.”

“Your shoes won’t hurt an atom; come right along,” Mrs. Noah replied, now in the best of moods, for, except her cup of green tea with raspberry jam and cream, she enjoyed nothing more than showing their handsome house.

Conducting him through the wide, marbled hall, she ushered him into the drawing-room, where for a time he stood perfectly bewildered. It was his first introduction to rosewood, velvet, and brocatelle, and it seemed to him as if he had suddenly been transported to fairy-land.

“Maddy would like this—it’s her nature,” he whispered, advancing a step or two, and setting down his feet as softly as if stepping on eggs.

Happening to lift his eyes before one of the long mirrors, he spied himself, wondering much what that “queer-looking chap” was doing there in the midst of so much elegance, and why Mrs. Noah did not turn him out! Then mentally asking forgiveness for this flash of pride, and determined to make amends, he bowed low to the figure in the glass, which bowed as low in return, but did not reply to the very good-natured remark: “How d’ye do—pretty well, to-day?”

There was a familiar look about the round cape of the camlet cloak, and Grandpa Markham’s face turned crimson as the truth burst upon him.

“How ’shamed of me Maddy would be,” he thought, glancing sidewise at Mrs. Noah, who had witnessed the blunder, and was now looking from the window to hide her laughter.

Grandpa believed she did not see him, and comforted with that assurance, he began to remark upon the mirror, saying “it made it appear as if there was two of you,” a remark which Mrs. Noah fully appreciated. He saw the silk chairs, slyly touching one to see if it did feel like the gored, peach-blossom dress worn by his wife forty-two years ago that very spring. Then he tried one of them, examined the rare ornaments, and came near bowing again to the portrait of the first Mrs. Remington, so natural and lifelike it looked standing out from the canvas.

“This will last Maddy a week. I thank you, ma’am. You have added some considerable to the happiness of a young girl, who wouldn’t disgrace even such a room as this,” he said, as he passed into the hall.

Mrs. Noah received his thanks graciously, and led him to the yard, where Sorrel stood waiting for him.

“Odd, but clever as the day is long,” was Mrs. Noah’s comment, as, after seeing him safe out of her yard, she went back to her vegetable oysters boiling on the stove.

Driving at a brisk trot through the grounds, Sorrel was soon out upon the highway; and with spirits exhilarated by thoughts of going home, he kept up the trot until, turning a sudden corner, his master saw the carriage from Aikenside approaching at a rapid rate. The driver, Paul, saw him too, but scorning to give half the road to such as Sorrel and the square-boxed wagons, he kept steadily on, while Grandpa Markham, determined to speak with Guy, reined his horse a little nearer, raising his hand in token that the negro should stop. As a natural consequence, the wheels of the two vehicles became interlocked, and as the powerful grays were more than a match for Sorrel, the front wheel of Grandpa Markham’s wagon was wrenched off, and the old man precipitated to the ground; which, fortunately for him, was in that locality covered with sand banks, so that he was only stunned for an instant, and thus failed to hear the insolent negro’s remark: “Served you right, old cove; might of turned out for gentlemen;” neither did he see the sudden flashing of Guy

Remington's eye, as, leaping from his carriage, he seized the astonished African by the collar, and, hurling him from the box, demanded what he meant by serving an old man so shameful a trick and then insulting him.

All apology and regret, the cringing driver tried to make some excuse, but Guy stopped him short, telling him to see how much the wagon was damaged, while he ran to the old man, who had recovered from the first shock and was trying to extricate himself from the folds of his camlet cloak. Nearby was a blacksmith's shop, and thither Guy ordered his driver to take the broken-down wagon with a view to getting it repaired.

"Tell him I want it done at once." he said, authoritatively, as if he well knew his name carried weight with it; then, turning to grandpa, he asked again if he were hurt.

"No, not specially—jolted my old bones some. You are very kind, sir," grandpa replied, brushing the dust from his pantaloons and then involuntarily grasping Guy's arm for support, as his weak knees began to tremble from the effects of excitement and fright.

"That darky shall rue this job," Guy said, savagely, as he gazed pityingly upon the shaky old creature beside him. "I'll discharge him to-morrow."

"No, young man. Don't be rash. He'll never do't again; and sprigs like him think they've a right to make fun of old codgers like me," was grandpa's meek expostulation.

"Do, pray, Guy, how long must we wait here?" Agnes asked, impatiently, leaning back in the carriage and partially drawing her veil over her face as she glanced at Grandpa Markham, but a look from Guy silenced her; and turning again to grandpa, he asked:

"What did you say? You have been to Aikenside to see me?"

"Yes, and I was sorry to miss you. I—I—it makes me feel awkward to tell you, but I wanted to borrow some money, and I didn't know nobody as likely to have it as you. That woman up to your house said she knowed you wouldn't let me have it, 'cause you hadn't it to spare. Mebby you haven't," and grandpa waited anxiously for Guy's reply.

Now, Mrs. Noah had a singular influence over her young master, who was in the habit of consulting her with regard to his affairs, and nothing could have been more unpropitious to the success of grandpa's suit than the knowing she disapproved. Beside this, Guy had only the previous week lost a small amount loaned under similar circumstances. Standing silent for a moment, while he buried and reburied his shining patent leather boots in the hills of sand, he said at last: "Candidly, sir, I don't believe I can accommodate you. I am about to make repairs at Aikenside, and have partially promised to loan money on good security to a Mr. Silas Slocum, who, 'if things work right,' as he expressed it, intends building a mill on some property which has come, or is coming, into his hands."

"That's mine—that's mine, my homestead," gasped grandpa, turning white almost as his hair blowing in the April wind. "There's a stream of water on it, and he says if he forecloses and gets it he shall build a mill, and tear our old house down."

Guy was in a dilemma. He had not asked how much Mr. Markham wanted, and as the latter had not told him, he naturally concluded it a much larger sum than it really was, and did not care just then to lend it.

"I tell you what I'll do," he said, after a little. "I'll drop Slocum a note to-night saying I've changed my mind, and shall not let him have the money. Perhaps, then, he won't be so anxious to foreclose, and will give you time to look among your friends."

Guy laid a little emphasis on that last word, and looking up quickly grandpa was about to say: "I am not so much a stranger as you think. I knew your father well;" but he checked himself with the thought: "No, that will be too much like begging pay for a deed of mercy done years ago." So Guy never suspected that the old man before him had once laid his sire under a debt of gratitude. The more he reflected the less inclined he was to lend the money, and as grandpa was too timid to urge his needs, the result was that when at last the wheel was replaced, and Sorrel again trotting on toward Devonshire, he drew after him a sad, heavy heart, and not once until the village was reached did he hear the cheery chuckle with which his kind master was wont to encourage him.

"Poor Maddy! I dread tellin' her the most, she was so sure," grandpa whispered, as he stopped before the office door, where Maddy waited for him.

But Maddy's disappointment was keener than his own, and so after the sorrowful words, "and I failed, too," he bent himself to comfort the poor

child, who, leaning her throbbing head against his shoulder, sobbed bitterly, as in the soft spring twilight they drove back to the low red cottage where grandma waited for them.

CHAPTER V.
THE RESULT.

It was Farmer Green's new buggy and Farmer Green's bay colt which, three days later than this, stopped before Dr. Holbrook's office. Not the square-boxed wagon, with old Sorrel attached; the former was standing quietly in the chip-yard behind the low red house, while the latter with his nose over the barnyard fence, neighing occasionally, as if he missed the little hands which had daily fed him the oatmeal he liked so much, and which now lay hot and parched and helpless upon the white counterpane Grandma Markham had spun and woven herself. Maddy might have been just as sick as she was if the examination had never occurred, but it was natural for those who loved her to impute it all to the effects of excitement and cruel disappointment, so there was something like indignation mingling with the sorrow gnawing at the hearts of the old couple as they watched by their fever-stricken darling. Farmer Green, too, shared the feeling, and numerous at first were his mental animadversions against that "prig of a Holbrook." But when Maddy grew so bad as not to know him or his wife, he laid aside his prejudices, and suggested to Grandpa Markham that Dr. Holbrook be sent for.

"He's great on fevers," he said, "and is good on curin' sick folks," so, though he would have preferred some one else should have been called, confidence in the young doctor's skill won the day, and grandpa consented.

This, then, was the errand of Farmer Green, and with his usual bluntness, he said to the recreant doctor, who chanced to be at home:

"Wall, you nigh about killed our little Madge t'other day, when you refused the stifficut, and now we want you to cure her."

The doctor looked up in surprise, but Farmer Green soon explained his meaning, making out a most aggravated case, and representing Maddy as wild with delirium.

"Keeps talkin' about the big books, the Latin and the Hebrew, and even the Catechism, as if such like was 'lowed in our school. I s'pose you didn't know no better; but if Maddy dies, you'll have it to answer for, I reckon."

The doctor did not try to excuse himself, but hastily took down the medicines he thought he might need, and stowed them carefully away. He had expected to hear from that examination, but not in this way, and rather nervously he made some inquiries, as to how long she had been ill, and so forth.

Maddy's case lost nothing by Mr. Green's account, and by the time the doctor's horse was ready, and he on his way to the cottage, he had arrived at the conclusion that of all the villainous men outside the walls of the State's prison, he was the most villainous, and Guy Remington next.

What a cozy little chamber it was where Maddy lay, just such a room as a girl like her might be supposed to occupy, and the bachelor doctor felt like treading upon forbidden ground as he entered the room so rife with girlish habits, from the fairy slippers hung on a peg, to the fanciful little workbox made of cones and acorns. Maddy was asleep, and sitting down beside her, he asked that the shawl which had been pinned across the window might be removed so that he could see her, and thus judge better of her condition. They took the shawl away, and the sunlight came streaming in, disclosing to the doctor's view the face never before seen distinctly, or thought about, if seen. It was ghastly pale, save where the hot blood seemed bursting through the cheeks, while the beautiful brown hair was brushed back from the brow where the veins were swollen and full. The lips were slightly apart, and the hot breath came in quick, panting gasps, while occasionally a faint moan escaped them, and once the doctor heard, or thought he heard, the sound of his own name. One little dimpled hand lay upon the bedspread, but the doctor did not touch it. Ordinarily he would have grasped it as readily as if it had been a piece of marble, but the sight of Maddy, lying there so sick, and the fearing he had helped to bring her where she was, awoke to life a curious state of feeling with regard to her, making him almost as nervous as on the day when she appeared before him as candidate No. 1.

"Feel her pulse, doctor; they are faster most than you can count," Grandma Markham whispered; and thus entreated, the doctor took the soft hand in his own, its touch sending through his frame a thrill such as the touch of no other hand had ever sent.

Somehow the act reassured him. All fear of Maddy vanished, leaving behind only an intense desire to help, if possible, the young girl whose fingers seemed to cling around his own as he felt for and found the rapid pulse.

"If she could awaken," he said, laying the hand softly down and placing his other upon her forehead, where the great sweat drops lay.

And, after a time, Maddy did awaken, but in the eyes fixed, for a moment, so intently on him, there was no look of recognition, and the doctor was half glad that it was so. He did not wish her to associate him with her late disastrous disappointment; he would rather she should think of him as some one come to cure her, for cure her he would, he said to himself, as he gazed into her childish face and thought how sad it was for such as she to die. When first he entered the cottage he had been struck with the extreme plainness of the furniture, betokening that wealth had not there an abiding place, but now he forgot everything except the sick girl, who grew more and more restless, talking of him and the Latin verb which meant "to love," she said, and which was not in the grammar.

"Guy was a fool and I was a brute," the doctor muttered, as he folded up the bits of paper whose contents he hoped might do much toward saving Maddy's life.

Then, promising to come again, he rode rapidly away, to visit other patients, who, that afternoon, were in danger of being sadly neglected, so constantly was their young physician's mind dwelling upon the little, low-walled chamber where Maddy Clyde was lying. As night closed in she knew them all, and heard that Dr. Holbrook had been there prescribing for her. Turning her face to the wall, she seemed to be thinking; then, calling her grandmother to her, she whispered: "Did he smooth my hair back and say, 'poor child?'"

Her grandmother hardly thought he did, though she was not in the room all the time, she said. "He had stayed a long while and was greatly interested."

Maddy had a vague remembrance of such an incident, and in her heart forgave the doctor for his rejection, thinking only how handsome he had looked, even while tormenting her with such unheard of questions, and how kind he was to her now. The sight of her grandfather awakened a new train of ideas, and bidding him to sit beside her, she asked if their home must be sold. Maddy was not to be put off with an evasion, and so grandpa told her honestly at last that Slocum would foreclose, but not while she was sick; he had been seen that day by Mr. Green, and had promised so much forbearance.

This was the last rational conversation held with Maddy for many a week, and when next morning the doctor came, there was a look of deep anxiety upon his face as he watched the alarming symptoms of his delirious patient, who talked incessantly, not of the examination now, but of the mortgage and the foreclosure, begging the doctor to see that the house was not sold, to tell them she was earning thirty-six dollars by teaching school, that Beauty should be sold to save their dear old home. All this was strange at first to the doctor, but the rather voluble Mrs. Green, who had come to Grandma Markham's relief, enlightened him, dwelling with a kind of malicious pleasure upon the fact that Maddy's earnings, had she been permitted to get a "stifficut," were to be appropriated toward paying the debt.

If the doctor had hated himself the previous day when he from the red cottage gate, he hated himself doubly now as he went dashing down the road, determined to resign his office of school inspector that very day. And he did.

Summoning around him those who had been most active in electing him, he refused to officiate again, assuring them that if any more candidates came he should either turn them from his door or give them a certificate without asking a question.

"Put anybody you like in my place," he said; "anybody but Guy Remington. Don't for thunder's sake take him."

There was no probability of this, as Guy lived in another town, and could not have officiated had he wished. But the doctor was too much excited to reason upon anything save Madeline Clyde's case. That he perfectly understood; and during the next few weeks his other patients waited many times in vain for his coming, while he sat by Maddy's side watching every change, whether for the worse or better. Even Agnes Remington was totally neglected; and so one day she sent Guy down to Devonshire to say that as Jessie seemed more than usually delicate, she wished the doctor to take her under his charge and visit her at least once

a week. The doctor was not at home, but Tom said he expected him every moment. So seating himself in the armchair, Guy waited until he came.

"Well, Hal," he began, jocosely, but the joking words he would have uttered next died on his lips as he noticed the strange look of excitement and anxiety on the doctor's face. "What is it?" he asked. "Are all your patients dead?"

"Guy," and the doctor came closely to him, whispering huskily, "you and I are murderers in the first degree. Yes; and both deserve to be hung. Do you remember that Madeline Clyde whom you insulted with your logic and Latin verbs? She'd set her heart on that certificate. She wanted the money, not for new gowns and fooleries mind, but to help her old grandfather pay his debts. His place is mortgaged. I don't understand it; but he asked some old hunks to lend him the money, and the miserly rascal, whoever he was, refused. I wish I had it. I'd give it to him out and out. But that's nothing to do with the girl—Maddy they call her. The disappointment killed her, and she's dying—is raving crazy—and keeps talking of that confounded examination. I tell you, Guy, my inward parts get terribly mixed up when I hear her talk, and my heart thumps like a trip-hammer. That's the reason I have not been up to Aikenside. I wouldn't leave Maddy so long as there was hope. I did not tell them this morning. I couldn't make that poor couple feel worse than they are feeling; but when I looked at her, tossing from side to side and picking at the bedclothes, I knew it would soon be over—that when I saw her again the poor little arms would be still enough and the bright eyes shut forever. Guy, I couldn't see her die—I don't like to see anybody die, but her, Maddy, of all others—and so I came away. If you stay long enough, you'll hear the bell toll, I reckon. There is none at Honedale Church, which they attend. They are Episcopalians, you see, and so they'll come up here, maybe. I hope I shall be deafer than an adder."

Here the doctor stopped, wholly out of breath, while Guy for a moment sat without speaking a single word. Jessie, in his hearing, had told her mother what the sick girl in the doctor's office had said about being poor and wanting the money for grandpa, while Mrs. Noah had given him a rather exaggerated account of Mr. Markham's visit; but he had not associated the two together until now, when he saw the whole, and almost as much as the doctor himself regretted the part he had had in Maddy's illness and her grandfather's distress.

"Doc," he said, laying his hand on the doctor's arm, "I am that old hunks, the miserly rascal who refused the money. I met the old man going home that day, and he asked me for help. You say the place must be sold. It never shall, never. I'll see to that, and you must save the girl."

"I can't, Guy. I've done all I can, and now, if she lives, it will be wholly owing to the prayers that old saint of a grandfather says for her. I never thought much of these things until I heard him pray; not that she should live anyway, but that if it were right Maddy might not die. Guy, there's something in such a prayer as that. It's more powerful than all my medicine swallowed at one grand gulp."

Guy didn't know very much about praying then, and so he did not respond, but he thought of Lucy Atherstone, whose life was one hymn of prayer and praise, and he wished she could know of Maddy, and join her petitions with those of the grandfather. Starting suddenly from his chair, he exclaimed, "I'm going down there. It will look queerly, too, to go alone. Ah, I have it! I'll drive back to Aikenside for Jessie, who has talked so much of the girl that her lady mother, forgetting that she was once a teacher, is disgusted. Yes, I'll take Jessie with me, but you must order it; you must say it is good for her to ride, and, Hal, give me some medicine for her, just to quiet Agnes, no matter what, provided it's not strychnine."

Contrary to Guy's expectations, Agnes did not refuse to let Jessie go for a ride, particularly as she had no suspicion where he intended taking her, and the little girl was soon seated by her brother's side, chatting merrily of the different things they passed upon the road. But when Guy told her where they were going, and why they were going there, the tears came at once into her eyes, and hiding her face in Guy's lap she sobbed bitterly.

"I did like her so much that day," she said, "and she looked so sorry, too. It's terrible to die!"

Then she plied Guy with questions concerning Maddy's probable future. "Would she go to heaven, sure?" and When Guy answered at random, "Yes," she asked, "How did he know? Had he heard that Maddy was that kind of good which lets folks in heaven? Because, Brother Guy," and the little preacher nestled closely to the young man, fingering his coat buttons as she talked, "because, Brother Guy, folks can be good—

that is, not do naughty things—and still God won't love them unless they —I don't know what, I wish I did."

Guy drew her nearer to him, but to that childish yearning for knowledge he could not respond, so he said:

"Who taught you all this, little one?—not your mother, surely."

"No, not mamma, but Miriam, the waiting-maid we left in Boston. She told me about it, and taught me to pray different from mamma. Do you pray, Brother Guy?"

The question startled the young man, who was glad his coachman spoke to him just then, asking if he should drive through Devonshire village, or go direct to Honedale by a shorter route.

They would go to the village, Guy said, hoping that thus the doctor might be persuaded to accompany them. This diverted Jessie's mind, and she said no more of praying; but the first tiny grain was sown, the mustard seed, which should hereafter spring up into a mighty tree, the indirect result of Maddy's disappointment and almost fatal illness. They found the doctor at home and willing to go with them. Indeed, so impatient had he become listening for the first stroke of the bell which was to herald the death he deemed so sure, that he was on the point of mounting his horse and galloping off alone, when Guy's invitation came. It was five miles from Devonshire to Honedale, and when they reached a hill which lay halfway between, they stopped for a few moments to rest the tired horses. Suddenly, as they sat waiting, a sharp, ringing sound fell on their ears, and grasping Guy's knee, the doctor said, "I told you so; Madeline Clyde is dead."

It was the village bell, and its twice three strokes betokened that it tolled for somebody youthful, somebody young, like Maddy Clyde. Jessie wept silently, but there were no tears in the eyes of the young men, as with beating hearts they sat listening to the slow, solemn sounds which came echoing up the hill. There was a pause; the sexton's dirgelike task was done, and now it only remained for him to strike the age, and tell how many years the departed one had numbered.

"One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten;" Jessie counted it aloud, while every stroke fell like a heavy blow upon the hearts of the young men, who a few weeks ago, knew not that such as Maddy Clyde had ever had existence.

How long it seemed before another stroke, and Guy was beginning to hope they'd heard the last, when again the dull, muffled sound came floating on the air, and Dr. Holbrook's black, bearded lip half quivered as he now counted aloud, "one, two, three, four, five."

That was all; there it stopped; and vain were all their listenings to catch another note. Fifteen years, and only fifteen had passed over the form now forever still.

"She was fifteen," Guy whispered, remembering distinctly to have heard that number from Maddy herself.

"I thought they told me fourteen, but of course it's she," the doctor rejoined. "Poor child, I would have given much to have saved her."

Jessie did not talk; only once, when she asked Guy, if it was very far to heaven, and if he supposed Maddy had got there by this time.

"We'll go just the same," said Guy. "I will do what I can for the old man;" and so the carriage drove on, down the hill, across the meadow-land, and past a low-roofed house whose walls inclosed the stiffened form of him for whom the bell had tolled, the boy, fifteen years of age, who had been the patient of another than Dr. Holbrook.

Maddy was not dead, but the paroxysm of restlessness had passed, and she lay now in a heavy sleep so nearly resembling death that they who watched, waited expectantly to see the going out of her last breath. Never before had a carriage like that from Aikenside stopped at that humble cottage, but the neighbors thought it came merely to bring the doctor, whom they welcomed with a glad smile, making a way for him to pass to Maddy's bedside. Guy preferred waiting in the carriage until such time as Grandpa Markham could speak with him, but Jessie went with the doctor into the sick room, startling even the grandmother, and causing her to wonder who the richly-dressed child could be.

"Dying, doctor," said one of the women, affirmatively, not interrogatively; but the doctor shook his head, and holding in one hand his watch he counted the faint pulse beats as with his eye he measured off the minute.

"There are too many here," he said. "She needs the air you are breathing," and in his singular, authoritative way, he cleared the crowded room of the mistaken friends who were unwittingly breathing

up Maddy's very life.

All but the grandparents and Jessie; these he suffered to remain, and sitting down by Maddy, watched till the long sleep was ended. Silently and earnestly the aged couple prayed for their darling, asking that if possible she might be spared, and God heard their prayers, lifting, at last, the heavy fog from Maddy's brain, and waking her to life and partial consciousness. It was Jessie who first caught the expression of the opening eyes, and darting forward, she exclaimed, "She's waked up, Dr. Holbrook. She will live."

Wonderingly Maddy looked at her, and then as a confused recollection of where they had met before crossed her mind, she smiled faintly, and said:

"Where am I now? Have I never come home, and is this Dr. Holbrook's office?"

"No, no; it's home, your home, and you are getting well," Jessie cried, bending over the bewildered girl. "Dr. Holbrook has cured you, and Guy is here, and I, and—"

"Hush, you disturb her," the doctor said, gently pulling Jessie away, and himself asking Maddy how she felt.

She did not recognize him. She only had a vague idea that he might be some doctor, but not Dr. Holbrook, sure; not the one who had so puzzled and tortured her on a day which seemed now so far behind. From the white-haired man kneeling by the bedside there was a burst of thanksgiving for the life restored, and then Grandpa Markham tottered from the room, out into the open air, which had never fallen so refreshingly on his tried frame as it fell now, when he first knew that Maddy would live. He did not care for his homestead; that might go, and he still be happy with Maddy left. But He who had marked that true disciple's every sigh, had another good in store, willing it so that both should come together, even as the two disappointments had come hand in hand.

From the soft cushions of his carriage, where he sat reclining, Guy Remington saw the old man as he came out, and alighting at once, he accosted him pleasantly, and then walked with him to the garden, where, on a rustic bench, built for Maddy beneath the cherry trees, Grandpa Markham sat down to rest. From speaking of Madeline it was easy to go back to the day when Guy had first met grandpa, whose application for money he had refused.

"I have thought better of it since," he said, "and am sorry I did not accede to your proposal. One object of my coming here to-day was to say that my purse is at your disposal. You can have as much as you wish, paying me whenever you like, and the house shall not be sold. Slocum, I understand, holds the mortgage. I will see him to-morrow and stop the whole proceeding."

Guy spoke rapidly, determined to make a clean breast of it, but grandpa understood him, and bowing his white head upon his bosom, the big tears dropped like rain upon the turf, while his lips quivered, first with thanks to the Providence who had truly done all things well, and next with thanks to his benefactor.

"Blessings on your head, young man, for making me so happy. You are worthy of your father, and he was the best of men."

"My father—did you know him?" Guy asked, in some surprise, and then the story came out, how, years before, when a city hotel was on fire, and one of its guests in imminent danger from the locality of his room, and his own nervous fear which made him powerless to act, another guest braved fearlessly the hissing flame, and scaling the tottering wall, dragged out to life and liberty one who, until that hour, was to him an utter stranger.

Pushing back his snowy hair, Grandfather Markham showed upon his temple a long, white scar, obtained the night when he periled his own life to save that of another. There was a doubly warm pressure now of the old man's hand, as Guy replied, "I've heard that story from father himself, but the name of his preserver had escaped me. Why didn't you tell me who you were?"

"I thought 'twould look too much like demanding it as a right—too much like begging, and I s'pose I felt too proud. Pride is my besetting sin —the one I pray most against."

Guy looked keenly now at the man whose besetting sin was pride, and as he marked the cheapness of his attire, his pantaloons faded and short, his coat worn threadbare and shabby, his shoes both patched at the toes, his cotton shirt minus a bosom, and then thought of the humble cottage, with its few rocky acres, he wondered of what he could be proud.

Meantime, for Maddy, Dr. Holbrook had prescribed perfect quiet, bidding them darken again the window from which the shade had been removed, and ordering all save the grandmother to leave the room and let the patient sleep, if possible. Even Jessie was not permitted to stay, though Maddy clung to her as to a dear friend. In a few whispered words Jessie had told her name, saying she came from Aikenside, and that her Brother Guy was there, too, outdoors, in the carriage. “He heard how sick you were at Devonshire, this morning, and drove right home for me to come to see you. I told him of you that day in the office, and that’s why he brought me, I guess. You’ll like Guy. I know all the girls do—he’s so good.”

Sick and weary as she was, and unable as yet to comprehend the entire meaning of all she heard, Maddy was conscious of a thrill of pride in knowing that Guy Remington, from Aikenside, was interested in her, and had brought his sister to see her. Winding her feeble arms around Jessie’s neck, she kissed the soft, warm cheek, and said, “You’ll come again, I hope.”

“Yes, every day, if mamma will let me. I don’t mind it a bit, if you are poor.”

“Tut, tut, little tattler!” and Dr. Holbrook, who, unseen by the children, had all the while been standing near, took Jessie by the arm. “What makes you think them poor?”

In the closely-shaded room Maddy could see nothing distinctly, but she heard Jessie’s reply: “Because the plastering comes down so low, and Maddy’s pillows are so teenty, not much bigger than my dolly’s. But I love her; don’t you doctor?”

Through the darkness the doctor caught the sudden flash of Maddy’s eyes, and something impelled him to lay his cool, broad hand on her forehead, as he replied, “I love all my patients;” then, taking Jessie’s arm, he led her out to where Guy was waiting for her.

CHAPTER VI.
CONVALESCENCE.

Had it not been for the presence of Dr. Holbrook, who, accepting Guy's invitation to tea, rode back with him to Aikenside, Mrs. Agnes would have gone off into a passion when told that Jessie had been "exposed to fever and mercy knows what."

"There's no telling what one will catch among the very poor," she said to Dr. Holbrook, as she clasped and unclasped the heavy gold bracelets flashing on her white, round arm.

"I'll be answerable for any disease Jessie caught at Mr. Markham's," the doctor replied.

"At Mr. Who's? What did you call him?" Agnes asked, the bright color on her cheek fading as the doctor replied:

"Markham—an old man who lives in Honedale. You never knew him, of course."

Involuntarily Agnes glanced at Guy, in whose eye there was, as she fancied, a peculiar expression. Could it be he knew the secret she guarded so carefully? Impossible, she said to herself; but still the white fingers trembled as she handled the china and silver, and for once she was glad when the doctor took his leave, and she was alone with Jessie.

"What was that girl's name?" she asked, "the one you went to see?"

"Maddy, mother—Madeline Clyde. She's so pretty. I'm going to see her again. May I?"

Agnes did not reply directly, but continued to question the child with regard to the cottage which Jessie thought so funny, slanting away back, she said, so that the roof on one side almost touched the ground. The window panes, too, were so very tiny, and the room where Maddy lay sick was small and low.

"Yes, yes, I know," Agnes said at last, impatiently, weary of hearing of the cottage whose humble exterior and interior she knew so much better than Jessie herself.

But this was not to be divulged; for surely the haughty Agnes Remington, who, in Boston, aspired to lead in society into which, as the wife of Dr. Remington, she had been admitted, and who, in Aikenside, was looked upon with envy, could have nothing in common with the red cottage or its inmates. So when Jessie asked again if she could not visit Maddy on the morrow, she answered decidedly: "No, daughter, no. I do not wish you to associate with such people," and when Jessie insisted on knowing why she must not associate with such people as Maddy Clyde, the answer was: "Because you are a Remington," and as if this of itself were of an unanswerable objection, Agnes sent her child from her, refusing to talk longer on a subject so disagreeable to her and so suggestive of the past. It was all in vain that Jessie, and even Guy himself, tried to revoke the decision. Jessie should not be permitted to come in contact with that kind of people, she said, or incur the risk of catching that dreadful fever.

So day after day, while life and health were slowly throbbing through her veins, Maddy waited and longed for the little girl whose one visit to her sick room seemed so much like a dream. From her grandfather she had heard the good news of Guy Remington's generosity, and that, quite as much as Dr. Holbrook's medicines, helped to bring the color back to the pallid cheek and the brightness to her eyes.

She was asleep the first time the doctor came after the occasion of Jessie's visit, and as sleep, he said, would do her more good than anything he might prescribe, he did not awaken her; but for a long time, as it seemed to Grandma Markham, who stood very little in awe of the Boston doctor, he watched her as she slept, now clasping the blue-veined wrist as he felt for the pulse, and now wiping from her forehead the drops of sweat, or pushing back her soft, damp hair. It would be three days before he could see her again, for a sick father in Cambridge needed his attention, and after numerous directions as to the administering of sundry powders and pills, he left her, feeling that the next three days would be long ones to him. Dr. Holbrook did not stop to analyze the nature of his interest in Maddy Clyde—an interest so different from any he had ever felt before for his patients; and even if he had sought to solve the riddle, he would have said that the knowing how he had wronged her was the sole cause of his thinking far more of her and of her case than of the thirty other patients on his list. Dr. Holbrook was a handsome man, a thorough scholar, and a most skillful physician;

but ladies who expected from him those little polite attentions which the sex value so highly generally expected in vain, for he was no ladies' man, and his language and manners were oftentimes abrupt, even when both were prompted by the utmost kindness of heart. In his organization, too, there was not a quick perception of what would be exactly appropriate, and so, when, at last, he was about starting to visit Maddy again, he puzzled his brains until they fairly ached with wondering what he could do to give her a pleasant surprise and show that he was not as formidable a personage as her past experience might lead her to think.

"If I could only take her something," he said, glancing ruefully around his office. "Now, if she were Jessie, nuts and raisins might answer—but she must not eat such trash as that," and he set himself to think again, just as Guy Remington rode up, bearing in his hand a most exquisite bouquet, whose fragrance filled the medicine-odored office at once, and whose beauty elicited an exclamation of delight even from the matter-of-fact Dr. Holbrook.

"I thought you might be going down to Honedale, as I knew you returned last night, so I brought these flowers for your patient with my compliments, or if you prefer I give them to you, and you can thus present them as if coming from yourself."

"As if I would do that," the doctor answered, taking the bouquet in his hand the better to examine and admire it. "Did you arrange it, or your gardener?" he asked, and when Guy replied that the merit of arrangement, if merit there were, belonged to himself, he began to deprecate his own awkwardness and want of tact. "Here I have been cudgeling my head this half hour trying to think what I could take her as a peace offering, and could think of nothing, while you—Well, you and I are different entirely. You know just what is proper—just what to say, and when to say it—while I am a perfect bore, and without doubt shall make some ludicrous blunder in delivering the flowers. To-day will be the first time really that we meet, as she was sleeping when I was there last, while on all other occasions she has paid no attention whatever to me."

For a moment Guy regarded his friend attentively, noticing now that extra care had been bestowed upon his toilet, that the collar was fresh from the laundry, and the new cravat tied in a most unexceptionable manner, instead of being twisted into a hard knot, with the ends looking as if they had been chewed.

"Doc," he said, when his survey was completed, "how old are you—twenty-five or twenty-six?"

"Twenty-five—just your age—why?" and the doctor looked with an expression so wholly innocent of Guy's real meaning that the latter, instead of telling why, replied:

"Oh! nothing; only I was wondering if you would do to be my father. Agnes, I verily believe, is more than half in love with you; but, on the whole, I would not like to be your son; so I guess you'd better take some one younger—say Jessie. You are only eighteen years her senior."

The doctor stared at him amazed, and when he had finished said with the utmost candor: "What has that to do with Madeline? I thought we were talking of her." "Innocent as the newly-born babe," was Guy's mental comment, as he congratulated himself on his larger and more varied experience.

And truly Dr. Holbrook was as simple-hearted as a child, never dreaming of Guy's meaning, or that any emotion save a perfectly proper one had a lodgment in his breast as he drove down to Honedale, guarding carefully Guy's bouquet, and wishing he knew just what he ought to say when he presented it.

Maddy had gained rapidly the last three days. Good nursing and the doctor's medicines were working miracles, and on the morning when the doctor, with Guy's bouquet, was riding rapidly toward Honedale, she was feeling so much better that in view of his coming she asked if she could not be permitted to receive him sitting in the rocking-chair, instead of lying there in bed, and when this plan was vetoed as utterly impossible, she asked, anxiously:

"And must I see him in this nightgown? Can't I have on my pink gingham wrapper?"

Hitherto Maddy had been too sick to care at all about her personal appearance, but it was different now. She did care, and thoughts of meeting again the handsome, stylish-looking man who had asked her to conjugate *amo* and whom she fully believed to be Dr. Holbrook, made her rather nervous. Dim remembrances she had of some one gliding in

and out, and when the pain and noise in her head was at its highest, a hand, large, and, oh! so cool had been laid upon her temples, quieting their throbbings and making the blood course less madly through the swollen veins. They had told her how kind, how attentive he had been, and to herself she had said: “He’s sorry about that certificate. He wishes to show me that he did not mean to be unkind. Yes; I forgive him: for I really was very stupid that afternoon.”

And so, in a most forgiving frame of mind, Maddy submitted to the snowy robe which grandma brought in place of the coveted gingham wrapper, and which became her well, with its daintily-crimped ruffles about the neck and wrists. Those wrists and hands! How white and small they had grown! and Maddy sighed, as her grandmother buttoned together the wristbands, to see how loose it was.

“I have been very sick,” she said. “Are my cheeks as thin as my arms?”

They were not, though they had lost some of their symmetrical roundness. Still there was much of childish beauty in the young, eager face, and the hair had lost comparatively none of its glossy brightness.

“That’s him,” grandma said, as the sound of a horse’s gallop was heard, and in a moment the doctor reined up before the gate.

From Mrs. Markham, who met him in the door, he learned how much better she was; also how “she has been reckoning on this visit, making herself all a-sweat about it.”

Suddenly the doctor felt returning all his old dread of Maddy Clyde. Why should she wrong herself into a sweat? What was there in that visit different from any other? Nothing, he said to himself, nothing; and yet he, too, had been more anxious about it than any he had ever paid. Depositing his hat and gloves upon the table, he followed Mrs. Markham up the stairs, vaguely conscious of wishing she would stay down, and very conscious of feeling glad; when just at Maddy’s door and opposite a little window, she espied the hens busily engaged in devouring the yeast cakes, with which she had taken so much pains, and which she had placed in the hot sun to dry. Finding that they paid no heed to her loud “Shoo, shoos,” she started herself to drive them away, telling the doctor to go right on and to help himself.

The perspiration was standing under Maddy’s hair by this time, and when the doctor stepped across the threshold, and she knew he really was coming near her, it oozed out upon her forehead in big, round drops, while her cheeks glowed with a feverish heat. Thinking he should get along with it better if he treated her just as he would Jessie, the doctor confronted her at once, and asked:

“How is my little patient to-day?”

A faint scream broke from Maddy’s lips, and she involuntarily raised her hands to thrust the stranger away. This black-eyed, black-haired, thick-set man was not Dr. Holbrook, for he was taller, and more slight, while she had not been deceived in the dark brown eyes which, even while they seemed to be mocking her, had worn a strange fascination for the maiden of fourteen and a half. The doctor fancied her delirious again, and this reassured him at once. Dropping the bouquet upon the bed, he clasped one of her hands in his, and without the slightest idea that she comprehended him, said, soothingly:

“Poor child, are you afraid of me—the doctor, Dr. Holbrook?” Maddy did not try to withdraw her hand, but raising her eyes, swimming in tears, to his face, she stammered out:

“What does it mean, and where is he—the one who—asked me—those dreadful questions? I thought that was Dr. Holbrook.”

Here was a dilemma—something for which the doctor was not prepared, and with a feeling that he would not betray Guy, he said:

“No; that was some one else—a friend of mine—but I was there in the back office. Don’t you remember me? Please don’t grow excited. Compose yourself, and I will explain all by and by. This is wrong. ’Twill never do,” and talking thus rapidly he wiped away the sweat, about which grandma had told him.

