

# UNFORGIVEN.

A Novel.

By BERRIEDALE.

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## UNFORGIVEN.

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THE bright winter sunshine streamed in through heavy crimson curtains, the piled-up blocks of Cannel coal made fiery tongues through the polished bars, and crackled and leaped with subdued roar up the yawning chimney, and the paler rays of the sun, mingling with the red and yellow lights of the fire's dancing flames, shed an inviting warmth and cast a cheerful glow upon polished mahogany, sank deep into the warm-hued carpet, and flickered in the mirrored surfaces of the silver breakfast service.

Eleven o'clock this bright cheery morning, and this cosy breakfast room in Mr. Bell's house still awaited the ladies of the family. Mr. Bell had long since taken his solitary meal, ungraced by wife's presence, and departed to his office, for the busy merchant in those days, if he would be prosperous, left the business of laziness to the female members of his household. Mr. Bell's family at this time consisted, besides himself and wife, of his wife's widowed sister, Mrs. Mortimer, their niece, Clarine Rivington, and his ward, Isabel Holmes. During her widowhood Mrs. Mortimer had kept house for her brother, the Rev. Mr.

Rivington, father to Clarine; but a few months previous to the opening of this narrative, Mr. Rivington's health, overtaxed by arduous pulpit duties, had suddenly given way, and medical orders had been imperative for a sea voyage and entire change of climate. The Bells, for the sake of a gay household, were always glad to have a large family around them, and so had insisted upon Mr. Rivington's closing his house and allowing Mrs. Mortimer and Clarine to remain with them during his absence, and Mr. Rivington, glad to set his mind entirely at ease regarding his little family, was easily induced to avail himself of Mr. and Mrs. Bell's urgent and hospitable solicitations. Isabel Holmes was the orphan daughter of an old and esteemed friend of Mr. Bell's, who, in dying, had left his only child and her fortune to his guardianship. She had been an inmate of his family about two years.

The silvery chiming of the mantel clock began its delicate pealing of the passing hour, and ere its last musical stroke had died away in the ringing echo of its own cadence the pleasing stillness of the room was disturbed by the entrance of bustling, active Mrs. Bell, who, once astir, was the busiest body in the house. Going up to the mantel she pulled the bell cord, and while waiting for the servant to answer the summons to order breakfast, she discovered a vase on the mantel turned back foremost, and with a mental criticism upon the stupidity of servants in general, and this one in particular, she set it right. She also detected one of the curtains looped all awry, and then, by a powerful effort of imagination, managed to see one or two flecks upon the polished silver of the table service. Then Mrs. Mortimer presently entered and cheerily bade "good morning," and before the breakfast was fairly served the two young ladies made their languid appearance.

"How refreshing this delicious coffee is when one wakes with a dull and heavy head!" remarked Isabel, as she in-

haled the fragrant aroma, and daintily sipped the creamy coffee beading the cup with its rich foam.

"Do you know that I was so hungry," said Clarine, in smiling complaint, "that I woke from my last sleep, dreaming of being at a sumptuous repast. If I had not been in such a famishing state I might have lain till mid-day."

"I thought you were taking to your beefsteak with unusual relish, Pet," said Mrs. Bell; "you seem anxious to prove that a good appetite is a good seasoner."

"As good as a spicy remark in a dull conversation," returned Clarine.

"How elegantly the ladies were dressed last night," observed Mrs. Mortimer. "Some of the most elegant toilets I have seen this winter."

"The entire affair was on a superb scale," remarked Isabel. "Mrs. Wilson always does give such agreeable balls."

"Yes; it is not often that Mrs. Wilson emerges from the quiet routine of her domestic life, but when she does give an entertainment it vies with the most brilliant of the season," returned Mrs. Mortimer.

"But the unpleasant feature of her entertainments is, that one is obliged to meet such a mixture of persons there," said Mrs. Bell, in a fault-finding tone.

"Not obliged, Helen," replied Mrs. Mortimer, with a smile, "for those who do not approve of this mixture, as you call it, can stay away, and that, too, without need of self reproach for paining Mrs. Wilson's heart."

"That is another of your favorite sarcastic slurs," returned Mrs. Bell, angrily. "You know very well that rather than offend an old friend like Mrs. Wilson, I would go to her house under any circumstances; and, of course, one always meets a few of one's own exclusive circle."

"Which is very consoling," observed Mrs. Mortimer, helping herself from the inviting dish of delicate brown



toast soaking in its tempting hot cream. "You see, the trouble about this mixture of society at Mrs. Wilson's and the cause of all the sore complaints we fashionables have against her, is, that she abjures all those people whose reputation rests upon their devotion to fashion, and gathers about her rather those whom she esteems for their personal qualities, or who have distinguished themselves by their meritorious deeds, or their learning, or by rare accomplishments, and allows merely a sufficient sprinkling of fashion to give coloring. You know her favorite phrase for the votaries of fashion, 'insipid fools, or contemptible knaves,' for she contends that to be an exclusive devotee to fashionable life one must be either without head or without heart."

"Wherein she is more than half right," suddenly observed Clarine, brightening up under the consoling influences of satisfied hunger.

"Take care, Puss," cried Mrs. Bell, in good humored warning, "it does not do for a beauty and a belle to rail against her own party. And you forget, in upholding Mrs. Wilson, that by her peculiar independence of ideas she merely draws down upon herself the ridicule and censure of those whose opinions are worthy of attention."

The air of judicial wisdom with which Mrs. Bell gave utterance to these last words was really majestic. She was well nigh confounded, though, when Clarine replied with unexpected spirit:

"Fortunately, then, for Mrs. Wilson's independent ideas, her social position is so secure and indisputable that she can well afford to laugh at the censure of those whom she—despises." Clarine blushed as she spoke the last word, for as it was upon her lips, it suddenly occurred to her that her aunt might possibly consider it a personal reflection; so she hastened to add more lightly, "I know that if ever I am married, and have a household of my own to

order as I wish, I shall adopt some of Mrs. Wilson's strange views, by choosing my own society and ordering my own leisure; for I own that I am heartily tired of being plunged in this constant round of fashionable dissipation every hour of the day and night, not a moment to stop and breathe a healthier atmosphere of rest, not a moment free from this mad intoxication for one sober, serious reflection upon one's self, and with never a thought given to ask of God the aim and end of our life."

This sudden and enthusiastic outburst merely provoked an indulgent smile, for they were accustomed to similar torrents of eloquence from the impulsive Clarine whenever anything aroused her youthful impetuosity.

Mrs. Bell gazed at her animated niece with fond admiration, for let the truth be known, this niece was her special pet unto whom she gave admiring adherence, in sum total. She smiled in good-humored tolerance at Clarine's impassioned vehemence, and did not dream of attaching any special sense to an enthusiasm which was perhaps very pretty language, but could not possibly have any application to her own individual conscience. So she replied very pleasantly: "It is to be hoped, Puss, that in this ideal household you are prospecting, you will at least never cast discredit upon your own careful education by admitting any who are not thoroughly genteel and aristocratic."

