2892

THE BEAUFORTS;

A STORY OF THE ALLEGHANIES.

BY

CORA BERKLEY.

Philadelphia:
PETER F. CUNNINGHAM, Catholic Bookseller,
No. 216 South Third Street.
1866.

PZ3
B455B

Entered according to the Act of Congress, in the year 1857, by
PETER F. CUNNINGHAM,
In the Office of the Clerk of the District Court of the Eastern District of Pennsylvania.

B. Douglas Wyeth, Agt., Stereotyper.
No 7 Pear Street, Phila.

PREFACE.

It has been my lot to see and hear much of Infidelity, not only as the great sin of the age, but as the peculiar source of deep sorrow in households, which but for that would be happy. I have seen misery following the footsteps of children far in the paths of life, because of the traitorships of parents to their faith; and it was this first gave me the idea of writing this little book. With what success I have embodied my thoughts, I leave those to judge who so kindly received my first attempts at story telling.

Cora Berkley.

THE BEAUFORTS:

A TALE OF THE ALLEGHANIES.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTION.

IN one of the narrow eastern passes of the Alleghany mountains is situated an estate which for ages belonged to the Beauforts, and which for wild, picturesque beauty can scarcely be rivaled. When Reginald Beaufort came from England with Lord Baltimore's Catholic colony, he had little thought of making in the depths of an American forest, a home that would be called his long after he slept in the grave, little thought of leaving descendants who

would tarnish the proud name of Beaufort by apostacy, yet so it happened.

Reginald left the colony with some Indian hunters who lived westward, and remained long enough with them to become deeply attached to the wild, roving life they led. There was fascination for him in the dark solemnity of the primeval forest, in the lofty mountains, and the rushing streams, and it seemed to him he could lead a purer, truer life with the simple sons of the soil, than amid the busy intrigue of a more civilized race, and so, when he stood, one summer evening on a broad plateau, which broke the steep ascent of one of the mountains, he said to himself, "It is well to be here." Far down below him in the narrow gorge, he could see the Indian village, fast growing indistinct in the gathering shadows of the evening, whilst above him the lofty brow of the mountain was crowned with the sunset's light. No monarch was ever more regally decked. The beauty of the place sank deep into his heart. There was no lordly mansion, as in the old English domain which had been taken from

him because he preferred his faith to all worldly advantages, no carefully kept lawn or flower garden, but with all its cultivation his old home was not more beautiful than the lonely gorge, with its dense woods and the narrow, rapid stream which, heard but scarce seen, rushed down from some neighboring height and divided the valley into two nearly equal portions.

Reginald was a prompt, resolute man, and it did not take him long to decide upon remaining with the Indian tribe who had treated him so kindly. Those rude, uncivilized men loved him well. The frank trust with which he had come among them completely won them, and there was something in the look and manner of their pale-faced brother which awed and impressed them with a sense of his superiority. There was but one thing that gave Reginald the least doubt as to the propriety of his resolution. He was a fervent Catholic as his ancestors for many long ages had been, and he felt it would not be easy to live without the sacraments. But there was another consideration which outweighed even that. Perhaps he might

be the instrument of leading the whole tribe to the true faith. He knew his influence and doubted not that some souls at least might be saved by his teaching and example, and the thought gave him something of a martyr's courage in braving dangers and overcoming obstacles.

He was not mistaken. But a short time elapsed before one of the most influential chiefs became a convert. It was impossible for him to receive baptism at the time, but he had the desire, and his example led many others to wish for it also. And now Reginald resolved to return to a white settlement in search of a priest. It was not an easy matter to find one, for the few who had come over with the colonists had more than they could accomplish in attending to the wants of their own flocks, but the noble Beaufort never flagged in his search, and at last a French missionary arrived in an emigrant ship, who eagerly offered himself. The two went forth from among their kindred, never to meet them in this world, but it mattered little to them, though, perhaps they thought of such a possibility as they

journeyed westward through the forest. They had a noble task to perform, and shrank not from the sacrifices its fulfilment demanded.

As the years passed by, slowly but surely, the faith gained ground in the hearts of the savages. They still fought with their foes, still brought home their captives, but by degrees their natural ferocity was tamed, far fewer cruelties were practiced among them, superstition slowly and reluctantly retired before the light of faith, and Reginald had the consolation of seeing a great number of souls making rapid progress towards perfection, who, but for his untiring zeal, might never have entered its paths. He had married an Indian girl, and at his death, left an only son, some twenty years of age. The younger Reginald, with all his father's determined spirit, worked zealously in the same cause, and the simple Indians grew far more noble than in the days of their warrior renown. He also married in the tribe, and as time passed by, sons and daughters grew up around him, with the classic features and unyielding will of the

Beauforts, and the dark complexion and poetic nature of their Indian mother. When his days had been accomplished, Reginald died and was buried in a beautiful spot, far up the rocky gorge, which his father had chosen for the last resting place of those of his race who should remain in their western home. In the course of time his family scattered about; one daughter married and went with her husband to England; another became a religious, and was loved by the colonists for her sweet, unassuming piety and gentleness. The eldest son, in the "livery of Christ," went forth among fiercer tribes than his own, and found a martyr's crown, and but one remained to inherit the mountain pass, Austin, the youngest of the family. He did not remain long; his sister in England was childless, and begged him to leave the solitude and live with her. He went, but returned after a few years absence, bringing with him a young English bride. They were very happy together, and often the fair Amy was heard to say her new home was far more lovely to her than the stately dwell-

ings of the mother land. Both had an intense love of the beautiful, and under their rule (for the Beauforts were little less than sovereigns in the tribe), both their own grounds and the village beyond were improved and beautified, so that when their only child, Hugh, came into possession of it, there was not in all the dominions a finer estate.

A handsome dwelling had been erected in a grove at the base of one of the two high mountains, which stood like bastions to protect the narrow vale between. Thence diverged pleasant paths all through the valley, now skirting the base of the lofty mountains, now lost in the gloom of the forest, or opening into vistas of the swelling land far west. A rustic bridge spanned the little stream, and in the outskirts of the village, which by this time was more than half composed of white settlers, stood a cross-crowned church. There was no priest stationed there then, for the faith had spread so rapidly, and there were so few ecclesiastics, that it was impossible for every mission to possess one.

But a good father came often from a

neighboring settlement, and often the sweet hymns of praise stole out and were borne on the wings of the wind to the listening forest groves. In the latter years of their lives, Austin and Amy were inexpressibly pained at the change which seemed to be slowly coming over the place.

Many of the white settlers came among them with pure motives; many had forsaken old homes for the interest of their souls, that they might practice their faith unmolested by cruelty, but, as in all new countries, many also came, but for the sake of worldly advantages. Adventurers anxious to make fortunes, and willing to do any thing to gain their object, defrauded and ill-treated the natives, who, from their intercourse with the Beauforts, had learned to place a trust in the whites, which few of them deserved, and so it happened that most of the Indians were robbed of their lands, and forced to go westward in search of hunting-grounds. Austin did what he could to keep together the fast dwindling tribe, but he did not live long enough to accomplish all that he desired. One of

his last injunctions to his son, was: "take care of our poor red brethren, Hugh, remember how they treated our ancestor, Reginald Beaufort, and do not let them suffer."

But Hugh had little thought of devoting himself to any such labor, and but for the restraining influence of his mother would have gratified his own desires. She soon followed her husband, and then he felt free. He longed to see the great, busy world of which he had but a glimpse in his quiet home, longed for excitement and pleasure and learning, and something of ambition stirred the young heart, as dreams of fame visited him in his hours of revery. Had he not been too young, the wild enthusiasm of his nature would probably have found vent in the Revolutionary struggle between the mother country and the colonies. Austin, himself, fought on the side of the oppressed, and all his sympathies were with them, but his boy he thought too young and inexperienced, and by far too hot headed, to trust in such exciting scenes. And so Hugh, much against his inclinations, remained closely

housed while a part of the American army occupied Woodville. By the time both parents died, the colonies were recognized as independent states, and Hugh to his regret, had lost that opportunity of making a figure in the world. As soon as he became his own master he went to France, to study, as he said, for the priesthood. He had been intended for that by both parents from infancy, and perhaps when he started he had no settled intention of going contrary to their desires, but it was not long before the wild vagaries of the so-called school of philosophy, then reigning in France, captivated him. He had just been there long enough to imbibe all manner of infidel notions, when the fearful revolution swept over the land. No one knew what first lured him from the path of virtue, or where the first downward step had been taken, but he soon plunged into wild excesses, and finally renounced even the name of Catholicity, a sin which was visited upon his house until his last descendant slept in the grave, and the broad lands of the Beauforts passed into the hands of strangers.

CHAPTER II.

THE BROTHERS.

AFTER many years Hugh returned to his American home. Very marked changes had been going on in it. Woodville had grown into a flourishing town, the poor Indians had been robbed of their last possessions about the gorge, and driven into the fastnesses of the mountains and the broad, fertile valleys beyond. Not a wigwam was to be seen when Hugh returned, bringing with him his wife, and the copper skins and rude dress of the few Indians who ventured into Woodville were objects of wonder and mirth to the children.

The years he had spent abroad, had changed Hugh in exterior as well as in

heart. He went away scarce more than a boy, with the fiery enthusiasm of boyhood just tempered by the half-conscious dignity of manhood, and he returned, the polished courtly man of the world, his natural impulsiveness so subdued that it could only be guessed by the occasional flash of his eye, and the quick, haughty gesture of contempt. But these were seldom seen; he had learned hypocrisy, the world's great lesson. For a while, after his return, he seemed to take pleasure in the society of the wealthy settlers in his neighborhood, but his manner soon showed a growing weariness, and, too proud to press themselves upon him, many who would have been friends left him to his own resources. For himself, his tastes were sufficient inasmuch as mere human things can suffice for happiness, but for his wife the time passed gloomily enough. Alone in a strange land. No wonder she pined for the home, and the loving hearts she had left for his sake, no wonder the beauty which had helped to lure him from his God, faded until it was but a shadow of its former brilliancy. Hugh was intensely selfish,

and the love of such a nature cannot be deep. He never felt for his wife until it was too late to save her life, and a lofty monument, and poetic inscription could make no atonement for years of neglect. Her death did not touch his heart, even enough to make him feel anxious about her children. He was so wrapt up in his own plans and pleasures that they had full liberty to do and say what they pleased, as long as they did not interfere with him. Basil and Cyril Beaufort from childhood had evinced the most marked dislike for each other. There never had been any thing brotherly in their dispositions; as children, they had fought over trifles, and as youths, each taking all possible advantage of the other, there was not much prospect of the breach being healed. Both inherited their father's intellectual cast of mind, both loved study, one for its own sake, and the other for the influence learning would give him in after life; but neither had the remotest idea of religion. "That is not fit for men," Mr. Beaufort said, when Cyril once asked him some

earnest question, and so both brothers eschewed its study.

But Catherine, their sister, pale, quiet little Catherine, who could be startled by her brothers' loud laughter, and frightened into tears by their angry clamor, and who loved all beautiful things, was wiser far than they. There was an old servant in the family who took entire charge of the child after her mother's death, and brought her up in the pure, true faith, Hugh Beaufort had so ignominiously deserted. But he knew nothing of this until the timid, neglected child had grown into a woman, with all a Beaufort's firmness hidden under a placid exterior, and then no human will could destroy the fair, broad edifice of faith and virtue she had reared in her soul. It was only when Catherine authorized the Catholic music teacher her father had given her, to ask for her hand, that Mr. Beaufort discovered she had always been a Catholic. Neither his passionate storming, nor his cold, cutting words were of any avail then. Her love she could have renounced, but her faith she *would* not; and sternly and unfeelingly, Hugh

bade her marry the man of her choice, and then depart from her home, never again to darken its doors. Something very like a curse rang in her ears as she left the altar, but it was one which recoiled on the guilty imprecator, instead of falling on the head of his innocent child. Mr. Beaufort lived out his appointed years, and died as he had lived, cold and passionless, hiding whatever fear he might have felt, under a stoical appearance. He had lived a hypocrite, and he died in fearful hypocrisy.

It was but a week after their father's death that the brothers were together in the room which had been his study. The windows looked northward over the valley, and the steep ascent of the opposite mountain, and the broad terrace, half-covered with pine trees. On this Cyril's eyes were fixed, as he stood tapping the window panes.

"Basil, that terrace would be a fine place for a house," he said; "I believe I'll get me a wife and build there. With a glass I could look into your windows and see all your movements. I'll do it."

He had only spoken in jest, but Basil's hot temper was aroused. "I would bar the windows with iron shutters before you should do that," he answered, passionately. "To-morrow I am twenty-one, and will take possession of my half of the estate. As eldest, this house is mine; my father so willed it; but I swear if you build on that plateau you will rue it."

"Your *half* of the estate!" exclaimed Cyril, with a laugh, "why, you are a gallant brother, to be sure! What is to become of Kate, if it is divided only in halves? Fie, Basil! She must have her third."

"Give her yours, then," he answered, sullenly. "You know my father's will commands us expressly to have nothing whatever to do with her. Let her take the pittance he has left her. I'll warrant you she'll never trouble us for more. But do not think to lord it over me, Cyril. That terrace shall be mine."

"As you please," Cyril said, carelessly. "If you take that, I'll go higher up, for look down on you I *will*. It is well to humble proud people. Take care. Aim better next

time," he added, with a laugh, as he suddenly stooped and passed under his brother's uplifted hand, which, missing its mark, descended upon a heavy piece of furniture. Basil, white with rage and pain, rushed after him, but he escaped to his own room and bolted himself in. Such scenes were of daily occurrence. The servants were accustomed to hear Basil's loud, angry voice, and Cyril's tantalizing laugh and jest, so one evening when a wild cry rang from the study, followed by a death-like stillness, they were not alarmed. The silence indeed was unusual, but not the uproar. A little while afterwards, Basil stole down the winding stairway in the back of the house, into the fast darkening woods, and one of the servants, who saw him pass, said that his face was ghastly white, and the hand which grasped his rifle was stained with blood. That night they found Cyril with a fearful gash in his forehead, lying in a heavy stupor on the study floor. It was weeks before he recovered from its effects, and in his feverish ravings his attendants learned who had dealt the blow. But fear sealed their lips and when Basil re-

turned, he believed his brother alone knew of the fearful burst of passion which had strengthened his hand.

One bright, calm evening, in early summer, when he had just strength enough to enjoy the beauty of the scene, without thought enough to let it make much impression, Cyril sat at one of the western windows watching the broad bands of sunlight streaming between the clumps of trees. Basil had been home for several days but had avoided his brother; this evening, however, he sought him, and before Cyril was aware of his presence, his hand was upon his shoulder. He started up at the touch, and would have left the room, but Basil, mastering the emotion which was very visible in his face, asked more gently than usual, "Cyril, I have something to say to you; will you listen?"

Cyril's taunting spirit, which illness had somewhat subdued was again aroused. He answered with a low laugh, which always stung Basil, "you need not ask if I will—you have strength to enforce your desires. See what a mark of affection you have given me!" He lifted up the bandage from his bruised brow, and showed the

still purple wound. Basil turned away with a frown.

"A most brotherly mark, truly," Cyril continued, going to the glass and gazing at his thin but fine face. "I am not as handsome now, Basil, as you. Come and look at the contrast." Basil grasped the back of a chair with both hands, as if fearing he might be again tempted to raise them against his brother, and bit his lips to keep back the angry words which rose to them, "Basil dear," Cyril went on, "I am listening—speak! Is it of my castle you wish to talk? You know I am making arrangements to build on the terrace, and before another year I will have a domicil of my own, and a wife too! Was it not too bad, Basil, that Ella Wharton would not accept you? She is a pretty little creature, and I think I'll make her Mrs. Cyril Beaufort."

Basil sprang forward, but hastily checked himself. "Take care, Cyril," he said, with smothered rage, "you know my temper, do not provoke it! Ella Wharton is nothing to me; I came here to bid you good bye, perhaps forever; to act as a brother should, for once in my life at least,

but you will not suffer it. I leave my property in good hands, see that you do not meddle with it. Build your castle, foolish boy, and live where you chose; this old, ancestral home is mine, and none but my descendants shall ever be welcome here. Take heed to my words, Cyril Beaufort! Depart as quickly as you can, for this is not your home."

He went out as quietly and hastily as he had entered, and the next day left Woodville. No one knew where he went but an old servant who loved him in spite of his faults. Cyril would dwell no longer than he could help beneath his fiery brother's roof, but erected a cottage on his own grounds, where he spent the summer months, watching the stately dwelling he had planned, as it grew day by day under the hands of the busy workmen. It was built to suit the fancy of its owner, half castle, half hall, with lofty battlemented towers for wings, and an arched centre with gothic windows. When the winter came, he and his bride, the Ella Wharton whose name so stung his brother, took up their abode in one of the towers, the only portion of the dwelling then habitable.