Maddy was disappointed, and it took her some time to rally sufficiently to convince the doctor that she was not flighty, as he termed it; but composing herself at last, she answered all his questions, and then, as he saw her eyes wandering toward the bouquet, he suddenly remembered that it was not yet presented, and placing it in her hands, he said:

“You like flowers, I know, and these are for you. I——”

“Oh! thank you, thank you, doctor; I am so glad. I love them so much, and you are so kind. What made you think to bring them? I’ve wanted flowers so badly; but I could not have them, because I was sick and did

not work in the garden. It was so good in you," and in her delight Maddy's tears dropped upon the fair blossoms.

For a moment the doctor was sorely tempted to keep the credit thus enthusiastically given; but he was too truthful for that, and so watching her as her eyes glistened with pleased excitement, he said:

"I am glad you like them, Miss Clyde, and so will Mr. Remington be. He sent them to you from his conservatory."

"Not Mr. Remington from Aikenside—not Jessie's brother?" and Maddy's eyes now fairly danced as they sought the doctor's face.

"Yes Jessie's brother. He came here with her. He is interested in you, and brought these down this morning."

"It was Jessie, I guess, who sent them," Maddy suggested, but the doctor persisted that it was Guy.

"He wished me to present them with his compliments. He thought they might please you."

"Oh! they do, they do!" Maddy replied. "They almost make me well. Tell him how much I thank him, and like him too, though I never saw him."

The doctor opened his lips to tell her she had seen him, but changed his mind ere the words were uttered. She might not think as well of Guy, he thought, and there was no harm in keeping it back.

So Maddy had no suspicion that the face she thought of so much belonged to Guy Remington. She had never seen him, of course; but she hoped she would some time, so as to thank him for his generosity to her grandfather and his kindness to herself. Then, as she remembered the message she had sent him, she began to think that it sounded too familiar, and said to the doctor:

"If you please, don't tell Mr. Remington that I said I liked him—only that I thank him. He would think it queer for a poor girl like me to send such word to him. He is very rich, and handsome, and splendid, isn't he?"

"Yes, Guy's rich and handsome, and everybody likes him. We were in college together."

"You were?" Maddy exclaimed. "Then you know him well, and Jessie, and you've been to Aikenside often? There's nothing in the world I want so much as to go to Aikenside. They say it is so beautiful."

"Maybe I'll carry you up there some day when you are strong enough to ride," the doctor answered, thinking of his light buggy at home, and wondering he had not used it more, instead of always riding on horseback.

Dr. Holbrook looked much older than he was, and to Maddy he seemed quite fatherly, so that the idea of riding with him, aside from the honor it might be to her, struck her much as riding with Farmer Green would have done. The doctor, too, imagined that his proposition was prompted solely from disinterested motives, but he found himself wondering how long it would be before Maddy would be able to ride a little distance, just over the hill and back. He was tiring her all out talking to her; but somehow it was very delightful there in that sick room, with the summer sunshine stealing through the window and falling upon the soft reddish-brown head resting on the pillows. Once he fixed those pillows, arranging them so nicely that grandma, who had come in from her hens and yeast cakes, declared "he was as handy as a woman," and after receiving a few general directions with regard to the future, "guessed, if he wasn't in a hurry, she'd leave him with Maddy a spell, as there were a few chores she must do."

The doctor knew that at least a dozen individuals were waiting for him that moment; but still he was in no hurry, he said, and so for half an hour longer he sat there talking of Guy, and Jessie, and Aikenside, and wondering he had never before observed how very becoming a white wrapper was to sick girls like Maddy Clyde. Had he been asked the question, he could not have told whether his other patients were habited in buff, or brown, or tan color; but he knew all about Maddy's garb, and thought the dainty frill around her slender throat the prettiest "puckered piece" that he had ever seen. How, then, was Dr. Holbrook losing his heart to that little girl of fourteen and a half? He did not think so. Indeed, he did not think anything about his heart, though thoughts of Maddy Clyde were pretty constantly with him, as after leaving her he paid his round of visits.

The Aikenside carriage was standing at Mrs. Conner's gate when he returned, and Jessie came running out to meet him, followed by Guy, while Agnes, in the most becoming riding habit, sat by the window

looking as unconcerned at his arrival as if it were not the very event for which she had been impatiently waiting, Jessie was a great pet with the doctor, and, lifting her lightly in his arms, he kissed her forehead where the golden curls were clustering and said to her:

"I have seen Maddy Clyde. She asked for you, and why you do not come to see her, as you promised."

"Mother won't let me," Jessie answered. "She says they are not fit associates for a Remington."

There was a sudden flash of contempt on the doctor's face, and a gleam of wrath in Agnes' eyes as she motioned Jessie to be silent, and then gracefully received the doctor, who by this time was in the room. As if determined to monopolize the conversation, and keep it from turning on the Markhams, Agnes rattled on for nearly fifteen minutes, scarcely allowing Guy a chance for uttering a word. But Guy bided his time, and seized the first favorable opportunity to inquire after Madeline.

She was improving rapidly, the doctor said, adding: "You ought to have seen her delight when I gave her your bouquet."

"Indeed," and Agnes bridled haughtily; "I did not know that Guy was in the habit of sending bouquets to such as this Clyde girl. I really must report him to Miss Atherstone."

Guy's seat was very near to Agnes, and while a cloud overspread his fine features, he said to her in an aside:

"Please say in your report that the worst thing about this Clyde girl is that she aspires to be a teacher, and possibly a governess."

There was an emphasis on the last word which silenced Agnes and set her to beating her French gaiter on the carpet; while Guy, turning back to the doctor, replied to his remark:

"She was pleased, then?"

"Yes; she must be vastly fond of flowers, though I sometimes fancied the fact of being noticed by you afforded almost as much satisfaction as the bouquet itself. She evidently regards you as a superior being, and Aikenside as a second Paradise, and asking innumerable questions about you and Jessie, too."

"Did she honor me with an inquiry?" Agnes asked, her tone indicative of sarcasm, though she was greatly interested as well as relieved by the reply:

"Yes; she said she heard that Jessie's mother was a beautiful woman, and asked if you were not born in England."

"She's mixed me up with Lucy. Guy, you must go down and enlighten her," Agnes said, laughing merrily and appearing more at ease than she had before since Maddy Clyde had been the subject of conversation.

Guy did not go down to Honedale—but fruit and flowers, and once a bottle of rare old wine, found their way to the old red cottage, always brought by Guy's man, Duncan, and always accompanied with Mr. Remington's compliments. Once, hidden among the rosebuds, was a childish note from Jessie, some of it printed and some in the uneven hand of a child just commencing to write.

It was as follows:

> "DEAR MADDY: I think that is such a pretty name, and so does Guy, and so does the doctor, too. I want to come see you, but mamma won't let me. I think of you ever so much, and so does Guy, I guess, for he sends you lots of things. Guy is a nice brother, and is most as old as mamma. Ain't that funny? You know my first ma is dead. The doctor tells us about you when he comes to Aikenside. I wish he'd come oftener, for I love him a bushel—don't you? Yours respectfully,
>
> "JESSIE AGNES REMINGTON.
>
> "P. S.—I am going to tuck this in just for fun, right among the buds, where you must look for it."

This note Maddy read and reread until she knew it by heart, particularly the part relating to Guy. Hitherto she had not particularly liked her name, greatly preferring that it should have been Eliza Ann, or Sarah Jane; but the knowing that Guy Remington fancied it made a vast difference, and did much toward reconciling her. She did not even see the clause, "and the doctor, too." His attentions and concern she took as a matter of course, so quietly and so constantly had they been given. The day was very long now which did not bring him to the cottage; but she

missed him much as she would have missed her brother, if she had had one, though her pulse always quickened and her cheeks glowed when she heard him at the gate. The inner power did not lie deeper than a great friendliness for one who had been instrumental in saving her life. They had talked over the matter of her examination, the doctor blaming himself more than was necessary for his ignorance as to what was required of a teacher; but when she asked who was his proxy, he had again answered, evasively: “A friend from Boston.”

And this he did to shield Guy, whom he knew was enshrined in the little maiden’s heart as a paragon of all excellence.

CHAPTER VII.
THE DRIVE.

Latterly the doctor had taken to driving in his buggy, and when Maddy was strong enough he took her with him one day, himself adjusting the shawl which grandma wrapped around her, and pulling a little farther on the white sunbonnet which shaded the sweet, pale face, where the roses were just beginning to bloom again. The doctor was very happy that morning, and so, too, was Maddy, talking to him upon the theme of which she never tired, Guy Remington, Jessie and Aikenside. Was it as beautiful a place as she had heard it was, and didn't he think it would be delightful to live there?

"I suppose Mr. Guy will be bringing a wife there some day when he finds one," and leaning back in the buggy Maddy heaved a little sigh, not at thoughts of Guy Remington's wife, but because she began to feel tired, and thus gave vent to her weariness.

The doctor, however, did not so construe it. He heard the sigh, and for the first time when listening to her as she talked of Guy, a keen throb of pain shot through his heart, a something as near akin to jealousy as it was possible for him then to feel. But all unused as he was to the workings of love he did not at that moment dream of such an emotion in connection with Madeline Clyde. He only knew that something affected him unpleasantly, prompting him, for some reason, to tell Maddy Clyde about Lucy Atherstone, who, in all probability, would one day come to Aikenside as its mistress.

"Yes, Guy will undoubtedly marry," he began, just as over the top of the easy hill they were ascending horses' heads were visible, and the Aikenside carriage appeared in view. "There he is now," he exclaimed, adding quickly: "No, I am mistaken, there's only a lady inside. It must be Agnes."

It was Agnes driving out alone, for the sole purpose of passing a place which had a singular attraction for her, the old, red cottage in Honedale. She recognized the doctor, and guessed whom he had with him, Putting up her glass, for which she had no more need than Jessie, she scrutinized the little figure bundled up in shawls, while she smiled her sweetest smile upon the doctor, showing to good advantage her white teeth, and shaking back her wealth of curls with the air and manner of a young coquettish girl.

"Oh, what a handsome lady! Who is she?" Maddy asked, turning to look after the carriage now swiftly descending the hill.

"That was Jessie's mother, Mrs. Agnes Remington," the doctor replied. "She'll feel flattered with your compliment."

"I did not mean to flatter. I said what I thought. She is handsome, beautiful, and so young, too. Was that a gold bracelet which flashed so on her arm?"

The doctor presumed it was, though he had not noticed. Gold bracelets were not new to him as they were to Maddy, who continued:

"I wonder if I'll ever wear a bracelet like that?"

"Would you like to?" the doctor asked, glancing at the small white wrist, around which the dark calico sleeve was closely buttoned, and thinking how much prettier and modest-looking it was than Agnes' half-bare arms, where the ornaments were flashing.

"Y-e-s," came hesitatingly from Maddy, who had a strong passion for jewelry. "I guess I would, though grandpa classes all such things with the pomps and vanities which I must renounce when I get to be good."

"And when will that be?" the doctor asked.

Again Maddy sighed, as she replied: "I cannot tell. I thought so much about it while I was sick, that is, when I could think; but now I'm better, it goes away from me some. I know it is wrong, but I cannot help it. I've seen only a bit of pomp and vanity, but I must say that I like what I have seen, and I wish to see more. It's very wicked, I know," she kept on, as she met the queer expression of the doctor's face; "and I know you think me so bad. You are good—a Christian, I suppose?"

There was a strange light in the doctor's eye as he answered, half sadly: "No, Maddy, I am not what you call a Christian, I have not renounced the pomps and vanities yet."

"Oh, I'm so sorry," and Maddy's eyes expressed all the sorrow she professed to feel. "You ought to be, now you've got so old."

The doctor colored crimson, and stopping his horse under the dim

shadow of a maple in a little hollow, he said:

"I'm not so very old, Maddy; only twenty-five—only ten years older than yourself; and Agnes' husband was more than twenty years her senior."

The doctor did not know why he dragged that last in, when it had nothing whatever to do with their conversation; but as the most trivial thing often leads to great results, so far from the pang caused by Maddy's thinking him so old, was born the first real consciousness he had ever had that the little girl beside him was very dear, and that the ten years difference between them might prove a most impassable gulf. With this feeling, it was exceedingly painful for him to hear Maddy's sudden exclamation:

"Oh, oh! over twenty years—that's dreadful. She must be most glad he's dead. I would not marry a man more than five years older than I am."

"Not if you loved him, and he loved you very, very dearly?" the doctor asked, his voice low and tender in its tone.

Wholly unsuspicious of the wild storm beating in his heart, Maddy untied her white sunbonnet, and, taking it in her lap, smoothed back her soft hair, saying, with a long breath: "Oh! I'm so hot," and then, as just thinking of his question, replied: "I shouldn't love him—I couldn't. Grandma is five years younger than grandpa, mother was five years younger than father, Mrs. Green is five years younger than Mr. Green, and, oh! ever so many. You are warm, too; ain't you?" and she turned her innocent eyes full upon the doctor, who was wiping from his lips the great drops of water, induced not so much by the heat as by the apparent hopelessness of the love he now knew was growing in his heart for Maddy Clyde. Recurring again to Agnes, Maddy said: "I wonder why she married that old man? It is worse than if you were to marry Jessie."

"Money and position were the attractions, I imagine," the doctor said. "Agnes was poor, and esteemed it a great honor to be made Mrs. Remington."

"Poor, was she?" Maddy rejoined. "Then maybe Mr. Guy will some day marry a poor girl. Do you think he will?"

Again Lucy Atherstone trembled on the doctor's lips, but he did not speak of her—it was preposterous that Maddy should have any thoughts of Guy Remington, who was quite as old as himself, besides being engaged, and with this comforting assurance the doctor turned his horse in the direction of the cottage, for Maddy was growing tired and needed to be at home.

"Perhaps you'll some time change your mind about people so much older, and if you do you'll remember our talk this morning," he said, as he drove up at last before the gate.

Oh, yes! Maddy would never forget that morning or the nice ride they'd had. She had enjoyed it so much, and she thanked him many times for his kindness, as she stood waiting for him to drive away, feeling no tremor whatever when at parting he took and held her hand, smoothing it gently, and telling her it was growing fat and plump again. He was a very nice doctor, much better than she had imagined, she thought, as she went slowly to the house and entered the neat kitchen, where her grandmother sat shelling peas for dinner, and her grandfather in his leathern chair was whispering over his weekly paper.

"Did you meet a grand lady in a carriage?" grandma asked, as Maddy sat down beside her.

"Yes; and Dr. Holbrook said it was Mrs. Remington, from Aikenside, Mr. Guy's stepmother, and that she was more than twenty years younger than her husband—isn't it dreadful? I thought so; but the doctor didn't seem to," and in a perfectly artless manner Maddy repeated much of the conversation which had passed between the doctor and herself, appealing to her grandma to know if she had not taken the right side of the argument.

"Yes, child, you did," and grandma's hands lingered among the light green peas in her pan, as if she were thinking of an entirely foreign subject. "I knows nothing about this Mrs. Remington, only that she stared a good deal at the house as she went by, even looking at us through a glass, and lifting her spotted veil after she got by. She may have been as happy as a queen with her man, but as a general thing these unequal matches don't work, and had better not be thought on. S'posin' you should think you was in love with somebody, and in a few years, when you got older, be sick of him. It might do him a sight of harm. That's what spoilt your poor Great-uncle Joseph, who's been in the hospital at Worcester goin' on nine years."

“It was!” and Maddy’s face was all aglow with the interest she always evinced whenever mention was made of the one great living sorrow of her grandmother’s life—the shattered intellect and isolation from the world of her youngest brother, who, as she said, had for nearly nine long years been an inmate of a madhouse.

“Tell me about it,” Maddy continued, bringing a pillow, and lying down upon the faded lounge beneath the window.

“There is no great to tell, only he was many years younger than I. He’s only forty-one now, and was thirteen years older than the girl he wanted. Joseph was smart and handsome, and a lawyer, and folks said a sight too good for the girl, whose folks were just nothing, but she had a pretty face, and her long curls bewitched him. She couldn’t have been older than you when he first saw her, and she was only sixteen when they got engaged. Joseph’s life was bound up in her; he worshiped the very air she breathed, and when she mittened him, it almost took his life. He was too old for her, she said, and then right on top of that we heard after a little that she married some big bug, I never knew who, plenty old enough to be her father. That settled it with Joseph; he went into a kind of melancholy, grew worse and worse, till we put him in the hospital, usin’ his little property to pay the bill until it was all gone, and now he’s on charity, you know, exceptin’ what we do. That’s what ’tis about your Uncle Joseph, and I warn all young girls of thirteen or fourteen not to think too much of nobody. They are bound to get sick of ’em, and it makes dreadful work.”

Grandma had an object in telling this to Maddy, for she was not blind to the nature of the doctor’s interest in her child, and though it gratified her pride, she felt that it must not be, both for his sake and Maddy’s, so she told the sad story of Uncle Joseph as a warning to Maddy, who could scarcely be said to need it. Still it made an impression on her, and all that afternoon she was thinking of the unfortunate man, whom she had seen but once, and that in his prison home, where she had been with her grandfather the only time she had ever ridden in the cars. He had taken her in his arms then, she remembered, and called her his little Sarah. That must have been the name of his treacherous betrothed. She would ask if it were not so, and she did.

“Yes, Sarah Morris, that was her name, and her face was handsome as a doll,” grandma replied, and wondering if she were as beautiful as Jessie, or Jessie’s mother, Maddy went back to her reveries of the poor maniac, whom Sarah Morris had wronged so cruelly.

CHAPTER VIII.
SHADOWINGS OF WHAT WAS TO BE.

It was very pleasant at Aikenside that afternoon, and the cool breeze blowing from the miniature fish pond in one corner of the grounds, came stealing into the handsome parlors, where Agnes Remington, in tasteful toilet, reclined languidly upon the crimson-hued sofa, bending her graceful head to suit the height of Jessie, who was twining some flowers among her curls, and occasionally appealing to Guy to know "if it was not pretty."

In his favorite seat in the pleasant bay window, opening into the garden, Guy was sitting, apparently reading a book, though his eyes did not move very rapidly down the page, for his thoughts were on some other object. When his pretty stepmother first came to Aikenside, three months before, he had been half sorry, for he knew just how his quiet would be disturbed, but as the weeks went by, and he became accustomed to Jessie's childish prattle and frolicsome ways, while even Agnes herself was not a bad picture for his handsome home, he began to feel how he should miss them when they were gone, Jessie particularly, who made so much sunshine wherever she went, and who was very dear to the heart of the half-brother. Full well he knew Agnes would rather stay there, that her income did not warrant as luxurious a home as he could give her, and that by remaining at Aikenside during the warmer season she could afford to board through the winter in Boston, where her personal attractions secured her quite as much attention as was good for her. Had she been more agreeable to him he would not have hesitated to offer her a home as long as she chose to remain, but, as it was, he felt that Lucy Atherstone would be much happier alone with him. Lucy, however, was not coming yet, and until she did come Agnes perhaps might stay. It certainly would be better for Jessie, who could have a teacher in the house, and it was upon these matters that he was reflecting.

As if divining his thoughts Agnes said to him rather abruptly:

"Guy, Ellen Laurie writes me that they are all going to Saratoga for a time, and then to Newport, and she wished I would join them. Do you think I can afford it?"

"Oh, yes, that's splendid, for I'll stay here while you are gone, and I like Aikenside so much better than Boston. Mamma can afford it, can't she, Guy?" Jessie exclaimed, dropping her flowers and springing upon her brother's knee.

Smoothing her bright hair and pinching her soft cheek, Guy replied:

"That means, I suppose, that I can afford it, don't it? but, puss, I was thinking just now about your staying here where you really do improve."

Then turning to Agnes he made some inquiries as to the plans proposed by the Laurie's, ascertaining that Agnes' plan was as follows: He should invite her to go with him to Saratoga, or Newport, or both, and that Jessie meantime should remain at Aikenside, just as she wished to do.

Guy could not find much pleasure in escorting Agnes to a fashionable watering place, particularly as he was, of course, expected to pay the bills, but he sometimes did unselfish things; and as he had not been very gracious to her on the occasion of her last visit to Aikenside, he decided to martyr himself and go to Saratoga. But who would care for Jessie? She must not be left wholly with the servants. A governess of some kind must be provided, and he was about speaking of this to Agnes, when the doctor was announced, and the conversation turned into another channel. Agnes Remington would not have confessed how much she was interested in Dr. Holbrook. Indeed, only that morning in reply to a joking remark made to her by Guy, she had petulantly exclaimed:

"The idea of my caring for him, except as a friend and physician. Why, he must be younger than I am, or at most about my age. A mere boy, as it were."

And yet, in making her toilet that afternoon, she had arranged every part of her dress with direct reference to the "mere boy," her heart beating faster every time she remembered the white sunbonnet and the Scotch plaid shawl she had seen beside him in the drive that morning. Little Maddy Clyde would hardly have credited the story had she been told that the beautiful lady from Aikenside was positively jealous of Dr. Holbrook's attentions to herself; yet so it was, and the jealousy was all the more bitter when she remembered who Madeline was, and how

startled that aged couple of the red cottage would be, could they know who she was. But they did not; she was quite sure of that; and so she had ventured to pass their door, her heart throbbing with a strange sensation as the old waymarks came in view, waymarks which she remembered so well, and around which so many sad memories were clustering. Agnes was not all bad. Indeed, she was scarcely worse than most vain, selfish fashionable women; and all that day, since her return from riding, haunting, remorseful thoughts of the long ago had been clinging to her, making her more anxious to leave that neighborhood for a time at least, and in scenes of gayety forget, if possible, that such things as broken vows or broken hearts existed.

The arrival of the doctor dissipated her sadness in a measure, and after greeting him with her usual expressions of welcome, she said, half playfully, half spitefully:

"By the way, doctor, who was that old lady, all bent up double in shawls and things, whom you were taking out for an airing?"

Guy looked up quickly, wondering where Agnes could have seen the doctor, who, conscious of a sudden pang, answered, naturally:

"That old lady, bent double and bundled in shawls, was young Maddy Clyde, to whom I thought a short ride might do good."

"Oh, yes; that patient about whom Jessie has gone mad. I am glad to have seen her."

There was unmistakable irony in her voice now, and turning from her to Guy, the doctor continued:

"The old man was telling me to-day of your kindness in saving his house from being sold. It was like you, Guy; and I wish I, too, had the means to be generous, for they are so very poor."

"I'll tell you," said Jessie, who had stolen to the doctor's side, and lain her fat, bare arm upon his shoulder, as if he had been Guy. "You might give Maddy the doctor's bill. I remember how mamma cried, and said she never could pay papa's bill when it was sent in."

"Jessie!" said Agnes and Guy, simultaneously, while the doctor laughingly pulled one of her long, bright curls.

"Yes, I could do that. I'd thought of it, but they might not accept it, as they are proud as well as poor."

"Mr. Markham has no one to care for but his wife and this Madeline, has he?" Agnes asked, and the doctor replied:

"I did not suppose so until a few days since, when I learned from a Mr. Green that Mrs. Markham's youngest and now only brother has been an inmate of a lunatic asylum for years; and that though they cannot pay his entire expenses, of course they do all they can toward providing him with comforts."

"What is a lunatic asylum, mother? What does he mean?" Jessie asked, but it was the doctor, not Agnes, who explained to the child what a lunatic asylum was.

"Is insanity hereditary in this family?" Guy asked.

Agnes' cheek was very white, though her face was fumed away as the doctor answered: "I do not know; I did not ask the cause. I only heard the fact that such a man as Joseph Mortimer exists."

For a moment there was silence in the room, and then Guy told the doctor of what himself and Agnes were speaking when he arrived.

"I suppose it's of no use asking you to join us for a week or so."

"There was not," the doctor said. "His patients needed him and he must stay at home."

"Doctor, how would this Maddy Clyde do to stay here with Jessie while we are gone, partly as companion and partly as her teacher?" was Guy's next question, which brought Mrs. Agnes at once from her reverie.

"Guy," she exclaimed, "are you crazy? That child Jessie's governess! No, indeed! I shall have a teacher from Boston—one whose manners and style are unexceptionable."

Guy had a will of his own, and few could provoke it into action as effectually as Agnes, who, in thus opposing him, was working directly against herself. Paying her no attention, except to bow in token that he heard, Guy asked Jessie her opinion.

"Oh, it will be splendid! Can she come to-morrow? I shan't care how long you are gone if I can have Maddy here, and doctor will come up every day, will you, doctor?" and the soft eyes looked up pleadingly into the doctor's face.

"It is not settled yet that Maddy comes," the doctor replied, adding as an answer to Guy's question: "If Agnes could be willing, I do not think

you could do better than to secure Miss Clyde's services. Two children will thus be made happy, for Maddy, as I have told you, thinks Aikenside must be a little lower only than Paradise. I shall be happy to open negotiations, if you say so."

"I'll ride down and let you know to-morrow," Guy said. "These domestic matters, where there is a difference of thinking, had better be discussed alone," and he turned good-humoredly toward Agnes, who knew it was useless to oppose him then.

But oppose him she did that night, after the doctor had gone, taking at first the high stand that sooner than have a country girl like Maddy Clyde associated daily with her daughter, whether as teacher or companion, she would give up Saratoga and stay at home. Guy could not explain why it was that opposition from Agnes always aroused all his powers of antagonism. Yet so it was, and now he was as fully determined that Maddy Clyde should come to Aikenside as Agnes was that she should not. He knew, too, how to attain this end without further altercation.

"Very well," was his quiet reply, "you can remain at home if you choose, of course. I had intended taking you myself, wherever you wished to go; and not only that, but I was about to ask how much was needed for the necessary additions to your wardrobe, but if you prefer remaining here to giving up a most unfounded prejudice against a girl who never harmed you, and whom Jessie already loves, you can do so," and Guy walked from the room, leaving Agnes first to cry, then to pout, then to think it all over, and finally to decide that going to Saratoga and Newport under the protection of Guy, was better than carrying out a whim, which, after all, was nothing but a whim.

Accordingly next morning as Guy was in his library reading his papers, she went tripping up to him, and folding her white hands upon his shoulder, said, very prettily:

"I was real cross last night, and let my foolish pride get the ascendency, but I have considered the matter, and am willing for this Miss Clyde to come, provided you still think it best."

Guy's mustache hid the mischievous smile lurking about his mouth, and he received the concession as graciously as if he did not know perfectly the motive which impelled it. As she had commenced being amiable she seemed determined to continue it, and offered herself to write a note soliciting Maddy's services,

"As I am Jessie's mother, it will be perfectly proper for me to hire and manage her," she said, and as Guy acquiesced in this suggestion, she sat down at the writing desk, and commenced a very pleasantly worded note, in which Miss Clyde was informed that she had been recommended as a suitable person with whom to leave Jessie during the summer and a part of the autumn, and that she, Jessie's mother, wrote to ask if for the sum of one dollar per week she were at liberty to come to Aikenside as governess, or waiting-maid.

"Or what?" Guy asked, as she read to him what she had written. "Maddy Clyde will not be waiting-maid in this house, neither will she come for one dollar per week as you propose. I hire her myself. I have taken a fancy to the girl. Commence again; substitute companion for waiting-maid, and offering her three dollars per week instead of one."

As long as Guy paid the bill Agnes could not demur to the price, although remembering a time when she had taught a district school for one dollar per week and boarded around besides. She thought three dollars far too much. But Guy had commanded, and him she generally obeyed, so she wrote another note, which he approved, and sealing it up sent it by a servant down to the red cottage.

CHAPTER IX.
THE DECISION.

The reception of Agnes' note produced quite a commotion at the red cottage, where various opinions were expressed as to the prime mover of the plan, grandpa thinking that as Mrs. Agnes wrote the note, and was most interested in it, she, of course, had suggested it, grandma insisting that it was Jessie's doings, while Maddy, when she said anything, agreed with her grandmother, though away down in her heart was a tiny spot warm with the half belief that Mr. Guy himself had first thought of having her at Aikenside, where she would rather go than to any other spot in the wide world; to Aikenside, with its shaven lawn, almost large enough to be called a park, with its shaded paths and winding walks, its costly flowers and running vines, its fountains and statuary, its fish pond and grove, its airy rooms, its marbled hall, its winding stairs, with banisters of rosewood, its cupola at the top, from which so many miles of hill and meadow land could be discerned, its bay windows and long piazzas, its sweet-faced, golden-haired Jessie, and its manly, noble Guy. Only the image of Agnes, flashing in silk and diamonds was a flaw on the picture's fair surface. From thoughts of her Maddy had insensibly shrank, until she met her in the carriage, and then received the note asking her services. These events wrought in her a change, and dread of Mrs. Agnes passed away. She should like her, and she should be so happy at Aikenside, for, of course, she was going, and she began to wish the doctor would come so as to tell her how long before she would be strong enough to perform the duties of teacher to little Jessie.

At first Grandpa Markham hesitated. It might do Maddy a deal of hurt to go to Aikenside, he said, her humble home would look mean to her after all that finery, while the temptations to vanity and ambition would be greater there than at home; but Maddy put all his objections aside, and long before the doctor came she had written to Mrs. Agnes that she would go. The doctor could not understand why it was that in Maddy's home he did not think as well of her going to Aikenside as he had done the evening previous. She looked so bright, so pure, so artless, sitting by her grandfather's knee, that it seemed a pity to transplant her to another soil, while, hidden in his heart where even he did not know it was hidden, was a fear of what might be the effect of daily intercourse with Guy. Still he said it was the best thing for her to do, and laughingly remarked that it was far better than teaching the district school, and then he asked if she would ride again that day; but to this Mrs. Markham objected. It was too soon, she said, Maddy had hardly recovered from yesterday's fatigue, suggesting that as the doctor was desirous of doing good to his convalescent patients, he carry out poor old deaf Mary Barnes, who complained that he stayed so long with the child at "granther Markham's" as to have but a moment to spare for her.

Instantly the eyes of Mrs. Markham and the doctor met, the latter feeling very uncomfortable, while the former was confirmed in the suspicion raised by what Maddy told her the day before.

It was the doctor who carried Maddy's answer to Agnes, the doctor who made all the succeeding arrangements, deciding that Maddy would not be wholly strong until the very day fixed upon by Agnes for her departure for Saratoga. For this Guy was sorry. It would have been an easy matter for him to have ridden down to the cottage, and seen the girl in whom he was beginning to feel so much interest that in his last letter to Lucy he had mentioned her as about to become his sister's governess; but he did not care to see her there. It seemed to him that the surroundings of that slanting-roofed house did not belong to her, and he would rather meet her in his own more luxurious home. But the doctor's word was law, and so, on the first day of August he followed Agnes and her three huge traveling trunks to the carriage, and was driven from the house to which Maddy was coming that afternoon.

CHAPTER X.
AT AIKENSIDE.

It was a long, tiresome ride, for grandpa, from Honedale to Aikenside, and as he was not in his wife's secret, he accepted thankfully the doctor's offer to take Maddy there himself. With this arrangement Maddy was well pleased, as it would thus afford her the opportunity she had so much desired, of talking with the doctor about his bill, and asking him to wait until she had earned enough to pay it.

To the aged couple, parting for the first time with their darling, the day was very sad, but they would not intrude their grief upon the young girl looking so eagerly forward to the new life opening before her; only grandpa's voice faltered a little when, in the morning prayer, he commended his child to God, asking that she might be kept from temptation, and that the new sights and scenes to which she was going might not beget in her a love of the world's vanities, or a disgust for her old home; but that she might come back to it the same loving, happy child as she was then, and never be ashamed of the parents to whom she was so dear. There was an answering sob from the chair where Maddy knelt, and after the devotions were ended she wound her arm around her grandfather's neck, and parting his silvery locks, said to him, earnestly;

"Grandpa, do you think I could ever be ashamed of you and grandma?"

"I hope not, darling; it would break our hearts; but finery and things is mighty apt to set folks up, and after you've walked a spell on them velvet carpets, you'll no doubt think your feet make a big noise on our bare kitchen floor."

"That may be, but I shan't be ashamed of you. No, not if I were Mrs. Guy Remington herself." And Maddy emphasized her words with a kiss, as she thought how nice it would be provided she were a widow, to be Mrs. Guy Remington, and have her grandparents live at Aikenside with her.

"But, pshaw! I'll never be Mrs. anybody; and if I am, I'll have to have a husband, which would be such a bother!" was her next mental comment, as, leaving her grandfather, she went to help her grandmother with the breakfast dishes, wondering when she would wipe those blue cups again, and how she should probably feel when she did.

Quickly the morning passed, and just as the clock struck two the doctor's buggy appeared over the hill. Up to this moment Maddy had only been happy in anticipation; but when, with her shawl and bonnet on, she stood waiting while the doctor fastened her little trunk, and when she saw a tear on the wrinkled faces of both her grandparents, her fortitude gave way; and 'mid a storm of sobs, she said her good-bys and received her grandfather's blessing.

It was very pleasant that afternoon, for the summer breeze was blowing cool across the fields, where the laborers were busy; and with the elasticity of youth, Maddy's tears stopped their flowing, but not until the dear old home had disappeared, and they were some distance on the road to Aikenside.

"I wonder how I shall like Mrs. Remington and Mr. Guy?" was the first remark she made.

"You'll not see them immediately. They left this morning for Saratoga," the doctor replied.

"Left! Mr. Guy gone!" Maddy repeated in a disappointed tone.

"Are you very sorry?" the doctor asked, and Maddy replied:

"I did want to see him once; you know I never have."

It would be such a surprise to find that Guy was no other than the terrible inspector, that he would not undeceive her, the doctor thought; and so he relapsed into a thoughtful mood, from which Maddy aroused him by breaking the subject of the unpaid bill, asking if he'd please not trouble grandpa, but wait until she could pay it.

"Perhaps it's wrong asking it when you were so good, but if you only will take me for payment," and Maddy's soft brown eyes were lifted to his face.

"Yes, Maddy, I'll take you for payment," the doctor said, smiling, half seriously, as his eyes rested fondly upon her.

Even then stupid Maddy did not understand him, but began to calculate out loud how long it would take to earn the money. She'd heard people say that the doctor charged a dollar a visit to Honedale, and he'd been so many, many times, that it would take a great many weeks to pay

him; besides, there was the debt to Mr. Guy. She wanted to help pay that, but did not see how she could, unless he waited, too. Did the doctor think he would? It seemed terrible to the doctor that one so young as Maddy should be harassed with the payment of debts, and he felt a most intense desire for the right to shield her from all such care, but he must not speak of it then; he'd rather she should remain a little longer an artless child, confiding all her troubles to him as if he had been her brother.

"There's Aikenside," he said, at last, and it was not long before they passed through the gate, guarded by the great bronze lions, and struck into the graveled road leading to the house.

"It's grander, finer, than I ever dreamed. Oh! if I could some time have just such a home! and doctor, look! What does make that water go up in the air so? Is it what they call a fountain?"

In her excitement Maddy had risen, and with one hand resting on the doctor's shoulder, was looking around her eagerly. Guy Remington would have laughed, and been gratified, too, could he have heard the enthusiastic praises heaped upon his home by the little schoolgirl as she drove up to his door. But Guy was away in the dusty cars, and only Jessie stood on the piazza to receive her teacher. There were warm words of welcome, kisses and hugs; and then Jessie led her friend to the chamber she was to occupy.

"Mother wanted you to sleep the other side of the house, but Brother Guy said no, you should have a pleasant room; and when Guy says a thing, it's so. It's nice in here, and close to me. See, I'm right here," and Jessie opened a door leading directly to her own sleeping room.

"Here's one trunk," she continued, as a servant brought up and set down, a little contemptuously, the small hair-cloth box containing Maddy's wardrobe. "Here's one; where's the rest?" and she was flying after Tom, when Maddy stopped her, saying:

"I have but one—that's all."

"Only that little, teenty thing? How funny. Why, mamma carried three most as big as my bed to Saratoga. You can't have many dresses. What are you going to wear to dinner?"

"I've been to dinner." And Maddy looked up in some surprise.

"You have! We never have it till five, when Guy is at home; but now they are gone, Mrs. Noah says we will have it at one, as folks ought to do. To-day I coaxed her to wait till you come, and the table is all set out so nicely for two. Can you carve, and do you like green turtle soup?"

Maddy was bewildered, but managed to reply that she could not carve, that she never saw any green turtle soup, and that she supposed she should wear to dinner the delaine she had on. "Why, we always change, even Mrs. Noah," Jessie exclaimed, bending over the open trunk and examining its contents.

Two calicoes, a blue muslin, a gingham and another delaine, beside the one she had on. That was the sum total of Maddy's wardrobe, and Jessie glanced at it a little ruefully as Maddy carefully shook out the nicely folded dresses and laid them upon the bed. Here Mrs. Noah was heard calling Jessie, who ran away leaving Maddy alone for a moment.

Maddy had seen the look Jessie gave her dresses, and for the first time there dawned upon her mind the possibility that her plain apparel, and ignorance of the ways of Aikenside might be to her the cause of much mortification.

"And grandma said they were so nice, too—doing them up so carefully," she said, her lip beginning to quiver, and her eyes filling with tears, as thoughts of home came rushing over her.

She could not force them back, and laying her head upon the top of the despised hair trunk, she sobbed aloud. Guy Remington's private room was in that hall, and as the doctor knew a book was to have been left there for him, he took the liberty of getting it; passing Maddy's door he heard the low sound of weeping, and looking in, saw her where she sat or rather knelt upon the floor.

"Homesick so soon!" he said, advancing to her side, and then amid a torrent of tears, the whole came out.