"There! I knew they would come at last," exclaimed Clarine, laughing merrily. "Genteel, aristocratic and—stylish," add the third, Aunt Helen; "those are your three pet terms, the harp strings upon which is sounded many a tune. Oh, Aunt Helen!" she continued, with mock pathos, "I fear that even my ideal household can never hope to be so perfectly organized as to ward off your fastidious criticism, and I can only trust humbly that I may never incur the fearful penalty of losing entirely your discriminating patronage."

"Don't be ridiculous, Clarine," returned Mrs. Bell, vexed in spite of herself at her niece's playful raillery.

"Then don't set the example yourself," retorted Mrs. Mortimer. "The truth is, Helen, we have heard so many changes rung upon 'genteel,' 'aristocratic' and 'stylish,' that one can't be blamed for ridiculing them. You are always fault-finding with people because they are not sufficiently the one or the other. You had better draw your ideal of perfection at once, and associate with no one until you meet him; for even in your select clique none of us have yet encountered him."

"You forget the doctor," said Clarine, with a mischievous glance at the speaker. "No need to trouble Aunt Helen for the drawing, when we have the original so constantly before us."

Even Mrs. Bell, though irritated and annoyed, had to join in the laugh raised by Clarine's merciless rally.

"Come, Puss, hush that little impudent tongue of yours," she said, more mildly than could reasonably have been expected of her. In fact, like most persons endowed with a more exalted opinion of themselves than of anybody else, Mrs. Bell had an inordinate fear of ridicule, yet not being gifted with a tongue of witty sarcasm, she had only two weapons at her disposal for repelling such attacks, anger and forbearance. To her sister and others she usually retorted with the former defence, but to Clarine's lively assaults she only accorded a laugh at the ready wit displayed, and seldom defended herself, unless, as in the present case, by a mild command imposing silence. Mrs. Mortimer, not feeling herself included under the ban of silence, quietly took up the cue dropped by Clarine, and as though the two had entered into a secret conspiracy to tantalize poor Mrs. Bell this morning, pursued the provoking theme:

"True, I did forget the doctor. They say the most

valued treasures lie buried deepest in their mother earth. That must be the reason, then, why Dr. Tillman's perfections have hitherto lain concealed from the common gaze and only been discovered by a few privileged patients," and at the very delicate emphasis upon the two last words Mrs. Bell's eyes flashed angrily. "I am willing to confess my own inability to perceive his many remarkable virtues, though I have no doubt of their existence, for Helen endorses him, and we all know that her opinion is infallible."

Mrs. Bell could stand these repeated charges no longer. With wrath fully aroused, she replied:

"You may say what you like against Dr. Tillman, but you will find very few men like him."

"Thank heaven for it," retorted Clarine.

At this they all laughed, which was very fortunate, for, as is usually the case in discussions where sarcastic repartee is the main element, temper was fast obtruding itself, and a good laugh is of advantage in restoring the happy equilibrium of all parties. Mrs. Bell afterwards proceeded more calmly in her defence of the doctor.

"Well, you can find no fault with him, at all events, even if you are blind to his good qualities. He is not only a very skilful physician, but a perfect gentleman, and as you must admit, highly educated, and if you don't like aristocratic, refined; and though I don't myself know how it is, yet I can talk to him by the hour and yet feel interested."

"Really, there is nothing surprising in that," began Clarine, silence having restored her courage to renew the strife, "for I should be curious to know whom it would be that you could not talk to by the hour, Aunt Helen. I really do believe that one might dress up an automaton, and in a properly darkened room you would never know the difference, but would talk away to it, and doubtless

think it a very genteel, stylish, aristocratic, and altogether a highly interesting person, worthy even of your patronage."

This stinging sarcasm, and the satirical emphasis Clarine laid upon her concluding words, was more than Mrs. Bell's tolerance could endure, even from Clarine. With face flushed angrily she opened her lips to take the offender to task, but at this moment Isabel, who had kept very quiet hitherto, partly indifferent, partly amused, now, though innocent of good intentions, came to Clarine's timely aid.

"Do hear the belligerents!" she laughingly exclaimed, before Mrs. Bell could speak. "Whenever you are together, there is always a war of words. And yet you never seem to get angry with one another, but are delightfully good-natured, no matter what is said."

Whereupon Mrs. Bell inwardly congratulated herself upon her commendable self-control in not having given hasty vent to her wrath.

"There is no use in getting angry in an argument, for then your opponent has all the advantage." Clarine said this with, it must be allowed, an aggravating calmness.

"Beauty turned philosopher!" remarked Mrs. Mortimer, accompanying her irony with a fond smile, for she, too, loved her niece well.

"By the bye, Pet, what do you intend to do with your new conquest?" asked Mrs. Bell. "Is he to receive no more mercy than his unfortunate predecessors?"

"Whom do you mean?" queried Clarine.

"Why, Mr. Bronson, of course; Mr. Curtiss' and Mr. Seymour's friend, to whom they gave such especial, and for them, unusually marked introduction. I noticed how very devotedly he lingered near your side all the evening, as though, poor man, he already found life only in breathing the atmosphere near you."

"Humph!" was Clarine's reply, with a pretty shrug, as though such critical tenacity of life were not totally unprecedented in her physiological experiments.

"Will you never tire of a coquette's life, and content yourself with a husband, Puss?" asked Mrs. Bell, with a smile of great leniency toward the charming coquette. "I should pity Mr. Bronson if he is to share the fate of all your unhappy captives, for I must say I think he is deserving of better treatment. I was very much pleased with him. He is certainly a very agreeable gentleman, handsome, and as Mr. Seymour vouches, quite wealthy; really very aristocratic, and with very elegant manners."

"How many compliments did the fortunate man pay for all that distinguished praise?" Mrs. Mortimer asked, with an ironical smile.

"Now, Julia, talk as usual, just like a fool!" retorted Mrs. Bell, her pent up ire this time finding full and satisfactory vent. "Your remarks to me are not only excessively silly, but very impertinent, I can tell you. I am astonished that a woman of your age has no more sense than to make such silly and nonsensical speeches."

"I did not intend to be so severe and—silly," returned Mrs. Mortimer, taking her sister's accusations very complacently. "I am really very glad you found our new friend so agreeable. I did not notice him much myself."

"Oh no! of course you did not notice him," said Mrs. Bell, with indignant emphasis. "You never notice anybody any more. And I must say, Julia, that your indifference to everybody lately, is insufferable. Since your engagement to Mr. Seymour, you are so bound heart and soul to him that you have neither eyes nor ears for anybody else. Such infatuation in a woman of your age is ridiculous."

"Patience, Helen!" cried Mrs. Mortimer, in laughing remonstrance; "patience, I beg you, and endure with my

infatuation a little while longer. Do let me enjoy the presence of my future spouse while we are yet lovers. Perhaps," she added, glancing pointedly at her indignant sister, "perhaps after we have been married as long as you have, I shall have more heart to notice the attractions of other men than my husband."