Years passed by, and children gathered around Cyril, but only lived to give promise of a bright, healthful youth, and then died, leaving the mother stricken with grief, and subduing the father's perverse spirit into something of quiet submission.

One by one sons and daughters were laid in their narrow resting places, until at last but one remained, Edward, the eldest of the band. And before he reached the years of manhood, he was an orphan. Cyril met with a terrible death, he was thrown from his horse down one of the precipices of the mountain, and dashed to pieces. His wife, already crushed by sorrow, did not long survive him.

Basil had been heard of but once in all this time, by any one but the old servant he had left at home, and all that was known of him was that he had married in Greece, and had vowed never to return to his native land while Cyril lived. But he did not come even after his untimely death, and at last the townspeople ceased to wonder at and talk of the strange freaks of the Beauforts.

CHAPTER III.

THE DREAMER.

CATHERINE KEENE had been sitting all the afternoon with papers innumerable strewed over her table and the floor of her little room. It was her birth-day, and she had given herself a half holiday; and putting aside thimble and thread, and work-basket, had drawn from their hiding-places, packets of letters, and scraps of writing that were treasured for the sake of those whose hands had traced them. One by one they were unfolded, and the words of tenderness read over and over again with a sad, lingering pleasure. Withered, scentless flowers were there, each with its little

history, and knots of ribbon; and one long shining tress of hair, so goldenly bright, it seemed as if the sunshine had crept into its twinings, and could not find its way out. Yet it was scarce brighter than the childish face it had fluttered about, long years ago, and as Catherine softly caressed and smoothed it down, her heart swelled with rebellious questionings of Providence, passionately refused to bow beneath the kindly severity of her heavenly father. She could see nothing but a little form in its narrow coffin, with hands meekly folded, lips still wearing the smiles that had parted them in life, and the waving hair giving the brow a beautiful hallowed look.

One by one, she gathered up the scattered papers, and replaced them, not a tear dimming her cold, clear eyes, nor a sigh parting her white lips, but a strange, rigid look settling upon her face, which made the plain features almost repulsive. They were safe under lock and key, and then she turned to the window and looked drearily, as if the brightness and beauty about her could not charm away the evil haunting spirit. She could look down the

one street or rather road of the village, over the scattered cottages, with their thrifty gardens, and the swelling meadow land beyond, and the dark mountains frowning over all. The sun had disappeared behind one lofty peak, leaving a broad streak of gold, like a pennant waving from some castle turret; and the soft shadows of the autumn twilight were stealing over the beach wood at its base, and across the stream, where the willows dipped their long, slender branches. And shadows seemed creeping over Catherine's heart, too—not like those on nature's fair face, making it all the lovelier for their purple veiling—but dark, and heavy, and gathering closer around, until it seemed no ray of light could ever penetrate them. There was music too, out on the still air, the low music of nestling leaves and running waters, and the glad laughter of children, now coming from afar off, now ringing close under her window; and soon the clear tones of a horn mingled with them, and the measured tramp of horses' feet—and a stage drove up to the public house.

She saw and heard everything without

in the least appreciating the beauty of the hour and scene, for her thoughts were busy with other things. She had gone back in spirit to her old home, and listened to old familiar voices, and gazed into loving faces until the present was forgotten a while.

> O that their unforgotten lips,
> Could smile on me once again;
> O that their voices could lull me now,
> With some sweet and cheering strain.

The thoughts were half spoken as she turned from the window, and hastily taking her sun-bonnet, went out into the street. There was one spot near the village to which Catherine always went to dream,—a long narrow gorge, in summer time protected from the heat, and in winter shut in from the cold winds by the towering bastion like mountains on either side. Since the first settlement of that portion of the country, it had been in possession of the Beauforts and their descendants, and each generation had improved and beautified the naturally wild and picturesque grant, until there was scarce a lovelier spot to be found than this strip of valley, not a half mile wide, but extending some distance

westward into the heart of the ridge. At the southern side a stately grove of trees enclosed the mansion, and thence diverged paths into all parts of the pleasant valley, now lost in the gloom of some dense wood, the growth of ages, now skirting the base of the lofty mountains, or opening into beautiful vistas of the swelling land far west. A rapid stream, which rose in some neighboring height, and leaping over rocky barriers, found its way into this vale, divided it into two nearly equal portions; and about half-way up the steepest of the two mountains, which stand like guards over the domain, was a broad plateau, on which Edward Beaufort's home was built. This eagle perch of his was Catherine's favorite haunt, when she knew the owner was not likely to discover her, and there she went this evening to sit in the gathering shadows and dream of other days. Edward she knew was off in the mountains, sketching, and would not probably be home until late; and so, as she climbed the rocky path, pausing often to rest, she had no fears of meeting any one. The giant pine which grew on the very edge

of a precipice was reached at last, and taking her accustomed seat with her head resting against its rough trunk, Catherine gazed down into the shadowy valley. She was soon startled by a wild, ringing laugh, and sprang to her feet, apparently to the amusement of a young girl who, with arms around the trunk of the tree, leaned forward over the dizzy gulf.

"So! you must have a taste like mine!" she said, in a rich musical voice, and with slight foreign accent. "It is very grand here, is it not?"

"Yes, very," Catherine answered, with a bewildered look at the beautiful flushed face and the flashing eyes peering so eagerly down into the dark chasm. "I suppose this is Edward Beaufort's eyrie," the stranger continued, pointing to the building. "He must be a lofty-minded individual. Do you know him?"

"Only by sight, I have never spoken to him."

"Come! don't be so niggardly of your words," the girl continued, after a moment's pause, fixing her strange brilliant eyes upon Catherine's face; "Can't you give

me any information at all? I'm his cousin, Mabel Beaufort, and I want to know something of the gentleman before I see him."

"Mabel Beaufort!" she exclaimed. "I did not know there was such a person."

"Yes there is! And I've got a sister, too, the prettiest creature in the world. She is called Anastasia. My father was Edward's uncle. Did you never hear of Basil and Cyril Beaufort?" she asked, suddenly seizing Catherine's hand.

"Yes—not much," she answered with some hesitation, for the little she knew of the Beauforts was not good. "None of the family have lived here for many years, except your cousin Edward."

"There was no others to live here, save we—Anastasia and I—" she said mournfully. "And now we have come, orphans, to the home of our father's."

Catherine did not speak, but the tears came into her eyes, for she too was an orphan. "Zephyr and I will have fine times here," Mabel went on, as if a sad thought had never troubled her. "Papa gave him to me—my horse I mean; are you listening? He gave him to me when

I could scarce walk, and I've lived on his back almost ever since. But I think Scio suited him better than America will. Ah! thou art beautiful, my island home."

Catherine stood watching her wild face with its color deepening as she spoke, and thinking if the sister, of whom she spoke, was more beautiful than herself, she must indeed be transcendant.

"Tell me your name," she said, presently.

"Mine! Catherine Keene."

"Catherine! That sounds English, and I hate all English names, my own among the rest. I don't know what possessed papa to give it to me. Now my sister's is very beautiful—it was my mother's too—and I love to say it, for it brings back Greece, with all its poetry and beauty, to my thoughts. Anastasia! Anastasia," she repeated many times, with a soft, half sorrowful tenderness, and then suddenly broke into a Greek battle-song, whose ringing martial notes might have stirred the hearts of a nation.

She had scarce more than finished when Catherine saw Edward Beaufort coming up the path, and would have hurried

round to another part of the plateau, had not Mabel detained her. "What are you running for? you must go home with me; wait a moment."

"There comes Mr. Beaufort, and——"

Mabel turned hastily as the tall figure passed in the arched doorway—for Edward had not noticed the two girls—and gazed after him with a scornful curl of her lips, and a deeper color on her face. When he had disappeared, she said with a stately kind of courtesy: "Excuse me, I forgot that I was a stranger to you, and might be intruding. But if you are going to the village, I would like to walk down with you."

"Yes, I am going there; it is getting late." They silently started down the path, Catherine not a little puzzled by the gloomy, abstracted look which had quite changed the beauty of her companion's face. When they came to the rustic bridge which Mabel had to cross, to reach home, she held out her hand, with a frank smile, saying; "I would like very much to know more of you; will you not come to see Anastasia and I?"

A painful flush mounted into Catherine's sallow cheeks, and a proud, almost contemptuous expression came into her eyes. "I don't know. Perhaps it would not be so agreeable to you to know more of me—as a visitor at least—I am only a poor seamstress."

Before she could say more, Mabel's white bare arms were around her neck, and she was saying, with the wild laugh that had startled her a while before: "What is that to me? I want you to come; you *must* promise."

Catherine's face slightly flushed at the peremptory tone of the "*must*," but there was no resisting the winning tenderness of Mabel's look, and after giving the required promise, she hurried home with a lighter heart than she had known for many a day.

CHAPTER IV.

RELICS.

CATHERINE kept her promise, and went to see the new comers, the day after her meeting with Mabel. The sisters were sitting in the low window, looking out over the lawn, Mabel talking vehemently in her native tongue. But for that, Catherine would not have been able to distinguish her, they were so marvellously alike. Both had the low foreheads and perfectly chiselled features, and small, graceful heads characteristic of their nation, but it was not this alone that constituted their beauty. Catherine thought, as she stood for a few moments unperceived in the doorway, that she had never in her life seen such dazzling com-

plexions, such clear blue eyes, such wonderfully bright hair.

"Where did you come from?" was Mabel's abrupt exclamation in English, as she turned and saw Catherine standing in the door. "O! I rememember now—you are Catharine Keene—come in. This is my sister, Anastasia."

She was welcomed with a very sweet smile, that sent her misgivings flying. "Mabel told me she had met you," Anastasia said; "we will be so glad to know you, we have no friends here. Can you tell us anything of our cousin Edward?"

"No, I do not know him. I have never spoken to him."

"Never mind asking questions," Mabel exclaimed. "People here are either very discreet, or don't know anything. I *must* go up to his eyrie, Anastasia, and find out what he does with himself. Good-bye; I'll bring him back with me."

She went out, singing as she went, but came flying back in a moment, with a heightened color. "He is coming now—I saw him open the gate," she exclaimed, throwing herself down beside her sister;

and presently they saw the tall, commanding figure, which Catherine knew very well, advancing up the walk. The three sat silent until he entered, and then Mabel, with her usual impetuosity, sprang up with outstretched hand.

"So you have come at last, Mr. Beaufort! Is this to be a stately, formal visit? Tell me if it is, for I can put on dignity too."

He laughed as she drew herself up, and threw back her beautiful head with a haughty, imperious air. "No, if you will permit me to do as I wish, there shall be no formality on my part, I assure you. I give you a proof of it" he added, suddenly drawing her toward him by the hand which still rested in his, and kissing her forehead. "Do not be angry with me," he said, as he marked the deep flush that rose to her face, and the quick flashing of her eyes. "It is but a cousinly privilege I am taking. I shall claim it of you also," he added, advancing to Anastasia, for there was no mistaking Catherine for a Beaufort. Mabel had quickly recovered her self-possession, and laughed merrily as she asked:

"Don't you want to claim cousinship with Catherine, too? Ah, how she blushes at the very idea of such a relationship. Well! Mr. Edward, suppose you give us some account of yourself. Greek girls have curiosity as well as others."

"Mabel, dear," Anastasia said, "you have forgotten the letter; let Mr. Beaufort have it first."

"Yes, I had forgotten, Edward; *my* father gave me this in his last hour, and bade me give it to *your* father. But they tell me he is dead, too, so I suppose it is yours." She placed the letter in his hand, and then quietly watched him while he read. Once or twice, his dark eyebrows met in a frown, and the thin nostrils dilated, as if with repressed passion, but as he read the last page, a smile flashed over his face, and with a quick glance at Mabel, he said; "I shall certainly do all that he asks. Do you know what it is, cousin —— what shall I call you?"

"Mabel—I have not read the letter," she answered evasively. He seemed satisfied, and folding it placed it in his pocket.

"I think I shall have to take your por-

traits in the costume you wear—it is very beautiful and picturesque," he said, presently.

"Can you?" exclaimed Mabel with a delighted look. "Anastasia is perfectly lovely in it, is she not? But there is something wanting."

"O Mabel, don't talk so, never mind putting anything else on," Anastasia said, trying to keep her back. But she sprang away with a laugh, and soon returned with an embroidered cap, such as Greek sailors wear, and placed it on her sister's head. Beautiful as she was, it certainly was an improvement, and, spite of her blushes and protestations, it was arranged by Mabel and Edward that she should sit for her portrait the next day.

"Well! are you petrified with admiration?" asked Mabel, after Edward had sat silent for many moments, glancing from one bright face to the other.

"Almost. I am wondering, too, how you both came to know English so well."

"Because we could not help it," she said, carelessly: "papa would talk nothing else to us, and so we were forced to learn it.

Do you remember, Asie, what fun we used to have trying to teach old Alexis to speak it? We would sit on the beach for hours teaching him some impertinent speech, and when he had learned it passably well, would send him to papa to repeat it. Many a rap over the head the poor fellow got for his obedience to us. Ah! dear, dear Scio! I think I shall be homesick very often."

"I hope not," said Edward. "I will try to amuse and interest you so much in your new home, that you will not think of the old one. To begin; suppose we go over the house, and I will tell you all the anecdotes I know about our forefathers."

"Delightful! Catherine, where are you going?" She had told Anastasia good bye, and was trying to make her escape unperceived.

"I must go now, Miss Beaufort," she said, still advancing toward the door.

"Stop! You shall not stir a step until you call me Mabel."

She grasped her arm and held it until she said, "Good bye, Mabel, I will come again." And then she went, crying all the way, for she had felt, while the cousins

laughed and chatted, that she had not a friend in the world. Even Anastasia's gentleness and Mabel's warm impulsiveness, had wounded her sensitive nature; she could bear nothing now, every careless word was like an arrow.

When she was gone, Mabel, Anastasia, and Edward started on an exploring expedition. It was only the central rooms on the first floor which had been prepared for the reception of the sisters, and so the rest of the house was in much the same condition that Basil had left it, except, indeed, that the dust and tarnish of years had gathered on all things. Edward led them back through the broad entrance hall to a dark narrow passage, and the winding stair-way, down which their father had stolen long years before, stained with his brother's blood. Anastasia clung close to the arm on which she leant, but Mabel fearlessly sprang forward, with hands outstretched to grope her way, and her eyes glistening like stars as they looked back to the silent pair behind her. When they emerged into the room above, soft as was the light coming through the heavily cur-

tained windows at the far end, Anastasia almost involuntarily shaded her eyes with her hand, and when she withdrew it, Mabel was standing in the middle of the room, gazing with wide dilated eyes and quivering nostrils, at a portrait on the wall.

"That is the face which has haunted me for years," she exclaimed. "Edward, who is this?"

"Our grandfather, Hugh Beaufort," he answered, after a glance at the dark proud face gazing down upon them in such quiet scorn.

"Hugh Beaufort!" she repeated, slowly. "Yes! I know him. There can be no doubt. How very like him you are, Edward," she continued, suddenly facing him. He certainly was that. The broad, high forehead, and heavy brows, and regular features were the same, but they were proverbial with the Beauforts, and Edward's was not merely a family resemblance to his ancestor. It seemed as if the same daring, tameless spirit might have animated both, and given their lips such scornful sternness, their eyes such a mocking light.

"Come!" said Mabel, turning with a

look of pain from the picture. "I care not to see it again. This was his study, was it not? And here it was that Basil and Cyril, his ill fated sons, quarreled. It is meet that reparation should be made on this spot, most fit that you and I, Anastasia, should promise to be Edward's friends where our fathers were such bitter foes."

Anastasia's face was full of astonishment, and Edward, wondering, asked, "Where did you learn all this, Mabel?"

"Where!" she echoed, with a wild laugh, the troubled, sorrowful look passing away, and one of strange excitement taking its place. "I will show you." In a moment she had reached from one of the well-filled shelves a large dark book with heavy clasps, and opening it, laid it before them. "See! it is written in blood."

It was only red ink, but Anastasia shuddered as she read, "Legends of the Beauforts."

"O Mabel, why do you talk so? I have never seen this before."

"Neither shall you see it again. Close it, Edward. If you gaze another moment, those eyes of yours will look from every

scarlet letter when I read in the book, and that must not be. I could better bear what I did yesterday, when I sat here reading those pages, with Hugh Beaufort's fearful orbs fixed so movelessly upon me. Let us go from here."