Maddy never could do as they did there, and everybody would laugh at her so for an awkward thing; she never knew that folks ate dinner at five instead of twelve—she should surely starve to death—she couldn't carve —she could not eat mud-turtle soup, and she did not know which dress to wear for dinner—would the doctor tell her? There they were, and she pointed to the bed, only five, and she knew Jessie thought it so mean.

Such was the substance of Maddy's passionate outpouring of her griefs

to the highly perplexed doctor, who, after quieting her somewhat, ascertained that the greatest present trouble was the deciding what dress was suitable to the occasion. The doctor had never made dress his study, but as it happened he liked blue, and so suggested it, as the one most likely to be becoming.

"That!" and Maddy looked confounded. "Why, grandma never let me wear that, except on Sunday; that's my very best dress."

"Poor child; I'm not sure it was right for you to come here where the life is so different from the quiet, unpretentious one you have led," the doctor thought, but he merely said: "It's my impression they wear their best dresses here, all the time."

"But what will I do when that's worn out! Oh, dear, dear, I wish I had not come!" and another impetuous fit of weeping ensued, in the midst of which Jessie came back, greatly disturbed on Maddy's account, and asking eagerly what was the matter.

Very adroitly the doctor managed to draw Jessie aside, while as well as he was able he gave her a few hints with regard to her intercourse with Maddy, and Jessie, who seemed intuitively to understand him, went back to the weeping girl, soothing her much as a little mother would have soothed her child. They would have such nice times, when Maddy got used to their ways, which would not take long, and nobody would laugh at her, she said, when Maddy expressed her fears on that point. "You are too pretty even if you do make mistakes!" and then she went into ecstasies over the blue muslin, which was becoming to Maddy, and greatly enhanced her girlish beauty. The tear stains were all washed away, Jessie using very freely her mother's *eau-de-cologne*, and making Maddy's cheeks very red with rubbing, the nut-brown hair was brushed until it shone like satin, a little narrow band of black velvet ribbon was pinned about Maddy's snowy neck, and then she was ready for that terrible ordeal, her first dinner at Aikenside. The doctor was going to stay, and this helped to relieve her somewhat.

"You must come to the housekeeper's room and see her first," Jessie said, and with a beating heart and brain bewildered by the elegancies which met her at every turn, Maddy followed to where the dreaded Mrs. Noah, in rustling back silk and a thread lace collar, sat sewing and greatly enjoying the leisure she had in her master's absence.

Mrs. Noah knew who Maddy was, remembering the old man said that she would not disgrace a drawing-room as fine as that at Aikenside. She had discovered, too, that Mrs. Agnes was opposed to her coming, that only Guy's determined will had brought her there; and this, if nothing else, had disposed her to feel kindly toward the little governess. She had expected to see her rather pretty, but was not prepared to find her what she was. Maddy's was a singular type of beauty—a beauty untarnished by any selfish, uncharitable, or suspicious feeling. Clear and truthful as a mirror, her brown eyes looked into Mrs. Noah's, while her low courtesy —so full of deference, found its way straight to that motherly heart.

"I am glad to see you, Miss Clyde," she said, "very glad."

Maddy's lip quivered a little and her voice shook as she replied:

"Please call me Maddy. They do at home, and I shan't be quite so—so —"

She could not say "homesick," lest she should break out again into a fit of crying, but Mrs. Noah understood her, and remembering her own experience when first she went from home, she involuntarily stooped to kiss the pure, white forehead of the girl, who henceforth was sure of one friend at least at Aikenside.

The dinner was a success, so far as Maddy was concerned. Not a single mistake did she perpetrate, though her cheeks burned painfully as she felt the eyes of the polite waiters fixed so often upon her, and fancied they might be laughing at her. But they were not, and thanks to the kind-hearted Guy, they thought of her only with respect, as one who was their superior and must be treated accordingly. Knowing how different everything was at Aikenside from that to which she had been accustomed, Guy, with the thoughtfulness natural to him, had taken the precaution of speaking to each of the servants concerning Miss Clyde, Jessie's teacher. As he could not be there himself when she first came it would devolve upon them, more or less, to make it pleasant for her by kind, civil attentions, he said, hinting at the dire displeasure sure to fall on any one who should be guilty of a misdemeanor in that direction. To Paul, the coachman, he had been particular in his charges, telling him who Maddy was, and arguing that from the insolence once given to the grandfather the offender was bound to be more polite to the grandchild. The carriage was to be at hers and Jessie's command, Paul never

refusing a reasonable request to drive the young ladies when and where they wished to go, while a pretty little black pony, recently broken to the saddle for Agnes, was to be at Miss Clyde's service, if she chose to have it. As Guy's slightest wish was always obeyed, Maddy's chances for happiness were not small, notwithstanding that she felt so desolate and lonely when the doctor left her, and standing by Jessie she watched him with a swelling heart until he was lost to view in the deepening twilight.

Feeling that she must be homesick, Mrs. Noah suggested that she try the fine piano in the little music-room.

"Maybe you can't play, but you can drum 'Days of Absence,' as most girls do," and opening the lid she bade Maddy "thump as long as she liked."

Music was a delight to Maddy, who coveted nothing so much as a knowledge of it, and sitting down upon the stool, she touched the soft-toned instrument, ascertaining by her far several sweet chords, and greatly astonishing Jessie, who wondered at her skill. Twice each week a teacher came up from Devonshire to give lessons to Jessie, but as yet she could only play one scale and a few simple bars. These she attempted to teach to Maddy, who caught at them so quickly and executed them so well that Jessie was delighted. Maddy ought to take lessons, she said, and some time during the next day she took to Mrs. Noah a letter which she had written to Guy. After going into ecstasies over Maddy, saying she was the nicest kind of a girl, that she prayed in the morning as well as at night, and looked so sweet in blue, she asked if she couldn't take music lessons, too, advancing many reasons why she should, one of which was that she could play now a great deal better than herself.

It was several days before an answer came to this letter, and when it did it brought Guy's consent for Maddy to take lessons, together with a note for Mr. Simons, requesting him to consider Miss Clyde his pupil, on the same terms with Jessie.

Though greatly pleased with Aikenside, and greatly attached to Jessie, Maddy had had many hours of loneliness when her heart was back in the humble cottage where she knew they were missing her so much, but now a new world, a world of music, was suddenly opened before her, and the homesickness all disappeared. It had been arranged with Mrs. Noah, by Agnes, that Jessie should only study for two hours each day, consequently Maddy had nearly all the time to herself, and well did she improve it, making so rapid progress that Simons looked on amazed declaring her case to be without a parallel, while Jessie was left far behind. Indeed, after a short time Maddy might have been her teacher, and was of much service to her in practicing her lessons.

Meanwhile the doctor came often to Aikenside, praising Maddy's progress in music, and though he did not know a single note, compelling himself to listen while with childlike satisfaction she played him her last lesson. She was very happy now at Aikenside, where all were so kind to her, and half wished that the family would always remain as it was then, that Agnes and Guy would not come home, for with their coming she felt there would be a change. It was nearly time now to expect them. Indeed, Guy had written on one Saturday that they should probably be home the next, and during the ensuing week Aikenside presented that most uncomfortable phase of a house being cleaned. Everything must be in order for Mr. Guy, Mrs. Noah said, taking more pains with his rooms than with the remaining portion of the building. Guy was her idol; nothing was too good for him, few things quite good enough, and she said so much in his praise that Maddy began to shrink from meeting him. What would he think of her? Perhaps he might not notice her in the least, and that would be terrible. But, no, a man as kind as he had shown himself to her, would at least pay her some attention, and so at last she began to anticipate his coming home, wondering what their first meeting would be, what she should say to him, and what he would think of her.

CHAPTER XI.
GUY AT HOME.

Saturday came at last, a balmy September day, when all nature seemed conspiring to welcome the travelers for whom so extensive preparations were making at Aikenside. They were expected at about six in the afternoon, and just before that hour the doctor rode up to be in readiness to meet them. In the dining-room the table was set as Maddy had never seen it set before, making, with its silver, its china, and cut-glass, a glittering display. There was Guy's seat as carver, with Agnes at the urn, while Maddy felt sure that the two plates between Agnes and Guy were intended for Jessie and herself, the doctor occupying the other side. Jessie would sit next her mother, which would leave her near to Guy, where he could see every movement she made. Would he think her awkward, or would he, as she hoped, be so much absorbed with the doctor as not to notice her? Suppose she should drop her fork, or upset one of those queer-looking goblets, more like bowls than anything else? It would be terrible, and Maddy's cheeks tingled at the very thought of such a catastrophe. Were they goblets really, those funny colored things, and if they were not, what were they? Summoning all her courage, she asked the doctor, her prime counselor, and learned that they were the finger-glasses, of which she had read, but which she had never seen before.

"Oh, must I use them?" she asked, in so evident distress that the doctor could not forbear a laugh as he told her it was not of the slightest consequence whether she used them or not, advising her to watch Mrs. Agnes, who was *au fait* in all such matters.

Six o'clock came, but no travelers. Then an hour went by, and there came a telegram that the cars had broken down and would not probably arrive until late in the night, if indeed they did till morning. Greatly disappointed, the doctor, after dinner, took his leave, telling the girls they had better not sit up. Consequently, at a late hour they both retired, sleeping so soundly as not to near the noise outside the house; the banging of doors, the setting down of trunks, the tramp of feet, Mrs. Noah's words of welcome, one pleasant voice which responded, and another more impatient one which sounded as if its owner were tired and cross.

Agnes and Guy had come. As a whole, Agnes' season at Saratoga had been rather disagreeable. Guy, it is true had been exceedingly kind. She had been flattered by brainless fops. She had heard herself called "that beautiful Mrs. Remington," and "that charming young widow," but no serious attentions had been paid, no millionaire had asked to be her second husband. If there had, she would have said yes, for Agnes was not averse to changing her state of widowhood. She liked the doctor, but if he did not propose, and some other body did, she should accept that other body, of course. This was her intention when she left Aikenside, and when she came back, it was with the determination to raise the siege at once, and compel the doctor to surrender. She knew he was not wealthy as she could wish, but his family were the Holbrooks, and as she positively liked him, she was prepared to waive the matter of money. In this state of mind it is not surprising that the morning of the return home she should listen with a troubled mind to Jessie's rather exaggerated account of the number of times the doctor had been there, and the nice things he had said to her and Maddy.

"He had visited them ever so much, staying ever so long. I know Maddy likes him; I do, anyway," Jessie said, never dreaming of the passion she was exciting, jealousy of Maddy, hatred of Maddy, and a desire to be revenged on a girl whom Dr. Holbrook visited "ever so much."

What was she that he should care for her? A mere nothing—a child, whom Guy had taken up. Pity there was a Lucy Atherstone in the way of his making her mistress of Aikenside. It would be a pretty romance, Guy Remington and Grandpa Markham's grandchild. Agnes was nervous and tired, and this helped to increase her anger toward the innocent girl. She would take immediate measures, she thought, to put the upstart down, and the sight of Flora laying the cloth for breakfast suggested to her the first step in teaching Maddy her place.

"Flora," she said, "I notice you are arranging the table for four. Have we company?"

"Why, no, ma'am; there's Mr. Guy, yourself, Miss Jessie, and Miss Clyde," was Flora's reply, while Agnes continued haughtily: "Remove

Miss Clyde's plate. No one allows their governess to eat with them."

"But, ma'am," and Flora hesitated, "she's very pretty, and ladylike, and young; she has always eaten with Miss Jessie and Dr. Holbrook when he was here. He treats her as if she was good as anybody."

In her eagerness to serve Maddy and save her from insult, Flora was growing bold, but she only hurt the cause by mentioning the doctor. Agnes was determined now, and she replied:

"It was quite right when we were gone, but it is different now, and Mr. Remington, I am sure, will not suffer it."

"Might I ask him?" Flora persisted, her hand still on the plate.

"No," Agnes would attend to that, and also see Miss Clyde. All Flora had to do was to remove the plate, which she finally did, muttering to herself: "Such airs! but I know Mr. Guy won't stand it."

Meantime Maddy had put on her prettiest delaine, tied her little dainty black silk apron, Mrs. Noah's gift, and with the feeling that she was looking unusually well, started for the parlor to meet her employer, Mrs. Agnes. Jessie had gone in quest of her brother, and thus Agnes was alone when Maddy Clyde first presented herself before her. She had not expected to find Maddy so pretty, and for a moment the hot blood crimsoned her cheek, while her heart throbbed wildly beneath the rich morning dress. Dr. Holbrook had cause for being attracted by that fresh, bright face, she thought, and so she steeled herself against the better impulses of her nature, impulses which pleaded that for the sake of the past she should be kind to Maddy Clyde.

"Ah, good-morning. You are Jessie's governess, I presume," she said, bowing distantly, and pretending not to notice the hand which Maddy involuntarily extended toward her. "Jessie speaks well of you, and I am very glad you suit her. You have had a pleasant time, I trust?"

Her voice was so cold and her manner so distant that Maddy's eyes for an instant filled with tears, but she answered civilly that she had been very happy, and everybody was very kind. It was harder work to put down Maddy Clyde than Agnes had expected, and after a little further conversation there ensued a silence, which neither was inclined to break. At last, summoning all her courage, Agnes began:

"Excuse me, Miss Clyde, but your own good sense, of which I am sure you have an abundance, must tell you that now Mr. Remington and myself are at home, your intercourse with our family must be rather limited—that is—ahem—that is, neither Mr. Remington nor myself are accustomed to having our governess very much with us. I suppose you have had the range of the parlors, sitting there when you liked, and all this was perfectly proper. Mind, I am finding no fault with you. It is all quite right," she continued, as she saw the strange look of terror and surprise visible on Maddy's face. "The past is right, but in future it will be a little different, I am willing to accord to a governess all the privileges possible. They are human as well as myself, but society makes a difference. Don't you know it does?"

"Yes—no—I don't know. Oh, pray tell me what I am to do!" Maddy gasped, her face as white as ashes, and her eyes wearing as yet only a scared, uncertain look.

With little, graceful tosses of the head, which set in motion every one of the brown curls, Mrs. Agnes replied:

"You are not, of course, to go to Mr. Remington. It is my matter, and does not concern him. What I wish is this: You are to come to the parlor only when invited, and are not to intrude upon us at any time, particularly when company is here, such as—well, such as Dr. Holbrook, if you please. As you cannot be with Jessie all the while, you will, when your labors as governess are over, sit in your own room, or the schoolroom, or walk in the back yard, just as the higher servants do—such as Mrs. Noah and the sewing girl, Sarah. Occasionally we shall have you in to dine with us, but usually you will take your meals with Mrs. Noah and Sarah. By following these directions you will, I think, give entire satisfaction."

When Mrs. Agnes had finished this, Maddy began to understand her position, and into her white face the hot blood poured indignantly. Wholly inexperienced, she had never dreamed that a governess was not worthy to sit at the same table with her employer, that she must never enter the parlors unbidden, or intrude herself in any way. No wonder that her cheeks burned at the degradation, or that, for an instant, she felt like defying the proud woman to her face. But the angry words trembling on her tongue were repressed as she remembered her grandfather's teachings; and with a bow as haughty as any Mrs. Agnes could have made, and a look on her face which could not easily be

forgotten, she left the room, and in a kind of stunned bewilderment sought the garden, where she could, unseen, give way to her feelings.

Once alone, the torrent burst forth, and burying her face in the soft grass, she wept bitterly, never hearing the step coming near, and not at first heeding the voice which asked what was the matter. Guy Remington, too, had come out into the garden, accidentally wandering that way, and so stumbling upon the little figure crying in the grass. He knew it was Maddy, and greatly surprised to find her thus, asked what was the matter. Then, as she did not hear him, he laid his hand gently upon her shoulder, compelling her to look up. In all her imaginings of Guy, she had never associated him with the man who had so puzzled and confused her, and now she did not for a time suspect the truth. She only thought him a guest at Aikenside; some one come with Guy, and her degradation seemed greater than before. She was not surprised when he called her by name; of course he remembered her, just as she did him; but she did wonder a little what Mrs. Agnes would say, could she know how kindly he spoke to her, lifting her from the grass and leading her to a rustic seat at no great distance from them.

“Now, tell me why you are crying so?” he said, brushing from her silk apron the spot of dirt which had settled upon it. “Are you homesick?” he continued, and then Maddy burst out again.

She forgot that he was a stranger, forgot everything except that he sympathized with her.

“Oh, sir,” she sobbed, “I was so happy here till they came home, Mrs. Remington and Mr. Guy. I never thought it was a disgrace to be a governess; never heard it was so considered, or that I was not good enough to eat with them till she told me this. Oh, dear, dear!” and choked with tears Maddy stopped a moment to take breath.

She did not look up at the young man beside her, and it was well she did not, for the dark expression of his face would have frightened her. Half guessing the truth, and impatient to hear more, he said to her:

“Go on,” so sternly, that she started, and replied:

“I know you are angry with me and I ought not to have told you.”

“I am not angry—not at you at least—go on,” was Guy’s reply, and Maddy continued:

“She told me that now they had come home it would be different, that only when invited must I come to the parlor, or anywhere, but must stay in the servants’ part, and eat with Mrs. Noah and Sarah. I’d just as soon do that. I am no better than they, only, only—the way she told me made me feel so mean, as if I was not anybody, when I am,” and here Maddy’s pride began to rise. “I’m just as good as she, if grandpa is poor, and I won’t stay here to be treated like a nigger by her and Mr. Guy. I liked him so much too, because he was kind to grandpa and to me when I was sick. Yes, I did like him so much.”

“And how is it now?” Guy asked, wondering who in the world she thought he was. “How is it now?”

“I s’pose it’s wicked to feel such things on Sunday, but, somehow, what she said keeps making me so bad that I know I hate her, and I guess I hate Mr. Guy!”

This was Maddy’s answer, spoken deliberately, while she looked up at the young man, who, with a comical expression about his mouth, answered back:

“I am Mr. Guy.” “You, you! Oh, I can’t bear it! I will die!” and Maddy sprang up as quickly as if feeling an electric shock.

But Guy’s arm was interposed to stop her, and Guy’s arm held her back, while he asked where she was going.

“Anywhere, out of sight where you can never see me again,” Maddy sobbed vehemently. “It is bad enough to have you think me a fool, as you must; but now, oh what do you think of me?”

“Nothing bad, I assure you,” Guy said, still holding her wrist to keep her there. “I supposed you knew who I was, but as you did not, I forgive you for hating me so cordially. If you thought I sanctioned what Mrs. Remington has said to you, you had cause to dislike me, but Miss Clyde, I do not, and this is the first intimation I have had that you were to be treated other than as a lady. I am master of Aikenside, not Mrs. Agnes, who shall be made to understand it.”

“Oh, please don’t quarrel about me. Let me go home, and then all will be well,” Maddy cried, feeling, at that moment, more averse to leaving Aikenside than she could have thought it possible.

“We shall not quarrel, but I shall have my way; meanwhile go to your room and stay there until told that I have sent for you.”

They went to the house together, but separated in the hall; Maddy repairing to her room, while Guy sought Mrs. Agnes. The moment she saw his face she knew a storm was coming, but was not prepared for the biting sarcasm and bitter reproaches heaped upon her by one who, when roused, was a perfect hurricane.

Maybe she had forgotten what she was when his father married her, he said, but he had not, and he remembered well the wonder expressed by many that his father should stoop to marry a poor school teacher. “Yes, that’s what you were, madam, much as you despise Maddy Clyde for being a governess; you were one once yourself, and before that time mercy knows what you were—a hired girl, perhaps—your present airs would seem to warrant as much!”

Guy was in a sad passion by this time, and failed to note the effect his last words had on Agnes, who turned livid with rage and terror; but smothering down her wrath, she said beseechingly:

“Pray, Guy, do not be so angry; I know I am foolish about some things, and proud people who ‘come up’ as you say always are, I guess; I know that marrying your father made me what I am, but everybody does not know it, and it is not necessary they should. I don’t remember exactly what I did say to this Clyde girl, but I thought it would be pleasanter for you, pleasanter for us all, not to have her always around; it seems she has presided at the table when Dr. Holbrook was here to tea, and even you can’t think that quite right.”

“I don’t know why,” and at mention of Dr. Holbrook Guy’s temper burst out again. “Agnes, you can’t deceive me; I know the secret of your abominable treatment of Maddy Clyde is jealousy.”

“Guy—jealous, I jealous of that child;” and Agnes’ voice was expressive of the utmost consternation.

“Yes, jealous of that child; you think that because the doctor has been kind to her, perhaps he wants her some time for his wife. I hope he does; I mean to help it on; I’ll tell him to have her, and if he don’t I’ll almost marry her myself!” and Guy paced up and down the parlor, chafing and foaming like a young lion.

Agnes was conquered, and quite as much bewildered as Maddy had been; she heard only in part how Maddy Clyde was henceforth to be treated.

“Yes, yes,” she gasped at last, as Guy talked on, “stop now, for mercy’s sake, and I’ll do anything, only not this morning, my head aches so I cannot go to the breakfast table; I must be excused,” and holding her temples, which were throbbing with pain, induced by strong excitement, Agnes hurried to her own room and threw herself upon the bed, angry, mortified and subdued.

The breakfast bell had rung twice while Guy was holding that interview with Agnes, and at last Mrs. Noah came up herself to learn the cause of the delay; standing in the hall she heard a part of what was transpiring in the parlor. Mrs. Noah was proud and jealous of her master’s dignity, and once or twice the thought had crossed her mind that perhaps when he came home Maddy would be treated more as some governesses were treated by their employers, but to have Agnes take the matter up was quite a different thing, and Mrs. Noah smiled with grim satisfaction, as she heard Guy issuing orders as to how Miss Clyde should be treated. Standing back to let Agnes pass, she waited a moment, and then, as if she had just come up, presented herself before Guy, asking if he were ready for breakfast.

“Yes, call Miss Clyde; tell her I sent for her,” was Guy’s answer, and forthwith Mrs. Noah repaired to Maddy’s room, finding her still sobbing bitterly.

“I cannot go down,” she said; “my face is all stains, and it’s so dreadful, happening on Sunday, too. What would grandpa say?”

“You can wash off the stains. Come,” Mrs. Noah said, pouring water into the bowl, and bidding Maddy hurry, “as Mr. Guy was waiting breakfast for her.”

“But I am not to eat with them,” Maddy began, when Mrs. Noah stopped her by explaining how Guy ruled that house, and Agnes had been completely routed.

This did not quiet Maddy particularly, and her heart beat painfully as she descended to the parlor, where Guy was still walking up and down.

“Come, Miss Clyde, Jessie is nearly famished,” he said pleasantly, as Maddy appeared, and without the slightest reference to what had passed he drew Maddy’s arm within his own, and giving a hand to Jessie, who had just come in, he went to the breakfast room, where Maddy was told

to preside.

Guy watched her closely without seeming to do so, mentally deciding that she was neither vulgar nor awkward. On the contrary, he thought her very pretty, and very graceful for one so unaccustomed to society. Nothing was said of Agnes, who kept her room the entire day, and did not join the family until evening, when Guy sat upon the piazza with Jessie in his lap, while Maddy was not very far away. At first there was much constraint between Agnes and Maddy, but with Guy to manage, it soon wore away, and Agnes felt herself exceedingly amiable when she reflected how gracious she had been to her rival.

But Maddy could not so soon forget. All through the day the conviction had been settling upon her that she could not stay at Aikenside, and so on the following morning, just after breakfast was over, she summoned courage to ask Mr. Guy if she might talk with film. Leading the way to his library, he bade her sit down, while he took the chair opposite, and then waited for her to commence.

Maddy was afraid of Guy. He did not seem quite like Dr. Holbrook. He was haughtier in his appearance, while his rather elaborate style of dress and polished manners gave him, in her estimation, a kind of superiority over all the men she had ever met. Besides that, she remembered how his dark eyes had flashed when she told him what she did the previous day, and also that she had said to his face that she hated him. She could not bear to leave a bad impression on his mind, so the first words she said to him were:

“Mr. Remington, I can’t stay here after all that has happened. It would not be pleasant for me or Mrs. Agnes, so I am going home, but I want you to forget what I said about hating you yesterday. I did not then know who you were. I don’t hate you. I like you, and I want you to like me.”

She did not look at him, for her eyelids were cast down, and her lashes were wet with the tears she could scarcely keep from shedding. Guy had never known much about girls of Maddy’s age, and there was something extremely fascinating in the artless simplicity of this half child, half woman, sitting there before him, and asking him so demurely to like her. She was very pretty, he thought, and with proper culture would make a beautiful woman. Then, as he remembered his avowed intention of urging the doctor to make her his wife some day, the idea flashed upon him that it would be very generous, very magnanimous in him to educate that young girl expressly for the doctor, and though he hardly seemed to wait at all ere replying to Maddy, he had in the brief interval formed a skeleton plan, and saw it in all its bearings and triumphal result.

“I am much obliged for your liking me,” he said, a very little mischievously. “You surely have not much reason so to do when you recall the incidents of our first interview. Maddy—Miss Clyde—I have come to the conclusion that I knew less than you did, and I beg your pardon for annoying you so terribly.”

Then briefly Guy explained to her how it all had happened, blaming himself far more than he did the doctor, who, he said, had repented bitterly. “Had you died, Miss Clyde, when you were so sick, I half believe he would have felt it his duty to die also. He likes you very much; more indeed than any patient I ever knew him to have,” and Guy’s eyes glanced curiously at Maddy to witness the effect his words might have upon her. But Maddy merely answered:

“Yes, I think he does like me, and I know I like him.”

Mentally chastising himself for trying to find in Maddy’s head an idea which evidently never was there, he began to speak of her proposition of leave, saying he should not suffer it, Jessie needed her and she must stay. She was not to mind the disagreeable things Mrs. Remington had said. She was tired and nervous, and so gave way to some very preposterous notions, which she had picked up somewhere. She would treat Maddy better hereafter, and she must stay. It was pleasanter for Jessie to have a companion so near her own age. Then, as he saw signs of yielding in Maddy’s face, he continued:

“How would you like to turn scholar for a short time each day, I being your teacher? Time often hangs heavily upon my hands, and I fancy the novelty of the thing would suit me. I have books. I will appoint your lessons and the hour for recitation.”

Guy’s face was scarlet by the time he finished speaking, for suddenly he remembered to have heard or read of a similar instance which resulted in the marriage of the teacher and pupil; besides that it would subject him to so much remark, when it was known that he, the fashionable and fastidious Guy, was teaching a pretty, attractive girl like Maddy Clyde, and he sincerely hoped she would decline. But Maddy had

no such intention. Always in earnest herself, she supposed every one else meant what they said, and without ever suspecting the peculiar position in which such a proceeding would place both herself and Guy, her heart leaped up at the idea of knowing what was in the books she had never dared hope she might study. With her beautiful eyes full of tears, which shone like diamonds, as she lifted them to Guy's face, she said:

"Oh, I thank you so much. You could not make me happier, and I'll try so hard to learn. They don't teach such things at the district school; and when there was a high school in Honedale I could not go, for it was three dollars a quarter, and grandpa had no three dollars for me. Uncle Joseph needed help, and so I stayed at home. It's dreadful to be poor, but, perhaps, I shall some time be competent to teach in a seminary, and won't that be grand? When may I begin?"

Guy had never met with so much frankness and simplicity in any one, unless it were in Lucy Atherstone, of whom Maddy reminded him somewhat, except that the latter was more practical, more—he hardly knew what—only there was a difference, and a thought crossed his mind that if Maddy had had all Lucy's advantages, and was as old, she would be what the world calls smarter. There was no disparagement to Lucy in his thoughts, only a compliment to Maddy, who was waiting for him to answer her question. There was no retracting now; he had offered his services; she had accepted; and with a mental comment: "I dread Doc's fun the most, so I'll explain to him how I am educating her for the future Mrs. Dr. Holbrook," he replied:

"As soon as I am rested from my journey, or sooner, if you like; and now tell me, please, who is this Uncle Joseph of whom you speak?"

He remembered what the doctor had said of a crazy uncle, but wishing to hear Maddy's version of it, put to her the question he did.

"Uncle Joseph is grandma's youngest brother," Maddy answered, "and he has been in the lunatic asylum for years. As long as his little property lasted, his bills were paid, but now they keep him from charity, only grandpa helps all he can, and buys some little nice things which he wants so badly, and sometimes cries for, they say. I picked berries all last summer, and sold to buy him a thin coat and pants. We should have more to spend than we do, if it were not for Uncle Joseph," and Maddy's face wore a thoughtful expression as she recalled all the shifts and turns she'd seen made at home that the poor maniac might be more comfortable.

"What made him crazy?" Guy asked, and after a moment's hesitancy Maddy replied: "I don't believe grandma would mind my telling you, though she don't talk about it much. I only knew it a little while ago. He was disappointed once. He loved a girl very much, and she made him think that she loved him. She was many years younger than Uncle Joseph —about my age at first, and when she grew up she said she was sick of him, because he was so much older. He wouldn't have felt so badly, if she had not gone straight off and married a rich man who was a great deal older even than Uncle Joseph; that was the hardest part, and he grew crazy at once. It has been so long that he never can be helped, and sometimes grandma talks of bringing him home, as he is perfectly harmless. I suppose it's wicked, but I most hope she won't, for it would be terrible to live with a crazy man," and a chill crept over Maddy, as if there had fallen upon her a foreshadowing of what might yet be. "Mr. Remington," she continued suddenly, "if you teach me, I can't, of course, expect three dollars a week. It would not be right."

"Perfectly right," he answered. "Your services to Jessie will be worth just as much as ever, so give yourself no trouble on that score."

He was the best man that ever lived, Maddy thought, and so she told the doctor that afternoon when, as he rode up to Aikenside, she met him out on the lawn before he reached the house.

It did strike the doctor a little comically that one of Guy's habits should offer to turn school teacher, but Maddy was so glad, that he was glad too, and doubly glad that across the sea there was a Lucy Atherstone. How he wished that she was there now as Mrs. Guy, and he must tell Guy so that very day. Seated in Guy's library, the opportunity soon occurred, Guy approaching the subject himself by saying:

"Guess, Hal, what crazy project I have just embarked in."

"I know without guessing; Maddy told me," and the doctor's eyebrows were elevated just a little as he crossed his feet upon the window sill and moved his chair so as to have a better view of Maddy and Jessie romping in the grass.

"And so you don't approve?" was Guy's next remark, to which the doctor replied:

“Why, yes; it’s a grand thing for her, providing you know enough to teach her; but, Guy, this is a confounded gossiping neighborhood, and folks will talk, I’m afraid.”

“Talk about what!” and Guy bridled up as his independent spirit began to rise, “What harm is there in my doing a generous act to a poor girl like Maddy Clyde? Isn’t she graceful as a kitten, though?” and Guy nodded toward the spot where she was playing.

It annoyed the doctor to have Guy praise Maddy, but he would not show it, and answered calmly:

“It’s all right in you, but just because the poor girl is Maddy Clyde, folks will talk. She is too handsome, Guy, for Madam Grundy to let alone. If Lucy were only here, it would be different. Why, in the name of wonder, are you two not married, if you are ever going to be?”

“Jealous, as I live!” and Guy’s hand came down playfully on the doctor’s shoulder. “I did not suppose you had got as far as that. You are afraid of the effect it may have on me teaching a sweet-faced little girl how to conjugate amo; and to cover up your own interest, you bring Lucy forward as an argument. Eh, Hal, have I not probed the secret?”

The doctor was in no mood for joking, and only smiled gloomily, while Guy continued:

“Honestly, doctor, I am doing it for you. I imagine you fancy her, as well you may. She’ll make a splend’d woman, but she needs educating, of course, and I am going to do it. You ought to thank me, instead of looking so like a thundercloud,” and Guy laughed merrily.

The doctor was ashamed of his mood, and could not tell what spirit prompted him to answer:

“I am obliged to you, Guy; but as far as I am concerned, you may spare yourself the trouble. If my wife needs educating, I can do it myself.”

Guy was puzzled. Could it be that, after all, he was deceived, and the doctor did not care for Maddy? It might be, and he hastened to change the conversation to another topic than Maddy Clyde. The doctor stayed to dinner, and as Guy watched him closely, he made up his mind that he did care for Maddy Clyde, and this confirmed him in his plan of educating her for him.

Magnanimous Guy! He felt himself very good, very generous, very condescending, and very forgiving, the early portion of the afternoon; but later in the day he began to view Guy Remington in the light of a martyr, said martyrdom consisting in the scornful toss of the head with which Agnes had listened to his plan, and the open opposition of Mrs. Noah.

“Was he beside himself, or what?” this worthy asked. “She liked Maddy Clyde, to be sure, but it wasn’t for him to demean himself by turning her school master. Folks would talk awfully, and she couldn’t blame ’em; besides, what would Lucy say to his bein’ alone in a room with a girl as pretty as Maddy? It was a duty he owed her at any rate to tell her all about it, and if she said ’twas right, why, go it.”

This was the drift of Mrs. Noah’s remarks, and as Guy depended much on her judgment, he decided to write to Lucy to see if she had the slightest objections to his teaching Maddy Clyde. Accordingly he wrote that very night, telling her frankly all he knew concerning Maddy Clyde, and narrating the circumstances under which he first had met her, being careful also to repeat what he knew would have weight with an English girl like Lucy, to wit, that though poor, Maddy’s father and grandfather Clyde had been gentlemen, the one a clergyman, the other a sea captain. Then he told of her desire for learning, and his plan to teach her himself, of what the doctor and Mrs. Noah said about it, and his final determination to consult her. Then he described Maddy herself, feeling a strange thrill as he told how pure, how innocent, how artless and beautiful she was, and asked if Lucy feared aught from his association with her.

“If you do,” he wrote, “you have but to say so, and though I am committed, I will extricate myself in some way rather than wound you in the slightest degree.”

It would be some time ere an answer to this letter could be received, and until such time Guy could not honorably hear Maddy’s lessons as he had agreed to do. But Maddy was not suspicious, and accepting his trivial excuse, waited patiently, while he, too, waited for the letter, wondering what it would contain.

CHAPTER XII.
A GENEROUS LETTER.

At last the answer came, and it was Maddy who brought it to Guy. She had been home that day, and on her return had ridden by the office as Guy had requested her to do. She saw the letter bore a foreign postmark, also that it was in the delicate handwriting of some female, but the sight did not affect her in the least. Maddy's heart was far too heavy that day to care for a trifle, and so placing the letter carefully in her basket she kept on to Aikenside.

The letter was decidedly Lucy-ish in all that pertained to her "dearest darling," her "precious Guy," but when she came to Maddy Clyde, her true, womanly nature spoke; and Guy, while reading it, felt how good she was. Of course he might teach Maddy Clyde all he wished to teach her, and it made Lucy love him better to know that he was willing to do such things. She wished she was there to help him; they would open a school for all the poor, but she did not know when mamma would let her come. That pain in her side was not any better, and her cough had come earlier this season than last. The physician had advised a winter in Naples, and they were going before very long. It would be pleasant there, no doubt, only she should be farther away from her boy Guy, but she would think of him, oh, so often, teaching that dear little Maddy Clyde, and she would pray for him, too, just as she always did. Then followed a few more lines sacred to the lover's eye, lines which told how pure was the love which sweet Lucy Atherstone bore for Guy Remington, who, as he read, felt his heart beat with a throb of pain, for Lucy spoke to him now for the first time of what might possibly be.

"I've dreamed about it nights," she said. "I've thought about it days, and tried so hard to be reconciled; to feel that if God will have it so, I am willing to die before you have ever called me your little wife, or I have ever called you husband. Heaven is better than earth, I know, and I am sure of going there, I think, but oh, dear Guy, a life with you looks so very sweet, that sometimes your little Lucy shrinks from the dark grave, which would hide her forever from you. Guy, you once said you never prayed, and it made me feel so badly, but you will, when you get this, won't you? You will ask God to make me well, and may be He will hear you. Do, Guy, please do pray for your Lucy, far away over the sea."

Guy could not resist that touching appeal, "to pray for his little Lucy," and though his lips were all unused to prayer, bowing his head upon his hands he did ask that she might live, beseeching the Father to send upon him any calamity save this one—Lucy must be spared. Guy felt better for having prayed, it was something to tell Lucy, something that would please her well, and though his heart yet was very sad, a part of the load was lifted, and he could think of Lucy now without the bitter pain her letter first had cost him. Was there nothing that would save her, nobody who could cure her? Her disease was not hereditary; surely it might be made to yield; had English physicians no skill, would not an American do better? It was possible, and if that mother of Lucy's would let her come where doctors knew something, she might get well; but she wouldn't; she was determined that no husband should be burdened with an ailing wife, and so if the mountain would not come to Mahomet, why, Mahomet must go to the mountain, and Guy fairly leaped from his chair as he exclaimed: "I have it—Doc!—he's the most skillful man I ever knew; I'll send him to England; send him to the Atherstones; he shall go to Naples with them as their family physician; he can cure Lucy; I'll speak to him the very next time he comes here;" and with another burden lifted from his mind, Guy began to wonder where Maddy was, and why that day had been so long.