"That is more of your sarcastic impertinence," Mrs. Bell began, angrily, but how much further utterance her just ire would have found, it is impossible to say, for at this moment a servant entered and presented a card.

"A morning call so early!" she exclaimed. "Oh, it is Mrs. Livingstone! Are you coming, girls?" she asked, as she and Mrs. Mortimer left the table and reached the doorway.

"No," replied Isabel, hastily; "we don't want to hear her gossip. We have something else to talk about."

"I think, Isabel, that you might show sufficient respect to Mr. Rashleigh's sister, to see her when she comes to my house," returned Mrs. Bell, in a serious, displeased voice.

"I don't care for Mr. Rashleigh's sister, and I will not trouble myself to see her," Isabel replied, haughtily, and Mrs. Bell, knowing from dearly bought experience that remonstrance with Isabel was useless, urged her no further.

## CHAPTER II.

AS soon as they were left alone, Isabel turned to Clarine, and, with sudden animation in voice and feature, asked if she had chanced to notice her appearance when she alighted from the carriage and entered the house the previous evening. Clarine answered: "Yes, that she believed she had glanced toward her," and wondered what was coming.

"Tell me, did I look angry?" then demanded Isabel.

"Yes; I think you did," with a little pretended hesitation.

"I am glad of it," replied Isabel. "Oh, I was so angry with him!" and there kindled a flash in her eyes, and there was an angry tossing of her head, as she spoke the words.

"You certainly appeared to be quite angry with some one, but"——

"How did he look? Did you see him?" interrupted Isabel.

"Him! Whom?" Clarine questioned, maliciously, pretending not to understand; though it was not difficult to conjecture the victim of Isabel's wrath.

"Why, Mr. Rashleigh, of course," was the expected answer, in a tone of simple surprise at the unnecessary question. "I am so glad that I looked angry!" she repeated; and the passion visible in every feature would have been comical, had it not been pitiable.

"Glad you looked angry?"

"Yes, because whenever he sees me looking angry he is afraid."

At this explanation, so natural and consistent with Isabel's mode of procedure in training her lover, Clarine laughed heartily.

"Pray, what had Mr. Rashleigh done to provoke you?" she asked.

"Why, he took advantage of my dancing with Mr. Curtiss, to wander off and devote himself to that sister of his, and that detestable Grace Newcombe."

"While you were dancing! Then it seems you are unwilling to accord Mr. Rashleigh privileges you allow yourself, of straying from his side."

"He had no right to go without my permission," returned Isabel, in sullen defiance.

"Oh, if your resentment is on account of his disobedience, I have nothing more to say in his defence," said Clarine, with a bow of mock deference, "and I suppose his offence must really have been serious, as you preferred sending him home for another wretched, sleepless night, rather than be reconciled with him before parting."

"Reconciled!" Isabel echoed, in astonishment at the bare suggestion of anything half so reasonable. "Do you suppose I ever forgive him so easily? No, indeed!" And very likely it was irritation at thoughts of his hated sister, now so near her, that gave additional firmness to her decided tones. "Poor man!" she added, with a half pitying laugh; "he really looked so sad—quite heartbroken, when we parted. He had asked Mrs. Mortimer's permission to drive home with us, and all the way he coaxed me to be friends, or to tell him how he had offended me, for he pretended not to know; but I would not give him the satisfaction of an explanation, and when he took my hand to bid me good bye, he asked so plaintively if we were yet

friends! but I drew my hand away, and, without a word to comfort him, swept past him into the house."

"Bella, you ought to be thoroughly ashamed of yourself for such heartless conduct," said Clarine, indignant at the pitiless, boasting tone in which Isabel had prated.

But Isabel only laughed at this merited reproach. "I do feel a little sorry for him," she said, with a shade of regret in her voice. Then suddenly changing her tone, she continued, "But no, I am not sorry for him! Let him pass wretched, sleepless nights if he will! It is his own obstinacy; he must learn to obey me better. He shall not leave my side whenever he wishes, not even for that sister of his. When I tell him to go, he may; but not before."

"Why Bella!" cried Clarine, amazed at such effrontery, "you would make him a mere slave to your whims; a tool to your caprice. Would he be apt to consent to that?"

"Certainly, he must consent to it. When he has learned to act according to my will and permission, then I will marry him, but not before."

"Do you think you will succeed in such training?" Clarine asked, quietly.

"If I do not succeed"—Isabel began haughtily, then hesitated, gnawed her lips angrily, then added coldly and decidedly, "then we shall have to part."

"Then rather than consent to such debasement as you shamelessly propose," retorted Clarine, passionately, "Edward Rashleigh will part from you, and that forever."

"Part!" cried Isabel; and again she gave vent to that short, scornful laugh—"Edward Rashleigh part from me! He would never dare to do it."

"Oh, yes, he would dare. You will soon wear out his patience; it is only a wonder that his forbearance, which with him has ceased to be a virtue, should have endured so long. He has borne with you, thinking that your caprices would yield to his gentleness; but finding that

you only grow worse and worse, more and more exacting, he will either part from you, or else"—

"Or else what?" demanded Isabel, in some curiosity, as Clarine paused.

"Or else attempt the hopeless task of reforming you and raising you to be his equal."

"His equal!" Isabel almost shrieked, as she started, and then gazed at Clarine in dumbfounded horror at this astounding proposition. Partially recovering herself, as she saw that Clarine remained quite cool and self-possessed, for this was not by any means the first time that Clarine had opposed her by startling assertions, she added with vehemence: "Which is the superior, he or I? which commands, and which obeys? Is he not already so meek that upon every trivial offence he humbly comes and craves my pardon? His equal!" she repeated, intense scorn glowing in every feature; and here her indignation at the monstrous insult could find no further language.

"Bella, do not flatter yourself that you are Mr. Rashleigh's superior, or even equal; believe me, you are by far his inferior, immeasurably his inferior. Listen to me one moment," Clarine exclaimed, seeing that Isabel was about to interrupt her. "Let me assure you, Bella, that any woman who so far descends from the exalted station in which our mother Eve was placed by her divine Creator, as to forget that she was led to man's side to comfort, love, and above all obey him, the moment she forgets her high prerogative of loving obedience so far as to wish to command him, that moment she becomes a noble man's inferior. I think, there must be something wrong in that woman's disposition who wishes to command the man she loves, for a true woman's love delights in serving, not in ruling, save through the gentle tyranny of the very love she inspires."

"You preach humility very well, Clarine," returned Isa-

bel, rather contemptuously, "but I should just like to see you in love once, and then see what a life you would lead your lover. The idea of your obeying any man is simply absurd, for you are certainly the proudest girl I ever knew."

"Proud! yes, Bella, but perhaps not with the kind of pride you mean," Clarine replied, gently. "My pride would not allow me to love one whom I could not respect, and would prevent me respecting him who would not respect himself; my pride would be so humble as to deter me from loving him who could servilely obey a woman. I want a master, not a slave; for I should scorn the slave, but love the master."