"Come, then," said Edward, "and I will show you a favorite haunt of mine. As you know the history of our fathers' enmity, I also may speak of it. *My* father would never suffer me to come here, and of course his prohibition but increased my desire to ramble through the old house, whose very exterior shadows had a charm. So one day, grown reckless of consequences, I came. It was through a low bay window in one of the lower rooms I entered, and thence passed up the stairs, hurrying fearfully by the old musical clock which stood at the head, and which just then rang out the hour. To my childish fancy, there was something grand and stately in the dimly lit rooms, with their heavy furniture, and tapestried walls, and after that day I spent hours wandering from room to room, collecting all the rare and beautiful things I found, and hiding

them in my own sanctum, as I afterward called this place. It is strange, Mabel, that I never came across the book you have just shown."

"Very!" she said, with a hurried laugh, "Especially as it was never in the house until I came. Is this the end of our journey?" He had led them up stairways, through passages and suites of rooms, until now they stood within a sort of triangular apartment with windows on two sides, one directly facing the rough mountain, and the other looking eastward over the expanding valley. He had told the truth; certainly there never were so many beautiful things collected in so small a space. Every inch of wall was covered with pictures, bright landscapes, with the glow of morning shimmering amid the leaves, or the shadows of evening trooping up from dells and thickets, and dark sea views, with the waves mounting up to the black sky, and the faces of despairing men, gleaming with fearful vividness amid the storm, and portraits too, of their English ancestors, in the quaint costumes of olden times. In one corner lay a parcel of Indian

relics, arrows and feathers, and moccasins, and some warrior's robe of state, with its gaudy deckings, which Mabel folded around her, and strutted to and fro in, looking strange enough with her Greek face and head rising above its clumsy folds. Old moth-eaten volumes were scattered about, and withered flowers in gorgeously colored Bohemian glasses, and pipes of every description, from the twisted serpent-like Turkish one, with its amber mouth piece, and the red man's painted calumet, to a clayish-looking affair with a stump of a stem, and a very celtic face carved on the bowl; all in the most artistic confusion.

"O, the beauty of order!" exclaimed Mabel. "This is its very perfection, is it not, Asie?" She gathered up her robe, that it might not sweep away a costly bauble lying on the floor.

"It does not look as if you had been here lately, Edward," said Anastasia; "you have material enough to make a dozen sanctums. O, Mabel! Mabel! come and look at this lovely picture!" She had just discovered a small, oval framed por-

trait under a pile of books and papers. But Mabel did not move, she, too, had found a treasure. It was a wooden crucifix, with a roughly carved figure extended upon it, evidently the work of an unskilled hand, and yet almost fearful in its truthful depicting of agony. Most expressive of woe and pain unutterable, were the contracted brows, the parted lips, the drawn sinews. Mabel gazed, heedless of her sister's repeated call, and Edward's laughter at her queer taste, until her own face grew tearful in its sympathy; and when at last she went to the two who were now looking at a piece of music they had found, the cross was folded close to her heart.

"Now show me the picture, my sister," she said, in a soft, tender voice, very unlike her usually wild, ringing one.

"O, it was only Aunt Catherine's portrait," Anastasia said. "I don't know where I laid it. Come down and try this music for us."

"Aunt Catherine! And who was she?"

"An only sister of our fathers'," Edward answered. "Did you never hear of her? I think she died soon after Basil left America. Ah! here it is."

He placed the picture in her hand. "It is certainly a Beaufort face," Mabel said, presently; "but where did the broad forehead get such a calm look, and the lips their sweet placidity?"

"I can't tell you, I'm sure," Edward answered, with a smile. "It is not hereditary, I suppose, but a Beaufort might have that style of beauty as well as another; it's all by chance. Don't think of entering upon a philosophical examination of the subject," he added, with a laugh at her grave face; "but come and try this music for us."

They went down to the parlor again, and Mabel sat at the piano. A moment's glance at the music, and then her fingers struck the full, harmonious chords, and her voice, rich and gushing, and startling in its pathos, rang out in a "Kyrie Eleison."

"Mabel; you are a magnificent musician!" Edward exclaimed, when she had finished. "Did you ever see the music before?"

"No, but I have heard it often in passing a little church that stood on the sea

shore, near our old home, and I have dreamed of it at night, and wondered what the words and the imploring tones meant. My father would never tell me; will not you, Edward? It seems to me, it should be sung in the presence of this woeful figure, for it sounds like the cry of a heavily laden heart," she added, drawing the crucifix from her bosom.

"Why, Mabel! don't become an idolater!" he said, with a scornful laugh. "It would be a long story to tell the meaning of what you ask; some day I will do it. But this day is passed now, and I must go." He pointed to where the sunset's flaming banners were flaunting in the sky, and promising to return the next morning, went home. That night Mabel walked her room with restless feet, striving in vain to grasp the broken threads of thought, and weave them with the memories of other days. Her head throbbed, and her brain ached with the restless effort to recall words she had heard spoken years before, and which seemed to have some connection with the grand supplicatory prayer she had been unconsciously singing that evening.

CHAPTER V.

CASSY'S HISTORY.

THERE was much gossip in Woodville when it was known that Basil Beaufort's twin daughters had arrived, and as soon as Catherine's visit was discovered, she was besieged with questions. But she could tell nothing, except that the orphans were exceedingly beautiful, and one most fascinating in manner, and that their cousin Edward had been to see them. It was a slender enough thread upon which to weave a romance, but the good people of Woodville had Edward and Mabel married before the parties themselves had seen each other twice.

A day or two after Catherine's visit,

Mabel came to see her. The villagers were astonished by a vision of a black horse, and a black habited rider, coming down the road like a flash of lightning, stopping but an instant at a corner, to ask "where Catherine Keene lived," and then dashing on to the door pointed out, as if on an errand of life or death. "Some wedding finery wanted," said one; "Catherine is to go up to the hall to sew," said another. Catherine herself was a little astonished when Mabel, without message or even a knock to announce her coming, walked into her room.

"Well, how do you do, to-day, Miss Demureness?" she said, dropping into a chair, and taking off her riding-cap. "Are you disposed to talk? Because I'm in a regular talking mood, and I hadn't a chance while Edward was at the hall, so I came here to see you."

"I am very glad to see you," Catherine said, but still went on with her sewing.

"You don't look so, then," Mabel retorted. "What are you sewing? Come, put up your work, like a good child," she added, in such a coaxing way, that Catherine had to smile.

"I cannot, indeed. Don't you remember I told you I was a seamstress? And I have promised to finish this work by to-morrow."

"You have? Give me a needle and thread." And before Catherine could remonstrate, she was turning over her work basket in search of a thimble. "There, now, where's the needle-case? Ah! I haven't sewed for a long time, and it will be a pleasant variety. Give me something to do, quick."

"I'm afraid ——"

"Hush! I can do it as well as you, simpleton." Of which Catherine was presently convinced, when she saw the delicate fingers about their work. Mabel was graceful in this womanly accomplishment, as in all things else.

"Now Catherine, or Kate, or Cassy, whichever you chose, tell me something about yourself. I like you, and I want to know all about you."

Catherine's head went suddenly down into the folds of the muslin she was sewing, and she said, almost with a sob, "Cassy!—My mother always called me that."

"And she is dead, is she not?" Mabel said, presently, in a gentle way.

"Yes, she has been dead a long while. And my father is dead, too—and the only little sister I ever had."

Catherine had much self-control, or rather, she was of too sensitive and shrinking a nature to betray her feelings, but there was something about Mabel Beaufort which forced her to betray herself. Her wild, impetuous manner, started into life, long dormant thoughts, and then the quiet sobering down to most womanly tenderness was irresistible. In spite of herself, Catherine felt she must open her heart to the strange girl she had known scarce a week, and that bright, cloudless evening, while the sun went slowly westward, and the shadows of the mountains grew longer and darker, Catherine told her history. The work fell from her hands, her plain face lighted up, and as Mabel listened and gazed, a thought flashed over her, "How very like my Aunt Catherine's picture she is! Only not so beautiful."

There was not much to tell, and in Catherine's excited manner it was rapidly told.

She had never known much worldly prosperity, but all the brightness that loving hearts can throw over a life path, had once been hers. That had been years before, when she lived in Baltimore, the dear old Catholic city, with her father and mother, and Lilly, the bright-haired, laughter-loving little sister, who was the household idol. The first sorrow was her father's death, and before she had recovered from the shock, her mother drooped and died too. It was enough, indeed, to sadden a young heart like hers, which had found all its happiness in home associations. She was as one blind for a while, knowing not and scarce caring, where her lot might thenceforth be cast, and only feeling that for Lilly's sake she must go to Woodville, as her dying mother had bade her. Why, she knew not. She had no friends there, not even acquaintances, and it appeared inexplicable, that the good, kind mother should send her orphans to seek a living amid strangers. But such was her desire, and when the paralyzed tongue refused to utter the words, she wrote on a slip of paper, "Go to Woodville, and——" This

was all the trembling hand could trace; what followed was so blurred and indistinct it could not be read. But that much was plain enough, and Catherine never for an instant hesitating to comply with that last request, went with her sister, to the beautiful inland village. It was desolate enough to her for a while, she could see no beauty in the place, the overshadowing mountains were like the great griefs that had risen up in her way, and the meadow lands and strips of forest were not half so dear to her as the ever-heaving sea.

That passed away, as the naturally buoyant temperament returned, and there was some prospect of making a comfortable subsistence for herself and Lilly. It was to be accomplished by the labor of her hands, in nothing was she likely to be successful save the needlework in which she excelled, a tiresome way, surely, to attain her object, but for her sister's sake she must brave its weariness. And so Catherine became the village seamstress. Months passed away, and resignation was beginning to take the place of passionate, unrestrained sorrow, when Lilly died. It

was this drop which overflowed the cup. Catherine shed no more tears after that, though before she had spent hours in vain weeping over the memories of the past. It seemed as if every trace of feeling was effaced, so white, and cold, and calm she grew after the little coffin lid was closed. No one could see the passionate throbbing of her heart, or know the sense of terrible loneliness that was crushing her; there was no one she loved well enough to make a confidant of, and so, bitter thoughts were nurtured in secret, until they grew into blasphemous reproaches to the God who had chastised her. Instead of seeking consolation from her faith, the only thing on earth that could give her any, she brooded over her sorrow, until that coldness crept over her which led her to the very brink of infidelity. Woodville had no pastor of its own, it was only visited occasionally from a distant station, and so there was little to arouse Catherine from her terrible indifference, save the ulterior graces, which were slowly withdrawing because of her neglect to correspond to them.

Catherine was conscious of this herself, she felt she was not what she ought to be, and yet she did not change. "It is strange indeed, Mabel, that I cannot be good," she said, in conclusion, for all this had been told with exceeding simplicity. "I wish, O, I wish I was the Cassy Keene of old times."

"And that you shall be, my darling," Mabel said, whisking the work off her lap, and seizing her hands to lead her a madcap dance, "you shall come and live with me, and we'll have glorious times; you're just the person I want."

Catherine felt the hot blood rushing to her face. She could not be a dependant. "Well! what's the matter, now?" Mabel asked.

"I would rather sew for you, Mabel, and live in my own little quarters."

"Now, Cassy, don't be a fool! Unless you think becoming my adopted sister would make you one."

"But what will Anastasia say?" Cassy asked, never for a moment believing Mabel in earnest.

"Say!" she exclaimed. "Why, bless

your heart, Asie never in her life objected to anything I did, and she will not begin at this hour. O, you need not look as if you did not think I meant it. I want you, Cassy! you must come, Asie and I have lots and scores of money, and as somebody says that it is the root of all evil—Who is it says so?" she asked, suddenly passing her hand over her forehead—"Well, never mind. I want to get rid of some of it, and you've got to take your share of the evil."

There was no resisting the arch, laughing face, and half-funning, half-imploring tone, and before she mounted her horse, Mabel had forced her new friend to promise to take up her abode at the Hall.

CHAPTER VI.

INFIDELITY.

THE cousins were often together now, and Edward, whose pride had never suffered him to make friends of those whom he considered his inferiors, and who had therefore led a very solitary life, began to wonder that he had so long endured its solitude. The hours now spent where Mabel's wonderful voice and Anastasia's placid smile could not reach him, were very lonely indeed, he was never happy but with the fair sisters. His bleak mountain-home grew desolate looking to him as the autumn deepened, and he silently compared its large, solitary rooms, to the parlor of the homestead, where Mabel and

Anastasia were generally to be found. *It* was always bright, the fire always glowing in the grate, the richest of fall flowers always in the vases, and music almost always ringing out in full, harmonious chords. Even his books, the faithful friends of years, were wearisome now, and he turned away from their pages with something of the feeling one might turn from an object upon which every affection of the heart had been lavished, but which at last was loved no more. Perhaps it was well for him that the great passion of his life was waning; perhaps it was well those seductive pages were losing their charms for him. He had been an infidel all his life. In childhood he had been suffered to grope in the dark, as his father had been before him, and growing up to man's estate without a single principle to guide him in his restless quest of knowledge, it was scarce to be wondered at that he was involved in a labyrinth of theories. And so he had led a careless, indolent life, without ambition enough to make it even a brilliant worldly one, enjoying whatever pleasures came in his way, and taking all

disagreeable incidents as things that were not to be avoided. Certainly not in a Christian spirit, but with a kind of philosophical resignation, which, for all he knew to the contrary, was quite as good.

But from the very first day of their acquaintance, Mabel had a kind of instinctive horror of his atheistical principle, she could not bear to hear him talk in his light, bantering way, of the unknown hereafter, and whenever he gravely called in question the existence of God, and tried with all the arts of eloquence to convince her that the Supreme Being was but a myth, a dream of some unenlightened mind, she would shrink from him as one accursed. Such conversations always roused and excited her. They seemed to puzzle her, too; to bring up the ghosts of ideas that would tantalize her with their apparent reality, and yet elude her grasp. With just as little training, and almost as much liberty as Edward had ever enjoyed, she seemed to possess some knowledge, slight however, and inextricably entangled with her own wild fancies, of a few of the great truths so utterly meaningless to him.

As for Anastasia, she was one of those naturally amiable but weak characters, who, though keenly alive to all other lovable things, are strangely apathetic in in matters of religion.

Of course, rumors enough were afloat in the village, and Catherine, who was a frequent visitor at the Hall, not yet having taken up her abode there, was closely questioned as to the probability of a matrimonial alliance blotting out the memory of their fathers' disagreements. But she could tell nothing. Edward was so impartial in his attentions, it was a difficult matter to tell which of the two had captivated his heart. Indeed, he scarce knew himself. It seemed at times that Mabel, with her wild, fitful spirit, her poetic nature, and that almost mysterious manner which he was sure was the effect of some secret emotion, was the favorite. She could sway him as she willed by her music, hour after hour he would sit listening to her songs of home—so she always called Scio—in the soft, musical tongue of her native land, or the melancholy improvisitations she would pour forth. They

were very like the slow rolling in of waters upon a beach—those fantasies of hers—deep, heavy, full with a depressingly mournful monotony, and yet powerful, so powerful that Edward never stirred until the full tide of melody had ebbed away, and Mabel herself, with a ringing laugh, or some taunting speech, dissolved the spell. But Anastasia had as much influence in her own quiet way. He almost involuntarily grew gentler in her presence, and his proud, stern face softened when near that whose exceeding sweetness was its peculiar charm. She was more feminine, too, than Mabel, and clung to her sister with a devotion half childish in its veneration, and womanly in its intensity, which was very beautiful. Edward had been from childhood an artist, and now he loved nothing better than to have Anastasia near him when he painted, not to talk to, for that he seldom did, but only to look at, and occasionally catch one of the flitting smiles which made her face so radiant. In the first weeks of their acquaintance he had taken her portrait—a most perfect likeness—and carried it to

his eyrie. But Mabel's face he could not paint. It was impossible to do it truthfully; at every sitting some expression that had been perfect the day before, seemed as if it had never rested upon those finely cut features. It was this which had made her so unlike her sister, that both Edward and Catherine Keene marvelled that they could ever have mistaken one for the other, as they had done in the beginning.

Sometimes Mabel would come to her cousin, pale and weary, without a vestige of color, or a spark of animation so natural to her, and her face most Madonna-like in its sorrowful repose; and at others with glowing cheeks, lips parted with scornful smiles, her hair dashed off her forehead as with a wayward fancy, and her eyes intensely brilliant. She would fix them upon him with an earnestness that made him shrink, their light was terrible, those wild dazzling eyes seemed to him a maniac's. He ceased at last to try. It was not possible to put on canvas those sudden changes of expression, that deep gloom, or the wild mirth that so quickly succeeded each other.