He knew she had returned, for Flora had said she brought the letter, and he was about going out, in hopes of finding her and Jessie, when he heard her in the hall, as she answered some question of Mrs. Noah's; stepping to the door, he asked her to come in, saying he would, if she chose, appoint the lessons talked about so long. Ordinarily, Maddy's eyes would have flashed with delight, for she had anticipated so much from these lessons; now, however, there was a sad look upon her face and she could scarcely keep from crying as she came at Guy's bidding, and sat upon the sofa, near to his armchair. Somehow it rested Guy to look at Maddy Clyde, who, having recovered from her illness, seemed the very embodiment of perfect health, a health which glowed and sparkled all over her bright face; showing itself as well in the luxuriance of her glossy hair as in the brilliancy of her complexion, and the flash of her lustrous eyes. How Guy wished that Lucy could share in what seemed almost

superfluity of health; and why shouldn't she? Dr. Holbrook had cured Maddy; Dr. Holbrook could cure Lucy; and so for the present dismissing that from his mind, he turned to Maddy, and said the time had come when he could give those promised lessons, asking if she would commence to-morrow, after she was through with Jessie, and what she would prefer to take up first?

"Oh, Mr. Remington," and Maddy began to cry: "I am afraid I cannot stay they need me at home, or maybe Grandpa said so and I don't want to go, though I know it's wicked not to; oh, dear, dear!"

Here Maddy broke down entirely, sobbing so convulsively that Guy became alarmed, and wondered what he ought to do to quiet her. As she sat the bowed head was just within his reach, and so he very naturally laid his hand upon it, and as if it had been Jessie's smoothed the silken hair, while he asked why she must go home. Had anything occurred to make her presence more necessary than it was at Aikenside? and into the young man's heart there crept a feeling that Aikenside would be very lonely without Maddy Clyde.

Controlling her voice as well as she was able, Maddy told him how the physicians at the asylum had written that as Uncle Joseph would in all human probability never be perfectly sane, and as a change of scene would do him good, Mr. Markham had better try taking him a while; that having been spoken with upon the subject, he seemed as anxious as a little child, even crying when the night came around and he was not at home, as he expressed it. "They have kept him so long," Maddy said, "that grandpa thought it his duty to relieve them, though he can't well afford it, and so he's coming next week, and grandma will need some one to help, and I must go. I know it's wrong, but I do not want to go, try as I will."

It was a gloomy prospect to exchange Aikenside for the humble home where poverty had its abode, and it was not very strange that Maddy should shrink from it at first. She did not stop to ask what was her duty, or think how much happiness her presence might give her grandparents, or how much she might cheer and amuse the weak imbecile, her uncle. She was but human, and so when Guy began to devise ways of preventing her going, she listened, while the pain at her heart grew less as her faith in Guy grew stronger. He would drive down with her to-morrow, he said, and see what could be done. Meanwhile she must dry her eyes and go to Jessie, who was calling her.

As Guy had half expected, the doctor came around that evening, and inviting him into his private room, Guy proceeded at once to unfold his scheme, asking him first:

"How much he probably received a year for his services as physician."

The doctor could not tell at once, but after a little thought made an estimate, and then inquired why Guy had asked the question.

"Because, Doc, I have a project on foot. Lucy Atherstone is dying with what they call consumption. I don't believe those old fogies understand her disease, and if you will go over to England and undertake her cure, I'll give you just double what you'll get by remaining here. They are going to Naples for the winter, and, undoubtedly, will spend some time in Paris. It will be just the thing for you. Lucy and her mother will be glad of your services when they know I sent you, Lucy likes you now. Will you go? You can trust Maddy to me. I'll take good care that she is worthy of you when you come back."

At the mention of Maddy's name, the doctor's brow darkened. He was sure that Guy meant kindly, but it grated on his feelings to be thus joked about what he knew was a stern reality. Guy's project appeared to him at first a most insane one, but as he continued to enlarge upon it, and the advantage it would be to the doctor to travel in the old world, a feeling of enthusiasm was kindled in his own breast; a desire to visit Naples and France, and the places he had dreamed of as a boy, but never hoped to see, Guy's plan began to look more feasible, and possibly he might have yielded but for one thought, and that a thought of Maddy Clyde. He would not leave her alone with Guy, even though Guy was true to Lucy as steel. He would stay; he would watch; and in time he would win the young girl waiting now for him in the hall below, waiting to tell him 'mid blushes of shame and tears of regret how she had meant to pay him with her very first wages, but now, Uncle Joseph was coming home, and he must wait a little longer.

"Would he, could he be so good?" and unmindful of Guy's presence Maddy laid her hand confidingly upon his arm, while her soft eyes looked beseechingly into his.

How the doctor wished Guy was away, and kindly taking the hint, Guy

left them together in the lighted hall. Sitting down on the sofa, and making Maddy sit beside him, the doctor began:

"Maddy, you know I mean what I say, at least to you, and when I tell you that I never think of that bill except when you speak of it, you will believe me. I know your grandfather's circumstances, and I know, too, that I did much to induce your sickness, consequently if I made one out at all, it would be a very small one."

He did not get any further, for Maddy hastily interrupted him, and while her eyes flashed with pride, exclaimed:

"I will not be a charity patient! I say I will not! I'd be a hired girl before I'd do it!"

It troubled the doctor to see Maddy so disturbed about dollars and cents—to know that poverty was pressing its iron hand upon her young heart; and only because she was so young did he refrain from offering her then and there a resting place from the ills of life in his sheltering love. But she was not prepared, and he should only defeat his object by his rashness, so he restrained himself, though he did pass his arm partly around her waist as he said to her:

"I tell you, Maddy, honestly, that when I want that bill liquidated I'll ask you. I certainly will, and I'll let you pay it, too. Does that satisfy you?"

Yes, Maddy was satisfied, and after a little the doctor continued:

"By the way, Maddy, I have some idea of going to Europe for a few months, or a year or more. You know it does a physician good to study awhile in Paris. What do you think of it? Shall I go?"

The doctor had become quite necessary to Maddy's happiness. He it was to whom she confided all her little troubles, and to lose him would be a terrible loss, and so she answered that if it would be much better for him she supposed he ought to go, though she should miss him sadly and be so lonely without him.

"Would you, Maddy? Are you in earnest? Would you be lonelier for my being gone?" the doctor asked, eagerly. With her usual truthfulness, Maddy replied: "Of course I should;" and, when, after the conference was ended, the doctor stood for a moment talking with Guy, ere bidding him good-night, he said: "I think I shall not accept your European proposition. Somebody else must cure Lucy."

The next day, as Guy had proposed, he rode down to Honedale, taking Maddy with him, and offering so many reasons why she should not be called home, that the old people began to relent, particularly as they saw how Maddy's heart was set on the lessons Guy was going to give her. She might never have a like opportunity, the young man said, and as a good education would put her in the way of helping them when they were older and needed her more, it was their duty to leave her with them. He knew they objected to her receiving three dollars a week, but he should pay it just the same, and if they chose they might, with a part of it, hire a little girl to do the work which Maddy would do were she at home. All this sounded very feasible, especially as it was backed up by Maddy's eyes, brimful of tears, and fixed pleadingly upon her grandfather. The sight of them, more than Guy's arguments, influenced the old man, who decided that if grandma were willing Maddy should stay, unless absolutely needed at the cottage. Then the tears burst forth, and winding her arms around her grandfather's neck, Maddy sobbed out her thanks, asking if it were selfish and wicked and naughty in her to prefer learning rather than staying there.

"Not if that's your only reason," grandpa replied. "It's right to want learning, quite right; but, if my child is biased by the fine things at Aikenside, and hates to come back to her poor home, because 'tis poor, I should say it was very natural, but not exactly right."

Maddy was very happy after it was settled, and chatted gayly with her grandmother, while Guy went out with her grandfather, who wished to speak with him alone.

"Young man," he said, "you have taken a deep interest in me and mine since I first came to know you, and I thank you for it all. I've nothing to give in return except my prayers, and those you have every day; you and that doctor. I pray for you two just as I do for Maddy. Somehow you three come in together. You're uncommon good to Maddy. 'Tain't every one like you who would offer and insist on learning her. I don't know what you do it for. You seem honest. You can't, of course, ever dream of making her your wife, and, if I thought—yes, if I supposed"—here grandpa's voice trembled, and his face became a livid hue with the horror of the idea—"if I supposed that in your heart there was the shadow of an intention to deceive my child, to ruin my Maddy, I'd

throttle you here on the spot, old as I am, and bitterly as I should repent the rashness."

Guy attempted to speak, but grandpa motioned him to be silent, while he went on:

"I do not suspect you, and that's why I trust her with you. My old eyes are dim, but I can see enough to know that Maddy is beautiful. Her mother was so before her, and the Clydes were a handsome race. My Alice was elevated, folks thought, by marrying Captain Clyde, but I don't think so. She was pure and good as the angels, and Maddy is much like her, only she has the ambition of the Clydes: has their taste for everything a little above her. She wouldn't make nobody blush if she was mistress of Aikenside."

Grandpa felt relieved when he had said all this to Guy, who listened politely, smiling at the idea of his deceiving Maddy, and fully concurring with grandpa in all he said of her rare beauty and natural gracefulness. On their return to the house grandpa showed Guy the bedroom intended for Uncle Joseph, and Guy, as he glanced at the furniture, though within himself how he would send down from Aikenside some of the unused articles piled away on the garret when he refurnished his house. He was becoming greatly interested in the Markhams, caring nothing for the remarks his interest might excite among the neighbors, some of whom watched Maddy half curiously as in the stylish carriage, beside its stylish owner, she rode back to Aikenside in the quiet, autumnal afternoon.

CHAPTER XIII.
UNCLE JOSEPH.

In course of time Uncle Joseph came as was arranged, and on the day following Maddy and Guy rode down to see him, finding him a tall, powerfully built man, retaining many vestiges of manly beauty, and fully warranting all Mrs. Markham had said in his praise. He seemed perfectly gentle and harmless, though when Guy was announced as Mr. Remington, Maddy noticed that in his keen black eyes there was for an instant a fiery gleam, but it quickly passed away, as he muttered:

"Much too young; he was older than I, and I am over forty. It's all right."

And the fiery eye grew soft and almost sleepy in its expression, as the poor lunatic turned next to Maddy, telling her how pretty she was, asking if she were engaged, and bidding her be careful that her *fiancé* was not more than a dozen years older than herself.

Uncle Joseph seemed to take to her from the very first, following her from room to room, touching her fair, soft cheeks, smoothing her silken hair, telling her Sarah's used to curl, asking if she knew where Sarah was, and finally crying for her as a child cries for its mother, when at last she went away. Much of this Maddy had repeated to Jessie, as in the twilight they sat together in the parlor at Aikenside; and Jessie was not the only listener, for, with her face resting on her hand, and her head bent eagerly forward, Agnes sat, so as not to lose a word of what Maddy was saying of Uncle Joseph. The intelligence that he was coming to the red cottage had been followed with a series of headaches, so severe and protracted that Dr. Holbrook had pronounced her really sick, and had been unusually attentive. Anxiously she had waited for the result of Maddy's visit to the poor lunatic, and her face was colorless as marble as she heard him described, while a faint sigh escaped her when Maddy told what he had said of Sarah.

Agnes was changed somewhat of late. She had grown more thoughtful and quiet, while her manner toward Maddy was not as haughty as formerly. Guy thought her improved, and thus was not so delighted as he would otherwise have been, when, one day, about two weeks after Uncle Joseph's arrival at Honedale, she startled him by saying she thought it nearly time for her to return to Boston, if she meant to spend the winter there, and asked what she should do with Jessie.

Guy was not quite willing for Agnes to leave him there alone, but when he saw that she was determined, he consented to her going, with the understanding that Jessie was to remain—a plan which Agnes did not oppose, as a child so large as Jessie might stand in the way of her being as gay as she meant to be in Boston. Jessie, too, when consulted, said she would far rather stay at Aikenside; and so one November morning, Agnes, wrapped in velvet and furs, kissed her little daughter, and bidding good-by to Maddy and the servants, left a neighborhood which, since Uncle Joseph was so near, had become so intolerable that not even the hope of winning the doctor could avail to keep her in it.

Guy accompanied her to the city, wondering why, when he used to like it so much, it now seemed dull and tiresome, or why the society he had formerly enjoyed failed to bring back the olden pleasure he had experienced when a resident of Boston. Guy was very popular there, and much esteemed by his friends of both sexes, and great were the efforts made to entertain and keep him as long as possible. But Guy could not be prevailed upon to stay there long, and after seeing Agnes settled in one of the most fashionable boarding houses, he started for Aikenside.

It was dark when he reached home, and as the evening had closed in with a heavy rain, the house presented rather a cheerless appearance, particularly as, in consequence of Mrs. Noah's not expecting him that day, no fires had been kindled in the parlors, or in any room except the library. There a bright coal fire was blazing in the grate, and thither Guy repaired, finding, as he had expected, Jessie and her teacher. Not liking to intrude on Mr. Guy, of whom she still stood somewhat in awe, Maddy soon arose to leave, but Guy bade her stay; he should be lonely without her, he said, and so bringing her work she sat down to sew, while Jessie looked over a book of prints, and Guy upon the lounge studied the face which, it seemed to him, grew each day more and more beautiful. Then he talked with her of books, and the lessons which were to be resumed on the morrow, watching Maddy as her bright face sparkled and glowed with excitement. Then he questioned her of her father's family, feeling a strange sense of satisfaction in knowing that the Clydes were not a race

of whose blood any one need be ashamed; and Maddy was more like them he was sure than like the Markhams, and Guy shivered a little as he recalled the peculiar dialect of Mr. and Mrs. Markham, and remembered that they were Maddy's grandparents. Not that it was anything to him. Oh, no, only as an inmate of his family he felt interested in her, more so perhaps than young men were apt to be interested in their sister's governess.

Had Guy then been asked the question, he would, in all probability, have acknowledged that in his heart there was a feeling of superiority to Maddy Clyde; that she was not quite the equal of Aikenside's heir, nor yet of Lucy Atherstone. It was natural; he had been educated to feel the difference, but any haughty arrogance of which he might have been guilty was kept down by his extreme good sense and generous, impulsive nature. He liked Maddy; he liked to look at her as, in the becoming crimson merino which he really and Jessie nominally had given her, she sat before him, with the firelight falling on her beautiful hair, and making shadows on her sunny face.

Guy was luxurious in his tastes, and it seemed to him that Maddy was just the picture to set off that room, or in fact all the rooms at Aikenside. She would disgrace none of them, and he found himself wishing that Providence had made her something to him—sister or cousin, or anything that would make her one of the Remington line.

And now, my reader, do not fall to abusing Guy, or accuse him of forgetting Lucy Atherstone, for he did not. He thought of her many times that evening, and in his dreams that night Lucy and Maddy shared pretty equally, but the latter was associated with the lessons of the morrow, while Lucy was the bright daystar for which he lived and hoped.

It did not take long for the people of Sommerville to hear that Guy Remington had actually turned schoolmaster, having in his library for two hours or more each day Jessie's little girl-governess, about whose brilliant beauty there was so much said—people wondering, as people will, where it would end, and if it could be possible that the haughty Guy had forgotten his English Lucy and gone to educating a wife.

The doctor, to whom these remarks were sometimes made, silently gnashed his teeth, then said savagely that "if Guy chose to teach Maddy Clyde, he did not see whose business it was," and then rode over to Aikenside to see the teacher and pupil, half hoping that Guy would soom tire of his project and give it up. But Guy grew more and more pleased with his employment, until, at last, from giving Maddy two hours of his time, he came to give her four, esteeming them the pleasantest of the whole twenty-four. Guy was proud of Maddy's improvement, praising her often to the doctor, who also marveled at the rapid development of her mind and the progress she made, grasping a knotty point almost before it was explained, and retaining with wonderful tenacity what she learned.

It mattered nothing to Guy that neighbors gossiped there were none familiar enough to tell him what was said, except the doctor or Mrs. Noah; and so he heard few of the remarks made so frequently, As in Honedale, so in Sommerville Maddy was a favorite, and those who interested themselves most in the matter never said anything worse of her and Mr. Guy than that he might perhaps be educating his own wife, and insinuating that it would be a great "come up" for Grandfather Markham's child. But Maddy never dreamed of such a thing, and kept on her pleasant way, reciting every day to Guy and going every Wednesday to the red cottage, whither, after the first visit to Uncle Joseph, Guy never accompanied her. Jessie, on the contrary, went often to Honedale, where one at least always greeted her coming, stealing up closely to her, and whispering softly: "My Daisy is come again."

From the first Uncle Joseph had taken to Jessie, calling her Sarah for a while, and then changing the name to "Daisy"—"Daisy Mortimer, his little girl," he persisted in calling her, watching from his window for her coming, and crying whenever Maddy appeared without her. At first Agnes, from her city home, forbade Jessie's going so often to see a lunatic; but when Jessie described the poor, crazy man's delight at sight of her, telling how quiet and happy he seemed if he could but lay his hand on her head, or touch her hair, she withdrew her restrictions, and, as if moved to an unwonted burst of tenderness, wrote to her daughter: "Comfort that crazy man all you can; he needs it so much."

A few weeks after there came another letter from Agnes, but this time it was to Guy, and its contents darkened his handsome face with anger and vexation. Incidentally Agnes had heard the gossip, and written it to Guy, adding in conclusion: "Of course I know it is not true, for ever if there were no Lucy Atherstone, you, of all men, would not stoop to

Maddy Clyde. I do not presume to advise, but I will say this, that now she is growing a young lady, folks will keep on talking so long as you keep her there in the house; and it's hardly fair toward Lucy."

This was what knotted up Guy's forehead and made him, as Jessie said, "real cross for once." Somehow, he fancied, latterly, that the doctor did not like Maddy's being there, while even Mrs. Noah managed to keep her out of his way as soon as the lessons were ended. What did they mean? what were they afraid of, and why did they presume to interfere with him? he'd know, at all events; and summoning Mrs. Noah to his presence, he read that part of Agnes' letter, pertaining to Maddy, and then asked what it meant.

"It means this, that folks are in a constant worry, for fear you'll fall in love with Maddy Clyde."

"I fall in love with that child!" Guy repeated, laughing at the idea, and forgetting that he had long since, accused the doctor of doing that very thing.

"Yes, you," returned Mrs. Noah, "and 'taint strange they do; Maddy is not a child: she's nearer sixteen than fifteen, is almost a young lady; and if you'll excuse my boldness, I must say, I ain't any too well pleased with the goin's on myself; not that I don't like the girl, for I do, and I don't blame her an atom. She's as innocent as a new-born babe, and I hope she'll always stay so; but you, Mr. Guy, you—now tell me honest—do you think as much of Lucy Atherstone, as you used to, before you took up school-keepin'?"

Guy did not like to be interfered with, and naturally high-spirited, he at first flew into a passion, declaring that he would not have folks meddling with him, that he thought of Lucy Atherstone all the time, and he did not know what more he could do; that 'twas a pity if a man could not enjoy himself in his own way, provided that way were harmless, that he'd never, in all his life, spent so happy a winter as the last; that—-

Here Mrs. Noah interrupted him with: "That's it, the very *it*; you want nothing better than to have that girl sit close to you when she recites, as she does; and once when she was workin' out some of them plusses and minuses, and things, her slate rested on your knee; it did, I saw it with my own eyes; and then, let me ask, when Jessie is drummin' on the piano, why don't you bend over her, and turn the leaves, and count the time, as you do when Maddy plays; and how does it happen that lately Jessie is one too many, when you hear Maddy's lessons. She has no suspicions, but I know she ain't sent off for nothin'; I know you'd rather be alone with Maddy Clyde than to have anybody present, isn't it so?"

Guy began to wince. There was much truth in what Mrs. Noah had said. He did devise various methods of getting rid of Jessie, when Maddy was in his library, but it had never looked to him in just the light it did when presented by Mrs. Noah, and he doggedly asked what Mrs. Noah would have him do.

"First and foremost, then, I'd have you tell Maddy yourself that you are engaged to Lucy Atherstone; second, I'd have you write to Lucy all about it, and if you honestly can, tell her that you only care for Maddy as a friend; third, I'd have you send the girl—-"

"Not away from Aikenside! I never will!" and Guy sprang to his feet.

The mine had exploded, and for an instant the young man reeled, as he caught a glimpse of where he stood; still he would not believe it, or confess to himself how strong a place in his affections was held by the beautiful girl now no longer a child. It was almost a year since that April afternoon when he first met Maddy Clyde, and from a timid, bashful child, of fourteen and a half, she had grown to the rather tall, and rather self-possessed maiden of fifteen and a half, almost sixteen, as Mrs. Noah said, "almost a woman;" and as if to verify the latter fact, she herself appeared at that very moment, asking permission to come in and find a book, which had been mislaid, and which she needed in hearing Jessie's lessons.

"Certainly, come in," Guy said, and folding his arms he leaned against the mantel, watching her as she hunted for the missing book.

There was no pretense about Maddy Clyde, nothing put on for effect, and yet in every movement she showed marks of great improvement, both in manner and style. Of one hundred people who might glance at her, ninety-nine would look a second time, asking who she was. Naturally graceful and utterly forgetful of herself, she always appeared to good advantage, and never to better than now, when two pairs of eyes were watching her, as standing on tiptoe, or kneeling upon the floor to look under the secretary, she hunted for the book. Not the remotest suspicion had Maddy of what was occupying the thoughts of her companions,

though as she left the room and glanced brightly up at Guy, it struck her that his face was dark and moody, and a painful sensation flitted through her mind that in some way she had intruded.

"Well," was Mrs. Noah's first comment, as the door closed on Maddy, but as Guy made no response to that, she continued: "She is pretty. That you won't deny."

"Yes, more than pretty. She'll make a most beautiful woman."

Guy seemed to talk more to himself than to Mrs. Noah, while his foot kicked the fender, and he mentally compared Lucy and Maddy with each other, and tried to think that it was not the result of that comparison, but rather Mrs. Noah's next remark, which affected him unpleasantly. The remark or remarks were as follows:

"Of course she'll make a splendid woman. Everybody notices her now for her beauty, and that's why you've no business to keep her here where you see her every day. It's a wrong to her, lettin' yourself alone."

Guy looked up inquiringly, and Mrs. Noah continued:

"I've been a girl myself, and I know that Maddy can't be treated as you treat her without its having an effect. I've no idea that it's entered her head yet, but it will by-and-by, and then good-by to her happiness."

"For pity's sake, what do you mean? Do explain, and not talk to me in riddles. What have I done to Maddy, or what am I going to do?"

Gay spoke savagely, and his boots were in great danger of being burned as he kicked vigorously against the fender. Coming nearer to him, and lowering her voice, Mrs. Noah replied:

"You are going to teach her to love you, Guy Remington, just as sure as my name is Noah."

"And is that anything so very bad, I'd like to know. Most girls do not find love distasteful," and Guy walked hastily to the window, where he stood for a moment gazing out upon the soft April snow, which was falling, and feeling anything but satisfied either with the weather or himself; then walking back, and taking a seat before the fire, he said: "I understand you now. You would save Maddy Clyde from sorrow, and you are right. You know more of girls than I do. She might in time get to—to—think of me as she ought not. I never looked upon it in this light before. I've been so happy with her;" here Guy's voice faltered a little, but he recovered himself and went on: "I will tell her about Lucy tonight, but the sending her away, I can't do that. Neither will she be happy to go back where I took her from, for though the best of people, they are not like Maddy, and you know it."

Yes, Mrs. Noah did know it, and pleased that her boy, as she called Guy, had shown some signs of penitence and amendment, she said she did not think it necessary to send Maddy home; she did not advise it either. She liked the girl, and what she advised was this, that Guy should send Maddy and Jessie both to boarding school. Agnes, she knew, would be willing, and it was the best thing he could do. Maddy would thus learn what was expected of a teacher, and as soon as she graduated, she could procure some eligible situation, or if Lucy were there, and desired it, she could come and stay forever for all what she cared.

"And during the vacations, where must she go then?" Guy asked.

"Go where she pleases, of course. As Jessie is so fond of her, and they are much like sisters, it will not be improper for her to come here, as I see, provided Agnes is here. Her presence, of course, would make a difference," Mrs. Noah replied, while Guy continued:

"I know you are right; that is, I do not wish to do Maddy a harm by placing temptation in her way, neither will I have everybody meddling with my business. I tell you I won't. I don't mean you, for you have a right to say what no one else has," and he glanced half angrily at Mrs. Noah. "Pity if I can't take an interest in a girl, because I once wronged her, without every old woman in Christendom thinking she needs to fall in love with me, and so be ruined for life. Maddy Clyde has too good sense for that, or will have when I tell her about Lucy."

"And you will do so?" Mrs. Noah said coaxingly.

"Of course I will, and write to Lucy, too, telling her how you talked, and how I care no more for Maddy than I do for Jessie."

"And will that be true?" Mrs. Noah asked.

Guy could not look her fully in the face then, so he kicked the grate until the concussion sent the red-hot coals out upon the carpet as he replied:

"True? Yes, every word of it."

Mrs. Noah noted all this, and thinking within herself:

“I orto have took him in hand long ago,” she came up to him and said kindly, soothingly: “We shall all miss Maddy; I as much as any one, but I do think it best for her to go to school; and so, after tea, I’ll manage to keep Jessie with me, and send Maddy to you, while you tell her about Lucy and the plan.”

Guy nodded a little jerking kind of a nod, in token of his assent, and then with that perversity which prompts women particularly to press a subject after enough has been said upon it, Mrs. Noah, as she turned to leave the room, gave vent to the following:

“You know, Guy, as well as I, that pretty and smart as she is, Maddy is really beneath you, and no kind of a match, even if you wan’t as good as married, which you be;” and the good lady left the room in time to escape seeing the sparks fly up the chimney, as Guy now made a most vigorous use of the poker, and so did not finish the scorching process commenced on the end of his boot.

Mrs. Noah’s last remark awakened in Guy a Singular train of thought. Yes, Maddy was his inferior as the world saw matters, and settling himself in the chair he tried to fancy what that same world would say if he should make Maddy his wife. Of course he had no such intention, he was just imagining something which never could possibly happen, because in the first place he wouldn’t marry Maddy Clyde if he could, and he couldn’t if he would! Still, it was not an unpleasant occupation fancying what folks, and especially Agnes, would say if he did, and so he sat dreaming about it until the bell rang for supper, when with a nervous start he woke from the reverie, and wishing the whole was over, started for the supper.

CHAPTER XIV.
MADDY AND LUCY.

Supper was over, and Guy was back again in his library. He had not stopped as he usually did, to romp with Jessie or talk to Maddy Clyde, until it was so dark that he could not see her sparkling face, but had come directly back, dropping the heavy curtains and piling fresh coal upon the fire. Mrs. Noah had lighted the lamps and then gone after Maddy, explaining to Jessie how she must stay with her while Maddy went to Mr. Guy, who wanted to talk with her.

"Is he angry with me, Mrs. Noah?" and remembering his moody looks when she went in quest of the book, Maddy felt her heart misgive her as to what might be the result of an interview with Guy.

Mrs. Noah, however, reassured her, and Maddy stole for a moment to her own room to see how she was looking. The crimson dress, with its soft edge of lace about the slender throat, became her well, and smoothing the folds of her black silk apron, whose jaunty shoulder pieces gave her a very girlish appearance, she went down to where Guy was waiting for her. He heard her coming, and involuntarily drew nearer to him the chair where he intended she should sit. But Maddy took instead a stool, and leaning her elbow on the chair, turned her face fully toward him, waiting for him to speak.

"Maddy," he began, "are you happy here at Aikenside?"

"Oh, yes, very, very happy," and Maddy's soft eyes shone with the happiness she tried to express.

It was at least a minute before he spoke again, and when he did, it came out how he had concluded it best to send her and Jessie to school, for a year or two at least; not that he was tired of teaching her, but it would be better for her, he thought, to mingle with other girls and learn the ways of the world. Aikenside would still be her home, still the place where her vacations would be spent with Jessie if she chose, and then he spoke of New York as the place he had in view, and asked her what she thought of it.

Maddy was too much stunned to think of anything at first. That the good she had coveted most should be placed within her grasp, and by Guy Remington too, was almost too much to credit. She was happy at Aikenside, but she had never expected her life there to continue very long, and had often wished that when it ended she might devise some means of entering a seminary as other young ladies did. But she had never dreamed of being sent to school by Guy, nor could she conceive of his motive. He hardly knew himself, only he liked her, and wished to do something for her. This was his reply to her tearful question:

"Oh, Mr. Remington, you are so good to me; what makes you?"

He liked her, and all over Maddy's face there spread a beautiful flush as the words rang in her ears. And then she told Guy how much she wished to be a teacher, and so take care of her grandparents and her poor Uncle Joseph. It seemed almost cruel for that young creature to be burdened with the care of those three half-helpless people, and Guy shuddered just as he usually did when he associated Maddy with them, but when he listened while she told him of all the castles she had built, and in every one of which there was a place for "our folks," as she termed them, it was more in the form of a blessing than a caress that his hand rested on her shining hair.

"You are a good girl, Maddy," he said, "and I am glad now that I have concluded to send you where you can be better fitted for the office you mean to fill than you could be here, but I shall miss you sadly. I like little girls, and though you can hardly be classed there now, you seem to me much like Jessie, and I take pleasure in doing for you as I would for her. Maddy—-"

Guy stopped, uncertain what to say next, while Maddy's eyes again looked up inquiringly.

He was going now to tell "the little girl much like Jessie" of Lucy Atherstone, and the words would not come at first.

"Maddy," he said, again blushing guiltily, "I have said I liked you, and so I hope will some one else. I have written of you to her."

Up to this point Maddy had a vague idea that he meant the doctor, but the "her" dispelled that thought, and a most inexplicable feeling of numbness crept over her as she asked faintly:

"Written to whom?"

Guy did not look at Maddy. He only knew that her head moved out from beneath his hand as he replied:

"To Miss Atherstone—Miss Lucy Atherstone. Have you never heard of her?"

No, Maddy never had, and with that same numbness she could not understand, she listened while Guy told her who Lucy Atherstone was, and why she was not at that moment the mistress of Aikenside. There was no reason why Guy should be excited, but he was, and he talked very rapidly, never once glancing at Maddy until he had finished speaking. She was looking at him intently, wondering if he could hear as she did the beatings of her heart. Had her life depended upon it, she could not at first have spoken, for the numbness which, like bands of steel, seemed to press all the feeling out of it. She did not know why it was that hearing of Lucy Atherstone should affect her so. Surely she ought to be glad for Guy that he possessed the love of so sweet a creature as he described her to be. He was glad, she knew, he talked so energetically—so much as if it were a pleasure to talk; and she was glad, too, only it had taken her so by surprise to know that Mr. Guy, whom she had rather considered as exclusively her own and Jessie's was engaged, and that some time, before long it might be, Aikenside would really have a mistress. She did not quite understand Guy's last words, although she was looking at him, and he asked her twice if she would like to see Lucy's picture ere she comprehended what he meant.

"Yes," came faintly from the parted lips, about which there was a slight quiver as she put up her hand to take the case Guy drew from his bosom.

Turning it to the light she gazed silently upon the sweet young face, which seemed to return her gaze with a look as earnest and lifelike as her own.

"What do you think of her—of my Lucy? Is she not pretty?" Guy asked, bending down so that his dark hair swept against Maddy's, while his warm breath touched her burning cheeks.

"Yes, she's beautiful, oh! so beautiful, and happy, too. I wish I had been like her. I wish—" and Maddy burst into a most uncontrollable fit of weeping, her tears dropping like rain upon the inanimate features of Lucy Atherstone.

Guy looked at her amazed, his own heart throbbing with a keen pang of something undefinable as he listened to her stormy weeping. What did ail her? he wondered. Could it be that the evil against which he was providing had really come upon her? Was Maddy more interested in him than he supposed? He hoped not, though with a man's vanity he felt a slight thrill of satisfaction in thinking that it might be so. Guy knew this feeling was not worthy of him, and he struggled to cast it off, while he asked Maddy why she cried.

Child as she was, the real cause of her tears never entered her brain, and she answered:

"I can't tell why, unless I was thinking how different Miss Atherstone is from me. She's rich and handsome. I am poor and homely, and—"

"No, Maddy, you are not;" and Guy interrupted her.

Gently lifting up her head, he smoothed back her hair, and keeping a hand on each side of her face, said, pleasantly:

"You are not homely. I think you quite as pretty as Lucy; I do, really," he continued, as her eyes kindled at the compliment. "I am going to write to her to-night, and shall tell her more about you. I want you to like each other very much when she comes, so that you may live with us. Aikenside would not be Aikenside without you, Maddy."

In all his wooings of Lucy Atherstone, Guy's voice had never been tenderer in its tone than when he said this to Maddy, whose lip quivered again, and who involuntarily laid her head now upon his knee as she cried a second time, not noisily, but quietly, softly, as if this crying did her good. For several minutes they sat there thus, the nature of their thoughts known only to each other, for neither spoke, until Maddy, half ashamed of her emotions, lifted up her head, and said:

"I do not know what made me cry, only I'd been so happy here that I guess I'd come to think that you only liked Jessie and me. Of course I knew that some time you would see and think all the world of somebody else, but I did not expect it so soon. I am afraid Miss Atherstone will not fancy me, and I know most I shall not feel as free here, after she comes, as I do now. Then your being so good, sending me to school, helped me to cry more, and so I was very foolish. Don't tell Miss Atherstone that I cried. Tell her, though, how beautiful she is, and how glad I am that she loves you, and is going to be your wife."

Maddy's voice was very steady in its tone. She evidently meant what she said, but Guy, the bad man, did not feel as graciously as he ought to have felt in knowing that Maddy Clyde was glad "Lucy loved him, and was to be his wife."

Guy was rather uncomfortable, and as Maddy was in some way associated with his discomfort, he did not oppose her when she arose to leave him.

Had Maddy been more a woman, or less a child, she would have seen that it was well for her to know of Lucy Atherstone before her feelings for Guy Remington had assumed a definite form. As it was, she never dreamed how near she was to loving Aikenside's young heir; and while talking with Jessie of the grand times they should have at school, she marveled at that little round spot of pain which was burning at her heart, or why she should wish that Guy would not speak of her in his letter to Lucy Atherstone.

But Guy did speak of her, frankly confessing the interest he felt in her, telling just how people were beginning to talk, and asking Lucy if she cared, declaring that if she did, he would not see Maddy Clyde any more than was necessary. In a little less than four weeks there came an answer from Lucy, who, with health somewhat improved, had returned to England, and wrote to Guy from Brighton, where she expected to spend the summer, half hoping Guy might join her there, though she could not urge it, as mamma still insisted that she was not able to take upon herself the duties of a wife. Then she spoke of Maddy Clyde, saying "She was not one bit jealous of her dear Guy, Of course ignorant, meddling people, of whom she feared there were a great many in America, would gossip, but he was not to mind them." Then she said that if Maddy were willing, she would so much like her picture, as she had a curiosity to know just how she looked, and if Maddy pleased, "would she write a few lines, so as not to seem so much a stranger?"

Lucy Atherstone had been educated to think a great deal of birth, and blood, and family, and Guy never did a wiser thing than when he told her that according to English views, Maddy was a lady. It went far toward reconciling Lucy to his interest in one whom her haughtier and more sanguine mother called a rival, advising her mother to ignore her altogether. But Lucy's was a different nature, and though it cost her pride a pang, she asked for a line from Maddy, partly to mortify that pride, and partly to prove to Guy how free she was from jealousy.

"Darling little Lucy, I do love her very dearly," was Guy's comment, as he finished reading her letter, feeling somewhat as if her mother were a kind of cruel ogress, bent on preventing him from being happy. Then, as he remembered Lucy's hope that he might join her, and thought how much easier of access New York was than Brighton, he said, half petulantly:

"I've been to England for nothing times enough. When that mother of hers says I may have Lucy, I'll go again, but not before. It don't pay."

And crushing the letter into his pocket, he went out upon the piazza where were assembled Maddy, Jessie and Mrs. Agnes, the latter of whom had come to Aikenside the day before.

At first she had objected to the boarding-school arrangement, saying Jessie was too young, but Guy as usual had overruled her objections, as he had those of Grandpa Markham, and it was now a settled thing that Maddy and Jessie both should go to New York, Mrs. Agnes to accompany them if she chose, and having a general supervision of her child. This was Guy's plan, the one which had prevailed with the fashionable woman, who, tired of Boston, was well pleased with the prospect of a life in New York. Guy's interest in Maddy was wholly inexplicable to her, unless she explained it on the principal that in the Remington nature there was a fondness for governesses, as had been exemplified in her own history. That Guy would ever marry Maddy she doubted, but the mere possibility of it made her set her teeth firmly together as she thought how embarrassing it would be to acknowledge as the mistress of Aikenside the little girl whom she had sought to banish from her table. Since her return she had had no opportunity of judging for herself how matters stood, and was consequently much relieved when, as Guy joined them, he began at once to speak of Lucy, telling of the letter, and her request for Maddy's picture.

"Me? Mine? You cannot mean that?" Maddy exclaimed, her eyes opening wide with wonder, but Guy did mean it, and began to plan a drive on the morrow to Devonshire, where there was at that time a tolerably fair artist.