"Well, you talk very finely," returned Isabel, impatiently, not in the least appreciating fine sentiments; "your love may lead you to obey, mine leads me to command. He must learn to have no will but mine."

"Then take my word for it, Bella; you may prate as much as you please about governing Mr. Rashleigh, but the time will come when he will so tame your haughty, imperious disposition, that rather than have your tongue utter one word to offend him, you will pluck it out; rather than raise your hand in the gesture of command, you will cut it off; and just so queenly as you have ordered him, so slavishly will you obey him."

"And then, perhaps, when I have learned to be his humble slave, you may consider me his equal," said Bella, with a sneering tone of mock humility.

"No, I did not mean that, Bella, for, of course, with love there is no such thing as slavery. But I do think that when misery such as he will yet cause you, or rather, you will cause yourself through him, shall have taught you repentance, when you have once felt the wild anguish of separation, when the bitter tears of remorse shall have furrowed your cheeks, then, in that dark hour, longing

for the light of his love, you will be able to approach him with true humility, and with all the earnestness of your soul beg him to forget the past, and then, as his first kiss of pardon thrills your heart with a sweeter, more womanly emotion than it has ever known, you will cling to him whose severity was merciful, and though in that humble moment you will indeed be his equal, you will heartily and sincerely think him your superior."

Isabel was touched in spite of herself. After a moment's silence, during which there was evidently a struggle going on in her mind, she said, in a low, hesitating voice: "And so you think, Clarine, that I ought to be the first to ask forgiveness?"

"Certainly I do."

"But I cannot go to him and ask him to forgive me. I have always been so proud and exacting that I can't now tell him that I am wrong." Her tone was more querulous than submissive.

"The first confession is the hardest, Bella," said Clarine, encouragingly; "and besides, recollect that few words are necessary; one look of contrition, one word of love from you, and rapture will lend such fluency to his tongue that you will best express yourself by listening; for love is not exacting for words; with love, silence is eloquent."

"Clarine, did you ever love?" Isabel suddenly asked.

"Not as you mean, Bella," Clarine lightly replied. "I have never loved deeper than the ties of friendship bade me. But why do you ask?"

"Because you speak as though you knew all about it, and I don't see how you can know as much as you do, unless by actual experience."

"A whole lifetime of experience would not teach me the things which sometimes reveal themselves to me without consciousness of thought."

"You are a strange girl, Clarine," said Isabel, looking up with a wondering smile.

"Not half so strange a girl as you are, with your waywardness," rejoined Clarine, pleasantly. "But come, you have not yet promised me to ask Mr. Rashleigh's pardon."

"I can't promise anything. I must wait until Mr. Rashleigh comes this evening, and then I will decide how to act."

"Do you think he will be here this evening?"

"Of course he will," was the reply, astonished at the question. "Do you suppose he would dare to stay away one evening when he knew I was angry with him?"

Clarine turned away with a gesture of impatience. She was annoyed by Isabel's folly, worse than folly, in thus trifling with such a love as was given her. After a short pause she again turned toward Isabel, in a last earnest appeal.

"Bella, I have tried again and again to stop this stream of poison you are fast pouring into your cup of life. I have warned you of what your present actions are leading you to, and now I only beg of you once more, as you value your future happiness, to be the first one, this time, to ask forgiveness."

"Why this time?"

"Because his offence has been so trivial that it makes your offence all the greater, your displeasure more irritating to him."

"Clarine, I cannot."

"You mean you will not."

"Very well, then have it so," returned Isabel, with sudden resumption of her natural vehemence. "I do mean that I will not, for I will not humble myself to ask any man's forgiveness."

"Then, Bella," replied Clarine, earnestly, "if that is your determination, and you persist in turning a deaf ear



to everything I can plead in Mr. Rashleigh's behalf, you must expect me to turn a deaf ear, hereafter, when you come to me with your usual fretful complaints about your quarrels and your lover's chidings." And as she slowly walked toward the door, she added to herself, with sarcastic bitterness, "It is useless to appeal to feelings which do not exist."

## CHAPTER III.

ALL that morning Isabel wandered about the house, flying from one occupation to the other, all the while noisily singing at the top of her voice. Later in the day she complained of a severe headache, to which her crimson face gave sufficient evidence, and shutting herself in her room, wrapped herself in shawls and had her maid bathe her head by the hour with camphor and cologne. She succeeded in arousing any amount of sympathy in the hearts of her condoling friends, very much increased when, upon the arrival of the dinner hour, upon the plea of the violence of her suffering, she excused herself from going down. Clarine kindly offered to remain with her, but Isabel preferred solitude and a darkened room. So, with an indefinite amount of pity and commiseration, the family left her to her lonely tortures, and one or two of the more intensely sympathetic members of the family actually found their enjoyment of their dinner sensibly diminished, as they said, by sorrowful considerations for the suffering invalid. What, then, was their amazement, upon entering the drawing-room, after dinner, to find Isabel seated comfortably in a large easy-chair drawn before the fire, her feet upon a footstool, and with her head prettily cushioned, looking to perfection the consciously graceful invalid!

"Do I frighten you?" she asked, with a calm smile, as they all exclaimed, in their natural astonishment.



"We thought you were too ill to leave your room," said Mrs. Bell.

"I was so nervous and restless that I could not possibly remain up stairs any longer; and besides, I thought Mr. Rashleigh would be so disappointed and alarmed if he found me too ill to receive him when he came; so of course, for his sake, I felt obliged to make the effort."

Certainly no reasonable person could gainsay such a strictly commendable sacrifice.

For a while Isabel remained in her easy-chair, now and then joining listlessly in the conversation, and then, upon the same plea of nervous restlessness, got up and wandered into the music-room, closing the door after her. There she sat down before the piano, and began playing snatches of songs and pieces, and, with fingers idling over the keys, she listened anxiously for the expected one—the one whom, by the power of love, she knew would not fail to come.

This girl's reckless, unwomanly ambition was so to subject the will of her lover to her will, that the future husband should know no law save her mandate. His past submission; with but a gentle remonstrance, or at most a lovers' quarrel now and then, in which he always took the initiatory step toward reconciliation, had constantly fed these unprincipled hopes; and could she but succeed this evening in bringing him in the wonted humility to her feet, then she could indeed hope confidently to break him by careful degrees to the abject spirit of unquestioning obedience. As the cat kills the mouse, so did she intend to conquer her lover. Not suddenly, so as to put his manly dignity to the alarm, but slowly, playfully tormenting him, now and then giving him the freedom of command, only to make him writhe again in the grip of subjection. It did not once occur to her that the mouse, though almost at the death, will yet sometimes escape.