"Mabel, it is useless!" he exclaimed, one day after he had tried for an hour to catch any one of the many expressions that had been flitting over her face, "I cannot do it."

She watched him with a most provokingly careless look, which for a moment quite banished every other, as he resolutely effaced his work. "There! It is all out now and I will never try again."

"No I would not were I you," she said, laughing. "You have Anastasia, and that is quite enough, isn't it?"

"Mabel! How can you"——

"O, don't talk to me!" she exclaimed, without suffering him to finish, "I'm tired and my head aches. There is Asie in the garden, go and talk to her. Go!"

He obeyed, and when she was alone, she loosened her long beautiful hair, and shaking it around her, walked to and fro, with knit brows, as if thinking of something that troubled her. Once she looked from the window, and seeing the two standing beneath a tree, Edward fastening a cluster of brilliant October blossoms in Anastasia's downbent head, drew back

with a flush of pain, muttering to herself, "I will save *her* from this doom, even though it break my own heart. Better mine than hers!"

After that she was more wayward and incomprehensible than ever, at times avoiding Edward so studiously, that he was stung to the quick, or frightening her gentle sister with her bursts of reckless gaiety. Zephyr, her horse, seemed to be the only living creature for whom she cared in those days. She would be mounted at the first streak of dawn in the cold autumn mornings, ready for a mad ride over hill and dale, which often lasted half the day, when both rider and horse would return spent with fatigue. Remonstrance was useless, she would not listen, and a wild laugh or a wilder burst of song, was the only answer she would give, when asked why she was so restless. Once, when Edward had been talking in his usual scoffing way, making a jest of everything holy and true, she left him abruptly, and when Anastasia followed, and finding her getting ready to ride, implored her not to go out that evening, she exclaimed——

"Asie, I must! I shall go mad if I stay here and listen to Edward. Why will he always talk of that fearful belief of his, that there is no God, no future, nothing to make this poor miserable existence worth having? O my sister! If you could know the terrible thoughts that haunt me sometimes, you would no longer wonder that I cannot bear to hear such things. He is unconsciously taking away from me the only hope I have, making a vague dreamy uncertainty of that which, if really true, must give strength enough for any trial—the knowledge that a strong unfailing arm supports every human being. Asie, I *must* believe it! There is surely a God!"

She had grasped her sister's hands, and was gazing now into her face with an imploring look. Anastasia could not understand why this should so excite her, but she was ready to acquiesce in anything to quiet her "Yes, surely, dear Mabel, there is. Come down now and play for me."

With a sigh of relief she threw off the velvet cap, with its dark heavy plumes, and gathering up the long folds of her skirt, went down with Anastasia. Passing Edward in silence, she went to the piano and began immediately to play. That night the spell her music so often cast upon others seemed to act upon herself. It seemed as if every haunting thought, every wild emotion, was swept out on the melancholy surges into a fathomless ocean of gloom. So it continued for a while, and then her natural manner returned, she was again the gay, fearless, enthusiastic Mabel of the first days of their arrival, visiting in the village and at the rich farms surrounding it, fascinating the simple people by the graceful freedom so unlike the proverbial pride and haughtiness of the Beauforts, and making hosts of friends among the little folks, by the strange legends she coined from her own fertile brain for their amusement. Edward was completely puzzled. With his proud intellect, his unbending will, he could not understand why feeling of any kind should make her so changeable in her moods, and what feeling it really was that made her so, he was quite at a loss to discover. Not jealously, he was certain, for he had tried her, and she appeared rather relieved when he devoted

himself entirely to Anastasia, and suffered her to follow her own freaks with no more notice than a contemptuous smile. It was only when he called in question the existence of Providence, or scoffed at the very thought of a hereafter, that her color would mount and her eyes flash with the wild gleam that gave such a peculiar expression to her face, and vain mortal that he was, he believed it was his own eloquence that so moved her.

CHAPTER VII.

THE ADOPTION.

WHENEVER Mabel was provoked with her cousin, she flew to Catherine Keene, and at such times so importuned her to come to the homestead, that Cassy was quite bewildered. She could not understand why Mabel should be in such need of her. In truth it was but a freak of the wayward girl's, and yet one whose gratification involved great consequences. Catherine still lingered, though promising to go "sometime or other," but Mabel at last would not be put off longer. "It would soon be winter," she said, "and Cassy must be comfortably fixed before that came."

"But why do you want me at all," Catherine asked.

"I will tell you," Mabel answered, impetuously. "I want some one to help me talk to Edward Beaufort. I want some one to contradict his assertions, to prove them false, as I *know* them to be."

"There is Anastasia, Mabel, and yourself, why cannot you talk to him?" Cassy said, almost laughing at the idea of her reasoning with the proud Beaufort, of whom she had always stood in awe.

"I cannot! O I wish I could!" Mabel said, with a hopeless, helpless look. "He crushes me with his bitter, cruel words, he makes life so dark and dreary, and the future such an awful blank, that I am appalled. I have no words to answer him. O surely, surely, Cassy, it cannot be true. I do not know, but I cannot believe it." She passed her hands rapidly over her forehead, and swept back her hair as if its weight oppressed her.

"But what does he say, Mabel?" Cassy asked, wondering, for she had spoken but once to Mr. Beaufort, and knew nothing of his belief.

"He says there is no God, no future. I don't know where it come from, but there is a thought always in my mind that——" She stopped, and again her hands went wandering over her forehead—"There, it is gone again! I cannot grasp it. I think some one told me once there was a God. But, perhaps, after all, it was but a dream!"

"No! no! dear Mabel, it is no dream, but a truth," Cassy exclaimed. "You feel it, do you not?"

"Feel it! Yes, sometimes. But, after all, of what use is feeling. I wish I had none, it is a very useless commodity." Mabel's eyes were flashing, and the color was mounting in her face. "What have you and I to do with it, Cassy? We both want peace, and feeling will never give us that. Come! let us go forth and search for that rest eternal, that dreamless sleep which no fear or sorrow can ever disturb. In the depths of the sea, or far away in the forest glades, where the bright leaves will be our shrouds, any where, so that we may only rest. Come! once sleeping, we will never more be wakened. There is no Judge to face, no retribution, no hope of a

better life than this, and why should we hesitate?"

She was talking with startling vehemence. For a moment Catherine's cheeks grew deathly pale, as the wild, tempting words brought a vision, flitting, indeed, but so distinct, that it long haunted her, of that inexhorable Judge, and the flaming abyss, and the gates of Paradise closing in forever from her all light and bliss and love. They were both silent for a long while, Mabel leaning from the window which she had thrown open, and gazing out upon the clear sky, and the many hued leaves that were dropping from the trees. At last she turned to Catherine again.

"I sometimes do not know what I am doing, Cassy. I think I am mad occasionally."

Catherine was too startled to speak, and after a slight pause, Mabel continued. "You say you are not good, Cassy—that you have slighted grace (whatever *that* may be), but there is something about you that tells me you can save me from—I don't know what it is—a strange, nameless dread, a fearful uncertainty, which haunts

me. Come home with me this very evening, Cassy! I need you, indeed I do!"

For a moment a high resolve filled Catherine's mind. She would lead Mabel to the rest which she so much coveted, she would teach her the Faith which had not yet deserted her own unworthy soul. But it lasted only a moment; a second thought brought a frightful sense of her own utter incapacity for converting any one. How could she, who had so obstinately refused to admit grace into her own heart, hope to open the way for it into another's? And that other wild, fitful, incomprehensible Mabel Beaufort! Alas! there was little hope. She must begin with herself first. And some faint undefined resolve to do so flitted through her mind.

"Will you come, Cassy?" Mabel asked, abruptly, rising to go.

"Yes. But go on, and I'll come before dark. Zephyr would not like to go along as gently as I shall walk," for Mabel had ridden into the town, as usual.

"Zephyr is accustomed to obey me," Mabel answered, laughing. "Put on your bonnet, and just lock your door, and I'll come to-morrow and help you pack up."

So they went out together. Mabel threw Zephyr's bridle over her arm, and gaily taking Cassy's hand, led both along.

Cool as the evening was, they found Edward and Anastasia out among the few fall flowers that were blooming in the garden.

"What on earth are you doing out in the evening air?" Mabel asked.

"Just amusing ourselves," Edward said, laughing. "What are *you* doing?"

"O I'm a different person from Anastasia. I can bear fifty times more than she can. Come in this instant!"

Anastasia laughed. "Isn't she a tyrant, Catherine?"

"I forgot!" Mabel said, turning round suddenly, and seizing Edward's hand. "That is no longer Miss Keene, Edward, but my adopted sister, Catherine Beaufort. Shake hands with her."

He did so, with a mock gravity which brought a painful flush to Catherine's cheeks. Anastasia smilingly greeted her as "Sister Kate," she was too accustomed to Mabel's freaks, to be astonished. And thus it was that the poor, friendless Catherine

Keene was established in one of the richest families in that section of the country. It was a strange thing to her to have every desire gratified, stranger still to have nothing to do after years of toil and privation. She had ample time now to attend to her soul. But alas! habits of neglect were too potent to be easily overcome. And then she had her trials, too. Anastasia was always meek and gentle and kind to her, but Mabel, much as she evidently loved her, had too fitful a temper to be always so. In Edward's demeanor, too, there was something that vexed her. He was always polite, sometimes so very ceremoniously polite that Catherine felt as if he was indulging in sarcasm at her expense. But at such times Mabel always fired up; she was far too generous to suffer such a thing, and the end of the matter was generally a quarrel between the cousins. After a little while it made Catherine exceedingly uncomfortable. But there was nothing to do but bear it, for Mabel would not hear of her return to the village, and Catherine, as usual, yielded to her impetuous will.

CHAPTER VIII.

A NEW GRACE.

IT was growing cold. The last pale roses in the garden had withered on their stalks, the brilliant chrisanthemums had paled and died, and the many-colored leaves which had made the mountain forests regally magnificent had fallen to the ground. Dark and bare the lofty heights stood against the cold, grey sky, for it, too, had lost its autumnal beauty, and put on the dusky veil of winter.

As the dreariness of nature increased, so the gloom which had become habitual with Catherine deepened, and as storms swept through the mountain-gorge, so wild, fitful storms of alternate mirth and

passion swept over Mabel Beaufort. The two were doing each other little good. Anastasia was like a sweet glimpse of summer in the house, and Edward apparently weary of Mabel's capricious moods devoted himself to her. They were all in the parlor one evening in December, Edward and Anastasia, side by side on a lounge, looking at a book of prints, Catherine on a low stool, with folded hands and compressed lips, gazing intently into the fire. Unhappiness and pain were written on every line of her face, and something very like despair in her drooping posture. Mabel had been walking the room with quick, restless steps, now stopping to turn over the leaves of some book, now glancing with a strange look at Edward and Anastasia, and occasionally putting aside the heavy curtains, and gazing out into the starless night. At last she seated herself at the piano, and after a wild melancholy prelude broke into the magnificent "Kyrie Eleison," which she had played the first evening Edward had visited them. In a moment he was at her side. It was generally so, no matter how much he seemed

engrossed with Anastasia, one of Mabel's masterly strains made him forget all but her. But his interest, deep as it was this evening, was not to be spoken of beside Catherine Keene's. As a general thing, Mabel's music did not move her, it was too stormy. Her father had been a musician, and played with exquisite feeling, and the music she was now accustomed to hear was not like the solemn, tender, swelling strains that used to captivate her youthful ear. But this evening she was startled. Mabel had but played a bar or two of the air, when Catherine was at her side, her hand resting upon the musician's shoulder, her eyes bent upon the notes, her whole frame quivering with emotion. Edward Beaufort's haughty smile, her own sensitiveness were forgotten. She was metamorphosed.

"Sing! sing, Mabel!" she said, quickly, pointing to the words. And Mabel obeyed. Presently, when she could command her voice, she joined in a soft, almost sobbing second. When they had finished, there was a moment of silent astonishment, and Catherine glided from

the room. Mabel soon followed, and found her in her own room, kneeling at the bedside, sobbing bitterly. Her own voice was unsteady as she asked what was the matter, for the words which Catherine had sung with such fervent articulation had somehow found their way to her heart.

"Catherine, dear Cassy, tell me what it all means?" she said, trying to remove the hands which were pressed so closely to the tear-stained face. "What is that mysterious music I have been playing? It haunts me like a ghost. Years ago, when I was a little child I heard it in a chapel by the sea shore, and thenceforth there was something of its imploring tone in the dashing of the surge, and now I can hear it too in the winds that sweep through the mountains. Hark! Do you not hear?"

She rose up from her bending position, beside Catherine, and stood with dilated eyes and uplifted hand. "Listen! What does it say, Catherine?"

"Kyrie Eleison! Christe Eleison!" she involuntarily exclaimed as the cold gust swept by, rattling the casements and moan-

ing in the trees. Mabel repeated the words over and over, and then, as if her wild spirit was subdued by them, sat down quietly to wait until Catherine's passion of tears had spent itself. It was long before it did. The sealed fountain was at last unclosed. Many mingled feelings swayed her as she knelt there, the memory of old happy days, recalled by these familiar strains, a passing glimpse of the sweet peace that had once dwelt in her heart, making its present despondency and forgetfulness of God, so dark in contrast, that she was fairly startled. The music had been as a barbed arrow, sent from the hand of mercy, which pierced through the ice of indifference, and woke up conscience with the keen smart of its wound.

By and by she dried her eyes, and went to Mabel's side. "Well, Cassy, are you ready to talk to me, now?" she asked, tenderly smothing back her disordered hair.

"Yes. What shall I talk about?"

"Answer my question. Tell me what that music means."

"It is a part of the Mass, Mabel," she said, her voice growing slightly tremulous again, "and the meaning of the words is only this: 'Lord have mercy on us! Christ have mercy on us!'"

"Only that!" Mabel exclaimed, starting up. "Then there *is* a God! I knew it! I was sure of it, although Edward tries to make me doubt."

"Never do that, dear Mabel," Catherine said. "That would indeed lead you to misery. I have been very wicked; I have madly questioned the providence of that good God, but if I had gone on to doubt his existence, this hour would never have come for me. It is only His mercy that has saved me from so fearful a sin."

"And what is the Mass?" Mabel again questioned, her whole face glowing, and her strange, beautiful eyes flooded with a soft light.

"The unbloody sacrifice of the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ," Catherine answered, in the simple words of the Catechism.

Mabel's eyes dilated. "And what is that? O, Catherine, tell me all! Begin

and tell me all! Ever since I first put my foot in that little Catholic chapel in Scio, I have longed to know what the music and the decorations, and the strange language meant. My father knew it; he used to read books written in that tongue, but he would never learn me, never answered my questions. And when he was dying—raving mad, Catherine, he died a maniac—he would mutter strange things about 'church,' and 'infidelity,' and then shrink out those very imploring words, which have puzzled me so much, 'Kyrie Eleison.' Begin at the very beginning." And then, as if startled by a sudden thought, she exclaimed, before Catherine could speak: "Surely, my father could not have been a Catholic in heart!"

"Perhaps he was, Mabel," she answered, gently. "His ancestors, for many generations, were Catholics."

Mabel held her breath almost. "Was my grandfather, Hugh Beaufort?"

"Yes and no. He was the first of his race who deserted his faith," Catherine said, and then she told the wondering Mabel all she knew of the family, from his

days down to their own, interrupted by many passionate exclamations from her listener. There was a long silence when it was finished, broken only by the sad wailing of the wind outside, and the cheerful crackling of the fire in the deep old-fashioned fireplace. Mingled sounds of joy and sorrow, each with its own peculiar music, which was felt by both the girls. Mabel seemed going over the whole history of her race. But by and by she came back to the old subject, and asked question after question with such startling vehemence and rapidity, that Catherine was forced to ask her to be quiet a while, and listen. And then, after a moment's reflection, she began that wonderful Drama of the Incarnation, which has thrilled so many millions of human hearts, inspired so many human intellects for more than eighteen hundred years. Once fairly into the subject, all Catherine's old Catholic enthusiasm waked up, words came unsought, the late hesitating speech flowed smoothly as an unimpeded stream, and there was no further need of asking Mabel's silence. The wayward girl was

spell-bound, speechless with many emotions, as Catherine told her of that calm, cold, starlit night in Bethlehem, when God, *our* God, came down to earth, in the humble guise of a helpless babe. Came down to that earth which he had made so beautiful, and peopled with his creatures, and could find no place to rest his freezing limbs but an old stable, where the very beasts he had not blessed with reason and understanding to know him, were more grateful than man, whom he loved so well. And then she went on to tell how he grew in beauty and strength, clinging like any other human child, to his sweet mother, but unlike others, never giving her one moment's pain, except indeed, that keen, keen pang of the foreknowledge of his awful death. And then, when he had grown up to manhood, he went about doing good, fulfilling his mission, pouring the sweet oil of his gentle tenderness, his loving, yearning forgiveness upon many a bruised and sorrowing heart, startling the worldly Jews with his irreproachable sanctity, puzzling their dull brains with his deep, calm intellect—all of which were

nothing less than the attributes of God. And then, how it all ended! How He knelt in the deep gloom of the olive trees, and grew faint in his agony, while the red drops of blood oozed out from every pore, and his human heart sickened so at the thought of the terrible hours fast approaching, that it sent forth its pitious cry, "Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass away, and yet not my will, but thine be done." How He was betrayed by a kiss from one of his chosen twelve, how they led him, bound like the veriest outcast, amid the yellings, and blasphemy and imprecations of a mob, mad for his blood, to a mock trial, dragging him from one tribunal to another, making a jest of His anguish. How they scourged Him, and crowned Him with thorns, and clothed His lacerated form with a tattered purple robe, and bowed the knee before Him as their king, and then laughed Him to scorn. And how, after that dreadful night, they led Him forth, bearing His own cross, to Calvary, and there concluded the awful tragedy, by crucifying their God.