Accordingly the next day the four went down to Devonshire, calling

first upon the doctor, whose face brightened when he heard why they had come. During the weeks that had passed, the doctor had not been blind to at that was passing at Aikenside, and the fear that Guy was more interested in Maddy than he ought to be, had grown almost to a certainty. Now, however, he was not so sure. Indeed, the fact that Guy had told her of Lucy Atherstone would indicate that his suspicions were groundless, and he entered heartily into the picture plan, saying laughingly that if he supposed Miss Lucy would like his face he'd sit himself, and bidding Guy be sure to ask her. The doctor's gay spirits helped raise those of Maddy, and as that little burning spot in her heart was fast wearing away, she was in just the mood for a most admirable likeness. Indeed, the artist's delight at his achievement was unbounded, as he declared it the very best picture he had ever taken. It was beautiful, even Agnes acknowledged to herself, while Jessie wait into raptures, and Maddy blushed to hear her own praises. Guy said nothing, except to ask that Maddy should sit again; this was good, but a second might be better. So Maddy sat again, succeeding quite as well as at first, but as the artist's preference was for the former, it was left to be finished up, with the understanding that Guy would call for it. As the ladies passed down the stairs, Guy lingered behind, and when sure they were out of hearing, said in a low voice:

"You may as well finish both; they are too good to be lost."

The artist bowed, and Guy, with a half guilty blush, hurried down into the street, where Agues was waiting for him. Two hours later, Guy, in Mrs. Conner's parlor, was exhibiting the finished picture, which in its handsome casing, was more beautiful than ever, and more natural, if possible.

"I think I might have one of Maddy's," Jessie said, half poutingly; then, as she remembered the second sitting, she begged of Guy to get it for her, "that was a dear brother."

But the "dear brother" did not seem inclined to comply with her request, putting her off, until, despairing of success, Jessie, when alone with the doctor, tried her powers of persuasion on him, coaxing until in self-defense he crossed the street, and entering the daguerrean gallery asked for the remaining picture of Miss Clyde, saying that he wished it for little Miss Remington.

"Mr. Remington took them both," the artist replied, commencing a dissertation on the style and beauty of the young girl, all of which was lost upon the doctor, who, in a kind of maze, quitted the room, and returning to Jessie, said to her carelessly: "He hasn't it. You know they rub out those they do not use. So you'll have to do without; and, Jessie, I wouldn't tell Guy I tried to get it for you."

Jessie wondered why she must not tell Guy, but the fact that the doctor requested her not was sufficient. Consequently Guy little guessed that the doctor knew what it was he carried so carefully in his coat pocket, looking at it earnestly when at home and alone in his own room, admiring its soft, girlish beauty, half shrinking from the lifelike expression of the large, bright eyes, and trying to convince himself that his sole object in getting it was to give it to the doctor after Maddy was gone! It would be such a surprise, and the doctor would be so glad, that Guy finally made himself believe that he had done a most generous thing!

"I am going to send Lucy your picture to-day, and as she asked that you should write her a few lines, suppose you do it now," Guy said to Maddy next morning, as they were leaving the breakfast table.

It was a sore trial to Maddy to write to Lucy Atherstone, but she offered no remonstrance, and so accompanying the picture was a little note, filled mostly with praises of Mr. Guy, and which would be very gratifying to the unsuspecting Lucy.

Now that it was fully decided for Jessie to go with Maddy, her lessons were suspended, and Aikenside for the time being was turned into a vast dressmaking and millinery establishment. With his usual generosity, Guy had given Agnes permission to draw upon his purse for whatever was needed, either for herself or Jessie, with the definite understanding that Maddy should have an equal share of dress and attention.

"It will not be necessary," he said, "for you to enlighten the citizens of New York with regard to Maddy's position. She goes there as Jessie's equal, and as such her wardrobe must be suitable."

No one could live long with Maddy Clyde without becoming interested in her, and in spite of herself Agnes' dislike was wearing away, particularly as of late she had seen no signs of special attention on the doctor's part. He had gotten over his weakness, she thought, and so was

very gracious toward Maddy, who, naturally forgiving, began to like her better than she had ever dreamed it possible for her to like so proud and haughty a woman. Down at the cottage in Honedale there were many consultations held and many fears expressed by the aged couple as to what would be the result of all Guy was doing for their child. Womanlike, Grandma Markham felt a flutter of pride in thinking that Maddy was going to school in a big city like New York. It gave her something to talk about with her less fortunate neighbors, who wondered, and gossiped, and envied, but could not bring themselves to feel unkindly toward the girl Maddy, who had grown up in their midst, and who as yet was wholly unchanged by prosperity. Grandpa Markham, on the contrary, though pleased that Maddy should have every opportunity for acquiring the education she so much desired, was fearful of the result—fearful that there might come a time when his darling would shrink from the relations to whom she was as sunshine to the flowers. He knew that the difference between Aikenside and the cottage must strike her unpleasantly every time she came home, and he did not blame her for her always apparent readiness to go back. That was natural, he thought, but a life in New York, that great city which to the simple-hearted old man seemed a very Babylon of iniquity, was different, and for a time he demurred to sending her there. But Guy persuaded him, and when he heard that Agnes was going, too, he consented, for he had faith in Agnes as a protector. Maddy had never told him of the scene which followed that lady's return from Saratoga. Indeed, Maddy never told anything but good of Aikenside or its inmates, and so Mrs. Agnes came in for a share of the old people's gratitude, while even Uncle Joseph, hearing daily a prayer for the "young madam," as grandpa termed her, learned to pray for her himself, coupling her name with that of Sarah, and asking in his crazy way that God would "forgive Sarah" first, and then "bless the madam—the madam—the madam."

A few days before Maddy's departure, grandpa went up to see "the madam;" anxious to know something more than hearsay about a person to whose care his child was to be partially intrusted. Agnes was in her room when told who wanted to see her. Starting quickly, she turned so deadly white that Maddy, who brought the message, flew to her side, asking in much alarm, what was the matter.

"Only a little faint. It will soon pass off," Agnes said, and then, dismissing Maddy, she tried to compose herself sufficiently to pass the ordeal she so much dreaded, and from which there was no possible escape.

Thirteen years! Had they changed her past recognition? She hoped, she believed so, and yet, never in her life had Agnes Remington's heart beaten with so much terror and apprehension as when she entered the reception room where Guy sat talking with the infirm old man she remembered so well. He had grown older, thinner, poorer looking, than when she saw him last, but in his wrinkled face there was the same benignant, heavenly expression which, when she was better than she was now, used to remind her of the angels. His snowy hair was parted just the same as ever, but the mild blue eye was dimmer, and it rested on her with no suspicious glance as, partially reassured, she glided across the threshold, and bowed civilly when Guy presented her.

A little anxious as to how her grandfather would acquit herself, Maddy sat by, wondering why Agnes appeared so ill at ease, and why her grandsire started sometimes at the sound of her voice, and looked earnestly at her.

"We've never met before to my knowledge, young woman," he said once to Agnes, "but you are mighty like somebody, and your voice when you talk low keeps makin' me jump as if I'd heard it summers or other."

After that Agnes spoke in elevated tones, as if she thought him deaf, and the mystified look of wonder did not return to his face. Numerous were the charges he gave to Agnes concerning Maddy, bidding her be watchful of his child, and see that she did not "get too much drinked in with the wicked things on Broadway!" then, as he arose to go, he laid his trembling hand on her head and said solemnly: "You are young yet, lady, and there may be a long life before you. God bless you, then, and prosper you in proportion as you are kind to Maddy. I've nothing to give you nor Mr. Guy for your goodness only my prayers, and them you have every day. We all pray for you, lady, Joseph and all, though I doubt me he knows much the meaning of what he says." "Who, sir? What did you say?" and Agnes' face was scarlet, as grandpa replied: "Joseph, our unfortunate boy; Maddy must have told you, the one who's taken such a shine to Jessie. He's crazy-like, and from the corner where he sits so much, I can hear him whispering by the hour, sometimes of folks he used

to know, and then of you, who we call madam. He says for ten minutes on the stretch: “God bless the madam—the madam—the madam!” You’re sick, lady; talkin’ about crazy folks makes you faint,” grandpa added, hastily, as Agnes turned white, like the dress she wore. “No—oh, no, I’m better now,” Agnes gasped, bowing him to the door with a feeling that she could not breathe a moment longer in his presence. He did not hear her faint cry of bitter, bitter remorse, as he walked through the hall, nor know she watched him as he went slowly down the walk, stopping often to admire the fair blossoms which Maddy did not feel at liberty to pick. “He loved flowers,” Agnes whispered, as her better nature prevailed over every other feeling, and, starting eagerly forward, she ran after the old man, who, surprised at her evident haste, waited a little anxiously for her to speak. It was rather difficult to do so with Maddy’s inquiring eyes upon her, but Agnes managed at last to say: “Does that crazy man like flowers—the one who prays for the madam?” “Yes, he used to years ago,” grandpa replied; and, bending down, Agnes began to pick and arrange into a most tasteful bouquet the blossoms and buds of May, growing so profusely within the borders.

“Take them to him, will you?” and her hand shook as she passed to Grandpa Markham the gift which would thrill poor crazy Joseph with a strange delight, making him hold converse a while with the unseen presence which he called “she,” and then whisper blessings on the madam’s head. Three days after this, a party of four left Aikenside, which presented a most forlorn and cheerless appearance to the passers-by, who were glad almost as the servants when, at the expiration of a week, Guy came back and took up his olden life of solitude and loneliness, with nothing in particular to interest him, except his books the letters he wrote to Lucy; unless, indeed, it were those he was going to write to Maddy, who, with Jessie, had promised to become his correspondents. Nothing but these and the picture—the doctor’s picture—the one designed expressly for him, and which troubled him greatly. Believing that he had fully intended it for the doctor, Guy felt as if it were, in a measure, stolen property, and this made him prize it all the more.

Now that Maddy was away, Guy missed her terribly, wondering how he had ever lived without her, and sometimes working himself into a violent passion against the meddlesome neighbors who would not let her remain with him in peace, and who, now that she was gone, did not stop their talking one whit. Of this last, however, he was ignorant, as there was no one to tell him how people marveled more than ever, feeling confident now that he was educating his own wife, and making sundry hateful remarks as to what he intended doing with her relations. Guy only knew that he was very lonely, that Lucy’s letters seemed insipid, that even the doctor failed to interest him, as of old, and that his greatest comfort was in looking at the bright young face which seemed to smile so trustfully upon him from the tiny casing, just as Maddy had smiled upon him when, in Madam ——’s parlor, he bade her good-by. The doctor could not have that picture, he finally decided. Hal ought to be satisfied with getting Maddy, as of course he would, for wasn’t he educating her for that very purpose? Certainly he was, and, as a kind of atonement for what he deemed treachery to his friend, he talked with him often of her, always taking it for granted that when she was old enough, the doctor would woo and win the little girl who had come to him in his capacity of inspector, as candidate number one.

At first, the doctor suspected him of acting a part in order to cover up some design of his own with regard to Maddy, and affected an indifference he did not feel; but, as time passed on, Guy, who really believed himself sincere, managed to make the doctor believe so, too. Consequently, the latter abandoned his suspicions, and gave himself up to blissful dreams of what might possibly be when Maddy should have become the brilliant woman she was sure one day to be. Alas! for the doctor’s dreams.

CHAPTER XV.
THE HOLIDAYS.

The summer vacation had been spent by the Remington's and Maddy at the seaside, the latter coming to the cottage for a week before returning to her school in New York, and as the doctor was then absent from home, she did not meet him at all. Consequently he had not seen her since she left Aikenside for New York. But she was at home now for the Christmas holidays—was down at the cottage, too; and unusually nervous for him, the doctor stood before the little square glass in his back office, trying to make himself look as well as possible, for he was going that very afternoon to call upon Miss Clyde. He was glad she was not at Aikenside; he would rather meet her where Guy was not, and he hoped he might be fortunate enough to find her alone.

The doctor was seriously in love. He acknowledged that now to himself, confessing, too, that with his love was mingled a spice of jealousy, lest Guy Remington should be expending more thought on Maddy Clyde than was consistent with the promised husband of Lucy Atherstone. He wished so much to talk with Guy about her, and yet he dreaded it; for if the talk should confirm his suspicious there would be no hope for him. No girl in her right mind would prefer him to Guy Remington, and with a little sigh the doctor was turning away from the glass, when, as if to verify a familiar proverb, Guy himself drove up in a most dashing equipage, the silver-tipped harness of his high-mettled steed flashing in the wintry sunlight, and the bright-hued lining of his fanciful robes presenting a very gay appearance.

Guy was in the best of spirits. For an entire half day he had tried to devise some means to getting Maddy up to Aikenside. It was quite too bad for her to spend the whole vacation at the cottage, as she seemed likely to do. He knew she was lonely there; that the bare floor and low, dark walls affected her unpleasantly. He had seen that in her face when he bade her good-by, for he had carried her down to the cottage himself, and now he was going after her. There was to be a party at Aikenside; the very first since Guy was its master. The neighbors had said he was too proud to invite them, but they should say so no more. The house was to be thrown open in honor of Guy's twenty-sixth birthday, and all who were at all desirable as guests were to be bidden to the festival. First on the list was the doctor, who, remembering how averse Guy was to large parties, wondered at the proceedings. But Guy was all engaged in the matter, and after telling who were to be invited, added rather indifferently: "I'm going now down to Honedale after Maddy. It's better for her to be with us a day or two beforehand. You've seen her, of course."

No, the doctor had not; he was just going there, he said, in a tone so full of sad disappointment, that Guy detected it at once, and asked if anything was the matter.

"Guy," the doctor continued, sitting down by his friend, "I remember once your making me your confidant about Lucy. You remember it, too?"

"Yes, why? well?" Guy replied, beginning to feel strangely uncomfortable as he half divined what was coming next.

Latterly Guy had stopped telling the doctor that he was educating Maddy for him. Indeed, he did not talk of her at all, and the doctor might have fancied her out of his mind but for the frequent visits to New York, which Guy found it absolutely necessary to make. Guy did not himself understand the state of his own feelings with regard to Maddy, but if compelled to explain them they would have been something as follows: He fully expected to marry Lucy Atherstone; the possibility that he should not had never occurred to him, but that was no reason why Maddy Clyde need be married for these many years. She was very young yet; there was time enough for her to think of marrying when she was twenty-five, and in the meanwhile it would be splendid to have her at Aikenside as Lucy's and his friend. Nothing could be nicer, and Guy did not care to have this little arrangement spoiled. But that the doctor had an idea of spoiling it, he had not a doubt, particularly after the doctor's next remark.

"I have not seen Maddy since last spring, you know. Is she very much improved?"

"Yes, very much. There is no more stylish-looking girl to be seen on Broadway than Maddy Clyde," and Guy shook down his pantaloons a little awkwardly.

"Well, is she as handsome as she used to be, and as childish in her

manner?" the doctor asked; and Guy replied:

"I took her to the opera once, last month, and the many admiring glances cast at our box proved pretty positively that Maddy's beauty was not of the ordinary kind."

"The opera!" the doctor exclaimed; "Maddy Clyde at the opera! What would her grandfather say? He is very puritanical, you know."

"Yes, I know; and so is Maddy, too. She wrote and obtained his consent before she'd go with me. He won't let her go to a theatre anyhow."

Here an interval of silence ensued, and then the doctor began again,

"Guy, you told me once you were educating Maddy Clyde for me, and I tried then to make you think I didn't care; but I did, oh, so much. Guy, laugh at me, if you please. I cannot blame you if you do; but the fact is, I believe I've loved Maddy Clyde ever since that time she was so sick. At all events, I love her now, and I was going down there this very afternoon to tell her so. She's old enough. She was sixteen last October, the—the——"

"Tenth day," Guy responded, thus showing that he, too, was keeping Maddy's age, even to a day.

"Yes, the tenth day," resumed the doctor. "There's 'most eleven years' difference between us, but if she feels at all as I do, she will not care, Guy;" and the doctor began to talk earnestly: "I'll be candid with you, and say that you have sometimes made my heart ache a little."

"Me!" and Guy's face was crimson, while the doctor continued:

"Yes, and I beg your pardon for it; but let me ask you one question, and upon its answer will depend my future course with regard to Maddy: You are true to Lucy?"

Guy felt the blood trickling at the roots of his hair, but he answered truthfully as he believed:

"Yes, true as steel;" while the generous thought came over him that he would further the doctor's plans all he possibly could.

"Then I am satisfied," the doctor rejoined; "and as you have rather assumed the position of her guardian or brother, I ask your permission to offer her the love which whether she accepts it or not, is hers."

Guy had never felt a sharper pang than that which now thrilled through every nerve, but he would not prove false to the friend confiding in him, and he answered calmly:

"You have my consent; but, Doc, better put it off till you see her at Aikenside. There's no chance at the cottage, with those three old people. I wonder she don't go wild. I'm sure I should."

Guy was growing rather savage about something, but the doctor did not mind; and grasping his arm as he arose, he said:

"And you'll manage it for me, Guy? You know how. I don't. You'll contrive for me to see her alone, and maybe say a word beforehand in my favor."

"Yes, yes, I'll manage it. I'll fix it right. Don't forget, day after to-morrow night. The Cutlers' will be there, and, by the way, Marcia has got to be a splendid girl. She fancied you once, you know. Old Cutler is worth half a million." And Guy tore himself away from the doctor, who, now that the ice was broken, would like to have talked of Maddy forever.

But Guy was not thus inclined, and in a mood not extremely amiable, he threw himself into his sleigh and went dashing down toward Honedale. For some unaccountable reason he was not now one bit interested in the party, and, were it not that a few of the invitations were issued, he would have been tempted to give it up. Guy did not know what ailed him. He only felt as if somebody had been meddling with his plans, and had he been in the habit of swearing, he would probably have sworn; but as he was not, he contented himself with driving like a second Jehu he reached Honedale, where a pair of soft, brown eyes smiled up into his face, and a little, fat, warm hand was clasped in his, as Maddy came even to the gate to meet him.

She was very glad to see him. The cottage with its humble adornings did seem lonely, almost dreary, after the life and bustle of New York, and Maddy had cried more than once to think how hard and wicked she must be growing when her home had ceased to be the dear old home she once loved so well. She had been there five days now, and notwithstanding the efforts of her grandparents to entertain her, each day had seemed a week in its duration. Neither the doctor nor Guy had been near her, and capricious little Maddy had made herself believe that the former was sadly remiss in his duty, inasmuch as he had not seen her for so long. He had been in the habit of calling every week, her grandmother said, and this did not tend to increase her amiability. Why didn't he come now

when he knew she was at home? Didn't he want to see her? Well, she could be indifferent, too, and when they did meet, she'd show how little she cared!

Maddy was getting to be a woman with womanly freaks, as the reader will readily see. At Guy she was not particularly piqued. She did not take his attentions, as a matter of course; still she thought more of him, if possible, than of the doctor, during those five days, saying to herself each morning: "He'll surely come to-day," and to herself each night: "He will be here to-morrow." She had something to show him at last—a letter from Lucy Atherstone, who had gradually come to be her regular correspondent, and whom Maddy had learned to love with all the intensity of her girlhood. To her ardent imagination Lucy Atherstone was but a little lower than the angels, and the pure, sweet thoughts contained in every letter were doing almost as much toward molding her character as Grandpa Markham's prayers and constant teachings. Maddy did not know it, but it was these letters from Lucy which kept her from loving Guy Remington. She could not for a moment associate him with herself when she so constantly thought of him as the husband of another, and that other Lucy Atherstone. Not for worlds would Maddy have wronged the gentle creature who wrote to her so confidingly of Guy, envying her in that she could so often see his face and hear his voice, while his betrothed was separated from him by many thousand miles. Little by little it had come out that Lucy's mother was averse to the match, that she had in her mind the case of an English lord, who would make her daughter "My Lady;" and this was the secret of her deferring so long her daughter's marriage. In her last letter to Maddy, however, Lucy had written with more than her usual spirit that she would come in possession of her property on her twenty-fifth birthday. She should then feel at liberty to act for herself, and she launched out into joyful anticipations of the time when she should come to Aikenside and meet her dear Maddy Clyde. Feeling that Guy, if he did not already know it, would be glad to hear it, Maddy had all the morning been wishing he would come; and when she saw him at the gate she ran out to meet him, her eyes and face sparkling with eager joy as she suffered him to retain her hand while she said: "I am so glad to see you, Mr. Remington. I almost thought you had forgotten me at Aikenside, Jessie and all."

Guy began to exclaim against any one's forgetting her, and also to express his pleasure at finding her so glad to see him, when Maddy interrupted him with, "Oh, it's not that; I've something to show you—something which will make you very happy. I had a letter from Lucy last night. When she is twenty-five she will be her own mistress, you know, and she means to be married in spite of her mother—she says—let me see—" and drawing from her bosom Lucy's letter, Maddy read, "'I do not intend to fail in filial obedience, but I have tired dear Guy's patience long enough, and as soon as I can I shall marry him.' Isn't it nice?" and returning the letter to its hiding place, Maddy scooped up in her hand and ate a quantity of the snow beside the path.

"Yes, it was very nice," Guy admitted, but there was a shadow on his brow as he followed Maddy into the cottage, where the lunatic, who had been watching them from the window, shook his head doubtfully and said, "Too young, too young for you, young man. You can't have our Sunshine if you want her."

"Hush, Uncle Joseph," Maddy whispered, softly, taking his arm and laying it around her neck. "Mr. Remington don't want me. He is engaged to a beautiful English girl across the sea."

Low as Maddy's words were, Guy heard them, as well as the crazy man's reply, "Engagements have been broken."

That was the first time the possibility had ever entered Guy's brain that his engagement might be broken, provided he wished it, which he did not, he said to himself positively. Lucy loved him, he loved Lucy, and that was enough, so in a kind of abstracted manner arising from the fact that he was calculating how long it would be before Lucy was twenty-five, he began to talk with Maddy, asking how she had spent her time, and so forth. This reminded Maddy of the doctor, who, she said, had not been to see her at all.

"He was coming this morning," Guy rejoined, "but I persuaded him to defer his call until you were at Aikenside. I have come to take you back with me, as we are to have a party day after to-morrow evening, and I wish you to be present."

A party, a big party, such as Maddy had never in her life attended! How her eyes sparkled from mere anticipation as she looked appealingly to her grandfather, who, though classing parties with the pomps and

vanities from which he would shield his child, still remembered that he once was young, that fifty years ago he, too, like Maddy, wanted “to see the folly of it,” and not take the mere word of older people that in every festive scene there was a pitfall, strewn over so thickly with roses that it was ofttimes hard to tell just where its boundary line commenced. Besides that, grandpa had faith in Guy, and so his consent was granted, and Maddy was soon on her way to Aikenside, which presented a gayer, busier appearance than she had ever known before. Jessie was wild with delight, dragging forth at once the pink dress which she was to wear, and whispering to Maddy that Guy had bought a dark blue silk for her, and that Sarah Jones was at that moment fashioning it after a dress left there by Maddy the previous summer.

“Mother said plain white muslin was more appropriate for a young girl, but Brother Guy said no; fee blue would be useful after the party; it was what you needed, and so he bought it and paid a dollar and three-quarters a yard, but it’s a secret until you are called to try it on. Isn’t Guy splendid?”

He was indeed splendid, Maddy thought, wondering why he was so kind to her, and if it would be so when Lucy came. The dress fitted admirably, only Maddy thought grandpa would say it was too low in the neck, but Sarah overruled her objections, assisted by Guy, who, when the dress was completed and tried on for the last time, was called in by Jessie to see if “Maddy’s neck didn’t look just like cheese curd,” and if “she shouldn’t have a piece sewed on as she suggested.” The neck was *au fait*, Guy said, laughing as Maddy for blushing so, and saying when he saw how really distressed she seemed that he would provide her with something to relieve the bareness of which she complained. “Oh, I know, I saw, I peeked in the box,” Jessie began, but Guy put his hand over the little tattler’s mouth, bidding her keep the result of her peeking to herself.

And for once Jessie succeeded in doing so, although she several times set Maddy to guessing what it was Guy had for her in a box! As the size of the box was not mentioned, Maddy had fully made up her mind to a shawl or scarf, and was proportionately disappointed when, as she was dressing for the party, there was sent up to her room a small round box, scarcely large enough to hold an apple, much less a small scarf. The present proved to be a pair of plain but heavy bracelets, and a most exquisitely wrought chain of gold, to which was appended a beautiful pearl cross, the whole accompanied with the words, “From Guy.” Jessie was in ecstasies again. Clasping the ornaments on Maddy’s neck and arms, she danced around her, declaring there never was anything more beautiful, or anybody as pretty as Maddy was in her rich party dress. Maddy was fond of jewelry—as what young girl is not?—and felt a flush of gratified pride, or vanity, or satisfaction, whichever one chooses to call it, as she glanced at herself in the mirror and remembered the time when, riding with the doctor, she had met Mrs. Agnes, with golden bracelets flashing on her arms, and wished she might one day wear something like them. The day had come sooner than she then anticipated, but Maddy was not as happy in possession of the coveted ornaments as she had thought she should be. Somehow, it seemed to her that Guy ought not to have given them to her, that it was improper for her to keep them, and that both Mrs. Noah and Agnes thought so, too. She wished she knew exactly what was right, and then, remembering that Guy had said the doctor was expected early, she decided to ask his opinion on the subject and abide by it.

At first Agnes had cared but little about the party, affecting to despise the people in their immediate neighborhood; but when Guy gave her permission to invite from the adjoining towns, and even from Worcester if she liked, her spirits arose; and when her toilet was completed, she shone resplendent in lace and diamonds and curls, managing to retain through all a certain simplicity of dress appropriate to the hostess. But beautiful as Agnes was, she felt in her jealous heart that there was about Maddy Clyde an attraction she did not possess. Guy saw it, too, and while complimenting his pretty mother-in-law, kept his eyes fixed admiringly on Maddy, who started him into certain unpleasant remembrances by asking if the doctor had come yet.

“No—yes—there he was now,” and Guy looked into the hall, where the doctor’s voice was heard inquiring for him.

“I want to see him a minute, alone, please. There’s something I want to ask him.” And, unmindful of Agnes’ darkening frown, or Guy’s look of wonder, Maddy darted from the room, and ran hastily down the hall to where the doctor stood, waiting for Guy, not for her.

He had not expected to meet her thus, or to see her thus, and the sight

of her, grown so tall, so womanly, so stylish and so beautiful, almost took his breath away. And yet, as he stood with her soft hand in his, and surveyed her from head to foot, he felt that he would rather have had her as she was when a dainty frill shaded her pale, wasted face, when the snowy ruffle was fastened high about her throat, and the cotton bands were buttoned about her wrists, where gold ones now were shining. The doctor had never forgotten Maddy as she was then, the very embodiment, he thought, of helpless purity. The little sick girl, so dear to him then, was growing away from him now; and these adornings, which marked the budding woman, seemed to remove her from him and place her nearer to Guy, whose bride should wear silk and jewels, just as Maddy did.

She was very glad to see him, she said, asking in the same breath why he had not been to the cottage, if she had not grown tall, and if he thought her one bit improved with living in a city?

“One question at a time, if you please,” he said, drawing her a little more into the shadow of the door where they would be less observed by any one passing through.

Maddy did not wait for him to answer, so eager was she to unburden her mind and know if she ought to keep the costly presents, at which she knew he was looking.

“If he remembers his unpaid bill, he must consider me mighty mean,” she thought: and then, with her usual frankness, she told him of the perplexity and asked his opinion.

“It would displease Mr. Guy very much if I were to give them back,” she said: “but it hardly is right for me to accept them, is it?”

The doctor did not say she ought not to wear the ornaments, though he longed to tear them from her arms and neck and throw them anywhere, he cared not where, so they freed her wholly from Guy.

They were very becoming, he said. She would not look as well without them; so she had better wear them to-night, and to-morrow, if she would grant him an interview, he would talk with her further.

Dissembling doctor! He said all this to gain the desired interview with Maddy, the interview for which Guy was to prepare her. That he had not done so he felt assured, but he could not be angry with him, as he came smilingly toward them, asking if they had talked privacy long enough, and glancing rather curiously at Maddy’s face. There was nothing in its expression to disturb him, and, offering her his arm, he led her back to the drawing-rooms where Agnes was smoothing down the folds of her dress, preparatory to receiving the guests just descending the stairs. It was a brilliant scene which Aikenside presented that night, and amid it all Agnes bore herself like a queen, while Jessie, with her sunny face and golden hair, came in for a full share of attention. But amid the gay throng there was none so fair or so beautiful as Maddy, who deported herself with as much ease and grace as if she had all her life long been accustomed to just such occasions as this. At a distance the doctor watched her, telling several who she was, and once resenting by both look and manner a remark made by Maria Cutler to the effect that she was nobody but Mrs. Remington’s governess, a poor girl whom Guy had taken a fancy to educate out of charity.

“He seems very fond of his charity pupil, upon my word. He scarcely leaves her neighborhood at all,” whispered old Mrs. Cutler, the mother of Maria, who, Guy said, once fancied Dr. Holbrook, and who had no particular objections to fancying him now, provided it could be reciprocal.

But the doctor was only intent on Maddy, knowing always just where she was standing, just who was talking to her; and just how far from her Guy was. He knew, too, when the latter was urging her to sing; and, managing to get nearer, heard her object that no one cared to hear her.

“But I do; I wish it,” Guy replied in that tone which people generally obeyed; and casting a half-frightened look at the sea of faces around her, Maddy suffered him to lead her to the piano, sitting quite still while he found what he wished her to play.

It was his favorite song, and one which brought out Maddy’s voice in its various modulations.

“Oh, please, Mr. Remington, anything but a song. I cannot sing,” Maddy whispered pleadingly; but Guy answered resolutely, “You can.”

There was no appeal after this, but a resigned, obedient look, which made the doctor gnash his teeth as he leaned upon the instrument. What right had Guy to command Maddy Clyde, and why should she obey? and yet, as the doctor glanced at Guy, he felt that were he in Maddy’s place, he should do the same.

“No girl can resist Guy Remington,” he thought. “I’m glad there’s a Lucy Atherstone over the sea.” And with a smile of encouragement for Maddy, who was pale with nervous timidity, he listened while her sweet, birdlike voice trembled for a moment with fear; and then, gaining from its own sound, filled the room with melody, and made those who had wandered off to other parts of the building hasten back to see who was singing.

Maria Cutler had presided at the piano earlier in the evening, as had one or two other young ladies, but to none of these had Guy paid half the attention he did to Maddy, staying constantly by her, holding her fan, turning the leaves of music, and dictating what she should play.

“There’s devotion,” tittered a miss in long ringlets; “but she really does play well,” and she appealed to Maria Cutler, who answered, “Yes, she keeps good time, and I should think might play for a dance. I mean to ask her,” and going up to Guy she said, “I wish to speak to—to—well, Jessie’s governess. Introduce me, please.”

Guy waited till Maddy was through, and then gave the desired introduction. In a tone not wholly free from superciliousness, Miss Cutler said:

“Can you play a waltz or polka, Miss Clyde? We are aching to exercise our feet.”

Maddy bowed and struck into a spirited waltz, which set many of the people present to whirling in circles, and produced the result which Maria so much desired, viz: it drove Guy away from the piano, for he could not mistake her evident wish to have him as a partner, and with his arm around her waist he was soon moving rapidly from that part of the room, leaving only the doctor to watch Maddy’s fingers as they flew over the keys. Maddy never thought of being tired. She enjoyed the excitement, and was glad she could do something toward entertaining Guy’s guests. But Guy did not forget her for an instant. Through all the mazes of the giddy dance, he had her before his eye, seeing not the clouds of lace and muslin encircled by his arm, but the little figure in blue sitting so patiently at the piano until he knew she must be tired, and determined to release her. As it chanced, Maria was again his partner, and drawing her nearer to Maddy, he said, “Your fingers ache by this time, I am sure. It is wrong to trouble you longer. Agnes will take your place while you try a quadrille with me.”

“Oh, thank you,” Maddy answered. “I am not tired in the least. I had as lief play till morning, provided they are satisfied with my time and my stock of music holds out.”

“But it is not fair for one to do all the playing; besides, I want you to dance with me—so consider yourself invited in due form to be my next partner.”

Maddy’s face crimsoned for an instant, and then in a low voice she said, “I thank you, but I must decline.”

“Maddy!” Guy exclaimed, in tones more indicative of reproach than expostulation.

There were tears in Maddy’s eyes, and Maria Cutler, watching her, was vexed to see how beautiful was the expression of her face as she answered frankly, “I have never told you that grandpa objected to my taking dancing lessons when I wrote to him about it. He does not like me to dance.”

“A saint!” Maria uttered under her breath, smiling contemptuously as she made a movement to leave the piano, hoping Guy would follow her.

But he did not at once. Standing for a moment irresolute, while he looked curiously at Maddy, he said at last:

“Of course I interfere with no one’s scruples of that kind, but I cannot allow you to wear yourself out for our amusement.”

“I like to play—please let me,” was Maddy’s reply; and, as the set upon the floor were waiting for her, she turned to the instrument, while Guy mechanically offered his arm to Maria, and sauntered toward the green room.

“What a blue old ignoramus that grandfather must be, to object to dancing, don’t you think so?”

Maria laughed a little spitefully, secretly glad that Maddy had refused, and secretly angry at Guy for seeming to care so much.

“Say,” she continued, as Guy did not answer her, “don’t you think it a sign that something is lacking in brains or education, when a person sets up that dancing is wicked?”

Guy would have taken Maddy’s side then, whatever he might have thought, and he replied:

“No lack of brains, certainly; though education and circumstances have much to do with one’s views upon that subject. For my part, I like to see people consistent. Now, that old ignoramus, as you call him, lays great stress on pomp and vanities, and when I asked him once what he meant by them, he mentioned dancing in particular as one of the things which you, church people, promise to renounce;” and Guy bowed toward Maria, who, knowing that she was one of the church people referred to, winced perceptibly.

“But this girl—this Maddy. There’s no reason why she should decline,” she said; and Guy replied: “Respect for her grandfather, in her case, seems to be stronger than respect for a higher power in some other cases.”

“It’s just as wicked to play for dancing as ’tis to dance,” Maria remarked impatiently, while Guy rejoined:

“That is very possible; but I presume Maddy has never seen it in that light, which makes a difference;” and the two retraced their steps to the rooms where the gay revelers were still tripping to Maddy’s stirring music.

After several ineffectual efforts Agnes had succeeded in enticing the doctor away from the piano, and thus there was no one near to see how at last the bright color began to fade from her cheeks as the notes before her ran together, and the keys assumed the form of one huge key which Maddy could not manage. There was a blur before her eyes, a buzzing in her ears, and just as the dancers were entering heart and soul into the merits of a popular polka, there was a sudden pause in the music, a crash among the keys, and a faint cry, which to those nearest to her sounded very much like “Mr. Guy,” as Maddy fell forward with her face upon the piano. It was hard telling which carried her from the room, the doctor or Guy, or which face of the three was the whitest. Guy’s was the most frightened, for the doctor knew she had only fainted, while Guy, struck with the marble rigidity of the face so recently flushed with excitement, said at first, “She’s dead,” while over him there flashed a feeling that life with Maddy dead would be desolate indeed. But Maddy was not dead, and Guy, when he went back to his guests carried the news that she had recovered from her faint, which she kindly ascribed to the heat of the rooms, instead of fatigue from playing so long. The doctor was with her and she was doing as well as could be expected, he said, thinking within himself how he wished they would go home, and wondering what attraction there was there, now that Maddy’s place was vacant. Guy was a vastly miserable man by the time the last guest had bidden him good-night, and he had heard for the hundred-and-fiftieth time what a delightful evening it had been. Politeness required that he should look to the very last as pleasant and unconcerned as if upstairs there were no little sick girl, all alone undoubtedly with Dr. Holbrook, whom he mentally styled a “lucky dog,” in that he was not obliged to appear again in the parlors unless he chose.

The doctor knew Maddy did not require his presence after the first half hour, but he insisted upon her being sent to bed, and then went frequently to her door until assured by Mrs. Noah that she was sleeping soundly, and would, if let alone, be well as ever on the morrow, a prediction which proved true, for when at a late hour next morning the family met at the breakfast table, Maddy’s was the brightest, freshest face of the whole, not even excepting Jessie’s. Maddy, too, was delighted with the party, declaring that nothing but pleasurable excitement and heat had made her faint, and then with all the interest which young girls usually attach to fainting fits, she asked how she looked, how she acted, if she didn’t appear very ridiculous, and how she got out of the room, saying the only thing she remembered after falling was a sensation as if she were being torn in two.

“That’s it,” cried Jessie, who readily volunteered the desired information, “Brother Guy was ’way off with Maria Cutler, and doctor was with mamma, but both ran, oh, so fast, and both tried to take you up. I think Miss Cutler real hateful, for she said, so meanlike, ‘Do you see them pull her, as if ’twas of the slightest consequence which carried her out?’”

“Jessie,” Guy interposed sternly, while the doctor looked disapprovingly at the little girl, who subsided into silence after saying, in an undertone, “I do think she’s hateful, and that isn’t all she said either about Maddy.”

It was rather uncomfortable at the table after that, and rather quiet, too, as Maddy did not care to ask anything more concerning her faint, while the others were not disposed to talk.

Breakfast over, the two young men repaired to the library, where Guy

indulged in his cigar, while the doctor fidgeted for a time, and then broke out abruptly:

"I say, Guy, have you said anything to her about—well, about me, you know?"

"Why, no, I've hardly had a chance; and then, again, I concluded it better for each one to speak for himself;" and carelessly knocking the ashes from his half-smoked cigar, Guy leaned back in his chair, with his eyes, and, to all appearance, thoughts, wholly intent upon the curls of smoke rising above his head.

"Guy, if you were not engaged, I should be tempted to think you wanted Maddy Clyde yourself," the doctor suddenly exclaimed, confronting Guy, who, still watching the rings of smoke, answered with the most provoking coolness, "You should?"