She had not long to wait, for soon from the drawing-room came the welcome sound of Mr. Rashleigh's voice, and in a few minutes he entered the room, and approached the piano, where she still sat playing, appearing not to have noticed his entrance. Mr. Rashleigh stood behind her, smiling at thought of the surprise he would give her, until her trembling hands and hurried breathing told him that the unconsciousness was only pretended. His brow flushed, as he said, in a low tone:

"Isabel, why do you not greet me?"

"Ah, are you there?" she asked, in a provokingly careless manner, as she turned her head toward him with a half smile.

"You knew I was here."

A reply to which she returned only the silence of cool indifference. Annoyed more than he wished to betray, Mr. Rashleigh moved away, and began turning over the contents of a portfolio that was in a standing supporter on the opposite side of the room.

Isabel continued dashing away on the piano, until, with a final bang and crash, she started up.

"As you seem to be desirous of solitary entertainment, Mr. Rashleigh, allow me to wish you good evening, rather than disturb you." With a mocking obeisance she turned to leave the room, but was stayed by Mr. Rashleigh's hand.

"Come, Bella, a truce to this nonsense, and"—

"It is not nonsense! It seems to me that you are very fond of applying that term to my actions. Everything that I do is nonsense, or silly, or—or something or other like that!" and there were tears of vexation glistening in her eyes.

"Not everything that you do, Bella," returned Mr. Rashleigh, in kindly tones, touched by her tears, for he naturally attributed them to some more gentle cause than mere temper.

Suddenly Isabel looked up, and said ;

"Why did you leave the other room ? You would have amused yourself much better there."

"I have not the least doubt of that," he answered lightly, "for I see you are so cross to-night, that it will be impossible to please you. But pardon me, Bella," he added, tenderly, "I should not find fault with you, for I understand that you have been ill all day," and fondly he put his arm around her. "I must not scold my darling ; that is a loved invalid's privilege."

Isabel was very willing to be petted and caressed into good humor, and there was every appearance that the threatened storm would blow over. But unfortunately, Mr. Rashleigh was not contented to let well enough alone.

"By the bye, Bella, you have not explained why you received me so coldly when I first came in. What had I done to vex you ?"

It was merely a lover's curiosity suggesting the question, and he doubtless expected to receive a fond, deprecating answer. Instead of which, the reply provoked by his inopportune words, was fretful and snappish.

"You are always asking what you have done to offend me, as though you did not know yourself. You must know very well why I was angry with you."

"Have you not yet recovered from the effects of last evening's—a—um—a—what shall I call it?—indisposition ?"

This pretended hesitation, notwithstanding his playful smile, must have been very tantalizing.

"Indisposition !" and the wrath in her tone cannot be punctuated. "I wish you would call things by their proper names !"

"Well, then, what shall I call it ?"

"It was indignation at"—

"Ha ! ha ! ha ! Well, I have heard before now of the

dignity of language, Bella ; but the idea of naming your tantrum of last evening, indignation !" and again he laughed in uncontrollable merriment.

Bella was furious. Turning upon him with flashing eyes, she angrily demanded :

"What do you mean by laughing at me ? Do you forget your conduct of last evening ? or do you expect me to forget, in a single moment, any offence you may choose to give me ? But I am not quite so foolish as that !"

Instantly Mr. Rashleigh's laughing manner was gone.

"Perhaps it would be better for us both, Bella," he said, in quiet, gentle tones, "if you were sometimes a little more foolish, as you term it, than you are. But come, darling, I am sorry to have vexed you. Let us be friends again," and coaxingly he again put his arm around her. "You are not very angry with me, are you ?" and fondly he kissed her to make peace. Bella could not well resist his loving kindness, and for a moment yielded to his tender caresses. But only for a moment, for presently, breaking away from his embrace, she exclaimed :

"I will not be angry any more, but will be very good, if you will promise never again to leave me to pay attention to any lady, without my permission."

"Why, Bella, what a silly, childish demand !" he exclaimed, in utter astonishment. "Would you have me forego society altogether ? Come, darling, forget your thoughtless words, and let me smooth this naughty, frowning brow." And one hand was placed lightly upon her flushed brow, while with the other he attempted to raise her face toward him. But she threw off his hands, and turned coldly away.

"Bella, are you never to have done with your nonsensical jealousy ?" There was weariness and impatience in his voice. "Are you not satisfied with knowing that no matter whom I may be with, my heart is yours alone ?"

Are you not yet convinced that I love you too well to pay more attention to other women, than mere etiquette requires? But please inform me of my latest offence, for I own that I am utterly at a loss to account for your present jealous irritation."

Without noticing his demand, she merely persisted:

"Then you will not do what I ask?"

"Certainly not!" he replied, wondering at her pertinacity.

"Then," cried Bella, passionately, entirely carried away by the violence of her temper, "if you will not obey me, I will hate you!"

"Bella!"

It was Bella's turn to start. The voice she had never heard except in the utmost gentleness and kindness, was now stern in its anger. She raised her eyes defiantly to his face, but met there a strange, unknown look, that immediately cooled her temper, and made her regret her willful passion. She stood before him with eyes cast down, pulling nervously at the lace of her handkerchief, waiting for him to speak. But the ominous silence was unbroken. Then slowly her features hardened into their old defiant expression, for this quiet opposition roused her worst feelings. She determined that at all hazards he should not conquer her.

"Well?" at length came from her compressed lips. "You have had long enough to think upon what I said. To what conclusion have you come?"

"Bella, did you really mean what you said?" There was no lover's tenderness now in the inquiry.

While Bella hesitated what to answer, suddenly her conversation with Clarine that morning, flashed into her mind. She remembered the kind advice to be the first one to ask pardon, and for a moment her heart was melting with love for him whose gentle endurance she was testing

so shamefully. She thought that if he would only come to her and take her in his arms to forgive her, she would condescendingly yield, and be reconciled. But he evidently had no such intention; he was waiting so quietly for her to be the one, this time, to act first. It provoked and tantalized her to have him watching her so gravely, and she remembered Clarine's warnings of the consequences of her reckless temper only to brave them madly, as her perverse spirit swelled stronger within her. With a haughty imperious air, she turned to leave the room, (she knew he would prevent her going,) saying, with unspeakable arrogance:

"As you seem to be in such a very agreeable frame of mind, I beg you will excuse me for seeking more genial society. Good evening. I trust you will be in better humor the next time I have the pleasure of seeing you."

"Which means, I suppose, that I must be prepared to obey you?" he returned, ironically.

"Certainly!" she replied, with a well assumed air of astonishment at the unnecessary question.

"I am afraid I shall prove rather refractory," he returned, with a bitter smile.

"As you please," she said, carelessly, with her hand upon the door-knob. "You know the consequences."

"Stay, Bella!"

He approached her as she was opening the door, and leading her away, placed her before him in the centre of the room, where the full blaze of the chandelier fell upon them both. She thought her triumph had come, and as her outraged lover gazed at her in silence for a moment, he noted the head tossed haughtily back, the lips curling in scorn, and the blue eyes flashing defiance. With a heart throbbing painfully, he yet could speak in accents from which all harshness had faded, as he tenderly

raised her head in both his hands, and with a kind smile said, in utmost gentleness :

"Bella, I know the consequences of my refusing to obey you, though I am afraid that you do not."