"O hush! hush!" Mabel exclaimed,

when Catherine had got thus far; "I shall never sleep again without seeing it all. It is too frightful! and yet what love?"

"What love indeed!" Catherine went on, her voice hushing down to a whisper almost, as if what she was speaking of was too sacred to be noised about. "And yet it is not all. That Divine Heart was not yet satisfied, it had not yet exhausted all its loving resources to win back man. It was determined to force him to live, if one atom of tenderness remained in his fallen nature. And so, when He had risen again from the dead, when He came forth from the grave leading captivity captive, and once more blessing His chosen ones with the sweet light of His smile and the music of His voice, but only for a little while, and then ascended into Heaven in their sight, wreathed in glory, He did not leave them desolate. They saw Him no longer with their earthly eyes, the fair bright earth was no longer fairer and brighter for His visible presence, and yet He remained upon it. Not alone, as the lingering memory of happiness, which sheds a soft halo over all things; not alone

by the power and efficacy of His doctrines, but really, truly, body and soul and divinity. Listen, Mabel, if you want to know what love means," and she drew down the awe-struck girl, until their faces were close together, and her own voice grew still more hushed, and her cheeks white with intense emotion, for her own words had affected her strangely. "The night before He suffered, Mabel, He supped with His twelve disciples. He was keeping the Jewish Pasch, but it was the last rite of the old law. Thenceforth another dispensation was to reign supreme. And while at table, Jesus took bread and blessed and broke and gave it to his disciples, saying: 'Take ye and eat, for this is my body,' and in like manner the chalice, saying: 'Drink ye of this, for this is my blood which shall be shed for you.' And then He added: 'Do this in commemoration of me.' And from that hour to this, Mabel, bread and wine have been changed into His body and blood, and that is what we call the Mass. Is it not awfully strange that God should love us so? That He should dwell with us always? for in every Catholic

Church in all the wide, wide world, there are some of those consecrated Hosts, and in every one of them, in every particle of each is Jesus whole and entire."

Catherine bowed down as if overwhelmed at the very thought, and Mabel was silent for many moments. At last she said—"It is very strange, Cassy, that I have never been able to remember these things before. I knew it all when I was a child. Alexis, an old Catholic servant my father had, taught me all about his faith, and that is why the music I found here brought in its strains such haunting, yet eluding memories. Years of my life that have long been but indistinct visions in memory, are to night as plain as if the written pages were before me. I think, Cassy, the curse of old Hugh Beaufort's sin is upon us all. I am *sure* that I am sometimes mad."

"Why?" Catherine asked, looking up, quickly.

"Because," said Mabel, "such strange, wild thoughts torment me sometimes. I cannot make out anything clearly; all that I know is, that I am Mabel Beaufort, and have a sister Anastasia, and I feel as if some

demon of motive possessed me. I cannot rest. I cannot sleep, but must be out where the free wind can blow over me. And since I have been here, whenever my cousin Edward speaks of God, as he does, it awakens that demon. I love you, Cassy, I have loved you from the first hour of our meeting; something like instinct told me you would do me good, and behold! this night you have made me sane. God grant I may be a lunatic no more. Good night," and bending down, she kissed her forehead tenderly, and went out. Presently the sweet solemn strains of the Kyrie Eleison came floating down the broad hall and up the stairway, and Catherine fell asleep, with the prayer upon her lips, and the music in her ears.

CHAPTER IX.

THE FATE OF THE UNFAITHFUL.

We have seen that when Basil Beaufort left his home, his nature was a wild passionate one, which had never been placed under the least restraint. And as he advanced in years, it became even more unmanageable. For a long time he wandered restlessly over Europe, but at last, as if weary of constantly changing scenes, settled himself in one of the beautiful islands of the Mediterranean. There he married, and there his twin daughters were born. Their mother died in giving them birth, and thenceforth Basil seemed to grow more tender, his whole life was devoted to his children. They grew day by day in beauty,

and Mabel inherited her father's hardihood in strength. Anastasia was always delicate, always required more care, and perhaps it was this which made her the pet. Basil scarce ever suffered her to be out of his sight, but was constantly thinking of and providing for her comfort. Her gentleness, too, was another attraction, it soothed and quieted her father's irritable temper, while Mabel's waywardness and strange freaks, to use his own expression, "almost drove him mad." She was never quiet a moment. From the hour her little feet could carry her about, she wandered when and where she pleased, frightening her nurse by her exploits, and laughing in childish daring at her father's threats of punishment. But it was not merely the exuberant spirits of health that characterized Mabel. From earliest childhood she was subject to strange fits and outbursts, which could be compared to nothing but actual madness. They frightened even Basil, used as he was to storms of his own raising. And yet the child seemed to have a strong comprehensive intellect, which rapidly mastered everything placed within

its grasp, and that with little care or cultivation on her father's part. His whole heart seemed centered in Anastasia, and Mabel was suffered to learn as she could and would. As she grew up, nothing could resist her determined will. If she met with a book in an unknown tongue which she wished to read, she forthwith set to work to master the language. It was thus she learned English, with some little assistance from her father, who had began teaching it to Anastasia. One day, when about ten years old, she went with Alexis to church, and there heard the music and saw the ceremonies, which in after life had such powerful command over her. She came home wild with excitement, and so anxious to know what it all meant, that the simple explanations of the old gardener did not satisfy her. Spite of his neglect, she had the greatest respect for her father's learning, and straightway the wayward child went to him and boldly questioned him upon subjects he had not thought of for years. She would know the why and the wherefore of all things, and even Basil was startled and astonished at the intellect

she manifested. It made him proud of her, and yet he was frightened too. That passionate thirst of hers for knowledge made him think of his own childish longings; made him think of the days when his own intellect was in its dawn, when the whole world was a wonder and a beauty to him, and he had so greedily imbibed all kinds of learning. He, as well as Mabel, had been insatiable. But no kind hand had led him in a right path, and so, although he learnt much which the world esteems, there was little else in his mind. Not so in after years. From old family records and stray letters, and more than all from the traditions of the neighborhood, he had learnt his father's history long before he left America, and strange thoughts had tormented him, and to know the truth, wild longings had filled his heart. And yet, when he wandered over Europe, standing in many a place made holy by the martyrs of that Faith Hugh Beaufort had deserted; kneeling in her magnificent churches, and listening to the explanations of her doctrines, he resisted the strong impulses of his own heart which prompted him to re-

pair, inasmuch as he could, the evil his father had done; resisted the sweet pleadings of grace, and went on in the infidelity in which he had been raised. One peculiar grace was granted to him which was denied to his brother, Cyril. From the very hour he first knew anything of Catholicity, he believed in the truth and infallibility of the Church. It seemed as if a spark of that Faith which had once burnt so brightly in the soul of every Beaufort, had been infused into his. The secret of it was, he had been baptized. The faithful Catholic servant who had succeeded in saving Catherine Beaufort from the unfaithfulness of her family, had made the attempt with Basil. She had stolen him off when an infant, and carried him to the priest, who was then visiting Woodville, and had pleaded so eloquently that he consented to baptize the child, on condition that she would do all in her power to bring him up a Catholic. But as he grew up he was too head strong and passionate to be at all under her influence, and she consoled herself by doing all she could for the gentle lovable Catherine.

It seemed now that Mabel had entered upon the same path her father had travelled before her. Would she slight grace as he had done, and end by being as careless as he? He thought not as he sat looking at the bright, excited eyes gazing so eagerly into his. And yet, with strange perversity, he refused to instruct her. Surely the demon had possession of his soul, when he could look upon his innocent child, and resolutely bar against her, as far as he could, the doors of truth. He would tell her nothing, but pleaded ignorance. She left him, deeply disappointed, but with a resolute look in her childish face, which convinced him she was determined to know what she desired, no matter through whom or how that knowledge came. And then, in a frenzy of evil passion, he went about the house gathering up every book from which she could have gleaned the least information, made a huge bonfire of them, and then sat down with an almost demoniacal pleasure, to think how impossible it was for her to learn much about Catholicity. But the Eternal has ways of His own, and He laughs at the

attempts of man to resist Him. Mabel learned all she could from the old gardener, enough to love his faith.

Years passed by. The fair twins grew up into lovely womanhood, both exceedingly beautiful—Anastasia so gentle and winning, that it was impossible not to love her. With the growth and development of her really strong intellect, Mabel seemed to grow more wild and fitful. She was incomprehensible to all about her, but that gave her little trouble. It seemed of little matter to her whether she was beloved or not, and all the affection of her own nature seemed divided between her sister and her horse. Unfortunately for her, Alexis died when she was just beginning to be a little subdued by his teachings, and from that time the strange girl seemed to forget them. All impressions were obliterated, and she was again the wild, untamable Mabel of early childhood.

At last a stern summons came to Basil Beaufort. A call, which he could not disobey if he would, sounded through all the chambers of his heart, and trembling with fear, he laid down to die. And then it

was that his neglect of God was fearfully punished, then it was that grace deserted him entirely, and left him in the hands of despair. The last sensible act he performed, was to write a letter to his brother, Cyril, entrusting his orphan children to his care, unconscious that that brother had long since been summoned to his account. After that, reason fled and he died raving mad, calling in his delirium upon the God he had deserted, to come and save him, and then cursing Him like one already damned. It was a frightful death-bed, and haunted poor Mabel long years after. When all was over, the orphans went to America to fulfil their own destiny.

CHAPTER X.

PLANS AND DISCOVERIES.

WHEN CATHERINE awoke from her sweet refreshing slumber, the sunshine was streaming full upon her, but not brighter than the sudden light which had flooded her soul. The earth was in bridal array. The rough, dark mountains were covered with snow, the leafless trees were folded in white, and over all gleamed the red flush of the morning, like a soft blush arising to the pallid face of a bride. Neither the spring time of the year, nor the queenly summer, nor autumn, with all its magnificence, had ever been more beautiful in Catherine's eyes, than that cold winter morning. Life had suddenly

changed from a dark, hopeless thing, to someting full of beauty; nature was transformed, earth and sky were brightened by the reflection of her own gladness. She had been sleeping in the shadow of despair, and now awoke to the full light of hope. Mabel came in before she was dressed, her face radiant, and her lips parted with such a smile as Catherine had never seen.

"Is it not glorious, this morning, Cassy?" she exclaimed. "Zephyr and I have been out for an hour, and I'm so warm now, I can hardly stay in doors." She threw up the window and leaned out as if the cold, piercing air was delicious.

"But remember, Mabel, if you please, that my blood has not been stirred up like yours."

"O, I did not think!" she said, quickly closing the window again. "I've been so accustomed to think only of myself! But never mind, Cassy, you and I will be good yet; won't we, my darling?" And she whirled Catherine around in her arms as if she had been a child, and then laughed at her own strength. But there was no

wildness in her mirth, she was only too light-hearted to be still.

"What has become of Anastasia and Mr. Beaufort?" she asked, presently. "I thought last night, perhaps he might stay, it was so stormy."

"Stay, indeed! I would not let him," Mabel answered. "I left Anastasia fast asleep, more than an hour ago, and as I passed Edward's eyrie, saw the honorable gentleman standing at a window with his cloak folded around him as if he was freezing."

"But he'll come down to-day, even if he has to wade knee-deep in snow," Cassy said, laughing. "Don't you think, Mabel, he and Asie will marry, some day?"

Mabel sprang from her chair as if shot, and as quickly sank back. "Let him if he dare!" Again the wild gleam was in her eyes, but it quickly died away, and with it the rich color which had been glowing in her face. "I wonder what could have been in my father's letter?" she went on, as if talking to herself. "He might have said something of that;" she sat musing and rocking to and fro in her chair

for many moments, and then with the old gesture, waving her hand before her eyes, as if putting aside something, began talking of their last night's conversation.

"We must do something, Cassy," she said. "I feel that I must act and not sit idly here amusing myself all my life long. I must work, and then, perhaps, those fearful fits I so dread will never return again. I have energy enough just now to move mountains."

"We must begin with ourselves, dear Mabel," Catherine said, a little sadly. "W must try to grow better in our own hearts. And then there are the poor and sick we can visit, and the children we can teach."

"Sure enough! Wont it be delightful!" And again and again her musical laugh rang through the room.

"What are you two doing?" asked Anastasia, putting her head in at the door. "Don't you hear the breakfast bell?"

"Yes. And as I live there's Edward Beaufort calling us down," said Mabel. He was standing at the foot of the steps and offered his hand to each of the girls

as they came down. Anastasia's rested in it a moment, but Mabel's just touched the tips of his fingers, saying he deserved no more for not being up in time to ride with her.

Those were grand schemes the young enthusiasts formed for their future life, and for a while they acted upon them. Catherine was the least sanguine of the two; she knew from sad experience that she could not trust herself, and, perhaps, that very distrust made her persevere the longer. But Mabel, impetuous in all things, was doubly so in this matter of reform. The placid Anastasia was little disturbed by her unusual demonstrations, but Edward was more puzzled than ever. There was no end he thought to his fair cousin's whims, and this last was certainly the most incomprehensible of all. He scarce owned to himself that it troubled as well as puzzled him, his affections were more fixed upon Mabel than he saw at the time. And yet he was trying to persuade himself that he loved Anastasia, and this very evening, which had so changed Mabel, a declaration had trembled upon his lips.

Mabel had been so startled at the very mention of the subject, that Catherine was convinced she had more interest in her haughty cousin than perhaps she herself was aware of. But after that one involuntary betrayal of feeling, Mabel was the same that she had always been in regard to Edward; at times laughing at him in her mocking way, or tantalizing him, and again so fascinating him by her conversation and music, that Anastasia was fairly forgotten.

So things went on for a while, Catherine growing daily more like her old happy, quiet self, as she yielded more and more to the sweet promptings of grace, and returned to her old allegiance; and Mabel, studying, visiting the poor and sick, and "talking religion," as Edward called it, in her usual fitful way. One change for the better was perceptible, she rarely yielded now to the gloom which had once enveloped her, was not near so wild and wayward, and, as Edward was forced to acknowledge to himself, was all the more lovable for the softening down.

She came in from the town one evening,

flushed with her walk, as well as some pleasant excitement. Edward was in the room, as usual, reading aloud to Catherine and Anastasia, and although she was full of a new plan, Mabel unconsciously stopped on the threshold to listen to his fine voice and delivery, as he read the concluding lines of Keats' Ode to the Nightingale.

"Ah! That is beautiful!" she said, as he pronounced the last "farewell," in a soft, fading cadence. "I had no idea, Edward, that you read so well."

"Indeed! I shall show you more of my powers," he said, with a pleased smile, springing up to make room for her; "where have you been?"

"In town. And you can't think, Cassy, what I have heard! you remember you told me the other night that my Aunt Catherine had been raised a Catholic by an old family servant. Was it so, Edward?" she asked, turning suddenly to him.

"Indeed, Mabel, I know very little of our family matters. My father never spoke of them. I believe there was some report to that effect, and our grandfather disinherited her for it."

"Shame upon him!" exclaimed Mabel.

"Well, Cassy, they say in town, that the very same woman is living but five miles from here, and in a destitute condition; that must not be allowed. We will go to see her to-morrow morning."

"She must be very old," Edward said.

"Yes, over ninety, they say, and very childish. Poor old creature! She should have been attended to before this. I will bring her home with me, if she will come."