"Yes, I should; and I am not certain but you do as it is, Guy," and the doctor grew very earnest in his manner, "if you do care for Maddy Clyde, and she for you, pray tell me so before I make a fool of myself."

"Doctor," returned Guy, throwing the remains of his cigar into the grate and folding his hands on his head, "you desire that I be frank, and I will. I like Maddy Clyde very much—more indeed than any girl I ever met—except Lucy. Had I never seen her—Lucy, I mean—I cannot tell how I should feel toward Maddy. The chances are, however, that much as I admire her, I should not make her my wife, even if she were willing. But I have seen Lucy. I am engaged to be married. I shall keep that engagement, and if you have feared me at all as a rival, you may fear me no longer. I do not stand between you and Maddy Clyde."

Guy believed that he was saying the truth, notwithstanding that his heart beat faster than its wont and his voice was a little thick. It was doubtful whether he would marry Maddy Clyde, if he could. By nature and education he was very proud, and the inmates of the red cottage would have been an obstacle to be surmounted by his pride. He knew they were good, far, far better than himself; but, from his earliest remembrance, he had been taught that blood and family and position were all-important; that by virtue of them Remington was a name of which to be proud; that his father's foolish marriage with a pretty governess was the first misalliance ever known in the family, and that he was not likely to follow that example was a point fully established in his own mind. He might admire Maddy very much, and, perhaps, build castles of what might possibly have been, had she been in his sphere of life; but, should he verily think of making her his wife, the olden pride would certainly come up a barrier between them. Guy could not explain all this to the doctor, who would have been tempted to knock him down, if he had; but he succeeded in quieting his fears, and even suggested bringing Maddy in there, if the doctor wished to know his fate that morning.

"I hear her now—I'll call her," he said; and, opening the door, he spoke to Maddy, just passing through the hall. "Dr. Holbrook wishes to see you," he said, as Maddy came up to him; and, holding the door for her to enter, he saw her take the seat he had just vacated. Then, closing it upon them, he walked away, thinking that last night's party, or something, had produced a bad effect on him, making him blue and wretched, just as he should suppose a criminal would feel when about to be executed.

CHAPTER XVI.
THE DOCTOR AND MADDY.

Now that they were alone, the doctor's courage forsook him, and he could only stammer out some commonplace remarks about the party, asking how Maddy Lad enjoyed it, and if she was sure she had entirely recovered from the effects of her fainting fit. He was not getting on at all, and it was impossible for him to say anything as he had meant to say it. Why couldn't she help him, instead of looking so unsuspiciously at him with those large, bright eyes? Didn't she know how dear she was to him? He should think she might. She might have divined it ere this; and if so, why didn't she blush, or something?

At last she came to his aid by saying, "You promised to tell me about the bracelets and necklace, whether I ought to keep them."

"Yes, oh yes, he believed he did." And getting up from his chair, the doctor began to walk the floor, the better to hide his confusion. "Yes, the bracelets. You looked very pretty in them, Maddy, very; but you are always pretty—ahem—yes. If you were engaged to Guy, I should say it was proper; but if not, why, I don't know; the fact is, Maddy, I am not quite certain what I am saying, so you must excuse me. I almost hated you that day you sent the note, telling me you were coming to be examined; but I had not seen you then. I did not know how, after a while —a very little while—I should in all probability—well, I did; I changed my mind, and I—I guess you have not the slightest idea what I mean." And stopping suddenly, he confronted the astonished Maddy, who replied:

"Not the slightest, unless you are going crazy."

She could in no other way account for his strange conduct, and she sat staring at him while he continued: "I told you once that when I wanted my bill I'd let you know. I'd ask for pay. I want it now. I present my bill."

With a scared, miserable feeling, Maddy listened to him, wondering where she should get the money, if it were possible for her grandfather to raise it, and how much her entire wardrobe would bring, suppose she should sell it! The bill had not troubled her latterly, for she had fallen into a way of believing that the doctor would wait until she was graduated and could earn it by teaching. Nothing could be more inopportune than for him to present it now; and with a half-stifled sob she began to speak, but he stopped her by a gesture, and sitting down beside her, said, in a voice more natural than the one with which he had at first addressed her:

"Maddy, I know you have no money. It is not that I want, Maddy; I want—I want—you."

He bent down over her now, for her face was hidden in her hands, all sense of sight shut out, all sense of hearing, too, save the words he was pouring into her ear—words which burned their way into her heart, making It throb for a single moment with gratified pride, and then growing heavy as lead as she knew how impossible it was for her to pay the debt in the way which he desired.

"I can't, doctor; oh, I can't!" she sobbed. "I never dreamed of this; never supposed you could want me for your wife. I'm only a little girl—only sixteen last October—but I'm so sorry for you, who have been so kind. If I only could love you as you deserve! I do love you, too; but not the way you mean. I cannot be Maddy Holbrook; no; doctor, I cannot."

She was sobbing piteously, and in his concern for her the doctor forgot somewhat the stunning blow he had received.

"Don't, Maddy darling!" he said, drawing her trembling form closely to him, "Don't be so distressed. I did not much think you'd tell me yes, and I was a fool to ask you. I am too old; but, Maddy, Guy is as old as I am."

The doctor did not know why he said this, unless in the first keenness of his disappointment there was a satisfaction in telling her that the objection to his age would apply also to Guy. But it did not affect Maddy one whit, or give her the slightest inkling of his meaning. He saw it did not, and the pain was less to bear. Still, he would know certainly if he had a rival, and so he said to her:

"Do you love some one else, Maddy? Is another preferred before me, and is that the reason why you cannot love me?"

"No," Maddy answered, through her tears. "There is no one else. Whom should I love, unless it were you? I know nobody but Guy."

That name touched a sore, aching chord in the doctor's heart, but he gave no sign of the jealousy which had troubled him, and for a moment there was silence in the room; then, as the doctor began faintly to realize

that Maddy had refused him, there awoke within him a more intense desire to win her than he had ever felt before. He would not give her up without another effort, and laying her unresisting head upon his bosom, he pleaded again for her love, going over all the past, and telling of the interest awakened when first she came to him that April afternoon, almost two years ago; then of the little sick girl who had grown so into the heart never before affected in the least by womankind, and lastly of the beautiful woman, as he called her, sitting beside him now in all the freshness of her young womanhood. And Maddy, as she listened, felt for him a strange kind of pity, a wish to do his bidding if she only could, and why shouldn't she? Girls had married those whom they did not love, and been tolerably happy with them, too. Perhaps she could be so with the doctor. There was everything about him to respect, and much which she could love. Should she try? There was a great lump in Maddy's throat as she tried to speak, but it cleared away and she said very sadly, but very earnestly, too:

"Dr. Holbrook, would you like me to say yes with my lips, when all the time there was something at my heart tugging to answer no?"

This was not at all what Maddy meant to say, but the words were born of her extreme truthfulness, and the doctor thus learned the nature of the struggle which he saw plainly was going on.

"No, Maddy, I would not have you say yes unless your heart was in it," he answered, while he tried to smile upon the tearful face looking up so sorrowfully at him.

But the smile was a forlorn one, and there came instead a tear as he thought how dear was the fair creature who never would be his. Maddy saw the tear, and as if she were a child wiped it from his cheek; then, in tones which never faltered, she told him it might be in time she'd learn to love him. She would try so hard, she'd think of him always as her promised husband, and by that means should learn at last not to shrink from taking him for such. It might be ever so long, and perhaps she should be twenty or more, but some time in the future she should feel differently. Was he satisfied, and would he wait?

Her little hand was resting on his shoulder, but he did not mind its soft pressure or know that it was there, so strong was the temptation to accept that half-made promise. But the doctor was too noble, to unselfish to bind Maddy to himself unless she were wholly willing, and he said to her that if she did not love him now she probably never would. She could not make a love. She need not try, as it would only result in her own unhappiness. They would be friends just as they always had been, and none need know of what had passed between them, none but Guy. "I must tell him" the doctor said, "because he knows that I was going to ask you."

Maddy could not explain why it was that she felt glad the doctor would tell Guy. She did not analyze any of her feelings, or stop to ask why she should care to have Guy Remington know the answer she had given Dr. Holbrook. He was going to him now, she was sure, for he arose to leave her, saying he might not see her again before she returned to New York. She did not mention his bill. That was among the bygones, a thing never again to be talked about, and offering him her hand, she looked for an instant earnestly into his face, then without a word, hurried from the room, while the doctor, with a sad, heavy heart, went in quest of Guy.

"Refused you, did you say?" and Guy's face certainly looked brighter than it had before since he left the doctor with Maddy Clyde.

"Yes, refused me, as I might have known she would," was the doctor's reply, spoken so naturally that Guy looked up quickly to see if he really did not care.

But the expression of the face belied the calmness of the voice; and, touched with genuine pity, Guy asked the cause of the refusal —"preference for any one else, or what?"

"No, there was no one whom she preferred. She merely did not like me well enough to be my wife, that was all," the doctor said, and then he tried to talk of something else; but it would not do. The wound was yet too fresh and sore to be covered up, and in spite of himself the bearded chin quivered and the manly voice shook as he bade good-by to Guy, and then went galloping down the avenue.

Great was the consternation among the doctor's patients when it was known that their pet physician—the one in whose skill they had so much confidence—was going to Europe, where in Paris he could perfect himself in his profession. Some cried, and among them Agnes; some said he knew enough already; some tried to dissuade him from his purpose; some wondered at the sudden start, while only two knew exactly why he

was going—Guy and Maddy; the former approving his decision and lending his influence to make his tour abroad as pleasant as possible; and the latter weeping bitterly as she thought how she had sent him away, and that if aught befell him on the sea or in that distant land, she would be held amenable. Once there came over her the wild impulse to bid him stay, to say that she would be his wife; but, ere the rash act was done, Guy came down to the cottage, and Maddy's resolution gave way at once.

It would be difficult to tell the exact nature of Maddy's liking for Guy at that time. Had he offered himself to her she would probably have refused him even more promptly than she did the doctor; for, to all intents and purposes, he was, in her estimation, the husband of Lucy Atherstone. As such, there was no harm in making him her paragon of all male excellence; and Guy would have felt flattered, could he have known how much he was in that young girl's thoughts. But now for a few days he had a rival, for Maddy's thoughts were all given to the doctor, who came down to see her once before starting for Europe. She did not cry while he was there, but her voice was strange and hoarse as she gave him messages for Lucy Atherstone; and all that day her face was white and sad, as are the faces of those who come back from burying their dead.

Only once after the party did she go up to Aikenside, and then, summoning all her fortitude, she gave back to Guy the bracelets and the necklace, telling him she ought not to wear them; that ornaments as rich as these were not for her; that her grandmother did not wish her to keep them, and he must take them back. Guy saw she was in earnest, and much against his will he received again the ornaments he had been so happy in purchasing.

"They would do for Jessie when she was older," Maddy said; but Guy thought it very doubtful whether Jessie would ever have them. They were something he had bought for Maddy, something she had worn, and as such they were too sacred to be given to another. So he laid them away beside the picture guarded so carefully from every one.

Two weeks afterward Aikenside presented again a desolate, shut-up appearance, for Agnes, Maddy and Jessie had returned to New York; Agnes to continue the siege which, in despair of winning the doctor, she had commenced against a rich old bachelor, who had a house on Madison Square; and Maddy to her books, which ere long obliterated, in a measure, the bitter memory of all that had transpired during her winter vacation.

CHAPTER XVII.
WOMANHOOD.

Two years pass quickly, particularly at school, and to Maddy Clyde, talking with her companions of the coming holidays, it seemed hardly possible that two whole years were gone since the eventful vacation when Dr. Holbrook had so startled her by offering her his hand. He was in Europe still, and another name than his was on the little office in Mrs. Conner's yard. To Maddy he now wrote frequently; friendly, familiar letters, such as a brother might write, never referring to the past, but telling her whatever he thought would interest and please her. Occasionally at first, and more frequently afterward, he spoke of Margaret Atherstone, Lucy's younger sister, a brilliant, beautiful girl who reminded him, he said, of Maddy, only she was saucier, and more of a tease; not at all like Lucy, whom he described as something perfectly angelic. Her twenty-fifth birthday found her on a sickbed, with Dr. Holbrook in attendance, and this was the reason given why the marriage between herself and Guy was again deferred. There had been many weeks of pain, succeeded by long, weary months of languor, and during all this time the doctor had been with her as the family physician, while Margaret also had been constantly in attendance. But Lucy was much better now. She could sit up all day, and even walk a little distance, assisted by the doctor and Margaret, whose name had become to be almost as familiar to Maddy as was that of Lucy. And Maddy, in thinking of Margaret, sometimes wondered "if——" but never went any farther than that. Neither did she ask Guy a word about her, though she knew he must have seen her. She not say much to him of Lucy, but she wondered why he did not go for her, and wanted to talk with him about it but he was so changed that she dared not. He was not sociable, as of old, and Agnes did not hesitate to call him cross, while Jessie complained that he never walked or played with her now, but sat all day long in a deep reverie of some kind.

On this account Maddy did not look forward to the coming vacation as joyfully as she would otherwise have done. Still it was, always pleasant going home, and she sat talking with her young friends of all they expected to do, when a servant entered the room and glancing over the group of girls, singled Maddy out saying, as he placed an unsealed envelope in her hand. "A telegram for Miss Clyde."

There was a blur before Maddy's eyes, so that at first she could not see clearly, and Jessie, climbing on the bench beside her, read aloud:

> "Your grandmother is dying. Come at once. Agnes and Jessie will stay till next week.
>
> "GUY REMINGTON."

It was impossible to go that afternoon but with the earliest dawn she was up, and unmindful of the snow falling so rapidly, started on the sad journey home. It was the first genuine storm of the season, and it seemed resolved on making amends for past neglect, sweeping in furious gusts against the windows sifting down in thick masses from the leaden sky, and so impeding the progress of the train that the chill wintery night had closed gloomily in ere the Sommerville station was reached, and Maddy, weary and dispirited, stepped out upon the platform, glancing anxiously around for the usual omnibus, which she had little hope would be there on such a night. If not, what should she do? This had been the burden of her thoughts for the last few hours, for she could not expect Guy to send out his horses in this fearful storm, much less to be there himself. But Guy was there, and it was his voice which first greeted her as she stood half blinded by the snow, uncertain what she must do next.

"Ah, Mr. Remington, I didn't expect this. I am so glad, and how kind it was of you to wait for me!" she exclaimed, her voice expressing her delight, and amply repaying the young man, who had not been very patient or happy through the six long hours of waiting he had endured.

But he was both happy and patient now with Maddy's hand in his, and pressing it very gently he led her into the ladies' room; then making her sit down before the fire he brushed her snowy garments himself, and dashing a few flakes from her disordered hair, told her what she so eagerly asked to know. Her grandmother had had a paralytic stroke, and the only word she had uttered since was "Maddy." Guy had not been down himself, but had sent Mrs. Noah as soon as Farmer Green had brought the news. She was there yet, he said, the storm having

prevented her return.

"And grandma?" Maddy gasped, fixing her eyes wistfully upon him. "You do not think her dead?"

No, Guy did not, and stooping he asked if he should not remove from the dainty little feet resting on the stove hearth the overshoes, so full of melting snow. Maddy cared little for her shoes, or herself just then. She hardly knew that Guy was taking them off, much less that, as he bent beside her, her hand lay lightly upon his shoulder as she continued her questionings.

"She is not dead, you say; but do you think-does any-body think she'll die? Your telegram said 'dying.'"

Maddy was not to be deceived, and thinking it best to be frank with her, Guy told her that the physician, whom he had taken pains to see on his way to the depot, had said there was no hope. Old age and an impaired constitution precluded the possibility of recovery, but he trusted she might live till the young lady came.

"She must—she will! Oh, grandma, why did I ever leave her?" and burying her face in her hands. Maddy cried passionately, while the last three years of her Life passed in rapid review before her mind—years which she had spent in luxurious ease, leaving her grandmother to toil in the humble cottage, and die at the last, it might be, without one parting word for her.

The feeling that perhaps she had been guilty of neglect, was the bitterest of all, and Maddy wept on, unmindful of Guy's attempts to soothe and quiet her. At last, as she heard a clock in the adjoining room strike eight, she started up exclaiming "I have stayed too long. I must go now. Is there any conveyance here?"

"But, Maddy," Guy rejoined, "you cannot go to-night. The roads between here and Honedale are one unbroken snow bank. It would take hours to break through; besides you are too tired. You need rest, and must come with me to Aikenside, where you are expected, for when I found how late the train would be, I sent back word to have your room and parlors warmed, and a nice hot supper to be ready for us. You'll surely go with me, if I think best."

Guy's manner was more like a lover than a friend, but Maddy was in no state to remark it. She only felt an intense desire to go home, and turning a deaf ear to all he could urge, replied: "You don't know how dear grandma is to me, or you would not ask me to stay. She's all the mother I ever knew, and I must go. Think, would you stay if the one you loved best was dying?"

"But the one I love best is not dying, so I can reason clearly, Maddy."

Here Guy checked himself, and listened while Maddy asked again if there was no conveyance there as usual.

"None but mine," said Guy, while Maddy continued faintly:

"And you are afraid it will kill your horses?"

"No, it would only fatigue them greatly; it's for you I fear. You've borne enough to-day."

"Then, Mr. Remington, oh, please send me. I shall die at Aikenside. John will drive me, I know. He used to like me. I'll ask him," and Maddy was going in quest of the Aikenside coachman, when Guy held her back, and said:

"John will go if I bid him. But you, Maddy, if I thought it was safe."

"It is. Oh, let me go," and Maddy grasped both his hands beseechingly.

If there was a man who could resist the eloquent appeal of Maddy's eyes at that moment, the man was not Guy Remington, and leaving her alone, he sought out John, asking if it would be possible to get through to Homedale that night.

John shook his head decidedly, but when Guy explained Maddy's distress and anxiety, the negro began to relent, particularly as he saw his young master, too, was interested.

"It'll kill them horses," he said, "but mabby that's nothin' to please the girl."

"If we only had runners now, instead of wheels, John," Guy said, after a moment's reflection. "Drive back to Aikenside as fast as possible, and change the carriage for a covered sleigh. Leave the grays at home and drive a pair of farm horses. They can endure more. Tell Flora to send my traveling shawl. Miss Clyde may need it, and an extra buffalo, and a bottle of wine, and my buckskin gloves, and take Tom on with you, and a snow shovel; we may have to dig."

"Yes, yes, I know," and tying his muffler about his throat, John started

off through the storm, his mind a confused medley of ideas, the main points of which were, bottles of wine, snow shovels, and the fact that his master was either crazy or in love.

Meanwhile, with the prospect of going home, Maddy had grown quiet, and did not refuse the temporary supper of buttered toast, muffins, steak and hot coffee, which Guy ordered from the small hotel just in the rear of the depot. Tired, nervous, and almost helpless, she allowed Guy himself to prepare her coffee, taking it from his hand and drinking it at his bidding as obediently as a child. There was a feeling of delicious rest in being cared for thus, and but for the dying one at Honedale she would have enjoyed it vastly. As it was, though, she never for a moment forgot her grandmother. She did forget, in a measure, her anxiety, and was able to think how kind, how exceedingly kind Guy was. He was like what he used to be, she thought, only kinder, and thinking it was because she was in trouble, she accepted all his little attentions willingly, feeling how pleasant it was to have him there, and thinking once with a half shudder of the long, cold ride before her, when Guy would no longer be present, and also of the dreary home where death might possibly be a guest ere she could reach it.

It was after nine ere John appeared, his crisp wool powdered with snow which clung to his outer garments, and literally covered his dark, cloth cap.

"'Twas mighty deep," he said, bowing to Maddy, "and the wind was getting colder. 'Twas a hard time Miss Clyde would have, and hadn't she better wait?"

No, Maddy could not wait, and standing up she suffered Guy to wrap her cloak about her, and fasten more securely the long, warm scarf she wore around her neck.

"Drive close to the platform," he said to John, and the covered sleigh was soon brought to the point designated. "Now then, Maddy, I won't let you run the risk of covering your feet with snow. I shall carry you myself," Guy said, and ere Maddy was fully aware of his intentions, he had her in his arms, and was bearing her to the sleigh.

Very carefully he drew the soft, warm robe about her, shielding her as well as he could from the cold; then pulling his own fur collar about his ears, he sprang in beside her, and, closing the door behind him, bade John drive on.

"But, Mr. Remington," Maddy exclaimed in much surprise, "surely you are not going too? You must not. It is asking too much. It is more than I expected. Please don't go." "Would you rather I should not—that is, aside from any inconvenience it may be to me—would you rather go alone?" Guy asked, and Maddy replied:

"Oh, no. I was dreading the long ride, but did not dream of your going. You will shorten it so much." "Then I shall be paid for going," was Guy's response, as he drew still more closely around her the fancy buffalo robe.

The roads, though badly drifted in some places, were not as bad as Guy had feared, and the strong horses kept steadily on; while Maddy, growing more and more fatigued, at last fell away to sleep, and ceased to answer Guy, For a time he watched her drooping head, and then carefully drawing it to him, made it rest upon his shoulder, while he wound his arm around her slight figure, and so supported her. He knew she was sleeping quietly, by her gentle breathings; and once or twice he involuntarily passed his hand caressingly over her soft, round cheek, feeling the blood tingle to his finger tips as he thought of his position there, with Maddy Clyde sleeping in his arms. What would Lucy say, could she see him? And the doctor, with his strict ideas of right and wrong, would he object? Guy did not know, and, with his usual independence, he did not care. At least, he said to himself he did not care; and so, banishing both the doctor and Lucy from his mind, he abandoned himself to the happiness of the moment—a singular land of happiness, inasmuch as it merely consisted in the fact that Maddy Clyde's young head was pillowed on his bosom, and that, by bending down, he could feel her sweet breath on his face. Occasionally there flitted across Guy's mind a vague, uneasy consciousness that though the act was, under the circumstances, well enough, the feelings which prompted it were not such as either the doctor or Lucy would approve. But they were far away; they would never know unless he told them, as he probably should, of this ride on that wintry night; this ride, which seemed to him so short that he scarcely believed his senses when, without once having been overturned or called upon to use the shovels so thoughtfully provided, the carriage suddenly came to a halt, and he knew by the dim light shining through the low window that the red

cottage was reached.

Grandma Markham was dying, but she knew Maddy, and the palsied lips worked painfully as they attempted to utter the loved name; while her wasted face lighted up with eager joy as Maddy's arms were twined about her neck, and she felt Maddy's kisses on her cheek and brow. Could she not speak? Would she never speak again, Maddy asked despairingly, and her grandfather replied: "Never, most likely. The only thing she's said since the shock was to call your name; She's missed you despatly this winter back, more than ever before, I think. So have we all, but we would not send for you—Mr. Guy said you was learning so fast." "Oh, grandpa, why didn't you? I would have come so willingly," and for an instant Maddy's eyes flashed reproachfully upon the recreant Guy, standing aloof from the little group gathered about the bed, his arms folded together, and a moody look upon his face.

He was thinking of what had not yet entered Maddy's mind, thinking of the future—Maddy's future, when the aged form upon the bed should be gone, and the two comparatively helpless men be left alone.

"But it shall not be. The sacrifice is far too great. I can prevent it, and I will," he muttered to himself, as he turned to watch the gray dawn breaking in the east. Guy was a puzzle to himself. He would not admit that during the past year his liking for Maddy Clyde had grown to be something stronger than mere friendship, nor yet that his feelings toward Lucy had undergone a change, prompting him not to go to her when she was sick, and not to be as sorry as he ought that the marriage was again deferred. Lucy had no suspicion of the change and her childlike trust in him was the anchor which held him still true to her in intentions at least, if not in reality. He knew from her letters how much she had learned to like Maddy Clyde, and so, he argued, there was no harm in his liking her too. She was a splendid girl, and it seemed a pity that her lot should have been so humbly cast. This was usually the drift of his thoughts in connection with her; and now, as he stood there its that cottage, Maddy's home, they recurred to him with tenfold intensity, for well he foresaw that a struggle was before him if he rescued Maddy as he meant to do from her approaching fate.

No such thoughts, however, intruded themselves on Maddy's mind. She did not look away from the present, except it were at the past, in which she feared she had erred by leaving her grandmother too much alone. But to her passionate appeals for forgiveness, if she ever had neglected the dying one, there came back only loving looks and mute caresses, the aged hand smoothing lovingly the bowed head, or pressing fondly the girlish cheeks where Guy's hand had been. With the coming of daylight, however, there was a change; and Maddy, listening intently, heard what sounded like her name. The tied tongue was loosed for a little, and in tones scarcely articulate, the disciple who for long years had served her Heavenly Father faithfully, bore testimony to the blessed truth that God's promises to those who love Him are not mere promises—that He will go with them through the river of death, disarming the fainting soul of every fear, and making the dying bed the very gate of heaven. This tribute to the Savior was her first thought, while the second was a blessing for her darling, a charge to seek the narrow way now in life's early morning. Disjointed sentences they were, but Maddy understood them all, treasuring up every word even to the last, the words the farther apart and most painfully uttered, "You—will—care—and—comfort——" She did not say whom, but Maddy knew whom she meant; and without then realizing the magnitude of the act, virtually accepted the burden from which Guy was so anxious to save her.

CHAPTER XVIII.
THE BURDEN.

Grandma Markham was dead, and the covered sleigh, which late in the afternoon plowed its way heavily back to Aikenside, carried only Mrs. Noah, who, with her forehead tied up in knots, sat back among the cushions, thinking not of the peaceful dead, gone forever to the rest which remains for the people of God, but of the wayward Guy, who had resisted all her efforts to persuade him to return with her, instead of staying where he was, not needed, and where his presence was a restraint to all save one, and that one Maddy, for whose sake he stayed.

"She'd be vummed," the indignant old lady said, "if she would not write to Lucy herself if Guy did not quit such doin's," and thus resolving she kept on her way, while the subject of her wrath was, it may be, more than half repenting of his decision to stay, inasmuch as he began to have an unpleasant consciousness of himself being in everybody's way.

In the first hour of Maddy's bereavement he had not spoken with her, but had kept himself aloof from the room where, with her grandfather and Uncle Joseph, she sat, holding the poor aching head of the latter in her lap and trying to speak a word of consolation to the old, broken-hearted man, whose hand was grasped in hers. But Maddy knew he was there. She could hear his voice each time he spoke to Mrs. Noah, and that made the desolation easier to bear. She did not look forward to the time when he would be gone; and when at last he told her he was going, she started quickly, and with a gush of tears, exclaimed: "No, no! oh, no!"

"Maddy," Guy whispered, bending over the strange trio, "would you rather I should stay? Will it be pleasanter for you, if I do?"

"Yes—I don't know. I guess it would not be so lonely. Oh, it's terrible to have grandmother dead!" was Maddy's response; after which Guy would have stayed if a whole regiment of Mrs. Noah's had confronted him instead of one.

Maddy wished it; that was reason enough for him; and giving a few directions to John, he stayed, thereby disconcerting the neighboring women who came in to perform the last offices for the dead, and who wished the young man from Aikenside was anywhere but there, watching them in all their movements, as they vainly fancied he did. But Guy thought only of Maddy, watching her so carefully that more than one meaning glance was exchanged between the women, who, even over the inanimate form of the dead, spoke together of what might possibly occur, wondering what would be the effect on Grandpa Markham and Uncle Joseph. Who would take care of them? And then, in case Maddy should feel it her duty to stay there, as they half hoped she would, they fell to pitying the young girl, who seemed now so wholly unfitted for the burden.

To Maddy there came no definite idea of the future during the two days that white, rigid form lay in the darkened cottage; but when, at last, the deep grave made for Grandma Markham was occupied, and the lounge in the little front room was empty—when the Aikenside carriage, which had been sent down for the use of the mourners, had been driven away, taking both Guy and Mrs. Noah—when the neighbors, too, had gone, leaving only herself and the little hired girl sitting by the evening fire, with the grandfather and the imbecile Uncle Joseph—then it was that she first began to fed the pressure of the burden—began to ask herself if she could live thus always, or at least for many years—as long as either of the two helpless men were spared. Maddy was young, and the world as she had seen it was very bright and fair, brighter far than a life of laborious toil, and for a while the idea that the latter alternative must be accepted made her dizzy and faint.

As if divining her thoughts, poor old grandpa, in his prayers that night, asked in trembling tones, which showed how much he felt what he was saying, that God would guide his darling in all she did, and give her wisdom to make the proper decision; that if it were best she might be happy there with them, but if not, "Oh, Father, Father!" he sobbed, "help me and Joseph to bear it." He could pray no more aloud, and the gray head remained bowed down upon his chair, while Uncle Joseph, in his peculiar way, took up the theme, begging like a very child that Maddy might be inclined to stay—that no young men with curling hair, a diamond cross, and smell of musk, might be permitted to come near her with enticing looks, but that she might stay as she was and die an old maid forever! This was the subject of Uncle Joseph's prayer, a prayer

which set the little hired girl to tittering, and would have wrung a smile from Maddy herself had she not felt all the strange petition implied.

With waywardness natural to people in his condition, Uncle Joseph that night turned to Maddy for the little services his sister had formerly rendered, and which, since her illness, Grandpa Markham had done, and would willingly do still. But Joseph refused to let him. Maddy must untie his cravat, unbutton his vest, and take off his shoes, while, after he was in bed, Maddy must sit by his side, holding his hand until he fell away to sleep. And Maddy did it cheerfully, soothing him into quiet, and keeping back her own choking sorrow for the sake of comforting him. Then, when this task was done she sought her grandfather, still sitting before the kitchen fire and evidently waiting for her. The little hired girl had retired, and thus there was no barrier to free conversation between them.

"Maddy," the old man said, "come sit close by me, where I can look into your face, while we talk over what must be done."

With a half shudder, Maddy drew a stool to her grandfather's feet, and resting her head upon his knee, listened while he talked to her of the future; told her all her grandmother had done; told of his own helplessness; of the trial it was to care for Uncle Joseph, and then in faltering tones asked who was going to look after them now. "We can't live here alone, Maddy. We can't. We're old and weak, and want some one to lean on. Oh, why didn't God take us with her, Joseph and me, and that would leave you free, to go back to the school and the life which I know is pleasanter than to stay here with us. Oh, Maddy! it comforts me to look at you—to hear your voice, to know that though I don't see you every minute, you are somewhere, and by and by you'll come in. I shan't live long, and maybe Joseph won't. God's promise is to them who honor father and mother. It'll be hard for you to stay, harder than it was once; but, Maddy, oh, Maddy! stay with me, stay with me!—stay with your old grandpa!"

In his earnestness he grasped her arm, as if he thus would hold her, while the tears rained over his wrinkled face. For a moment Maddy made no response. She had no intention of leaving him, but the burden was pressing heavily and her tongue refused to move. Maddy was then a stranger to the religion which was sustaining her grandfather in his great trouble, but the teachings of her childhood had not been in vain. She was God's covenant child. His protecting presence was over and around her, moving her to the right. New York, with its gay sights, her school, where in another year she was to graduate, the trip to the Catskills which Guy had promised Mrs. Agnes, Jessie and herself, Aikenside with its luxurious ease—all these must be given up, while, worse than all the rest, Guy, too, must be given up. He would not come there often; the place was not to his taste, and in time he would cease to care for her as he cared for her now. "Oh, that would be dreadful!" she groaned aloud, while here thoughts went backward to that night ride in the snowstorm, and the numberless attentions he had paid her then. She would never ride with him again—never; and Maddy moaned bitterly, as she began to realize for the first time how much she liked Guy Remington, and how the giving him up and his society was the hardest part of all. But Maddy had a brave young heart, and at last, winding her arms around her grandfather's neck, she whispered: "I will not leave you, grandpa. I'll stay in grandmother's place."

Surely Heaven would answer the blessings whispered over Maddy by the delighted old man, and the young girl taking so cheerfully the burden from which many would have shrunk, should be blessed by God.

With her grandfather's hand upon her head, Maddy could almost feel that the blessing was descending; but when, in her own room, the one where she had lain sick for so many weary weeks, her courage began to give way, and the burden, magnified tenfold by her nervous weakness, looked heavier than she could bear. How could she stay there, going through each day with the same routine of literal drudgery—drudgery which would not end until the two for whom she made the sacrifice were dead.

"Oh, is there no way of escape, no help?" she moaned, as she tossed from side to side, "Must my life be wasted here. Surely—-"

Maddy did not finish the sentence, for something checked the words of repining, and she seemed to hear again her grandfather's voice as it repeated the promise to those who keep with their whole souls the fifth commandment.

"I will, I will," she cried, while into her heart there crept an intense longing for the love of him who alone could make her task a light one. "If I were good like grandma, I could bear everything," she thought, and

turning upon her pillow, Maddy prayed an earnest, childlike prayer, that God would help her do night, that He would take from her the proud spirit which rebelled against her lot because of its loneliness, that pride and love of her own ease and advancement in preference to others' good might all be subdued; in short that she might be God's child, walking where He appointed her to walk without a murmur, and doing cheerfully His will.

Aikenside, and school, and the Catskill Mountains were easier to abandon after that contrite prayer; but when she thought of Guy, the fiercest, sharpest pang she had ever felt shot through her heart, making her cry out so quickly that the little hired girl who shared her bed moved as if about to waken, but Maddy lay very quiet until all was still again, when turning a second time to God she tried to pray, tried to give up what to her was the dearest idol, but she could not say the words, and ere she knew what she was doing she found herself asking that Guy should not forsake her. "Let him come," she sobbed, "let Guy come some time to see me".

Once the tempter whispered to her, that had she accepted Dr. Holbrook she would have been spared all this, but Maddy turned a deaf ear to that suggestion. Dr. Holbrook was too noble a man to have an unloving wife, and not for a moment did she repent of her decision with regard to him. She almost knew he would say now that she was right in refusing him, and right in staying there, as she must. Thoughts of the doctor quieted her, she believed, not knowing that Heaven was already owning its submissive child, and breathing upon it a soothing benediction. The moan of the winter wind and the sound of the snow beating against her little window ceased to annoy her. Heaven, happiness, Aikenside and Guy, all seem blended into one great good just within her reach, and when the long clock below the stairs struck three, she did not hear it, but with the tear stains upon her face she lay nestled among her pillows, dreaming that her grandmother had come back from the bright world of glory to bless her darling child.

It was broad noon ere Maddy awoke, and starting up she looked about her in bewilderment, wondering where she was and what agency had been at work in her room, transforming it from the cold, comfortless apartment she had entered the previous night into the cheery-looking chamber, with a warm fire blazing in the tiny fireplace, a rug spread down upon the hearth, a rocking-chair drawn up before it, and all traces of the little hired girl as completely obliterated as if she had never been. In her grief Maddy seemed to have forgotten how to make things cozy, and as, during her grandmother's illness, her own room had been left to the care of the hired girl, Nettie, it wore a neglected, rude aspect, which had grated on Maddy's finer feelings, and made everything so uninviting. But this morning all was changed. Some skillful hand had been busy there while she slept, and Maddy was wondering who it could be, when the door opened cautiously and Flora's good-humored face looked in—Flora from Aikenside. Maddy knew now to whom she was indebted for all this comfort, and with a cry of joy she welcomed the girl, whose very presence brought back something of the life with which she had parted forever.

"Flora," she exclaimed, "how came you here, and did you make this fire and fix the room for me?"

"Yes, I made the fire," Flora replied, "and fixed up the things a little, hustlin' that young one's goods out of here; because it was not fittin' for you to be sleepin' with her. Mr. Guy was mad enough when he found it out."

"Mr. Guy, Flora? How should he know of our sleeping 'rrangements?" Maddy asked, but Flora evaded a direct reply, saying, "there was enough ways for things to get to Aikenside;" then continuing, "How tired you must be, Miss Maddy, to sleep so sound as never to hear me at all, though to be sure I tried to be still as a mouse. But let me help you dress. It's all but noon, and you must be hungry. I've got your breakfast all ready."

"Thank you, Flora, I can dress myself," Maddy said, stepping out upon the floor, and feeling that the world was not as dark as it had seemed to her when last night she came up to her chamber.

God was comforting her already, and as she made her simple toilet, she tried to thank Him for His goodness, and ask for grace to make her what she ought to be.

"You have not yet told me why you came here," she said to Flora, who was busy making her bed, and who replied: "It's Mr. Guy's work. He thought I'd better come, as you would need help to get things set to rights, to could go back to school."

Maddy felt her heart coming up in her throat, but she answered calmly, “Mr. Guy is very kind—so are you all; but, Flora, I am not going back to school.” “Not going back!” and Flora stopped her bed-making, while she stared blankly at Maddy. “What be you going to do?” “Stay here and take care of grandpa,” Maddy said, bathing her face and neck in the cold water, which could not cool the feverish heat she felt spreading all over them. “Stay here! You are crazy, Miss Maddy! ’Tain’t no place for a girl like you, and Mr. Guy never will suffer it, I know,” Flora rejoined, as she resumed her work, thinking she “should die to be moped up in that nutshell of a house.” With a little sigh as she foresaw the opposition she should probably meet with from Guy, Maddy went on with her toilet, which was soon completed, as it did not take long to arrange the dark calico dress and plain linen collar which she wore. She was not as fresh-looking as usual that morning, for excitement and fatigue had lent a paleness to her cheek, and a languor to her whole appearance, but Flora, who glanced anxiously after her as she went out, muttered to herself, “She was never more beautiful, and I don’t wonder an atom that Mr. Guy thinks so much of her.” The kitchen was in perfect order, for Flora had been busy there as elsewhere. The kettle was boiling on the stove, while two or three little covered dishes were ranged upon the hearth, as if waiting for some one. Grandpa Markham had gone out, but Uncle Joseph sat in his accustomed corner, rubbing his hands when he saw Maddy, and nodding mysteriously toward the front room, the door of which was open, so that Maddy could hear the fire crackling on the hearth.