"I know," she replied, impetuously, "that if you refuse my request, my love for you will turn to"—

"Hush ! Do not dare to repeat that word to me, or you shall repent it."

"No fear of my repenting of what I mean."

Deeply stung by this shameless taunt, he yet controlled himself, and with marvellous forbearance again spoke calmly :

"And so you will not take back your harsh words ?"

"Certainly not ; why should I ?"

There was a dead silence. Bella dared not raise her eyes, for a vague fear was creeping over her. She felt the hands which held hers in a vice-like grasp, growing icy cold, and then, with a long-drawn breath, came the low decisive words :

"Then, Bella, we must part." Her hands were dropped, and slowly he moved toward the door.

Strange that Mr. Rashleigh's words only roused to greater fierceness the demon of her nature. She grew furious, maddened by desperation as she saw that he actually dared to leave her, dared to take the initiatory step in parting. In an instant her purpose was formed. As the door was closing upon her departing lover, she fell heavily to the floor. Of course, hearing the fall, he instantly re-entered the room, and beheld her lying insensible. Instantaneously all resentment generously fled. He raised her in his arms ; he called upon her by every endearing term to forgive him ; he covered her face with repentant kisses, and begged her to look upon him and be his own darling again.

The fall had also been heard in the drawing-room,

startling everybody. Hastening into the room, they found Isabel with all the symptoms of strong convulsion. Her hands clutched nervously, her face every moment grew a deeper crimson, while from between her chattering teeth came low, pitiful moans. Obeying Mrs. Bell's directions, Mr. Rashleigh raised Isabel in his arms, and carried her to her room. Laying her upon the couch, he then left her to be restored by others, while he, impatiently awaiting her recovery, was a prey to agonizing reproaches and apprehensions. In about half an hour, Mrs. Mortimer, with kindly sympathy, sought Mr. Rashleigh, where he was wearily pacing the lonely music-room, and relieved him of his anxiety by announcing Isabel's recovery.

"May I go to her—just one moment ?" he asked, beseechingly.

They had some difficulty, apparently, in persuading Isabel to receive Mr. Rashleigh, but finally succeeded in obtaining what seemed to be a very reluctant consent. She listened very calmly while her tortured lover entreated her to forgive him for his cruel thoughtlessness in having so tantalized her, when he should have recollected that only for his sake she had exerted herself to leave her sick-room.

"Would she forgive his heartless impatience ? Would she be his own darling once more, and he would do anything she wished ?"

Of course, after this last declaration, it was easy for Isabel, with a few tears, graciously to forgive him, and then the humbled, repentant lover, only too happy to be received into favor again, left his adored tyrant to exult in her secret heart at having so successfully managed him. She was playing very skilfully with her captive mouse.

## CHAPTER IV.

MR. BELL'S summer residence was situated on the summit of one of the numerous hills for which Staten Island is famous, commanding from its elevated site one of the finest views possible of New York harbor. On the one side lay the peaceful bay, with its enclaspings shores, its cities and its rivers; on the other rolled the broad ocean. The grounds were extensive and laid out with taste. The smooth, close-mown lawn, the large park in the depths of its shade, half disclosing, half concealing quiet little lakes, rustic seats, and everywhere flowers, all formed attractions powerful in enticing the lovers of nature to linger within their influence. It had originally, when Mr. Bell first purchased it, been scarce more than a well-built, substantial farm-house, with a portion of the land cultivated as a farm, the remainder, well-wooded, having never been cleared, but allowed to run wild with undergrowth. Mr. Bell's care and expenditures for several seasons had changed the old farm-house into a stately mansion, the neglected land into a fine domain. The woods became a park, the running brook, whose pretty babbling had been almost silenced by entangling brushwood, was cleared, and now gave out its limpid music; the pond became a lake; rustic seats found place under moss-covered rocks, and from nests of gaily-berried vines peeped out tempting bowers.

Here Mr. Bell sought in the retirement and peaceful seclusion of country-life that rest and relaxation from the whirl and buzz of the city, and the furious pace of fashionable life, which he deemed necessary to impose upon his family before plunging anew into tireless fashion's ceaseless eddies. But although Mr. Bell's well-known wishes upon this point, and indeed Mrs. Bell's own moderate degree of prudential regard for health, interdicted for a short time all entertainments upon any such grand scale of magnificence as suited Mrs. Bell's capacious ideas, still, was either her husband's law, or her own prudence, any reason why this irrepressible woman should deny a reasonable indulgence to her taste for fashionable gayeties? Certainly not. Now Mrs. Bell's hunger and thirst after all kinds of excitement, but particularly the congenial pleasures of fashionable life, were insatiable and unquenchable; and it most assuredly should never have been supposed, for an instant, by any husband in his senses, —though unfortunately few husbands ever are in their senses—that the unhappy possessor of this hunger that was always gnawing, and of this thirst that was always parching, ever could seriously entertain, for a moment, any such self-sacrificing idea as settling down into the quiet oblivion of a tame country mansion, and playing rural rusticity in satin slippers and flowing skirts. At all events, Mr. Bell ought never to have expected anything half so unreasonable of such a reasonable woman as his wife. But husbands always have and always will persist in expecting the most unreasonable things, and so Mr. Bell did demand of his wife, that she should rest for a few weeks. But rightly enough, a husband's demand does not amount to much if antagonistic to his wife's determination; and therefore, though Mrs. Bell, too wise in wifely caution, scarcely ventured, it is true, to give entertainments upon a very extensive scale, yet contrived to give small dinner-

parties. "Just a few friends—half a dozen, or so, my dear" to get up quiet breakfasts and pic-nics "only a very few of our most intimate friends from the city, my love!" and in fact managed most successfully to keep the entire household in a constant state of mild effervescence—a result very much to her own satisfaction, if not quite so agreeable to others.

It was in first instituting this programme of modified gayety that Mrs. Bell gave a dinner to "just a very few intimate friends," shortly after their removal to the Island. The day was clear and bright, as all pleasure days ought to be, coquettish spring having graciously donned her brightest smiles. The carriages had already been sent to the boat-landing to convey the guests to the house, and as the whirl of returning wheels was heard crushing the gravelled drive, the ladies stepped through the low windows of the drawing-room, out upon the broad piazza, to receive their friends as they alighted from the carriages.

Mr. Bell approached his wife with a stranger by his side.

"My dear, this is my old friend, Mr. Maltby, whom you already know so well by name, as one of my most valued friends."