Edward scarce knew whether she meant it as a reproach to him or not, yet the hot blood mounted to his forehead, and his brows came together. But the feeling of resentment passed, when Mabel, turning to him with one of her bewitching smiles, asked him if he would accompany them. Little as he liked the trip, he could not refuse. So it was arranged that he should drive Anastasia and Catherine in his own buggy, while Mabel of course would mount Zephyr.

"Why not come with us?" Edward said, half in earnest, although he knew that it was impossible.

"Thank you," she said; "I think three

more than enough for a one-seat, one-horse concern."

The next day dawned bright and clear, and so mild that it felt almost like spring. Mabel was in extacies, and the rest could scarce help sharing her exuberant spirits. It was a day that Catherine long remembered. The bright sunshine and the mild air was delicious, but other things made her happier. For the first time since she had known him, Mr. Beaufort laid aside his haughty condescention of manner and fascinated her by his brilliant and poetic conversation. Anastasia said little, but looked perfectly satisfied to be near Edward, and Mabel kept dashing ahead of them, and then returning to make some merry speech, and waken the echoes of the mountains with her laughter. At last they reached the place, a miserable hovel on the very edge of a deep ravine. It looked, Mabel said, as if a breath might overturn it. A boy of twelve or fourteen years was cutting wood near by, and Edward called him.

"Is this where Mrs. Acton lives?" Mabel asked.

"Yes, ma'am," he answered, in a quiet, melancholy tone, that went tc Catherine's heart; she knew that suffering alone could have given it. There was a look of premature age, too, on the thin, pinched face, and a strange, sorrowful shadow in the deep blue eyes. "That child is older in feeling than you or I, Edward," Mabel whispered, after a moment's gaze.

"Do you want so see her, ladies," the boy said, with a sweet politeness. Grandmother is very old, and sometimes talks very strangely. She has been dreaming of old times this morning, I think, and talks of the Beauforts, a family who once lived in Woodville."

"Come, let us go in," Mabel said, "and then added, "tell her that Mabel Beaufort has come to see her."

A look of pleased surprise passed over the boy's face, as he led the way and opened the scarce closed door of the hut. It was a miserable place within, the broken window stuffed with rags, great chinks in the walls and floor, into which the air came in gusts, and only an excuse for a fire in the wide open chimney-place.

Pleasant as it was out of doors, Anastasia shivered as she stood with Mabel on the threshold. Wrapped in a tattered shawl, the old woman sat near the embers, rocking to and fro, and muttering to herself. The child spoke to her several times, but she did not notice him, until he struck her slightly and said, "Grandmother, here is Mabel Beaufort come to see you."

The name seemed to arouse her, "A Beaufort," she said slowly. "Yes, they are all cursed, every Beaufort in the land."

Edward and Catherine had lingered outside, admiring the wild scenery, and just then Cassy laughed gaily at some quaint speech of Edward.

"Who is that?" the old woman asked, starting up.

"Miss Keene, one of my friends," Mabel said, coming forward. "She is outside with my cousin Edward. And here is my sister, Anastasia," she continued, leading her in. "We have all come to see you."

"Edward and Anastasia and Mabel! Who may you all be?" the old woman muttered, pulling at her tattered shawl.

"Edward is the son of Cyril Beaufort," Mabel answered, "and Anastasia and I are Basil's children. You knew them both, did you not?"

"Yes! yes! But where is Catherine, the flower of the flock; the poor outcast child. My little darling Catherine, they treated her badly!" And the poor old creature moaned piteously. Again Cassy's laugh rang out, and Mrs. Acton stretched out her arms. "That is her voice! That is Catherine Beaufort's voice; bring her here!"

The boy shook his head sadly, and whispered to Mabel: "May I call her in? Grandmother will not be satisfied unless I do. These old dreams haunt her so."

Mabel stepped to the door herself, and brought her in. It was strange to see the change which came over the old woman, as Cassy, half-shrinking and blushing deeply stood before her. A flash of life came into the withered, pallid face, and a gleam of tenderness lit up the dimmed eyes and the shrunken lips parted with a smile.

"Have you come at last, Catherine?" she said, in trembling tones, not the tremu-

lessness of old age alone, but of deep emotion. "My little darling! My Cassy!" and before Catherine could speak, she was folded closely in those old shaking arms, and the hot tears of joy were raining over her face.

"O grandmother!" said the boy, quite distressed at Catherine's evident embarrassment. "Do not be thinking always of those old days. That is Miss Keene."

"No, no. I will never call her that. She is my Cassy Beaufort. Let me see if you are not." She gently turned her face so that she could gaze into it, softly stroking back the hair, and talking rather to herself than to others.

"Yes. This soft fair hair is my Catherine's. I've dressed it many a time, haven't I, deary? And which of all the Beauforts had the broad white forehead and sweet mouth that you have? Those are your mother's eyes, darling. My master Hugh's were darker and fiercer. O you are the only true hearted among them, Cassy."

And so talking and caressing her, old Mrs. Acton seemed heedless of the rest. Edward and Anastasia thought it all a

fancy of the old woman's, but not so Mabel. She stood by with downbent head and folded arms, thinking how strange it would be if Catherine was indeed her cousin. She was very like the picture of Catherine Beaufort, which was in Edward's room, more so now that the cloud of gloom had passed from her face. Not in features, indeed, for Catherine Keene's were far from being as perfect as Catherine Beaufort's, but in the quiet, half-sad expression that rested upon them. And then Mrs. Acton called her Cassy, a pet name she had borne when her father and mother were alive to caress her. More convincing of all to Mabel was the strange attraction she had felt toward her from the moment of their meeting. "Surely," she said to herself, "there must be kindred blood in our veins." And then, as Mrs. Acton was still caressing and muttering over Catherine, and Edward and Anastasia had gone out to walk, she called the boy aside to question him.

He told her he and his grandmother were all now left of a once large family, that they were very poor, having no means

of subsistence but his own scanty earnings from cutting and selling wood. He could read, he said, and would like to go to school, but that was not worth thinking of.

Mabel saw there was more than ordinary intellect in the child's finely formed head and sorrowful face.

"Well, Henry," she said—that was his name—"you shall learn all you want to, if you will come and live with me. Don't you think your grandmother would consent?"

"I cannot leave her," the boy said, with quivering lips.

"No! no! I would not ask it," Mabel said, quickly. "I want you both. Your grandmother was kind to my kindred, and I want to repay her now. It is late, indeed, for that. Don't you think you and I, Henry, might persuade her to come and live with me?" Mabel's bright smile called up an answering one on the pale, young face, and then the two went to the old woman. It did not take them long to convince her she would be better off in the old homestead where her young days

were passed, than in that miserable hovel. But Mabel and Henry alone would scarce have been able to do it, had not Catherine joined her entreaties to theirs. She could not refuse her "darling Cassy," the old woman said, and so it was arranged that Mabel should send for them the next day.

All the way home, Mabel was laying plans for the future. Once again in her old home, Mrs. Acton, she thought, would remember many of the scenes which had happened there, she would talk of Cassy and Basil and Cyril, and the warm-hearted, sanguine Mabel felt sure she would some day discover whether or not Catherine Keene was Catherine Beaufort's child. In the mean time she resolved to say nothing of the matter to Cassy herself, until perfectly sure her hopes and convictions proved true.

CHAPTER XI.

THE MIDNIGHT MASS.

IT was Christmas Eve. The old hall at the homestead, which had not been used for many long years, was warmed, and lighted up, and garlanded with evergreens. It was easy to see that Mabel had been busy there. Traces of her fanciful nature were left upon everything, in the quaint droopings of the garlands, in the strongly contrasted pictures hung together, in the face of the window curtains, and in the ornaments of the Christmas-tree, which stood in the centre of the room. No one did things just as she.

Anastasia stood near the window, apparently watching the sun going down, but in

reality gazing abstractedly at her cousin Edward, who was making his way down the mountain path, and would soon be with her.

Before he arrived, however, Mabel and Cassy, who had been to town to gather up the poor children, came in with a troop of the little ones, who looked in wondering admiration at the preparations made for their reception.

When Edward came, Mabel was flying about from one to the other, giving toys and eliciting laughter from the shyest. "How very beautiful she is!" he whispered to Anastasia, and then, with a passing greeting to Cassy, went to help her.

"Come, Mabel, let me make friends with them, too," he said, picking up a book. "Who is this for?"

"O, that is Henry Acton's. Where is he? Cassy, do go and bring him and the old lady down. I thought they were here."

Mabel had fulfilled her promise, and Mrs. Acton and her grandson were now domiciled with her. They came in presently, while Mabel was talking rapidly to Edward and Anastasia of the Midnight

Mass to be celebrated in Woodville. A priest had arrived that evening, and she and Cassy were going. "You and Asie must go with us, Edward," she said. "It will be so delightful."

"Which? Our going, or the Mass?" Edward asked, with his scornful smile.

"Not the first, certainly," Mabel answered, with a flashing look; "we can easily dispense with your company. Anastasia, I know will go."

"It is so cold, sister, and that will be such an unseasonable hour to go out, that——"

"Bah! Stay with Mr. Beaufort, if you want to then," she answered, impetuously. "Henry Acton is going to be our escort."

The boy looked up into her face with a pleased smile. He was already devoted to her, short as the time had been since he first saw her. Over him as over Cassy she exercised a species of fascination, and no wonder, for her every thought seemed to be for their happiness. Even Anastasia was not ranked before them, and *she* felt somehow that a gulf was growing between herself and her sister, and so loved Edward

all the more. But if he had been true-hearted, he would not so have engaged her affections, for his own were in Mabel's keeping, little as she suspected it. He could not understand her, and feared to risk a proposal.

That Christmas eve was a merrier one than the old hall had witnessed for years. Mabel gave herself up to the wildest enjoyment, and Edward joined her, half-pleased and half-provoked. Anastasia was quiet as usual, but none the less happy; a jealous or suspicious thought never entering her mind, and Cassy sat listening to old Mrs. Acton's tales, and submitting to her caresses.

It was near midnight when the whole party, the infirm old woman excepted, sallied out for town. Mabel, of course, was in front, now dancing and sliding over the frozen ground, among the children, and making the mountains echo with her wild song and laughter, now flying back to chide the rest for their tardiness. Cassy could not be gay; a soft, sad quietude had come over her spirits, and a kind of awe too, because that night she was to receive

her long neglected Lord. So she walked silent and thoughtful beside young Henry Acton, while Edward and Anastasia, whispering low to each other, followed. They were soon at the door of the house in which Mass was to be celebrated, and then Mabel grew somewhat quieter. Marshaling her little troup into order, she led the way, and presently all were before the altar. The priest was already vested, and stood at its foot, repeating the first words of the Mass. Catherine was overpowered. She could only kneel and weep, not the bitter, scorching tears that had so often flowed over her face, but a sweet shower which eased her full heart. And when her lips were "crimsoned with the blood of her God," and she knew that he was actually present within her heart, a gentle peace came over her, she felt as if she could fall asleep so, and only wake in heaven. Edward and Anastasia had remained in the back part of the room, standing, one with a scornful smile, and the other with a wondering, pleased look, while Mabel knelt beside her friend, trembling in every limb. Once or twice she

grasped Cassy's arm, but *she* was too absorbed to notice her, and so she knelt, watching and listening, as if with her very heart. After all was over, the priest turned to the congregation, and spoke a few words. They were not eloquent in the strict sense of the term, but their sweet persuasiveness quieted Mabel.

When he left the altar, she glided from her place, and going up to him, said something the rest could not hear. That she was intensely excited, both Edward and Cassy knew, but neither guessed to what extent.

Cassy guessed something of it when they came to the little frozen stream on their way home. Mabel leaned over the bridge, and gazed down with such a look that Cassy was frightened.

"Mabel, dear," she said, gently, "Come, let us go on."

"Cassy," Mabel replied. "Do you know that if that was water instead of ice, I should be tempted to plunge into it, and sleep there forever. O, my God! I think I am growing mad again. Cassy! save me! save me!" And she clasped her

hands and turned to her friend with a most imploring look.

"Don't think of such a thing, dear Mabel. To-morrow we will go to see Mr. Stillman, and he will instruct you, and you will soon be a good Catholic, and then all these wild fancies will depart."

"O, I hope so, I hope so," she said, with a sigh of relief. "He is coming to see us in the morning. I have asked him. Henry Acton told me he knew his grandmother."

"I am very glad," Cassy said. "I am sure he will do you good." They spoke no more until they reached home, and then Mabel, with a hurried good night to her cousin, who was still standing on the steps with Anastasia, sprang in and went up to Cassy's room. They slept together that night, but Mabel was troubled, and muttered, and turned about until daylight, and then got up and rode out on Zephyr, bitter cold though it was. Cassy could only pray for her.

CHAPTER XII.

BASIL'S BEQUEST.

ALL through the lonely mountain passes the tramp of Mabel's horse echoed on that cold dark Christmas morning. For there was no red flushing in the eastern sky as the day awoke—only a gray purplish tinge, which deepened into black near the meridian. The wind seemed asleep, or rather silently gathering its forces for a battle. Over every thing was the hush of an approaching storm, and even Mabel herself was quiet, sitting firmly on Zephyr's back, with lips tightly compressed, and blanched cheek. Was her heart calm then to be the more terribly convulsed afterwards?

As she drew near the eyrie on her way home, she saw Edward standing in the doorway, and with a sudden impulse rode up.

"Good morning, my cousin," she said. "A merry Christmas to you. Will you be pleased to dine with me, to-day?"

"Yes," he said, taking the reins out of her hands. "That is if you will be pleased to breakfast with me. Come in, Mabel, and warm yourself at least."

"Warm! I'm in a perfect fever, now." But nevertheless she sprang to the ground before he could assist her, and entered before him, calling out, "Come and do the honors, quick, for I'm only going to stay two minutes and a half. Leave Zephyr there."

Presently both stood in the breakfast room, a cozy little place Edward had had fixed up for his own especial use. It was the first time Mabel had ever been in his house, and a strange thrill went through his heart, as he gazed upon her standing before the fire.

"Dear Mabel, I am glad you are here! Would that I could keep you here always,"

he said, with no little emotion. And then suddenly bending over her he kissed her forehead, for the second time in his life.

She did not stir, but a strange smile passed over her face. She was thinking of Anastasia, and wondering if Edward had not said the same thing to her. "Mabel," he went on earnestly, "did you read the letter you brought from your father?"

"No. What was it about?" Still gazing into the fire, and standing motionless within his arm.

He unlocked a desk which was in the room, and placed the letter in her hands. Never in her life had Mabel been so completely self-possessed, nothing but the deep unchanging color in her face, and the resolute pressure of her lips told of the wild storm that was raging in her heart. And those Edward did not notice—he thought her cold and passionless as he had never before seen her.

"Cyril, my brother," the letter said, "we have been parted many years, and the last words that were spoken between us were words of bitter anger. It may

seem strange to you, therefore, that I leave you the most precious things I have—my daughters. I have not long to live, Cyril, and they will have no friend when I am gone, unless you will be one. I implore you, brother, by the memory of our mother, who left you and I, as my Anastasia left her twins, to love and take care of my children. If you have sons, let the families be united. My children are beautiful and gifted, Cyril, and will do honor to any husband. I can write no more. Mabel will give you this, and if you do not fulfil my wishes, the curse which has so long rested upon our unhappy race, will sink deeper into the destiny of your posterity, and make them more miserable than even you and I have been."

That was all. Mabel read it over twice, and then, without comment, handed it back to Edward. "Well, Mabel," he said, "have you nothing to say? No hope to give me?"

"You need not despair," she answered, lightly. "My father gave no charge to you, so the curse cannot rest upon you."

"Do not misunderstand me; it is of the

proposed union I speak. Why cannot we fulfil your father's injunctions? I love you, Mabel! you know it!" He approached and tried to take her hand, but she shrank from his touch.

"Stand back, Mr. Beaufort!" she said, with startling vehemence. "How should I know it? you have taken a strange way to show it to me. Answer me, Sir, have you not from the hour of our arrival devoted yourself to my sister? Have you not won *her* love? And now you would fain make me believe that I am the elect of your heart. Shame upon you, base Beaufort that you are! Listen to me. Anastasia loves you, though you do not deserve her love, and I will not suffer her heart to be broken. Remember, Edward, it is I, Mabel Beaufort, who say this, and I *will* have my way. You shall love *her*, not me, as in truth I believe you do, whatever may be your motive for trying to make me think the contrary. Remember, sir, you are to marry my sister—and to make her happy, too," she added, lowering her voice, and speaking with a wild, sybil-like

look, "else a curse will rest upon you forever."

She gathered up her riding skirt, sprang from the room, and in another moment was riding down the narrow way as if no harm could ever happen to her or her steed, while Edward Beaufort remained standing where she had left him, petrified with astonishment.