“Go in, go in,” Uncle Joseph said, waving his hand in that direction. “My Lord Governor is in there waiting for you. He won’t let me spit on the floor any more as Martha did, and I’ve swallowed so much that I’m almost choked.”

Continual spitting was one of Uncle Joseph’s worst habits, and as his sister had indulged him in it, it had become a source of great annoyance both to Maddy, and to some one else of whose proximity Maddy did not dream. Thinking that Uncle Joseph referred to her grandfather, and feeling glad that the latter had attempted a reform, she entered the room known at the cottage as the parlor, the one where the rag carpet was, the six cane-seated chairs and the Boston rocker, and where now the little round table was nicely laid for two, while cozily seated in the rocking-chair, reading last night’s paper, and looking very handsome and happy, was Guy!

When Maddy prayed that he might come and see her she did not expect an answer so soon, and she started back in much surprise, while Guy came easily forward to greet her, asking how she was, once telling her she looked tired and thin, then making her take the chair he had vacated, he stood over her, smoothing her hair, while he continued:

“I have taken some liberties, you see, and have made myself quite at home. I knew how unaccustomed you were to the duties of a house, and as I saw that girl was wholly incompetent, I denied myself at least two hours’ sleep this morning for the sake of getting here early, bringing Flora with me and a few things which I thought would be for your comfort. You must excuse me, but Flora looked so cold when she came down from your chamber, where I sent her to see how you were, that with your grandfather’s permission I ordered a fire to be kindled there. I hope you found it comfortable. This house is very cold.”

He kept talking on, and Maddy in a delicious kind of bewilderment listened to him, wondering if ever before there was a person so kind and good as Guy. And really Guy was doing great violence to his pride by being there as he was, but he could do anything for Maddy, and so he had forced down his pride, trying for her sake to make the cottage as pleasant as possible. With Flora to assist he had succeeded wonderfully, and was really enjoying it himself. At first Maddy could not thank him, her heart was so full, but Guy was satisfied with the expression of her face, and calling Flora he bade her serve the breakfast.

“You know my habits,” he said, smilingly, as he took a seat at the table, “and breakfasting at daylight, as I did, has given me an appetite; so, with your permission, I’ll carve this nice bit of steak for you, while you pour me a cup of coffee, some of Mrs. Noah’s best. She”—Guy was going to say, “sent it,” but as no stretch of the imagination could construe her “calling him a fool” into sending Maddy coffee, he added instead, “I brought it from Aikenside, together with this strawberry jelly, of which I remember you were fond;” and he helped Maddy lavishly from the fanciful jelly jar which yesterday was adorning the sweetmeat closet at Aikenside.

How chatty and social he was, trying to cheer Maddy up and make her

forget that such a thing as death had so lately found entrance there; talking of Jessie, of Aikenside, of the pleasant little time they would have during the vacation, and of the next term at school, when Maddy, as one of the graduating class, would not be kept in as strictly as heretofore, but allowed to see more of the city. Maddy felt as if she should die for the pain tugging at her heart, while she listened to him and knew that the pictures he was drawing were not for her. Her place was there; and after the breakfast was over and Flora had cleared the dishes away, she shut the door, so that they might be alone, and then standing before Guy, she told him of her resolution, begging of him to help her and not make it harder to bear by devising means for her to escape what she felt to be an imperative duty. Guy had expected something like this and was prepared, as he thought, to combat all her arguments; so when she had finished, he replied that of course he did not wish to interfere with her duty, but there might be a question as to what really was her duty, and it seemed to him he was better able to judge of that than herself. It was not right for her to bury herself there while her education was unfinished, when another could do as well. Her superior talents were given to her to improve, and how could she improve them in Honedale; besides her grandfather did not expect her to stay. Guy had talked with him while she was asleep, and the matter was all arranged; a competent woman was to be hired to take charge of the domestic arrangements, and if it seemed desirable, two should be procured; anything to leave Maddy free.

"And grandpa consented to this willingly?" Maddy said, feeling a throb of pleasure at thoughts of release. But Guy could not answer that the grandfather consented willingly.

"He thinks it best. When he comes back you can ask him yourself," he said, just as Uncle Joseph, opening the door, brought their interview to a close by asking very meekly, "if it would please the Lord Governor to let him spit!"

The blood rushed at once to Maddy's face, and she not repress a smile, white Guy laughed aloud, saying to her softly: "For your sake, I tried my skill to stop what I knew must annoy you. Pardon me if I did wrong;" then turning to Uncle Joseph, he gave the desired permission, together with the promise of a handsome spittoon, which should be sent down on the morrow. With a bow Uncle Joseph turned away, muttering to himself, "High doings now Martha's gone; but new lords, new laws. I trust he's not going to live here;" and slyly he asked Flora if the Lord Governor had brought his things!

At this point Grandpa Markham came in, and to him Guy appealed at once to know if he were not willing for Maddy to return to school.

"I said she might if she thought best," was the reply, spoken so sadly that Maddy's arms were at once twined around the old man's neck, while she said to him:

"Tell me honestly which you prefer. I'd like so much to go to school, but I am not sure I should be happy there, knowing how lonely you were here at home. Say, grandpa, which would you rather now, honor bright?" and Maddy tried to speak playfully, though her heart-beats were almost audible as she waited for the answer.

Grandpa could not deceive. He wanted his darling sorely, and he wanted her to be happy, he said. Perhaps they would get on just as well without her. When Mr. Guy was talking it looked as if they might, he made it all so plain, but the sight of Maddy was a comfort. She was all he had left. Maybe he shouldn't live long to pester her, and if he didn't wouldn't she always feel better for having stayed with her old grandpa to the last?

He looked very pale and thin, and his hair was white as snow. He could not live many years, and turning resolutely from Guy, who, so long as he held her eye, controlled her, Maddy said:

"I've chosen once for all. I'll stay with grandpa till he dies," and with a convulsive sob she clung tightly to his neck, as if fearful that without such told on him her resolution would give way.

It was in vain that Guy strove to change Maddy's resolution. She was wholly decided, and late in the afternoon he rode back to Aikenside, a disappointed man, with, however, the feeling that Maddy had done right, and that he respected her all the more for withstanding the temptation.

CHAPTER XIX.
LIFE AT THE COTTAGE.

It was arranged that Flora should for the present at least remain at the cottage, and Maddy accepted the kindness gratefully. She had become so much accustomed to being cared for by Guy that she almost looked upon it as a matter of course, and did not think of what others might possibly say, but when, in as delicate a manner as possible Guy suggested furnishing the cottage in better style, even proposing to modernize it entirely in the spring, Maddy objected at once. “They were already indebted to him for more than they could ever pay,” she said, and she would not suffer it. So Guy submitted, though it grated upon his sense of the beautiful and refined terribly, to see Maddy amid so humble surroundings. Twice a week, and sometimes oftener, he rode down to Honedale, and Maddy felt that without these visits life would hardly have been endurable.

During the vacation Jessie spent a part of the time with her, but Agnes resolutely resisted all Guy’s entreaties that she would at least call once on Maddy, who had expressed a wish to see her, and who, on account of her grandfather’s health, and the childishness with which Uncle Joseph clung to her, could not well come up to Aikenside. Agnes would not go down, neither would she give other reason for her obstinacy than the apparently foolish one that she did not wish to see the crazy man. Still she did not object to Jessie’s going as often as she liked, and she sent by her many little delicacies from the larder at Aikenside, some for grandpa, but most for Uncle Joseph, who prized highly everything coming from “the madam,” and sent back to her more than one strangely worded message which made the proud woman’s eyes overflow when sure that no one could see her. But this kind of intercourse came to an end at last. The vacation was over, Jessie had gone back to school, and Maddy began in sober earnest the new life before her. Flora, it is true, relieved her of all household drudgery, but no one could share the burden of care and anxiety pressing so heavily upon her, anxiety for her grandfather, whose health seemed failing so fast, and who always looked so disturbed if a shadow were resting on her bright face, or her voice were less cheerful in its tone, and care for the imbecile Joseph, who clung to her as a puny child clings to its mother, refusing to be cared for by any one else, and often requiring of her more than her strength could endure for a great length of time. She it was who gave him his breakfast in the morning, amused him through the day, and then, after he was in bed at night, often sat by his side till a late hour, singing to him old songs, or telling Bible stories until he fell away to sleep. Then if he awoke, as he frequently did, there was a cry for Maddy, and the soothing process had to be repeated, until the tired, pale watcher ceased to wonder that her grandmother had died so suddenly, wondering rather that she had lived so long and borne so much.

Those were dark, wearisome days to Maddy, and the long, cold winter was gone from the New England hills, and the early buds of spring were coming up by the cottage door, the neighbors began to talk of the change which had come over the young girl, once so full of life and health, but now so languid and pale. Still Maddy was not unhappy, nor was the discipline too severe, for by it she learned at last the great object of life; learned to take her troubles and cares to One who helped her bear them so cheerfully, that those who pitied her most never dreamed how heavy was her burden, so patiently and sweetly she bore it. Occasionally there came to her letters from the doctor, but latterly they gave her less pleasure than pain, for as sure as she read one of his kind, friendly messages of sympathy and remembrance, the tempter whispered to her that though she did not love him as she ought to love her husband, yet a life with him was far preferable to the life she was living, and a receipt of his letters always gave her a pang which lasted until Guy came down to see her, when it usually disappeared. Agnes was now at Aikenside, and thus Maddy frequently had Jessie at the cottage, but Agnes never came, and Maddy little guessed how often the proud woman cried herself to sleep after listening to Jessie’s recital of all Maddy had to do for the crazy man, and how patiently she did it. He had taken a fancy that Maddy must tell him stories of Sarah, describing her as she was now, not as she used to be when he knew her, but now. “What is she now? How does she look? What does she wear? Tell me, tell me!” he would plead, until Maddy, forced to tell him something, and having distinctly in her mind but one fashionable woman such as she fancied Sarah might be, told him of Agnes Remington, describing her as

she was in her mature beauty, with her heavy flowing curls, her brilliant color, her flashing diamonds and costly laces, and Uncle Joseph, listening to her with parted lips and hushed breath, would whisper softly, “Yes, that’s Sarah, beautiful Sarah; but tell me—does she ever think of me, or of that time in the orchard when I wove the apple blossoms in her hair, where the diamonds are now? She loved me then; she told me so. Does she know how sick, and sorry, and foolish I am?—how the aching in my poor, simple brain is all for her, and how you, Maddy, are doing for me what it is her place to do? Had I a voice,” and the crazy man now grew excited, as, raising himself in bed, he gesticulated wildly, “had I a voice to reach her, I’d cry shame on her, to let you do her work, let you-wear your young life and fresh, bright beauty all away for me, whom she ruined.”

The voice he craved, or the echo of it, did reach her, for Jessie had been present when the fancy first seized him to hear of Sarah, and in the shadowy twilight she told her mother all, dwelling most upon the touching sadness of his face when he said, “Does she know how sick and sorry I am?”

The pillow which Agnes pressed that night was wet with tears, while in her heart was planted a germ of gratitude and respect for the young girl doing her work for her. All that she could do for Maddy without going directly to her, she did, devising many articles of comfort, sending her fruit and flowers, the last new book, or whatever else she thought might please her, and always finding a willing messenger in Guy. He was miserable, and managed when at home to make others so around him. The sight of Maddy bearing her burden so uncomplainingly almost maddened him. Had she fretted or complained could bear it better, he said, but he did not see the necessity for her to lose all her spirit or interest in everything and everybody. Once when he hinted as much to Maddy, he had been awed into silence by the subdued expression of her face as she told him in part what it was which helped her to bear and made the rough places so smooth. He had seen something like this in Lucy, when paroxysms of pain were racking her delicate frame, but he could not understand it; he only knew it was something he could not touch—something against which his arguments beat helplessly, and so, with an added respect for Maddy Clyde, he smothered his impatience, and determining to help her all he could, rode down to Honedale every day, instead of twice a week, as he had done before.

Attentions so marked could not fail to be commented upon; and while poor, unsuspecting Maddy was deriving so much comfort from his daily visits, deeming that day very long which did not bring him to her, the Honedale gossips, of which there were many, were busy with her affairs, talking them over at their numerous tea-drinkings, discussing them in the streets, and finally at a quilting, where they met in solemn conclave, deciding, that, “for a girl like Maddy Clyde it did not look well to have so much to do with that young Remington, who, everybody knew, was engaged to a somebody in England.”

“Yes, and would have been married long ago, if it wasn’t for this foolin’ with Maddy,” chimed in Mrs. Joel Spike, throwing the chalk across the quilt to her sister, Tripheny Marvel, who wondered if Maddy thought he’d ever have her.

“Of course he wouldn’t. He knew what he was about. He was not green enough to marry Grandpa Markham’s daughter; and if she didn’t look out, she’d get herself into a pretty scrape. It didn’t look well, anyhow, for her to be putting on airs, as she had done ever since big folks took her up, and she guessed she wouldn’t be beholden to nobody for her larnin’.”

All this and much more was discussed, and by the time the patchwork thing was done, there remained but little to be said either for or against Guy Remington and Maddy Clyde which had not been said by either friend or foe.

Among the invited guests at that quilting was the wife of Farmer Green, Maddy’s warmest friend in Honedale, and the one who did her best to defend her against the attacks of those whose remarks she well knew were caused more by envy than any personal dislike to Maddy, who used to be so much of a pet until her superior advantages separated her in a measure from them. Good Mrs. Green was sorely tried. Without in the least blaming Maddy, she, too, had been troubled at the frequency of Guy’s Visits to the cottage. It was not friendship alone which took him there, she was sure; and knowing that he was engaged, she feared for Maddy’s happiness at first, and afterward, when people began to talk, she feared for her good name. Something must be done, and though she dreaded it greatly, she was the one to do it. Accordingly, next day she started for the cottage, which Guy had just left, and this, in her opinion,

accounted for the bright color in Maddy's cheek and the sparkle in her eye. Guy had been there, bringing and leaving a world of sunshine, but, alas, his chances for coming ever again as he had done were fearfully small, when, at the close of Mrs. Green's well-meant visit, Maddy lay on her bed, her white, frightened face buried in the pillows, and herself half wishing she had died before the last hour had come, with the terrible awakening it had brought; awakening to the fact that of all living beings, Guy Remington was the one she loved the best—the one without whose presence it seemed to her she could not live, but without which she now knew she must.

With the best of intentions Mrs. Green had made a bungle of the whole affair, but had succeeded in giving Maddy a general impression that folks were talking awfully about Guy's coming there, and doing for her so much like an accepted lover, when everybody knew he was engaged, and wouldn't be likely to marry a poor girl if he wasn't; that unless she wanted to be ruined teetotally, and lose all her friends, she must contrive to stop his visits, and not see him so much.

"Yes, I'll do anything, only please leave me now," Maddy gasped, her face as white as ashes and her eyes fixed pleadingly upon Mrs. Green, who, having been young herself, guessed the truth, and, as she arose to go, laid her motherly hand on Maddy's head, saving kindly:

"Poor child, it's hard to bear now, but you'll get over it in time."

"Get over it," Maddy moaned, as she shut and bolted the door after Mrs. Green, and then threw herself upon the bed, "I never shall till I die."

She almost felt that she was dying then, so desolate and so dreary the future looked to her. What was life worth without Guy, and why had she been thrown so much in his way; why permitted to love him as she knew she did, if she must lose him now? Maddy could not cry; there was a tightness about her eyes, and a keen, cutting pain about her heart as she tried to pray for strength to do what was right—strength to cast Guy Remington from her heart where it was a sin for him to be; and then she asked to be forgiven for the wrong she had unwittingly done to Lucy Atherstone, who trusted implicitly, and who, in her last letter, had said:

"If I had not so much faith in Guy I should be jealous of one who has so many opportunities for stealing his heart from me. But I trust you, Maddy Clyde. You would not do a thing to harm me, I am sure, and to lose Guy now, after these years of cruel waiting, would kill me."

Sweet Lucy, there was in her heart a faint stirring of fear lest Maddy Clyde might be a shadow in her pathway, else she had never written that to her. But Lucy's cause was safe in Maddy's hands. Always too high-souled to do a treacherous act, she was now sustained by another and holier principle, which of itself would have kept her from the wrong. But for a few moments Maddy abandoned herself to the bliss of fancying what it would be to be loved by Guy Remington, even as she loved him. And as she thought, there crept into her heart the certainty that in some degree he did love her; that his friendship was more than a mere liking for the girl to whom he had been so kind. In Lucy's absence she was essential to his happiness, and that was why he sought her society so much. Remembering everything that had passed, but more particularly the incidents of that memorable night ride to Honedale with all that had followed since, she could not doubt it, and softly to herself she whispered, "He loves me, he loves me," while little throbs of joy beat all over her heart; but only for an instant, and then the note of joy was changed to sorrow as she thought how she must henceforth seek to kill that love, both for her own sake and Lucy's. Guy must not come there any more. She could not bear it now, even if the neighbors had never meddled with her. She could not see him as she had done, and not betray her real feelings toward him. He had been there that day; he would come again tomorrow. She could see him now just as he would look coming up the walk, easy and self-possessed, confident of his reception, his handsome face beaming all over with kind thoughtfulness for her, and his voice full of tender concern as he asked how she was, and bade Flora see that she did not overtax herself, and all this must cease. She had seen it, heard it for the last time. No wonder that Maddy's heart fainted within her, as she thought how desolate, how dreary would be the days when Guy no longer came. But the victory was gained at last, and strength imparted for the task she had to do.

Going to the table she opened her portfolio, the gift of Guy, and with her gold pen, also his gift, wrote to him what the neighbors were saying, and that he must come there no more; at least, only once in a great while, because if he did, she could not see him. Then, when this was written, she went down to Uncle Joseph, beginning to call for her, and

sat by him as usual, singing to him the songs he loved so well, and which this night pleased him especially, because the voice which sang them was so plaintive, so full of woe. Would he never go to sleep, or the hand which held hers so firmly relax its hold? Never, it seemed to Maddy, who sat and sang, while the night-bird on a distant tree, awakened by the low song, uttered a responsive note, and the hours crept on to midnight. Human nature could endure no more, and when the crazy man said to her, “Now sing of Him who died on Calvary,” Maddy’s answer was a gaping cry as she fell fainting on the pillow.

“It was only a nervous headache,” she said to the frightened Flora, who came at Uncle Joseph’s call, and helped her young mistress up to bed. “She should be better in the morning, and she would rather be alone.”

So Flora left her there, but went often to her door, until assured by the low breathing sound that Maddy was sleeping at last. It was a heavy sleep, and when Maddy awakened from it the pain in her temples was there still; she could not rise, and half glad that she could not, inasmuch as her illness would be a reason why she could not see Guy if he came. She did not know he was here already, until she heard his voice speaking to her grandfather. It was later than she imagined, and he had ridden down early because he could not stay away.

“I can’t see him, Flora,” Maddy said, when the latter came up with the message that Mr. Remington was there with his buggy, and asked if a little ride would not do her good. “I can’t see him, but give him this,” and she placed in Flora’s hand the note, baptized with so many tears and prayers, and the contents of which made Guy furious; not at her, but at the neighbors, the inquisitive, envious, ignorant, meddlesome neighbors, who had dared to talk of him, or to breathe a suspicious word against Maddy Clyde. He would see; he would make them sorry for it; they should take back every word; and they should beg Maddy’s forgiveness for the pain they had caused her.

All this, and much more, Guy thought, as with Maddy’s note in his hand he walked up and down the sitting-room, raging like a young lion, and threatening vengeance upon everybody. This was not the first intimation Guy had received of the people’s gossip, for only that morning Mrs. Noah had hinted that his course was not at all calculated to do Maddy any good, while Agnes had repeated to him some things which she had heard touching the frequency of his visits to Honedale; but these were nothing to the calmly worded message which banished him effectually from Maddy’s presence. He knew Maddy, and he knew, she meant what she wrote, but he could not have it so. He must see her; he would see her; and so for the next half hour Flora was the bearer of written messages to and from Maddy’s room; messages of earnest entreaty on the one hand, and of firm denial on the other. At last Maddy wrote:

“If you care for me in the least, or for my respect, leave me, and do not come again until I send for you. I am not insensible to your kindness. I feel it all; but the world is nearer right than you suppose. It does not look well for you to come here so much, and I prefer that you should not. Justice to Lucy requires that you stay away.”

That ended it! That roused up Guy’s pride, and writing back:

“You shall be obeyed. Good-by.” He sprang into his buggy, and Maddy, listening, with head and heart throbbing alike, heard him as he drove furiously away.

Those were long, dreary days which followed, and but for her grandfather’s increasing feebleness Maddy would almost have died. Anxiety for him, however, kept her from dwelling too much upon herself, but the excitement and the care wore upon her sadly, robbing her eye of its luster and her cheek of its remaining bloom, making even Mrs. Noah cry when she came one day with Jessie to see how they were getting on. She had heard from Guy of his banishment, and now that he stayed away, she was ready to step in; so she came, laden with sympathy and other more substantial comforts brought from the Aikenside larder.

Maddy was glad to see her, and for a time cried softly on her bosom, while Mrs. Noah’s tears kept company with hers. Not a word was said of Guy, except when Jessie told her he was gone to Boston, and it was so stupid at home without him.

With more than her ordinary discretion, Flora kept to herself what had passed when Guy was last there, so Mrs. Noah knew nothing except what he had told her, and what she read in Maddy’s white, suffering face. This last was enough to excite all her pity, and she treated the young girl with the most motherly kindness, staying all night, and herself

taking care of grandpa, who was now too ill to sit up. There seemed to be no disease preying upon him, nothing save old age, and the loss of one who for more than forty years had shared all his joy and sorrow. He could not live without her, and one night, three weeks after Guy's dismissal, he said to Maddy, as she was about to leave him:

"Sit with me, darling, for a little while, if you are not too tired. Your grandmother seems near me to-night, and so does Alice, your mother. Maybe I'll be with them before another day. I hope I may if God is willing, and there's much I would say to you."

He was very pale, and the great sweat drops stood on his forehead and under his white hair, but Maddy wiped them away and listened with a breaking heart while the aged disciple almost home told her of the peace, the joy, that shone around his pathway to the tomb, and of the everlasting arm bearing him so gently over Jordan. Then he talked of herself, blessing her for all she had been to him, telling her how happy she had made his life since she came home to stay, and how for a time he had ached so with fear lest she should choose to go back and leave him to a stranger. "But my darling stayed with her old grandpa. She'll never be sorry for it, never. I've tried you sometimes, I know, for old folks ain't like young; but I'm sorry, Maddy, and you'll forget it when I'm gone, darling Maddy, precious child;" and the trembling hand rested caressingly on her bowed head as grandpa went on to speak of his affairs, his little property which was hers after the mortgage to Mr. Guy was paid. "I've kept up the interest," he said, "but I could never get him to take any of the principal. I don't know why he is so good to me. Tell him, Maddy, how I thanked and blessed him just before I died; tell him how I used to pray for him every day that he might choose the better part. And he will—I'm sure he will, some day. He hasn't been here of late, and though my old eyes are dim, I can see that your step has got slow, and your face whiter by many shades, since he stayed away. Maddy, child, the dead tell no secrets, and I shall soon be dead. Tell me, then, what it is between you two. Does my girl love Mr. Guy?"

"Oh, grandpa! grandpa!" Maddy moaned, laying her head beside his own on the pillow.

It would be a relief to talk with some one of that terrible pain, which grew worse every day; of that intense longing just for one sight of the beloved one; of Guy, still absent from Aikenside, wandering nobody knew where; and so Maddy told the whole story, while the dying man listened to her, and smoothing her silken hair, tried to comfort her.

"The worst is not over yet," he said. "Guy will offer to make you his wife, sacrificing Lucy for you, and if he does, what will my darling do?"

Maddy's heart leaped up into her throat, and for a moment prevented her from answering, for the thought of Guy's really offering to make her his wife, to shield her from evil, to enfold her in his tender love, made her giddy with joy. But it could not be, and she answered through her tears:

"I shall tell him no."

"God bless my Maddy! She will tell him no for Lucy's sake, and God will bring it right at last," the old man whispered, his voice growing very faint and tremulous. "She will tell him no," he kept repeating, until, rousing up to greater consciousness, he spoke of Uncle Joseph, and asked what Maddy would do with him; would she send him back to the asylum, or care for him there? "He will be happier here," he said, "but it is asking too much of a young girl like you. He may live for years."

"I do not know, grandpa. I hope I may do right. I think I shall keep Uncle Joseph with me," Maddy replied, a shudder creeping over her as she thought of living out all her youth and possibly middle age with a lunatic.

But her grandfather's whispered blessings brought comfort with them, and a calm quiet fell upon her as she sat there listening to the words of prayer, and catching now and then her own name and that of Guy's.

"I am drowsy, Maddy. Watch while I sleep. Perhaps I'll never wake again," grandpa said, and clasping Maddy's hands he fell away to sleep, while Maddy kept her watch beside him, herself falling into a troubled sleep, from which she was aroused by a clammy hand pressing on her forehead, and Uncle Joseph's voice, which said: "Wake, my child. There's been a guest here while you slumbered," and he pointed to the rigid features of the newly dead.

CHAPTER XX.
THE BURDEN GROWS HEAVIER.

Of the days which followed, Maddy had no distinct consciousness. She only knew that other hands than hers cared for the dead, that in the little parlor a stiff, white figure lay, that neighboring women stole in, treading on tiptoe, and speaking in hushed voices as they consulted, not her, but Mrs. Noah, who had come at once, and cared for her and hers so kindly. That she lay all day in her own room, where the summer breeze blew softly through the window, bringing the perfume of summer flowers, the sound of a tolling bell, of grinding wheels, the notes of a low, sad hymn, sung in faltering tones, and of many feet moving from the door. Then friendly faces looked in upon her, asking how she felt, and whispering ominously to each other as she answered:

"Very well; is grandpa getting better?"

Then Mrs. Noah sat with her for a time, fanning her with a palm-leaf fan and brushing the flies away. Then Flora came up with a man whom they called "Doctor," and who gave his sundry little pills and powders dissolved in water, after which they all went out and left her there with Jessie who had been crying, and whose soft little hands felt so cool on her hot head, and whose kisses on her lips made the tears start, and brought a thought of Guy, making her ask, "if he was at the funeral." She did not know whose funeral, or why she used that word, only it seemed to her that Jessie just came back from somebody's grave, and she asked if Guy was there. "No," Jessie said; "mother wanted to write and tell him, but we don't know where he is."

And this was all Maddy could recall of the days succeeding the night of her last watch at her grandfather's side, until one balmy August afternoon, when on the Honedale hills there lay that smoky haze so like the autumn time hurrying on apace, and when through her open window stole the fragrance of the later summer flowers. Then, as if waking from an ordinary sleep, she woke suddenly to consciousness, and staring about the room, wondered if it were as late as the western sun would indicate, and how she came to sleep so long. For a while she lay thinking, and as she thought, a sad scene came back to her, a night when her hot hands had been enfolded in those of the dead, and that dead her grandfather. Was it true, or was she laboring under some hallucination of the brain? If true, was that white, placid face still to be seen in the room below, or had they burial him from her sight? She would know, and with a strange kind of nervous strength she arose, and throwing on the wrapper and slippers which lay near, descended the stairs, wondering to find herself so weak, and half shuddering at the deep stillness of the house; stillness broken only by the ticking of the clock and the purring of the house cat, which at sight of Maddy arose from its position near the door and came forward, rubbing its sides against her dress, and trying in various ways to evince its joy at seeing one whose caresses it had missed so long. The little bedroom off the kitchen where grandpa slept and died was vacant; the old fashioned coat was put away, as was every vestige of the old man save the broad-rimmed hat which hung upon the wall just where his hands had hung it, and which looked so much like its owner that with a gush of tears Maddy sank upon the bed, moaning to herself, "Yes, grandpa is dead. I remember now. But Uncle Joseph, where is he? Can he too have died without my knowledge? and she looked round in vain for the lunatic, not a trace of whom was to be found. His room was in perfect order, as was everything about the house, showing that Flora was still the domestic goddess, while Maddy detected also various things which she recognized as having come from Aikenside. Who sent them? Did Guy, and had he been there too while she was sick? The thought brought a throb of joy to Maddy's heart, but it soon passed away as she began again to wonder if Uncle Joseph too had died, and where Flora was. It was not far to the Honedale burying ground. Maddy could see the headstones from where she sat gleaming through the August sunlight; could discern her mother's, and knew that two fresh mounds at least were made beside it. But were there three? Was Uncle Joseph there? By stealing across the meadow in the rear of the house the distance to the graveyard was shortened more than half, and could not be more than the eighth part of a mile, She could walk so far, she knew. The fresh air would do her good, and hunting up her long unused flat, the impatient girl started, stopping once or twice to rest as a dizzy faintness came over her, and then continuing on until the spot she sought was reached, Three graves, one old and sunken, one made when the last winter's snow was on the hills, the other fresh and new. That was all, Uncle Joseph was not

there, and vague terror entered Maddy's heart lest he had been taken back to the asylum.

"I will get him out," she said; "I will take care of him. I should die with nothing to do; and I promised grandpa——"

She could get no farther, for the rush of memories which came over her, and seating herself upon the ground close to the new grave, she laid her face upon it, and sobbed piteously:

"Oh, grandpa. I'm so lonely without you all; I almost wish I was lying here in the quiet yard."

Then a storm of tears ensued, after which Maddy grew calm, and with her head still bent low, did not hear the rapid step approaching, the manly step coming down the grassy road, coming past the marble tombstones, on to where that wasted figure was crouching upon the ground. There it stopped, and in a half whisper called, "Maddy! Maddy!" Then indeed she started, and lifting up her head saw before her Guy Remington. For a moment she regarded him intently while he said to her, oh so kindly, so pityingly.

"Poor child, you have suffered so much, and I never knew of it till a few days ago."

At the sound of that loved voice speaking thus to her, everything else was forgotten, and with a cry of joy Maddy stretched her hands toward him, moaning out:

"Oh, Guy, Guy, where have you been, when I wanted you so much?"

Maddy did not know what she was saying, or half comprehend the effect it had on Guy, who forgot everything save that she wanted him, had missed him, had turned to him in her trouble, and it was not in his nature to resist her appeal. With a spring he was at her side, and lifting her in his arms seated himself upon her mother's grave; then straining her tightly to his bosom, he kissed her again and again. Hot, burning, passionate kisses they were, which took from Maddy all power of resistance, even had she wished it, which she did not. Too weak to reason, or see the harm, if harm there were, in being loved by Guy, she abandoned herself for a brief interval to the bliss of knowing that she was beloved, and of hearing him tell her so.

"Darling Maddy," he said, "I went away because you sent me, but now I have come back, and nothing shall part us again. You are mine; I claim you here at your mother's grave. Precious Maddy, I did not know of all this till three days ago, when Agnes' letter found me almost at the Rocky Mountains. I traveled day and night, reaching Aikenside this morning, and coming straight to Honedale. I wish I had come before, now that I know you wanted me. Say that again, Maddy. Tell me again that you missed and wanted me."

He was smoothing her hair now, as her head still lay pillowed upon his breast, so he could not see the spasm of pain which contorted her features as he thus appealed to her. Half bewildered, Maddy could not at first make out whether it were a blissful dream or a reality, her lying there in Guy's arms with his kisses on her forehead, lips and cheek, his words of devotion in her ear, and the soft summer sky smiling down upon her. Alas, it was a dream from which she was awakened by the thought of one across the sea, whose place she had usurped, and this it was which brought the grieved expression to her face as she answered mournfully:

"I did want you, Guy, when I forgot; but now—oh, Guy—Lucy Atherstone!"

With a gesture of impatience Guy was about to answer, when something in the heavy fall of the little hand from his shoulder alarmed him, and lifting up the drooping head he saw that Maddy had fainted. Then back across the meadow Guy bore her to the cottage, where Flora, just returned from a neighbor's, whither she had gone upon an errand, was looking for her in much affright, and wondering who had come from Aikenside with that wet, tired horse, showing so plainly how hard it had been driven.

Up again into her little chamber Maddy was carried and laid upon the bed, which she never left until the golden harvest sheaves were gathered in, and the hot September sun was ripening the fruits of autumn. But now she had a new nurse, a constant attendant, who during the day seldom left her except to talk with and amuse Uncle Joseph, mourning below because no one sang to him or noticed him as Maddy used to do. He had not been sent to the asylum, as Maddy feared, but by way of relieving Flora had been taken to Farmer Green's, where he was so homesick and discontented that at Guy's instigation he was suffered to return to the cottage, crying like a little child when the old familiar spot

was reached, kissing his armchair, the cook-stove, the tongs, Mrs. Noah and Flora, and timidly offering to kiss the Lord Governor himself, as he persisted in calling Guy, who declined the honor, but listened quietly to the crazy man's promise "not to spit the smallest kind of a spit on the floor, or anywhere, except in its proper place."

Guy had passed through several states of mind during the interval in which we have seen so little of him. Furious at one time, and reckless as to consequences, he had determined to break with Lucy and marry Maddy, in spite of everybody; then, as a sense of honor came over him, he resolved to forget Maddy, if possible, and marry Lucy at once. It was in this last mood, and while roaming over the Western country, whither after his banishment he had gone, that he wrote to Lucy a strange kind of letter, saying he had waited for her long enough, and sick or well he should claim her the coming autumn. To this letter Lucy had responded quickly, sweetly reproving Guy for his impatience, softly hinting that latterly he had been quite as culpable as herself in the matter of deferring their union and appointing the bridal day for the—of December. After this was settled Guy felt better, though the old sore spot in his heart, where Maddy Clyde had been, was very sore still, and sometimes it required all his powers of self-control to keep from writing to Lucy and asking to be released from an engagement so irksome as his had become. Neglecting to answer Agnes' letters when he first left home, she did not know where he was until a short time before, when she wrote apprising him of grandpa's death and Maddy's severe illness. This brought him, while Maddy's involuntary outburst when she met him in the graveyard, changed the whole current of his intentions. Let what would come, Maddy Clyde should be his wife and as such he watched over her, nursing her back to life, and by his manner effectually silencing all remark, so that the neighbors whispered among themselves what Maddy's prospects were, and, as was quite natural, were a very little more attentive to the future lady of Aikenside. Poor Maddy! it was a terrible trial which awaited her, but it must be met, and so with prayers and tears she fortified herself to meet it, while Guy, the devoted lover, hung over her, never guessing of all that was passing in her mind, or how, when he was out of sight, the lips he had longed so much to kiss, but never had since that day in the graveyard, quivered with anguish as they asked for strength to do right. Oh, how Maddy did love the man she must give up, and how often went up the wailing cry, "Help me, Father, to do my duty, and give me, too, a greater inclination to do it than I now possess."

Maddy's heart did fail her sometimes, and she might have yielded to the temptation but for Lucy's letter, full of eager anticipations of the time when she should see Guy never to part again.

"Sometimes," she wrote, "there comes over me a dark foreboding of evil—a fear that I shall miss the cup now within my reach; but I pray the bad feelings away. I am sure there is no living being who will come between us to break my heart, and as I know God doeth all things well, I trust Him wholly, and cease to doubt."

It was well the letter came when it did, as it helped Maddy to meet the hour she so much dreaded, and which came at last on an afternoon when Mrs. Noah had gone to Aikenside, and Flora had gone on an errand to a neighbor's, two miles away, thus leaving Guy free to tell the story, the old, old story, yet always new to him who tells it and her who listens—story which, as Guy told it, sitting by Maddy's side, with her hands in his, thrilled her through and through, making the sweat drops start out around her lips and underneath her hair—story which made Guy himself pant nervously and tremble like a leaf, so earnestly he told it; told how long he had loved her, of the picture withheld, the jealousy he felt each time the doctor named her, the selfish joy he experienced when he heard the doctor was refused; told of his growing dissatisfaction with his engagement, his frequent resolves to break it, his final decision, which that scene in the graveyard had reversed, and then asked if she would not be his—not doubtfully, but confidently, eagerly, as if sure of her answer.

Alas for Guy! he could not believe he heard aright when, turning her head away for a moment while she prayed for strength, Maddy's answer came, "I cannot, Guy, I cannot. I acknowledge the love which has stolen upon me, I know not how, but I cannot do this wrong to Lucy. Away from me you will love her again. You must. Read this, Guy, then say if you can desert her."

She placed Lucy's letter in his hand, and Guy read it with a heart which ached to its very core. It was cruel to deceive that gentle, trusting girl writing so lovingly of him, but to lose Maddy was to his undisciplined

nature more dreadful still, and casting the letter aside he pleaded again, this time with the energy of despair, for he read his fate in Maddy's face, and when her lips a second time confirmed her first reply, while she appealed to his sense of honor, of justice, of right, and told him he could and must forget her, he knew there was no hope, and man though he was, bowed his head upon Maddy's hands and wept stormily, mighty, choking sobs, which shook his frame, and seemed to break up the very fountains of his life. Then to Maddy there came a terrible temptation. Was it right for two who loved as they did to live their lives apart?—right in her to force on Guy the fulfillment of vows he could not literally keep? As mental struggles are always the more severe, so Maddy's took all her strength away, and for many minutes she lay so white and still that Guy roused himself to care for her, thinking of nothing then except to make her better.