The introduction bore a magic spell. Immediately Mrs. Bell assumed all her most studied elegance, which elegance consisted in parting her full, well-cut lips in a gracious smile, neatly contrived for showing to greatest advantage the rows of glistening teeth; in drooping her eyelids modestly, courtesying gracefully, murmuring inaudibly. Mrs. Bell always glowed with the idea that this combination of actions had the effect of rendering her manner peculiarly charming, giving it, in fact, a certain style and finish which few, if any, could hope to attain. If a few bold spirits did venture to hint that this was all one silly mass of compounded affectations, ~~why~~ such were only to be

pitied for their ignorance, as it was scarcely to be expected that every one should be able to appreciate such a remarkably genteel air as she possessed. To say that upon mention of their guest's name Mrs. Bell was in a delightful agitation, is but feeble language. She had indeed frequently heard her husband speak of Mr. Maltby as his most esteemed friend and correspondent, and knew well that his distinguished rank made his visits an honor to any house. Add to this, that he was one of the wealthiest men and most honored statesmen of his own country, Denmark, and still add that in personal appearance he was handsome and unmistakably aristocratic, and I think Mrs. Bell's happy flutter of mind can really be much better imagined than described.

As Mrs. Bell was graciously receiving her distinguished guest with murmurs of delight, and he was expressing his great pleasure in thus meeting the wife of his dearest friend, and several very neat and very polite speeches were made by both parties, Mr. Maltby suddenly started, as a merry rippling laugh was wafted toward him, and involuntarily he exclaimed:

"What a musical voice!"

"My niece," rejoined Mrs. Bell, in gracious accents; but he scarcely heard her, for he was looking away, as the low, melodious laugh was again swept toward him, and his eyes rested upon the maiden, the object of his brief encomium. And here, allow me the gratification of describing my heroine; it will need but a few words, I think. A right merry maiden she was, provoking a cheery smile as you watched the curving of her laughing, rosebud lips, and perhaps a warmer glow at your heart, as you glanced up into the lustrous, deep gleaming eyes. Her regal head was decked with rich masses of waving hair, and a bewitching softness graced a stately mien. Such, reader, was Clarine Rivington.



Mr. Bell completed the formal introduction of his guest, and as Mr. Maltby approached Clarine, his gaze again fell upon her, and she raising her glance to him, their eyes met, and instantly she felt the hot blood rush to her cheeks, mount to her forehead, and gradually dyeing face and neck with its flush. Clarine was annoyed beyond measure at such a school-girl exhibition of untimely emotion, and to increase the awkwardness and absurdity of the situation, Isabel was overheard to remark mischievously to Mr. Rashleigh, in one of those subdued tones, invariably quite distinct :

"Do look at Clarine ! How she is blushing ! What can be the matter with her ?"

"Perhaps love at first sight," replied Mr. Rashleigh, in the same stage whisper.

Mr. Maltby courteously hastened to relieve Clarine's embarrassment, with ready tact remarking upon the beauties of the scene before them. Clarine, too thoroughly trained in society to lose her self-possession more than momentarily, soon recovered her usual ease ; yet the clinging consciousness of knowing that he knew he had caused her to blush threw just sufficient modest restraint over her manner to lend an additional charm to its natural grace and fascination ; and I fancy that it was only by a severe self-denial that Mr. Maltby could prevent the glance, which he occasionally stole toward the still blushing face, from lingering upon its witching beauty. But Mr. Bell soon claimed his guest's attention elsewhere than by the side of his lovely niece, and though Mr. Maltby may have obeyed his host rather reluctantly, Clarine, I think, was glad. The vacancy at her side was not long in being filled, for Mr. Maltby's departure was the signal for the instant approach of other claimants for the beauty's smiles.

Foremost among admirers came Mr. Bronson. Now,

Bronson had been well cautioned by his friends against the witcheries of this coquette. But did ever wise caution make Cupid twang his bow the lighter ? Upon his first presentation to the reigning belle by his friends Seymour and Curtiss as already referred to, he had been received with the most charming smiles, and with one glance into those beautiful eyes all friendly warning vanished from his mind. Once by Clarine Rivington's side, like many an unfortunate predecessor, he was rashly content to linger. One bit of friendly advice, however, which had been strenuously urged by both Curtiss and Seymour, Bronson had acted upon, and that to the letter. On that same memorable evening at Mrs. Wilson's, Bronson had addressed himself with all the courtesy and suavity he possessed, to the illustrious Mrs. Bell, and profiting by the timely forewarnings of his friends, had availed himself of the first opportunity to call to his aid a few delicately pointed compliments, thinking to himself, the while—"She is the aunt of the lovely Miss Rivington." As we have seen, he had won favor in Mrs. Bell's eyes by his well aimed flattery, and he had ever since been an honored guest at her house.

There were three qualifications which Mrs. Bell specially regarded in deciding whether she would condescendingly allow the mantle of her patronage to fall upon the manly aspirants for that honor. Naming them in the order in which they ranged upon her mental tablets, first came wealth, second position, third good looks. According as a candidate presented any one of these credentials did Mrs. Bell mete out to him, upon a neatly arranged scale of her own, the measure of her grace. Now Mr. Bronson happening to be the lucky possessor, in a fair degree, of all three of these important contributions of nature and good fortune combined, he had immediately taken up a first class position in Mrs. Bell's kindly estimation. To the emoluments of such a position, however, was at-

tached the duty of paying double court. It is scarcely to be supposed that with two such fair charges as Isabel and Clarine, the unmarried men flocked to Mrs. Bell's house purely from disinterested admiration for her, though her charms were doubtless many and great. But to be privileged to woo the smiles of more youthful beauty, they must first pay subtle court to Mrs. Bell, and be content to wear the yoke of her patronage. Of course the bachelors, hoping for the recompense before their eyes, took to her patronizing ways kindly enough, and as for the married men frequenting her house, lured by its many attractions, why, Mrs. Bell was herself a fine looking woman, and there are few men, married or no, who would not suffer themselves to be patronized by such.

For some subtle reason or other Clarine, during the fore part of the dinner, was unusually quiet, and little disposed to talk, very much to the discomfiture of her companion, for Mr. Bronson, not having the gift of shining brilliantly in original topics of conversation, was best pleased when he could shelter his own colloquial deficiencies under the talents of others.

Isabel, seated next to Mr. Rashleigh, was in her happiest mood, and without a shadow of displeasure upon her countenance, the latter noteworthy merely as being a remarkable physiognomical exception. The rosy flush upon her cheeks, the smile upon her lips, betokened a peaceable frame of mind, and as she glanced up into her lover's face there was a soft appealing look in her eyes which probably made the happy man forget that they had ever flamed in anger against him. Mrs. Mortimer was undoubtedly happy in the presence of her betrothed, though neither she nor Mr. Seymour was so foolishly in love as to allow their attention to be entirely engrossed by each other.

Mrs. Bell, at the head of the table, was radiant with good humor and courteous affability. And why not? For

the time being she had all that heart—her heart—could desire. As hostess she saw that her dinner was faultless, her guests well entertained; regarding purely individual considerations, upon her right hand sat her distinguished guest, Mr. Maltby, who, of course, was the embodiment of courtesy to his hostess; upon her left sat her esteemed physician, Dr. Tillman. Although, perhaps, a subject for comment, the doctor's presence was scarcely a case for surprise, for it was well known, in Mrs. Bell's circle of friends, that no entertainment at her house was complete, unless adorned by Dr. Tillman's presence.