CHAPTER XIII.

A DISCOVERY.

CASSY was busy as usual with Mrs. Acton, when Mabel entered, with so white a face that her friend was startled. "Mabel! what is the matter? Let me get you a cup of coffee, you look ready to faint."

"No! I want some water! Ah! that is refreshing," she said, as she drained the glass Cassy had handed her. "Cassy, don't let any one come near me. I'm tired, and want to rest. I'll send for you, by and by."

But Cassy was not satisfied with her apparent calmness; she felt sure something disturbed her, and followed her to her

chamber. Mabel had thrown herself across the bed, and lay there moaning as if her heart would break, but at the sound of Cassy's voice she sprang up with a fierce look.

"How dare you come here, Catherine Keene? Do you think I will have you looking at my agony? What do you want, Anastasia?" she added, as her sister appeared at the door. "Go away! Go away both of you, and let me rest if I can."

They closed the door and went down stairs, Anastasia saying, with a sorrowful shaking of her head, "she feared the old fit was returning upon Mabel."

In the lower hall they met Henry Acton with Mr. Stillman. Anastasia advanced to welcome him, and then, as Catherine extended her hand, he took it, saying with a smile; "yours is a very familiar face, I have surely seen you before."

"I think not," she answered. "I do not remember ever to have met you, sir, but," she added, laughing, "that I know, will not prevent you from being a good friend, now. Come in here, Father Stillman, Mrs. Acton is in this room."

The old woman sat crouching in her usual position over the fire, mumbling some unintelligible words. She had been more than usually flighty that morning, would talk of nothing but Catherine Beaufort and the "days of old." Even when Mr. Stillman spoke to her, although she seemed to recognize him, she would still go on with her strange tales.

The priest shook his head a little sadly. "I am afraid, Henry, your grandmother will never recover her mind again. Has she been in this way long?"

"O yes, Father," he said, his dark, lustrous eyes filling with tears. "For a year at least, but she has had intervals of consciousness. Ever since she has been here though, her mind has dwelt on her young days. I think the place has some effect upon her."

"Doubtless," he said, and then turning to Cassy again, asked her name. "You are a Beaufort, I am sure—but of what branch of the family?"

"None, Father," Cassy answered, with a puzzled look, for the words recalled Mabel's expression. "I can't think how

it comes that I am taken for one of the family. I am not even related to them."

"Except by adoption," Anastasia said, fondly, for she loved Cassy quite as much as Mabel, in her own quiet way.

"Yes," Cassy went on. "I am only a poor girl, Father Stillman, to whom Mabel and Anastasia have been exceedingly kind. My father was Mr. Keene of Baltimore—a musician," she added a little proudly. "Perhaps you have heard of him."

"Robert Keene!" Mr. Stillman exclaimed, "I raised him, my child; he lived with me for many years, and was my pride, my blessing. I knew you and I ought to be friends." The old man's hands rested in benediction upon her head for a moment, and then he went on. "And your name is Catherine, is it not? He wrote to me at the time of your birth. I saw him but seldom after his marriage, but I knew he loved me still. Where is he, Catherine?"

"Dead!" It was all she could say—but a kind hand was extended in sympathy, and she bent down over it with a gush of tears. Anastasia and Henry stole out

of the room; they felt their presence was unneeded there.

"And your mother, Catherine?" the priest asked, presently.

"Dead, too," she answered, sobbing. "I am all alone. And before I knew Mabel and Anastasia, I was so desolate, Father Stillman! But they are very, very kind."

"They have a right to be, Catherine. Did you not know that your mother was their aunt? Catherine Beaufort the only daughter of old Hugh Beaufort?"

"*I* knew it," said a strange voice. And starting up, Cassy found herself in Mabel's arms. "I knew that you belonged to us—that you would be my friend, my guide. Darling, cousin Cassy.

Cassy was bewildered for a minute, the knowledge came so suddenly upon her.

"You must thank me, Miss Beaufort, for making you sure," said Father Stillman, offering his hand to Mabel.

"I do, indeed," she answered, and suddenly left them. She was back in a moment with a portrait of her aunt Catherine, which she placed in Cassy's hands.

"O mother! mother!" exclaimed the bewildered girl, as she gazed on the dear well-remembered features. "Mabel, why did you never show me this? I should have recognized it immediately, although it must have been taken when she was very young. She had a sadder face than this when she died."

"Ah! she had seen trouble, my dear," said Father Stillman.

"Yes," Mabel said. "Trouble enough to drive one mad. I think they told me old Hugh cursed her."

Cassy shuddered, and instinctively drew nearer to Father Stillman. Mabel went on, her face growing wild in its expression. "I think Satan must have dwelt in my grandfather's heart. I have heard such fearful things of him, that I cannot even bear to look at his portrait which hangs in the gallery. And I believe that he has left an inheritance of woe to his descendants. I believe a curse has fallen upon the Beauforts to rest there forever. O terrible curse! Ill fated race.

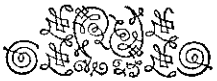
She dashed out of the room, and presently they saw her flying down the long

avenue on Zephyr's back. Cassy told Mr. Stillman of her strange freaks, and of her fears that she was at times insane. "Indeed, sir, she says herself that she is mad. I have noticed that only religious things can quiet her at all, and if she could be baptized, I think she would be better."

"And so I am a Beaufort, too!" she added, after a pause, "I wonder, if, indeed, the race is accursed?"

"Hush, Catherine! *you* must not have such foolish fancies."

"I will not, father; I will drive them away." And then with earnest simplicity she told of those dark, unfaithful years of her life for which she was now striving to atone; talked of her mother and her father, and the little sister who had been the sunshine of her life, of Mabel and Anastasia and Edward, until Mr. Stillman, smilingly told her he could stay no longer, and she must finish her tale some other time.



CHAPTER XIV.

THE PROPOSAL.

EDWARD did not visit the homestead for several days. He was restless and unhappy. That it was Mabel he had loved from the beginning he was satisfied now, although at times, he had from very weariness of her freaks and changeable words, turned to Anastasia with a feeling of relief. But now that the strang girl had so scornfully rejected his proffered love, nay, had even insisted upon his transferring it to her sister, he had little hope of ever winning her own heart. And with all his bitter disappointment was mingled some self-reproach, for he had indeed, as Mabel said, given Anastasia every reason to believe that he would one day ask her

hand in marriage. He had read, and walked, and rode with her, and worse than all, had with his insidious eloquence, perverted the gentle but weak mind. Anastasia was ready at any moment to follow blindly wherever he might lead her, ready to peril her soul, although, poor child, she scarce knew what a soul was, for one of the rare, brilliant smiles that at times lit up her cousin's dark, stern face. Edward had but one comfort; he was sure that Anastasia had no suspicion of his falsehood, and so he could easily continue in his old course. For with all his boasted intellect, a cloud of superstition darkened his mind, and he believed that he was bound to fulfil Basil Beaufort's request, bound to marry one of his fair daughters, or be the inheritor of some deep malediction.

And so, with this conviction strong upon him, he went down one day, after a week's absence, to see Anastasia. Mabel he knew was from home, for he saw her walk up the mountain path and pause at the plateau where she had first met Catherine Keene.

The family were in the large front room,

half-parlor, half-library, which they used more than any other; Henry Acton busy with the task Mabel had given him, his grandmother crouching as usual in the chimney corner, mumbling to herself, and Cassy close beside her, sewing. Anastasia had been sitting all the morning in the deep bay window, making a pretence of reading, but although her fair face was bent down over the book, and her eyes were resolutely fixed upon the page, she saw little that was written there. The hours passed by and not a leaf was turned, she sat there, pale and weary, looking as she had never looked before. Presently she raised her eyes, and with a flushed cheek, and a glad exclamation, put down her book, and went out. Edward was walking rapidly up the avenue. She met him at the door, and with the frankness of a child, told him how glad she was to see him.

"Where have you been, all this time, Edward?"

"Go and get your bonnet and shawl, and I'll tell you," he answered.

She went back for them, stopping at the parlor door to say to Catherine: "If

Mabel comes, tell her I have gone to walk with Edward," and was at his side again in a moment. He drew her arm within his own, and scarce conscious of where he was going, walked on.

"Well, Edward," she said, presently, "Where have you been, and what is the matter with you?"

"I have been home, trying to force my heart to forget one it loves too well," he answered, abruptly. Her face paled, and the hand that rested upon his arm trembled. But, heedless of it, he continued, "Anastasia, when your father wrote to mine, he begged that the two branches of the family might be united by marriage, and I need not tell you that to fulfil his desire is my greatest happiness. Will you be my wife, Anastasia?" He spoke hurriedly, almost with effort, but not in the eager, passionate way he had one little week before spoke to Mabel. His heart was not in his words, but Anastasia, guiltless herself, never suspected him of guile. And so, with happy tears she told him how well she loved him, how pleased Mabel would be. "But you must speak to her, dear Edward, she is so much better

than I, so much more gifted, that I would like to show her that much respect."

He shrank at the name, but promised. And then saying, with a quick gasp of relief, "well, I am satisfied now. Let us go back."

Before they reached the door, Mabel dashed by, kissing her hand gaily to them as she passed. Neither guessed she had heard all that had passed. "Anastasia," Edward said, as they paused on the steps, "I will not go in now—you must speak to Mabel for me. She is so wild and strange sometimes, I cannot get her to listen to me. Good-bye for a little while." She held his hand in both of hers for a moment, gazing up into his face with her very soul in her eyes, and then releasing him, went slowly in.

Again she sat in the window with down-bent head, but no longer sad. Happiness was flooding her heart, and lighting up her young face. And Mabel, too, seemed happy that day. She was gentler than usual, though restless, and many times in her in-coming and out-going, paused to gaze lovingly at the sweet picture Anastasia made, as she sat there in the bright

sunlight. But she gave her sister no opportunity through the day of telling her the sweet secret of her joy. She was apparently much occupied with household duties, got out her account book, and pored over the long columns of figures, heard Henry Acton's lessons, wound silk for Cassy, practised diligently a difficult piece of music which had been sent her, and all with the look of one bent upon something. So the day went by, and the cold night came on, and with it Edward Beaufort. Mabel greeted him very kindly, but very soon excused himself, and they saw her no more that evening.

Cassy remained at her work long after Henry and his grandmother had retired, for Anastasia kept her to tell Edward how they had discovered her relationship. His face clouded at the news, and his manner grew more haughty than ever, until at last, with a feeling of indignation, she left them and went up stairs. As usual, she opened Mabel's door to tell her good night.

Mabel was sitting before the fire, her long hair unbound and hanging about her, and her face bent down to her knees.

"Dear Mabel, what is the matter?"

Cassy asked, coming and laying her hand gently upon the down-bent head.

"Nothing," she answered, without looking up. "My head aches—that is all. Good night, Cassy."

"Good night, Mabel," was answered, by a lingering voice. "Let me stay with you until Anastasia comes, won't you?"

"Where is she?"

"Down stairs, talking to Edward."

Mabel sprang to her feet at the name, and then sat down in a chair close by. She had been on the rug. "I'm tired of my lowly position," she said, laughing. "Go to bed, Cassy, and don't make such a baby of me—a little headache is nothing."

Presently she was alone again, and in her former position, only now she rocked to and fro, and moaned. Near midnight Anastasia came up and found her so, but she was too happy, and too used to Mabel's capricious doings to think any thing amiss. So she sat down beside her sister, and told her all that had happened; how much Edward loved her, how happy she would be. "Are you not glad, Mabel?" she asked. "You must tell me, dear sister, for I would not be so happy, if you were not."

"Yes, I am glad," she said, slowly.

"I knew you would be!" Anastasia said, and then, nestling up to her sister, gave herself up to pleasant dreams.

"When is this marriage to take place?" Mabel asked, after a long silence.

"I hardly know yet, sister; Edward wishes it as soon as possible."

"Indeed! And so you will leave me, Asie?" Mabel said, bitterly.

"No, no! Mabel, how can you think so? That was not in our bargain. I made Edward promise to come here and live with us."

If she had seen Mabel's face at the moment, she would have been convinced *that* arrangement was anything but pleasant to her. But she made no objection.

"Go to bed, now, Asie. I have some writing to do. Good night, darling." She kissed her, and going into the library, brought back the large, dark book in which was inscribed "Legends of the Beauforts," and opening her desk began to write in it. Anastasia was soon asleep, but Mabel wrote on until day dawned, and then went to take her usual morning ride.

CHAPTER XV.

AN UNEXPECTED VISIT.

EDWARD BEAUFORT had passed a restless night. Strange voices had been talking to him in the wind, strange forms had glided all night long about the gloomy rooms. He had never before felt so lonely, so awe-struck, and many a time he would have prayed, had not his proud heart rebelled against it. Morning came at last, and with it, Mabel. He had just gone down to the breakfast-room, and was standing before the fire, when she entered quietly, without knocking.

"I thought I should find you here," she said, going to his side. "I want to speak to you about some important business, Edward."

With grave, ceremonious politeness he placed a chair for her, and saying he was "highly honored," and "would gladly listen," and other meaningless things, waited for her to begin. A scornful smile flashed over her face at the words, but her voice and manner were kinder than usual.

"It will be a strange story for you to hear, perhaps," she said. "You know, Edward, that our fathers, Basil and Cyril Beaufort had an only sister Catherine, who married against her father's will, and was consequently disinherited. That, at least, is the report, but my own opinion is, that old Hugh Beaufort had another reason. Catherine was a Catholic, and that he could not and would not stand. And so she, who had been reared so delicately, was sent forth into the cold world, to fare as best she might. As long as her husband lived, I believe no great misfortune came upon them, but when he died, her sorrows began and lasted until her own death put an end to them. The only surviving child of this union is now with me—Cassy Keene—you had guessed as much, I am sure!"

She glanced up into his face to see the effect of her words. But he did not suffer it to betray him, and merely answered: "Anastasia told me of it last night."

"Yes! And how we discovered it of course, also. I felt from the very hour I first saw her, that she was something to me. Well, Edward, the business part of the story is this: you and I must repair the injustice which has been done. We must give Cassy the property which of right belonged to her mother. Old Hugh Beaufort had no right to cut her off in his will, and both Basil and Cyril were heartless in executing so unjust an instrument. Asie and I will do our part."

She paused for his answer, but he gave none for several moments.

"But where are your proofs, Mabel?" he asked, finally. "It will not do merely to assert her claim. No one will take your womanly enthusiastic feeling for proof of her relationship."

She made a great effort to keep down the rising storm of passion. Something of it flashed in her face as she answered: "I knew, Mr. Beaufort, that *you* would ask

more, and so I have provided for it. Mr. Stillman knew Cassy's father very well, he has letters which speak of the marriage, and more conclusive still, he is sure that it is registered in the old book which belonged to the little church once in Woodville. This evening I will probably have it to show you, if you will honor me with a visit."

She arose to go, but he detained her. "There is another subject to be discussed, Mabel. This marriage of mine. You consent to it, of course?"

She laughed. "How foolish to ask. Don't you know it is the dearest wish of my heart?"

He was piqued at her calmness. He had hoped to see some sign of emotion, for there still lingered a feeling that he was not indifferent to Mabel. But for once in her life she had completely mastered her impulses, and neither by look nor word betrayed herself. She knew the unwonted control could not last long, and hurried to take her leave. Edward helped her into the saddle, bowed with stately dignity, and turned back to the house as soon as she

was fairly started. One thing he was determined upon—that Cassy should never have an acre of the land of the Beauforts if he could help it. But that was not in his power.

It was well for Mabel that she had something to engross her mind, and keep her from thinking of her sister's approaching marriage. Father Stillman, who was now to remain in Woodville, searched diligently for the register. But it was some time before it could be found. So many years had passed since a priest had resided in Woodville, that the books had been taken to a neighboring mission for safe keeping. Finally it came to light—the marriage was there, also the baptisms of all the Beauforts from Reginald down to Catherine.

It was one evening, late in January, that Father Stillman took the book to the homestead. Mabel triumphantly pointed out to Edward, who was there, the long-looked-for entry.

His face flushed up, and he put it away, saying, angrily, "Mabel, you are determined to annoy me as much as possible, I see. I never disputed the marriage of Catherine Beaufort and Robert Keene; but

how do you know that Miss Cassy is their child?"

Cassy fortunately was not in the room; she had been suffering all day with the headache, and now was sleeping it off. Father Stillman answered, gently: "The resemblance to her mother is too strong to suffer a doubt, and besides I have letters and papers to prove it." He had taken a package from his pocket and would have placed it in Edward's hand, but Mabel prevented him.