It was a long time ere that interview ended, but when it did there was on Maddy's face a peaceful expression, which only the sense of having done right at the cost of a fearful sacrifice could give, while Guy's bore traces of a great and crushing sorrow, as he went out from Maddy's presence and felt that to him she was lost forever. He had promised her he would do right; had said he would marry Lucy, being to her what a husband should be; had listened while she talked of another world, where they neither marry nor are given in marriage, and where it would not be sinful for them to love each other, and as she talked her face had shone like the face of an angel. He had held one of her hands at parting, bending low his head, while she laid the other on it as she blessed him, letting her snowy fingers thread his soft brown hair and linger caressingly among his curly locks. But that was over now. They had parted forever. She was lying where he left her, cold, and white, and faint with dizzy pain. He was riding swiftly toward Aikenside, his heart beats keeping time to the swift tread of his horse's feet, and his mind a confused medley of distracted thoughts, amid which two facts stood out prominent and clear-he had lost Maddy Clyde, and had promised her to marry Lucy Atherstone.

For many days after that Guy kept his room, saying he was sick, and refusing to see any one save Jessie and Mrs. Noah, the latter of whom guessed in part what had happened, and imputing to him far more credit than he deserved, petted and pitied and cared for him until he grew weary of it, and said to her savagely: "You needn't think me so good, for I am not. I wanted Maddy Clyde, and told her so, but she refused me and made me promise to marry Lucy; so I'm going to do that very thing—going to England in a few weeks, or as soon as Maddy is better, and before the sun of this year sets I shall be a married man."

After this all Mrs. Noah's sympathy was in favor of Maddy, the good lady making more than one pilgrimage to Honedale, where she expended all her arguments trying to make Maddy revoke her decision; but Maddy was firm in what she deemed right, and as her health began slowly to improve, and there was no longer an excuse for Guy to tarry, he gave out to the neighborhood that he was at last to be married, and started for England the latter part of October, as unhappy and unwilling a bridegroom, it may be, as ever wait after a bride.

CHAPTER XXI.
THE INTERVAL BEFORE THE MARRIAGE.

Maddy never knew how she lived through those bright, autumnal days, when the gorgeous beauty of decaying nature seemed so cruelly to mock her anguish. As long as Guy was there, breathing the same air with herself, she kept up, vaguely conscious of a shadowy hope that something would happen without her instrumentality, something to ease the weight pressing so hard upon her. But when she heard that he had really gone, that a line had been received from him after he was on board the steamer, all hope died out of her heart, and had it been right she would have prayed that she might die and forget how utterly miserable she was.

At last there came to her three letters, one from Lucy, one from the doctor, and one from Guy himself. Lucy's she opened first, reading of the sweet girl's great happiness in seeing her darling boy again, of her sorrow to find him so thin, and pale, and changed, in all save his extreme kindness to her, his careful study of her wants, and evident anxiety to please her in every respect. On this Lucy dwelt, until Maddy's heart seemed to leap up and almost turn over in its casing, so fiercely it throbbed and ached with anguish. She was out in the beechen woods when she read the letter, and laying her face in the grass she sobbed as she had never sobbed before.

The doctor's next was opened, and Maddy read with blinding tears that which for a moment increased her pain and sent to her bleeding heart an added pang of disappointment, or a sense of wrong done to her, she could not tell which. Dr. Holbrook was to be married the same day with Lucy, and to Lucy's sister, Margaret.

"Maggie, I call her," he wrote, "because that name is so much like my first love, Maddy, the little girl who though I was too old to be her husband, and so made me very wretched for a time, until I met and knew Margaret Atherstone. I have told her of you, Maddy; I would not marry her without, and she seems willing to take me as I am. We shall come home with Guy, who is the mere wreck of what he was when I last saw him. He has told me, Maddy, all about it, and though I doubly respect you now, I cannot say that I think you did quite right. Better that one should suffer than two, and Lucy's is a nature which will forget far sooner than yours or Guy's. I pity you all."

This almost killed Maddy; she did not love the doctor, but the knowledge that he was to marry another added to her misery, while what he said of her decision was the climax of the whole. Had her sacrifice been for nothing? Would it have been better if she had not sent Guy away? It was anguish unspeakable to believe so, and the shadowy woods never echoed to so bitter a cry of pain as that with which she laid her head on the ground, and for a brief moment wished that she might die. God pitied His child then, and for the next half hour she hardly knew what she suffered.

There was Guy's letter yet to read, and with a listless indifference she opened it, starting as there dropped into her lap a small *carte de viste*, a perfect likeness of Guy, who sent it, he said, because he wished her to have so much of himself. It would make him happier to know she could sometimes look at him just as he should gaze upon her dear picture after it was a sin to love the original. And this was all the direct reference he made to the past except where he spoke of Lucy, telling how happy she was, and how if anything could reconcile him to his fate, it was the knowing how pure and good and loving was the wife he was getting. Then he wrote of the doctor and Margaret, whom he described as a dashing, brilliant girl, the veriest tease and madcap in the world, and the exact opposite of Maddy.

"It is strange to me why he chose her after loving you," he wrote; "but as they seem fond of each other, their chances of happiness are not inconsiderable."

This letter, so calm, so cheerful in its tone, had a quieting effect on Maddy, who read it twice, and then placing it in her bosom, started for the cottage, meeting on the way with Flora who was seeking for her in great alarm. Uncle Joseph had had a fit, she said, and fallen upon the floor, cutting his forehead badly against the sharp point of the stove. Hurrying on Maddy found that what Flora had said was true, and sent immediately for the physician, who came at once, but shook his head doubtfully as he examined his patient. There were all the symptoms of a fever, he said, bidding Maddy prepare for the worst. Nothing in the form

of trouble could particularly affect Maddy now, and perhaps it was wisely ordered that Uncle Joseph's illness should take her thoughts from herself. From the very first he refused to take his medicines from any one save her or Jessie, who with her mother's permission stayed altogether at the cottage, and who, as Guy's sister, was a great comfort to Maddy.

As the fever increased, and Uncle Joseph grew more and more delirious his cries for Sarah were heartrending, making Jessie weep bitterly as she said to Maddy:

"If I knew where this Sarah was I'd go miles on foot to find her and bring her to him."

Something like this Jessie said to her mother when she went for a day to Aikenside, asking her in conclusion if she thought Sarah would go.

"Perhaps," and Agnes brushed abstractedly her long, flowing hair, winding it around her jeweled fingers, and then letting the soft curls fall across her snowy arms.

"Where do you suppose she is?" was Jessie's next question, but if Agnes knew, she did not answer, except by reminding her little daughter that it was past her bedtime.

The next morning Agnes' eyes were very red, as if she had been wakeful the entire night, while her white face fully warranted the headache she professed to have.

"Jessie," she said, as they sat together at their breakfast, "I am going to Honedale to-day, going to see Maddy, and shall leave you here, as I do not care to have us both absent."

Jessie demurred a little at first, but finally yielded, wondering what had prompted this visit to the cottage. Maddy wondered so, too, as from the window she saw Agnes instead of Jessie alighting from the carriage, and was conscious of a thrill of gratification that Agnes would have come to see her. But Agnes' business concerned the sick man, poor Uncle Joseph, who was sleeping when she came, and so did not hear her voice as in the tidy kitchen she talked to Maddy, appearing extremely agitated, and flashing her eyes rapidly from one part of the room to another, resting now upon the tinware hung upon the wall and now upon the gourd swimming in the water pail standing in the old-fashioned sink, with the wooden spout, directly over the pile of stones covering the drain. These things were familiar to the proud woman; she had seen them before, and the sight of them now brought to her a most remorseful regret for the past, while her heart ached cruelly as she wished she had never crossed that threshold, or crossing it had never brought ruin to one of its inmates. Agnes was not the same woman whom we first knew. All hope of the doctor had long since been given up, and as Jessie grew older the mother nature was stronger within her, subduing her selfishness, and making her far more gentle and considerate for others than she had been before. To Maddy she was exceedingly kind, and never more so in manner than now, when they sat talking together in the humble kitchen at the cottage.

"You look tired and sick," she said. "Your cares have been too much for one not yet strong. Let me sit by him till he wakes, and you go up to bed."

Very gladly Maddy accepted the offered relief, and utterly worn out with her constant vigils, she was soon sleeping soundly in her own room, while Flora, in the little shed, or back room of the house, was busy with her ironing. Thus there was none to follow Agnes as she went slowly into the sick-room where Uncle Joseph lay, his thin face upturned to the light, and his lips occasionally moving as he muttered in his sleep. There was a strange contrast between that wasted imbecile and that proud, queenly woman, but she could remember a time when the superiority was all upon his side, a time when in her childish estimation he was the embodiment of every manly beauty, and the knowledge that he loved her, his sister's little hired girl, filled her with pride and vanity. A great change had come to them both since those days, and Agnes, watching him and smothering back the cry of pain which arose to her lips at sight of him, felt that for the fearful change in him she was answerable. Intellectual, talented, admired and sought by all he had been once; he was a mere wreck now, and Agnes' breath came in short, quick gasps, as glancing furtively around to see that no one was near, she laid her hand upon his forehead, and parting his thin hair, said, pityingly: "Poor Joseph."

The touch awoke him, and starting up he stared wildly at her, while some memory of the past seemed to be struggling through the misty clouds, obscuring his mental vision.

“Who are you, lady? Who, with eyes and hair like hers?”

“I’m the `madam’ from Aikenside,” Agnes said, quite loudly, as Flora passed the door. Then when she was gone she added, softly: “I’m Sarah. Don’t you know me? Sarah Agnes Morris.”

It seemed for a moment to burst upon him in its full reality, and to her dying day Agnes would never forget the look upon his face, the smile of perfect happiness breaking through the rain of tears, the love, the tenderness mingled with distrust, which that look betokened as he continued gazing at her, but said to her not a word. Again her hand rested on his forehead, and taking it now in his he held it to the light, laughing insanely at its soft whiteness; then touching the costly diamonds which flashed upon him the rainbow hues, he said: “Where’s that little bit of a ring I bought for you?”

She had anticipated this, and took from her pocket a plain gold ring, kept until that day where no one could find it, and holding it up to him, said: “Here it is. Do you remember it?”

“Yes, yes,” and his lips began to quiver with a grieved, injured expression. “He could give you diamonds, and I couldn’t. That’s why you left me, wasn’t it, Sarah—why you wrote that letter which made my head into two? It’s ached so ever since, and I’ve missed you so much, Sarah! They put me in a cell where crazy people were—oh! so many—and they said that I was mad, when I was only wanting you. I’m not mad now, am I, darling?”

His arm was around her neck, and he drew her down until his lips touched hers. And Agnes suffered it. She could not return the kiss, but she did not turn away from his, and she let him caress her hair, and wind it around his fingers, whispering: “This is like Sarah’s, and you are Sarah, are you not?”

“Yes, I am Sarah,” she would answer, while the smile so painful to see would again break over his face as he told how much he had missed her, and asked if she had not come to stay till he died.

“There’s something wrong,” he said; “somebody dead, and seems as if somebody else wanted to die—as if Maddy died ever since the Lord Governor went away. Do you know Governor Guy?”

“I am his stepmother,” Agnes replied, whereupon Uncle Joseph laughed so long and loud that Maddy awoke, and, alarmed by the noise, came down to see what was the matter.

Agnes did not hear her, and as she reached the doorway, she started at the strange position of the parties—Uncle Joseph still smoothing the curls which drooped over him, and Agnes saying to him: “You heard his name was Remington, did you not—James Remington?”

Like a sudden revelation it came upon Maddy, and she turned to leave, when Agnes, lifting her head, called her to come in. She did so, and standing upon the opposite side of the bed, she said, questioningly: “You are Sarah Morris?”

For a moment the eyelids quivered, then the neck arched proudly, as if it were a thing of which she was not ashamed, and Agnes answered: “Yes, I was Sarah Agnes Morris; once for three months your grandmother’s hired girl, and afterward adopted by a lady who gave me what education I possess, together with that taste for high life which prompted me to jilt your Uncle Joseph when a richer man than he offered himself to me.”

That was all she said—all that Maddy ever knew of her history, as it was never referred to again, except that evening, when Agnes said to her, pleadingly: “Neither Guy nor Jessie, nor any one, need know what I have told you.”

“They shall not,” was Maddy’s reply; and from that moment the past, so far as Agnes was concerned, was a sealed page to both. With this bond of confidence between them, Agnes felt herself strangely drawn toward Maddy, while, if it were possible, something of her olden love was renewed for the helpless man who clung to her now instead of Maddy, refusing to let her go; neither had Agnes any disposition to leave him. She should stay to the last, so she said; and she did, taking Maddy’s place, and by her faithfulness and care winning golden laurels in the opinion of the neighbors, who marveled at first to see so gay a lady at Uncle Joseph’s bedside, attributing it all to her friendship for Maddy, just as they attributed his calling her Sarah to a crazy freak. She did resemble Sarah Morris a very little, they said; and in Maddy’s presence they sometimes wondered where Sarah was, repeating strange things which they had heard of her; but Maddy kept the secret from every one, so that even Jessie never suspected why her mother stayed day after day at the cottage; watching and waiting until the last day of Joseph’s life.

She was alone with him then, so that Maddy never knew what passed between them. She had left them together for an hour, while she did some errands; and when she returned, Agnes met her at the door, and with a blanched cheek whispered: “He is dead; he died in my arms, blessing you and me; do you hear, blessing me! Surely; my sin is now forgiven?”

CHAPTER XXII.
BEFORE THE BRIDAL.

There was a fresh grave made in the churchyard, and another chair vacant at the cottage, when Maddy was at last alone. Unfettered by care and anxiety for sick ones, her aching heart was free to go out after the loved ones over the sea, go to the elm-shaded mansion she had heard described so often, and where now two brides were busy with their preparations for the bridal hurrying on so fast. Since the letter read in the smoky, October woods, Maddy had not heard from Guy directly, though Lucy had written since, a few brief lines, telling how happy she was, how strong she was growing, and how much like himself Guy was becoming. Maddy had been less than a woman if the last intelligence had failed to affect her unpleasantly. She did not wish Guy to regret his decision; but to be forgotten so soon after so strong protestations of affection, was a little mortifying, and Maddy's heart throbbed painfully as she read the letter, half hoping it might prove the last she should receive from Lucy Atherstone. Guy had left no orders for any changes to be made at Aikenside; but Agnes, who was largely imbued with a love of bustle and repair, had insisted that at least the suite of rooms intended for the bride should be thoroughly renovated with new paper and paint, carpets and furniture. This plan Mrs. Noah opposed, for she guessed how little Guy would care for the change; but Agnes was resolved, and as she had great faith in Maddy's taste, she insisted that she should go to Aikenside, and pass her judgment upon the improvements. It would do her good, she said—little dreaming how much it cost Maddy to comply with her wishes, or how fearfully the poor, crushed heart ached, as Maddy went through the handsome rooms fitted up for Guy's young bride; but Mrs. Noah guessed it all, pitying so much the white-faced girl, whose deep mourning robes told the loss of dear ones by death; but gave no token of that great loss, tenfold worse than death.

"It was wicked in her to fetch you here," she said to Maddy, one day when in Lucy's room she found her sitting upon the floor, with her head bowed down upon the window sill. "But law, she's a triflin' thing, and didn't know 'twould kill you, poor child, poor Maddy!" and Mrs. Noah laid her hand kindly on Maddy's hair. "Maybe you'd better go home," she continued, as Maddy made no reply; "it must be hard, to be here in the rooms, and among the things which by good rights should be yours."

"No, Mrs. Noah," and Maddy's voice was strangely unnatural, as she lifted up her head, revealing a face so haggard and white that Mrs. Noah was frightened, and asked in much alarm if anything new had happened.

"No, nothing; I was going to say that I'd rather stay a little longer where there are signs and sounds of life. I should die to be alone at Honedale to-morrow. I may die here, I don't know. Do you know that to-morrow will be the bridal?"

Yes, Mrs. Noah knew it; but she hoped it might have escaped Maddy's mind.

"Poor child," she said again, "poor child, I mistrust you did wrong to tell him no!"

"Oh, Mrs. Noah, don't tell me that; don't make it harder for me to bear. The tempter has been telling me so, all day, and my heart is so hard and wicked, I cannot pray as I would. Oh, you don't know how wretched I am!" and Maddy hid her face in the broad, motherly lap, sobbing so wildly that Mrs. Noah was greatly perplexed, how to act, or what to say.

Years ago, she would have spurned the thought that the grandchild of the old man who had bowed to his own picture should be mistress of Aikenside; but she had changed since then, and could she have had her way, she would have stopped the marriage, and, bringing her boy home, have given him to the young girl weeping so convulsively in her lap. But Mrs. Noah could not have her way. The bridal guests were, even then, assembling in that home beyond the sea. She could not call Guy back, and so she pitied and caressed the wretched Maddy, saying to her at last:

"I'll tell you what is impressed on my mind; this Lucy's got the consumption, without any kind of doubt, and if you've no objections to a widower, you may——"

She did not finish the sentence, for Maddy started in horror. To her there was something murderous in the very idea, and she thrust it quickly aside. Guy Remington was not for her, she said, and her wish was to forget him. If she could get through the dreaded to-morrow, she should do better. There had been a load upon her the whole day, a

nightmare she could not shake off, and she had come to Lucy's room, in the hope of leaving her burden there, of praying her pain away. Would Mrs. Noah leave her a while, and see that no one came?

The good woman could not refuse, and going out, she left Maddy by the window, watching the sun as it went down, and then watching; the wintry twilight deepen over the landscape, until all things were blended together in one great darkness, and Jessie, seeking for her found her at last, fainting upon the floor.

Maddy was glad of the racking headache, which kept her in her bed the whole of the next day, glad of any excuse to stay away from the family, talking—all but Mrs. Noah—of Guy, and what was transpiring in England. They had failed to remember the difference in the longitude of the two places; but Maddy forgot nothing, and when the clock struck four, she called Mrs. Noah to her and whispered, faintly:

"They were to be married at eight in the evening. Allowing for possible delays, it's over before this and Guy is lost forever!"

Mrs. Noah had no consolation to offer, and only pressed the hot, feverish hands, while Maddy turned her face to the wall, and did not speak again, except to whisper, incoherently, as she half slumbered, half woke:

"Did Guy think of me when he promised to love her, and does he, can he, see how miserable I am?" Maddy was indeed passing through deep waters, and that night, the fourth of December, the longest, dreariest she ever knew, could never be forgotten. Once past, the worst was over, and as the rarest metal is purified by fire, so Maddy came from the dreadful ordeal strengthened for what was before her. Both Agnes and Mrs. Noah noticed the strangely beautiful expression of her face, when she came down to the breakfast-room, while Jessie, as she kissed her pale cheek, whispered:

"You look as if you had been with the angels."

Guy was not expected with his bride for two weeks, or more, and as the days dragged on, Maddy felt that the waiting for him was more intolerable than the seeing him with Lucy would be. Restless and impatient, she could not remain quietly at the cottage—while at Aikenside, she longed to return again to her own home, and in this way the time wore on, until the anniversary of that day when she had come from New York, and found Guy waiting for her at the station. To stay that day in the house so rife with memories of the dead was impossible, and Flora was surprised and delighted to hear that both were going up to Aikenside in the vehicle hired of Farmer Green, whose son officiated as driver. It was nearly noon when they reached their destination, meeting at the gate with Flora's brother Tom, who said to them:

"We've heard from Mr. Guy; the ship is in; they'll be here sure to-night, and Mrs. Noah is turnin' things upside down with the dinner."

Leaning back in the buggy, Maddy felt for a moment as if she were dying. Never until then had she realized how, all the while, she had been clinging to an indefinable hope, a presentiment that something might yet occur to spare her from a long lifetime of pain, such as lay before her if Guy were really lost; but the bubble had burst, leaving her nothing to hope, nothing to cling to, nothing but black despair; and half bewildered, she received the noisy greeting of Jessie, who met her at the door, and dragged her into the drawing-room, decorated with flowers from the hothouse, told her to guess who was coming.

"I know; Tom told me; Guy is coming with Lucy," Maddy answered, and relieving herself from Jessie, she turned to Agnes, asking where Mrs. Noah was, and if she might go to her for a moment.

"Oh, Maddy, child, I'm sorry you've come to-day," Mrs. Noah said, as she chafed Maddy's cold hands, and leading her to the fire, made her sit down, while she untied her hood, and removed her cloak and furs.

"I did not know it, or I should have stayed away," Maddy replied; "I shall not stay, as it is. I cannot see them to-day. Charlie will drive me back before the train is due; but what did he say? And how is Lucy?" "He did not mention her. There's the dispatch" and Mrs. Noah handed to Maddy the telegram, received that morning, and which was simply as follows:

> "The steamer is here. Shall be at the station at five o'clock P. M.
>
> GUY REMINGTON."

Twice Maddy read it over, experiencing much the same feeling she would have experienced had it been her death warrant she was reading.

“At five o’clock. I must go before that,” she said, sighing as she remembered how, one year ago that day, she was traveling over the very route where Guy was now traveling with his bride. Did he think of it? think of his long waiting at the depot, or of that memorable ride, the events of which grew more and more distinct in her memory, making her cheeks burn even now, as she recalled his many acts of tenderness and care.

Laying the telegram on the table, she went with Mrs. Noah through the rooms, warmed and made ready for the bride, lingering longest in Lucy’s, which the bridal decorations, and the bright fire blazing in the grate made singularly inviting. As yet, there were no flowers there, and Maddy claimed the privilege of arranging them for this room herself. Agnes had almost stripped the conservatory; but Maddy found enough to form a most tasteful bouquet, which she placed upon a marble dressing table; then within a slip of paper which she folded across the top, she wrote: “Welcome to the bride.”

“They both will recognize my handwriting; they’ll know I’ve been here,” she thought, as with one long, last, sad look at the room, she walked away.

They were laying the table for dinner now, and with a kind of dizzy, uncertain feeling, Maddy watched the servants hurrying to and fro, bringing out the choicest china, and the glittering silver, in honor of the bride. Comparatively, it was not long since a little, frightened, homesick girl, she first sat down with Guy at that table, from which the proud Agnes would have banished her; but it seemed to her an age, so much of happiness and pain had come to her since then. There was a place for her there now, a place near Guy; but she should not fill it. She could not stay; and she astonished Agnes and Jessie, just as they were going to make their dinner toilet, by announcing her intention of going home. She was not dressed to meet Mrs. Remington, she said, shuddering as for the first time she pronounced a name which the servants had frequently used, and which jarred on her ear, every time she heard it. She was not dressed appropriately to meet an English lady. Flora of course would stay, she said, as it was natural she should, to greet her new mistress; but she must go, and finding Charlie Green she bade him bring around the buggy.

Agnes was not particularly surprised, for a vague suspicion of something like the truth had gradually been creeping into her brain, as she noted Maddy’s pallid face, and the changes which passed over it whenever Guy was mentioned. Agnes pitied Maddy, for in her own heart there was a little burning spot, when she remembered who was to accompany Dr. Holbrook. So she did not urge her to remain, and she tried to hush Jessie’s lamentations when she heard Maddy was going.

One long, sad, wistful look at Guy’s and Lucy’s home, and Maddy followed Charlie to the buggy waiting for her, bidding him drive rapidly, as there was every indication of a coming storm.

The gray, wintry afternoon was drawing to a close, and the December night was shutting down upon the Honedale hills in sleety rain, when the cottage was reached, and Maddy, passing up the narrow, slippery walk, entered the cold, dreary room, where there was neither fire nor light, nor friendly voice to greet her. No sound save the ticking of the clock; no welcome save the purring of the house cat, who came crawling at her feet as she knelt before the stove and tried to kindle the fire. Charlie Green had offered to go in and do this for her, as indeed he had offered to return and stay all night, but she had declined, preferring to be alone, and with stiffened fingers she laid the kindlings Flora had prepared, and then applying the match, watched the blue flame as it gradually licked up the smoke and burst into a cheerful blaze.

“I shall feel better when it’s warm,” she said, crouching over the fire, and shivering with more than bodily cold.

There was a kind of nameless terror stealing over her as she sat thinking of the year ago when the inmates of three graves across the meadow were there beneath that very roof where she now sat alone.

“I’ll strike a light,” she said, rising to her feet, and trying not to glance at the shadowy corners filling her with fear.

The lamp was found, and its friendly beams soon dispersed the darkness from the corners and the fear from Maddy’s heart, but it could not drive from her mind thoughts of what might at that moment be transpiring at Aikenside. If the bride and groom came at all that night, she knew they must have been there for an hour or more, and in fancy she saw the tired, but happy, Lucy, as up in her pleasant room she made her toilet for dinner, with Guy standing by and looking on. Just as he had

a right to do. Did he smile approvingly upon his young wife? Did his eye, when it rested on her, light up with the same expression she had seen so often when it looked at her? Did he commend her taste and say his little wife was beautiful, as he kissed her fair, white cheek, or was there a cloud upon his handsome face, a shadow on his heart, heavy with thoughts of her, and would he rather it were Maddy there in the bridal room? If so, his burden was hard indeed, but not so hard as hers, and kneeling on the floor, poor Maddy laid her head in the chair, and, 'mid piteous moans, asked God, her Father, to help them both to bear—help her and Guy—making the latter love as he ought the gentle girl who had left home and friends to live with him in a far-distant land; asked, too, that she might tear from her heart every sinful thought, loving Guy only as she might love the husband of another.

The prayer ended, Maddy still sat upon the floor, while over her pale face the lamplight faintly flickered, showing the dark lines beneath her eyes and the tear stains on her cheek. Without, the storm still was raging, and the wintry rain, mingled with sleet and snow, beat piteously against the curtained windows, while the wind howled mournfully as it shook the door and sweeping past the cottage went screaming over the hill. But Maddy heard nothing of the tumult. She had brought a pillow from the bedroom, and placing it upon the chair, sat down again upon the floor and rested her head upon it. She did not even know that her pet cat had crept up beside her, purring contentedly and occasionally licking her hair, much less did she hear above the storm the swift tread of horses' feet as some one came dashing down the road, the rider pausing an instant as he caught a glimpse of the cottage lamp and then hurrying on to the public house beyond, where the hostler frowned moodily at being called out to care for a stranger's horse, the stranger meanwhile turning back a foot to where the cottage lamp shone a beacon light through the inky darkness. The stranger reached the little gate and, undoing the fastening, went hurrying up the walk, his step upon the crackling snow catching Maddy's ear at last and making her wonder who could be coming there on such a night as this. It was probably Charlie Green, she said, and with a feeling of impatience at being intruded upon she arose to her feet just as the door turned upon its hinges, letting in a powerful draught of wind, which extinguished the lamp and left her in total darkness.

But it did not matter. Maddy had caught a sound, a peculiar cough, which froze the blood in her veins and made her quake with terror quite as much as if the footsteps hurrying toward her had been the footsteps of the dead, instead of belonging, as she knew they did, to Guy Remington —Guy, who, with garments saturated with rain, felt for her in the darkness, found her where from faintness she had crouched again beside the chair, drew her closely to him, in a passionate, almost painful, hug, and said, oh! so tenderly, so lovingly:

"Maddy, my darling, my own! We will never be parted again."

CHAPTER XXIII.

LUCY.

Hours had gone by, and the clock hands pointed to twelve, ere Maddy compelled herself to hear the story Guy had come to tell. She had thrust him from her at first, speaking to him of Lucy, his wife, and Guy had answered her back: “I have no wife—I never had one. Lucy is in heaven,” and that was all Maddy knew until the great shock had spent itself in tears and sobs, which became almost convulsions as she tried to realize the fact that Lucy Atherstone was dead; that the bridal robe about which she had written, with girlish frankness, proved to be her shroud, and that her head that night was not pillowed on Guy’s arm, but was resting under English turf and beneath an English sky. She could listen at last, but her breath came in panting gasps; while Guy told her how, on the very morning of the bridal, Lucy had greeted him with her usual bright smile, appearing and looking better than he had before seen her look since he reached her mother’s home; how for an hour they sat together alone in a little room sacred to her, because years before it was there he confessed his love.

Seated on a low ottoman, with her golden head lying on his lap, she had this morning told him, in her artless way, how much she loved him, and how hard it sometimes was to make her love for the creature second to her love for the Creator; told him she was not faultless, and asked that when he found how erring and weak she was, he would bear with her frailties as she would bear with his; talked with him, too, of Maddy Clyde, confessing in a soft, low tone, how once or twice a pang of jealousy had wrung her heart when she read his praises of his pupil. But she had conquered that; she had prayed it all away, and now, next to her own sister, she loved Maddy Clyde. Other words, too, were spoken—words of guileless, pure affection, too sacred even for Guy to breathe to Maddy; and then Lucy had left him, her hart-bounding step echoing through the hall and up the winding stairs, down which she never came again alive, for when Guy next looked upon her she was lying white as a water lily, her neck and dress and golden hair stained with the pale red life current oozing from her livid lips. A blood vessel had been suddenly ruptured, the physician said, and for her, the fair, young bride, there was no hope. They told her she must die, for the mother would have them tell her. Once, for a few moments, there rested on her face a fearfully frightened look, such as a harmless bird might wear when suddenly caught in a snare. But that soon passed away as from beneath the closed eyelids the great tears came gushing, and the stained lips whispered faintly: “God knows best what’s right. Poor Guy!—break it gently to him.”

At this point in the story Guy broke down entirely, sobbing as only strong men can sob.

“Maddy,” he said, “I felt like a heartless wretch—a most consummate hypocrite—as, standing by Lucy’s side, I met the fond, pitying glance of her blue eyes, and suffered her poor little hand to part my hair as she tried to comfort me, even though every word she uttered was shortening her life; tried to comfort me, the wretch who was there so unwillingly, and who at this prospect of release hardly knew at first whether he was more sorry than pleased. You may well start from me in horror, Maddy. I was just the wretch I describe: but I overcame it, Maddy, and Heaven is my witness that no thought of you intruded itself upon me afterward is I stood by my dying Lucy—gentle, patient, loving to the last. I saw how good, how sweet she was, and something of the old love, the boy love, came back to me, as I held her in my arms, where she wished to be. I would have saved her if I could; and when I called her ‘my darling Lucy,’ they were not idle words. I kissed her many times for myself, and once, Maddy, for you. She told me to. She whispered: ‘Kiss me, Guy, for Maddy Clyde. Tell her I’d rather she should take my place than anybody else—rather my Guy should call her wife—for I know she will not be jealous if you sometimes talked of your dead Lucy, and I know she will help lead my boy to that blessed home where sorrow never comes.’ That was the last she ever spoke, and when the sun went down death had claimed my bride. She died in my arms, Maddy. I felt the last fluttering of her pulse, the last beat of her heart. I laid her back upon her pillows. I wiped the blood from her lips and from her golden curls. I followed her to her early grave. I saw her buried from my sight, and then, Maddy, I started home; thoughts of you and thoughts of Lucy blended equally together until Aikenside was reached. I talked with Mrs. Noah; I heard all of you there was to tell, and then I talked with Agnes, who was not greatly surprised, and did not oppose my coming here tonight. I could not remain there,

knowing you were alone. In the bridal chamber I found your bouquet, with its ‘Welcome to the bride.’ Maddy, you must be that bride. Lucy sanctioned it, and the doctor, too, for I told him all. His own wedding was, of course, deferred, and he did not come home with me, but he said: ‘Tell Maddy not to wait. Life is too short to waste any happiness. She has my blessing.’ And, Maddy, it must be so. Aikenside needs a mistress; you are all alone. You are mine—mine forever.”

The storm had died away, and the moonbeams stealing through the window told that morning was breaking, but neither Guy nor Maddy heeded the lapse of time. Theirs was a sad kind of happiness as they talked together, and could Lucy have listened to them she would have felt satisfied that she was not forgotten. One long, bright curl, cut from her head by his own hand, was all there was left of her to Guy, save the hallowed memories of her purity and goodness—memories which would yet mold the proud, impulsive Guy into the earnest, consistent Christian which Lucy in her life had desired that he should be, and which Maddy rejoiced to see him.

CHAPTER XXIV.
FINALE.

The close of a calm September afternoon, and the autumnal sunlight falls softly upon Aikenside, where a gay party is now assembled. For four years Maddy Clyde has been mistress there, and in looking back upon them she wonders how so much happiness as she has known could be experienced in so short a time. Never but once has the slightest ripple of sorrow shadowed her heart, and that was when her noble husband, Guy, said to her, in a voice she knew was earnest and determined that he could no longer remain deaf to his country's call—that where the battle storm was raging he was needed, and like a second Sardanapalus he must not stay at home. Then for a brief season her bright face was overcast, and her brown eyes dim with weeping. Giving him to the war seemed like giving him up to death. But women can be as true heroes as men. Indeed, it oftentimes costs more courage for a weak, confiding woman to bid her loved ones leave her for the field of carnage than it costs them to face the cannon's mouth. Maddy found it so, but Christian patriotism triumphed over all, and stifling her own grief, she sent him away with smiles, and prayers, and cheering words of encouragement, turning herself for consolation to the source from which she never sued for peace in vain. Save that she missed her husband terribly, she was not lonely, for her beautiful dark-eyed boy, whom they called Guy, Jr., kept her busy, while not very many weeks afterward, Guy, Sr., sitting in his tent, read with moistened eyes of a little golden-haired daughter, whom Maddy named Lucy Atherstone, and gazed upon a curl of hair she inclosed to the soldier father, asking if it were not like some other hair now moldering back to dust within an English churchyard. "Maggie" said it was, Aunt Maggie, as Guy, Jr., called the wife of Dr. Holbrook, who had come to Aikenside to stay, while her husband did his duty as surgeon in the army. That little daughter is a year-old baby now, and in her short white dress and coral bracelets she sits neglected on the nursery floor, while mother and Jessie, Maggie and everybody hasten out into the yard to welcome the returning soldier, Major Guy, whose arm is in a sling, and whose face is very pale from the effects of wounds received at Gettysburg, where his daring courage had well-nigh won for Maddy a widow's heritage. For the present the arm is disabled, and so he has been discharged, and comes back to the home where warm words of welcome greet him, from the lowest servant up to his darling wife, who can only look her joy as he folds her in his well arm, and kisses her beautiful face. Only Margaret Holbrook seems a little sad, she had so wanted her husband to come with Guy, but his humanity would not permit him to leave the suffering beings who needed his care. Loving messages he sent to her, and her tears were dried when she heard from Guy how greatly he was beloved by the pale occupants of the beds of pain, and how much he was doing to relieve their anguish.

Jessie, grown to be a most beautiful girl of nearly sixteen, is still a child in actions, and wild with delight at seeing her brother again, throws her arms around his neck, telling, in almost the same breath, how proud she is of him, how much she wished to go to him when she heard he was wounded, how she wishes she was a boy, so she could enlist, how nicely Flora is married and settled down at the cottage in Honedale, and then asks if he knows aught of the rebel colonel to whom just before the war broke out her mother was married, and whose home was in Richmond.

Guy knows nothing of him, except that he is still doing what he deems his duty in fighting for the Confederacy, but from exchanged prisoners, who had come up from Richmond, he has heard of a beautiful lady, an officer's wife, and as rumor said, a Northern woman, who visited them in prison, speaking kind words of sympathy, and once binding up a drummer boy's aching head with a handkerchief, which he still retained, and on whose corner could be faintly traced the name of "Agnes Remington."

Jessie's eyes are full of tears as she says:

"Poor mamma, how glad I am I did not go to Virginia with her. It's months since I heard from her direct. Of course it was she who was so good to the drummer boy. She cannot be much of a rebel," and Jessie glances triumphantly at Mrs. Noah, who, never having quite overcome her dislike of Agnes, had sorely tried Jessie by declaring that her mother "had found her level at last, and was just where she wanted to be."

Good Mrs. Noah, the ancient man whose name she bore would as soon have thought of leaving the Ark as she of turning a traitor to her country,

and when she heard of the riotous mob raised against the draft, she talked seriously of going in person to New York “to give ’em a piece of her mind,” and for one whole day refused to speak to Flora’s husband, because he was a “dum dimocrat,” and she presumed was opposed to Lincoln. With the exception of Maddy, no one was more pleased to see Guy than herself. He was her boy, the one she brought up, and with all a mother’s fervor she kissed his bronzed cheek, and told him how glad she was to have him back.

With his boy on his sound arm, Guy disengaged himself from the noisy group and went with Maddy to where the little lady, the child he had never seen, was just beginning to show signs of resentment at being left so long alone.

“Lulu, sissy, papa’s come; this is papa,” the little boy cried, assuming the honor of the introduction.

Lulu, as they called her, was not afraid of the tall soldier, and stretching out her fat, white hands, went to him readily. Blue-eyed and golden haired, she bore but little resemblance to either father or mother, but there was a sweet, beautiful face, of which Maddy had often dreamed, but never seen, and whether it were in the infantile features of his little girl. Parting lovingly her yellow curls and kissing her fair cheek, he said to Maddy, softly, just as he always spoke of that dead one:

“Maddy, darling, Margaret Holbrook is right—our baby daughter is very much like our dear lost Lucy Atherstone.”

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