"No," she exclaimed, passionately, "he shall not see them. Believe what you please, and do what you please, Edward Beaufort, Cassy shall never owe any thing to you. I will provide for her. Asie, how can you love so base a heart?"

Anastasia was frightened at the abrupt question, and Edward looked white with anger. Father Stillman put his hand gently upon Mabel's arm, and the light touch seemed to subdue her.

"Indeed, sir," she said, "it is enough to try any one's patience."

She went to the piano, and played the rest of the evening to put her in a good humor with herself, she said.

CHAPTER XVI.

MABEL'S LEGENDS.

CATHERINE had a pleasant time in those days. Father Stillman was stationed in Woodville, and she spent much of her time with him. On the outskirts of the town was the little church, which had so long been unoccupied. It had been sadly neglected, and looked little like a fitting resting-place for the Most High, but it was soon repaired and fitted up neatly. After Mabel had once arranged the property to her satisfaction, she, too, entered heart and soul into all Father Stillman's plans. She and Anastasia deeded to Cassy a very pretty place near the old homestead—the income of which would have supported a

much more extravagant person than Cassy, but there was an express stipulation that she was to remain with the sisters as long as both or either of them lived.

This weighty affair once dismissed, Mabel was free. The preparations for Anastasia's wedding were making, but that seemed to trouble her little—she left the lovers to themselves, evidently to Edward's delight. For somehow a strange feeling had come over him in regard to her. He felt awed in her presence—almost afraid to play his part. It was really that he was doing—for he did not love Anastasia. Poor child! She little suspected that.

Once more the Holy Sacrifice was offered daily in Woodville—once more the sweet hymns of Catholic devotion floated out from the little church. Mabel had a small organ built and placed there, and even when there were no devotions in the church, she was there making wonderful music. It was strange, what rich, powerful strains she drew from this instrument. Sometimes a tone of the old wild

melancholy surged through them, but oftenest they were sweetly plaintive or bursting forth in rich triumph.

A school was established too, and she and Cassy spent part of each day in teaching, so that her time was fully occupied. That, indeed, seemed to be the end of her desires.

"O don't talk to me about it," she said once, when Cassy asked something of Anastasia's marriage. "I don't want to think of it—only let me do what I can while the time lasts." What time she did not say, but as spring drew near, she grew more restless and fitful. One day she and Cassy were walking home from the town. It was not long after Mabel had been baptized, and although a sweet tranquillity had for a time settled upon her, this evening she seemed very sad. The air was beginning to feel very spring-like, the trees were ready to bud, the sky had a soft hazy flush, and as the sun went down a golden radiance lingered over the mountain tops.

"This world is very beautiful, Cassy," Mabel said, presently. "It is hard to

part with life and all its bright visions, is it not?"

"Yes, indeed," she answered. "And but for the brighter future, we would scarce be willing to leave this earth."

"The brighter future!" Mabel repeated, with a sigh; "will it really be that?" And she threw off her bonnet and gazed around her with the look of one saying farewell to something very dear. "Cassy," she continued, "when I am dead, I want you to remain with Anastasia. I want you to try and save her from Edward's pernicious influences. O, why did we ever meet with him! He has brought bitter sorrow to me, and I fear he will bring it to Asie, too—my darling little sister! Cassy, you must take care of her."

"As much care as I can, Mabel—but you will live many years to watch over her. What makes you speak so of death, as if it was very near?"

"It is near. Don't you know that Edward and Anastasia are to be married next week, and at every bridal of a Beaufort there is a death?"

"Hush! hush, Mabel! don't let those wild fancies trouble you again."

"But they are not fancies, they are realities, sad realities. Have I never told you those Legends of the Beauforts?" Her face was flushing, and the wild light which had for a while slumbered, again awakened in her eyes. "Come! Let us hurry home, and I will read them to you this evening."

She grasped Cassy's hand, and walked on rapidly and in silence until they were home. Then she led her up into the library where Cassy had never been but once, for it was always locked, and Mabel kept the key.

"There! Sit down and listen!" She placed her just opposite the portrait of Hugh Beaufort, and then putting back one of the curtains and reaching down the dark, heavily-clasped book she had shown Edward the first evening he visited them, sat down beside her and began to read in Greek. Presently Cassy laughed. "Why, Mabel, I will not be a bit the wiser for all your reading, if you go on so."

"Ah! I had forgotten. Well, then, you know of course, that the Beauforts were originally from England. There is still an estate in Devonshire which belongs to

some branch of the family, and it was there all I am going to tell you happened. It is the same old history over again, a history so like ours here in America, that I sometimes fancy it must surely mean us. But I suppose not." A weary, puzzled look swept over her face; she was evidently troubled, and uncertain, and after a moment's thought, closed the book, saying, impetuously, "What is the use of going over the whole rigmarole, when I can tell it in a dozen sentences."

"Don't tell it all if you don't feel like it, Mabel," Cassy said, for she did not like the expression that was settling upon her face. It was too like that which she had known in the first days of their acquaintance.

"Yes, but I must. In this old English domain once dwelt a Beaufort, proud and cold and stern as my grandfather, Hugh. People said he cared for neither friend nor foe, not even for wife or child. For these last, indeed, he showed little affection, and it was even whispered about that many a time he was cruel. Be that as it may, neither neglect nor cruelty chilled the

warm heart or dimmed the lustre of Emily's beauty. She grew up bright and lovely as day, while her mother, poor creature, pined away. And then, Cassy, what could the lonely girl do but love, as all her sex must, sooner or later. It is the old, old story over again, and why need I repeat it? She loved and married, and her father raved and stormed, and——" here Mabel bent forward, fixing her wild eyes upon Cassy's face, and lowering her voice to an awing whisper—"and then, Cassy, he cursed her. O, frightful! And, Cassy, the gentle mother died the very night her ill-fated child was married, and with her last breath she prophesied that upon every marriage of a Beaufort there should also be a death. Death and a Bridal! And ever since, Cassy, that prophecy has been verified. There was Alice Beaufort; 'queenly, gifted Alice,' as the old legend calls her, who fled from her home with a wandering musician, and only returned to die on the night her fair young sister stood at the altar in bridal array. She brought with her an only son, and after giving him to her sister, disappeared, and the next

day they found her lying stark and cold, out on the desolate moor, her once beautiful face, wan and pinched, and the once queenly form almost a skeleton. She had suffered for long, long years, perhaps.

"And Cassy, since I have been here, I have discovered that it was on the very day my father married that Cyril Beaufort was dashed to pieces down the precipice. Is it not fearful to have such a curse hanging over us?"

Mabel had been talking rapidly and wildly, and seemed only to pause to take breath. "You see, Cassy," she went on presently, "I cannot escape the doom. Anastasia will be the bride, and so I *must* be the corpse. O Cassy! Cassy, it is a terrible thing to go down into the silent grave so young, to leave the beautiful earth and the glad spring time, and for what? Perchance there is no future, no God, no nothing. Perchance I may have to lie down in that narrow resting-place and moulder away like a worm, or the autumn's withered leaves." She started up, and walked to and fro with rapid, uncer-

tain steps, wringing her hands and moaning piteously.

Cassy knew not what to say or do, and sat silent and bewildered. She was convinced all that Mabel had told her was but the coinage of her own heated fancy; but how convince Mabel herself that no such frightful doom awaited her? It seemed a task beyond her powers, for now the really insane girl was growing fearfully excited.

"Do you know that I love Edward Beaufort, Cassy?" she asked, abruptly, stopping before her. "He might have saved me from the doom, but then, Asie, my pet, my darling would have been the victim. I love them both so dearly. O Cassy, what shall I do? I cannot die! I will not die! So young and beautiful. Am I not beautiful?" She was really that spite of the fire-like glow in her eyes. A bright thought flashed upon Cassy.

"Perhaps, after all, Mabel," she said, soothingly, "perhaps, after all, *I* may be the victim. You know I am a Beaufort, also.

Mabel looked up suddenly. "Strange

I never thought of that! No! no!" she exclaimed, directly, "it must not be." And in a moment her arms were closely folded about Cassy, and she was telling her she loved her too.

It was well for both of them that Anastasia just then came in search of them.

"Well! I declare you two are strange girls. Come down stairs, and don't be moping here in the dark." For the short spring twilight was deepening into night. They following her silently, only Mabel whispering, when they got on the main stairway, "Cassy, for your life do not betray me."

CHAPTER XVII.

THE LAST OF THE RACE.

THE bridal day came at last. Anastasia was very beautiful in her snowy robes, the delicate veil floating like a fleecy cloud over her radiant head, and the fair spring flowers nestling lovingly amid its folds. Mabel gazed upon her as if drinking in her beauty, and then turning to Catherine, said, with a sigh, "it is well. Better that she should live than I."

It was the first time since their interview in the library, that she had even alluded to the legend, and now with the single remark she seemed to give her thoughts to other things. All day long she was busy making preparations for the evening *fête*. The long-closed study of

old Hugh Beaufort was thown open and decked with garlands of flowers and evergreens, for Mabel insisted that the marriage ceremony should be performed there. Colored lamps were hung in gay festoons from the trees in the garden, long tables were spread out on the lawn and in quiet groves near by, for all the villagers were invited, and there was to be feasting among high and low. To Catherine it was all like a bright vision of fairy land, when the soft May twilight came down and the lamps were lit, and the gaily-dressed crowds wandered in and out. Mabel was every where, now flying like a spirit down the long walks, warbling a song, now seated for an instant in the midst of some laughing group, and then at her sister's side, whispering words of tenderness never to be forgotten. Late in the evening all who could get into the library were there eagerly watching for the bride's entrance. She came, leaning upon her sister's arm, one pale the other flushed with a wild, feverish beauty, but both surpassingly lovely. Edward came forward to meet them. Then Mabel released Anastasia

after a long passionate kiss, and the words were pronounced which bound the two indissolubly. For a moment after it was over, Mabel looked like one stunned and stupefied by some sudden blow, and then the old mad fire flashed up in her eyes, the old wild tone returned to her voice, and going down to the piano, she poured forth song after song, of such passionate pathos that none who heard her ever forgot them. Hour after hour passed by, and the feasting and gaiety went on. Mabel grew pale and faint as the evening wore on, and begged to be excused, but she would not suffer Catherine to accompany her. "It is nothing but fatigue," she said, and went slowly out into the night air. No one knew where she went but Cassy, who anxiously watched her and saw that she took the path leading to Edward's Eyrie. A half hour afterwards a wild cry from those without startled those within the house, and going out a scene met their eyes which horrified all—Edward's home was a blazing pyre. From bottom to top, tower and arch and battlement, all wooden structures, burnt with

fearful rapidity, and most frightful of all, at the highest window of the eastern tower a white garment fluttered out, as if some one was standing upon the sill within. "Mabel! Mabel!" shrieked Cassy, the frightful thought flashed upon her that the crazy girl was destroying her own life, and as the name passed her lips, Anastasia fell senseless into her husband's arms. Wild confusion now reigned, where but an hour before laughter and song and mirth prevailed. They bore the pale bride to her room, and leaving her with her husband went to stay, if possible, the flames and save Mabel. Terror lent Cassy wings; she flew up the steep mountain path and gained the plateau just in time to see the walls of the burning edifice fall with a deafening crash, and hear a wild cry go up seemingly from the very heart of the flames—"Death and a bridal!" It is the Beaufort's doom."

It seemed so indeed. For when Cassy went sorrowing back, she found Anastasia dying. She had broken a blood vessel, and no human skill could save her now. The day was dawning, and as the glorious

sun came up from behind the mountain tops, Anastasia's little "lamp of life went out."

Edward spoke no word that day, but watched all the preparations for burial with a cold exterior more terrible than any expression of woe.

When evening came, the fair corpse lay in bridal robes, ready for the grave. It was a cold embrace for one so young to go to. Busy feet had all day long been going in and out, for the whole neighborhood had been searching for the lost Mabel's remains, but no traces of her had yet been discovered, and now when the night was come, silence deep, unbroken, fell upon the desolate homestead. On the mountain terrace, smoke went up from the smouldering ruins of Edward's home, and in the valley below, his fair bride lay in the arms of death, enough, surely, to make one like him, who had no belief in Providence, exclaim: "Fate, thou hast done thy worst."

It was near midnight. The cousins were both watching beside the corpse, Cassy kneeling with her face hid in her

hands, and Edward slowly pacing to and fro, when they were startled by a gush of music, coming up soft and sweet from the parlor below. Cassy sprang to her feet, exclaiming: "Thank God! That is Mabel," and hurried down. Yes, it was really Mabel, seated at the piano.

"Well," she asked, gaily, as Cassy entered the room; "where is my new brother, now?"

"O, Mabel! Mabel! How could you frighten us so? Where have you been? Do you not know——" she stopped abruptly.

"Know what?" Mabel asked, but before Cassy could answer, Edward was beside them, saying bitterly, "come and see your handiwork, Mabel Beaufort."

He led her silently up to the study, for it was there Anastasia lay, and pointing to the white, cold face and the folded hands, bade her see there the consequences of her mad freak.

Cry after cry of the wildest anguish burst from the poor girl's lips. "O fate! O cruel fate! Why did I not die and save her! You see, Cassy, it is all true.

There must be a death as well as a bridal, and because I, poor coward, shrank from my doom, the inexorable fates have taken her. My darling! My beautiful Asie!"

And so she raved for hours. No one could soothe her. When morning came, she fled away, and they saw her no more for many days.

When Anastasia was buried, Edward left the place. He could not bear to live there longer, he said, and so Cassy was left alone in the old homestead with Mrs. Acton and Henry, for Mabel could not be prevailed upon to remain more than an hour or two at a time. She wandered about the mountains, and the lonely grave yard in the gorge, where they had buried Anastasia; sometimes singing gaily, at others wailing as if her heart was breaking. Occasionally she would return home, gentle and quiet enough, but oftenest in some wild transport, flitted through the house, or played music, strange and weird as the wind that sighed in the forest trees. When her fits were at the worst, she gasped for the free air, and as Cassy would never consent to have her confined, she

would ride headlong wherever she willed, until her strength was exhausted, and she would return pale and weary, to lie down at the foot of the altar in the church, and sleep peacefully as a child. It was always there her mad wanderings ended, always at the foot of the cross that reason returned. In one of her lucid intervals Cassy learnt from her that she had intentionally set fire to Edward's house, intending to perish in the flames, but that the sight appalled her, and she hid in the neighboring thicket, little thinking that Anastasia would die of fright, and thus seemingly verify her own wild fancy. The life she now led was too trying a one on mind and body to last long, and God in his mercy soon gave her rest.

After that Cassy was more lonely than ever, but she led a quiet life, doing all the good in her power, and praying constantly for Edward's conversion.

Old Mrs. Acton lingered for many months, and then died so gently and peacefully, it did not seem like death at all. Her grandson went into the world, to carve out his own destiny, and to do his allotted work.

And so the years went by, Cassy growing more lonely as she grew older, but still working bravely on in the sphere Providence had placed her. The poor and the sick blessed her, and the sweet consciousness of duty performed, rendered her life less lonely than many imagined it

Late one winter evening she returned from a visit to the village and was surprised to see some one sitting on the front steps of the house. As she drew near, she saw it was a man scantily clothed, and looking thin and pinched with cold. Thinking it some applicant for charity, she kindly invited him in. He merely bowed his head, without speaking, and followed her in. Was it the sudden change in the atmosphere that made him feel faint that he trembled so, and grasped a chair for support?

"So Cassy, you do not recognize me?" He spoke the words slowly. She sprang to his side, and then for the first time suspected who he was. Yes, it was Edward Beaufort, but so changed it was no wonder Cassy knew him not. He was thin and pale, with little of the old, haughty Beau

fort look in his face, little of the cold, sneering tone in his voice.

Cassy could scarce command words to welcome him, she was so pleased and astonished. "Cassy," he said, after sitting a long while silent—"Cassy, I have been here all day, wandering about the place, bidding a last farewell to every spot once dear to me. I will never return again."

"But why, Edward?" she asked. "Why not stay?"

He shook his head, sadly. "I must do penance in sackcloth and ashes for the rest of my days. See, Cassy, I have found a treasure since we parted." He held up a rosary before her, and a smile more beautiful than had ever before irradiated his face, now parted the wan lips.

She asked no questions now. She knew he was safe, and so with but a passing emotion, she bade him farewell when he left her. They never met again on earth.

Time passed by; the little town grew into a flourishing city, changes crept over the face of the land, and when the appointed hour came, Cassy too went from the world, peacefully as a summer day,

leaving behind the fragrance of her virtues, like the lingering perfume of flowers. And thus perished the race of the Beauforts in America—thus the old homestead passed into the hands of strangers.

THE END.