Mr. Bell was—well, I know it is in bad taste to break off abruptly from a subject, but, apart from the discourtesy of delaying the course of the dinner by indulging in an author's propensity for long-winded catalogues of his characters, a sober second thought suggests that the description of Mr. Bell is best summed up in the bare statement,—the idea of which, however, is not original,—that Mr. Bell was Mrs. Bell's husband. His personal appearance was not worth dilating upon, and as for any idiosyncrasies of character, they will doubtless reveal themselves in the course of my story. After dinner coffee and cakes upon the piazza, for the bright sunshine and balmy spring air took on the semblance of summer, and lured into the open air. And then some of the guests broke up into couples, and strolled through the grounds. Among these were Clarine and Mr. Bronson. They sauntered slowly along the pleasant paths, Clarine chatting away with the most charming sprightliness; but her companion evidently had some burden upon his mind, for he was absent minded, heaved one or two laborious sighs, and soon began venting sentiment upon the beauties of spring, the sweet teachings of loving birds, the silent language of flowers and so forth. Perhaps Clarine recognized the alarming symptoms, for she presently recollected that it



must be time for the carriages to come around for the drive, and suggested their returning to the house.

Not waiting for the consent she took for granted, she tripped lightly ahead of her companion, indeed, keeping to a greater distance than altogether suited him. She kept flitting before him, first on one side of the path, then to the other, never so far off as to prevent keeping up a continuous flow of small talk; now stooping to caress a pretty little white rabbit that peeped at her with its pink eyes from the green sward, then softly leaping its trembling escape as the man's heavier steps approached; then she must stop to gather a handful of the first spring buttercups, and, again, for a few pure snow drops to place against their yellow light; and indeed—for why repeat all her misdemeanors?—doing all that a willful naughty girl could do to prevent the avowal of any serious purpose possibly lurking in her companion's tortured heart. It was not until they came within sight of the house, where the guests were assembled on the broad piazza, and the carriages were standing, that the perverse coquette walked demurely and sedately by his side, as a properly decorous young lady should have done in the first place if she had had the slightest compassion for the misery she shrewdly surmised she was inflicting.

As for Mr. Bronson, he was not very unhappy, for though his lovely tormentor's manner was perhaps not altogether as encouraging as could be wished, still it did not by any means crush out all hope, and he could be content for the present to wait until he could capture the timid ear to listen to his plaint. Alas, unhappy man, content in the vanity of his self-conceit! Could he but have foreseen the dire events of the immediate future, he would sooner have ventured the daring throw, would sooner have risked all happiness, and been happier in despair. But it

was not in blissful lover's vision to foresee that ere the golden sun set that day, it would be his fate to watch the prize begin visibly to recede further and further from his grasp.

In the carriage with Mrs. Bell were Clarine, Mr. Maltby and Mr. Bronson. By the neat contrivance of Mrs. Bell, Mr. Maltby was placed opposite Clarine, Mr. Bronson opposite herself, which arrangement divided up the conversation accordingly. Thus was it plainly to be seen that Mr. Bronson's sun of glory was already on the wane; the day was henceforth forever past that Mrs. Bell had connived at similar advantages for him. At first Clarine did not feel disposed to respond to Mr. Maltby's efforts to draw her into conversation, for there was an unusual feeling of timidity upon her, but, by degrees, as he spoke upon subjects that pleased her, of fine scenery, of people and their customs in the different parts of the world which he had visited, she became more interested, sat more erect as she replied to him, and gradually, as her interest deepened, leaned forward to catch all his words; her features became flushed with animation, her eyes gave out their sparkle, and every now and then the blush of emotion fluttered across her face, then fled away, to return again bewitchingly. Soon she became so absorbed in the fascinating discourse that she entirely ignored the presence of others; one glance at Mr. Bronson's face would have shown her the terrible expression of jealous rage that worked his features. Mrs. Bell saw it. She noted the pallor, the compression about the mouth, the sullen glare of his eyes as they rested now on Clarine, now on Mr. Maltby. Yet, strange to say, she made no attempt to alleviate this too evident suffering by making the conversation more general. On the contrary, without seeming to notice the two so engrossed with each other, she endeavored to draw Mr.

Bronson's attention from them by making her own remarks more interesting. Futile efforts. Though he politely pretended to converse, his answers were at random, and it was only too plain to Mrs. Bell that the miserable man's thoughts were not on her. Still, with woman's tact and perseverance, she kept up the appearance of an animated conversation until on their return drive they stopped at the boat landing to leave those guests who were returning to the city, of which number the unhappy Mr. Bronson was a dejected unit. Mr. Maltby was to remain the guest of Mr. and Mrs. Bell until the following day.

## CHAPTER V.

AGAIN the carriages started, and now the party alight at home. Involuntarily they all paused to admire the magnificent sunset over the waters. Mr. Maltby stood by Clarine, neither speaking, though the others were indulging in varied exclamations at the beauty of the golden view. At last, in low tones, almost a murmur, he broke the silence :

"What gorgeous hues and what exquisite harmony in the blending of colors ! Such harmony does the student of nature always perceive in her works."

Clarine made no reply ; she was well satisfied to gaze silently upon the scene before her.

"What artists your country should produce when they can have such natural beauties ever before them as constantly meet the eye in your beautiful land !"

"Yes," replied Clarine, as Mr. Maltby paused and looked at her ; and that was all she could say. She was conscious only of an utter inability to collect her thoughts clearly enough to answer in the corresponding strain of his remarks. She did not see the smile upon his lips, nor the earnest gaze momentarily bent upon her at that simple, tell-tale answer.

"Clarine, dear," said Mrs. Bell, moving toward the

door, "I am afraid you will take cold if you remain out here any longer. The air is very chilly."

"Just a few moments, please, Aunt Helen," pleaded Clarine. "I want to see the last of those lovely purple clouds, rolling up their golden lining."

As Clarine stood gazing afar off upon the distant grandeur of the effulgent sky, Mr. Maltby again spoke in his low, musical tones. His voice had a peculiarly soft, caressing murmur that, together with the beauties of the scene, was fast lulling her in a strange charm.

"How exquisitely lovely!" he murmured, continuing the low, humming remarks which Clarine had helplessly allowed to flow or buzz on uninterruptedly for some time. "And how pure and elevated are the emotions of the soul impressed by the æsthetic influences of such harmonious blendings as nature's kaleidoscope is constantly presenting to us in hues ever changing, never the same, each with its own peculiar attributes of beauty, which soften and spiritualize our hard, material natures, and inspire us with love and admiration for that kind and genial nature which can combine such a multitude of etherealizing influences. Do you not think so?"

This abrupt question at the end of such a string of murmurs, of course roused Clarine in a rude shock. There had crept over her a delightfully dreamy languor, and on being thus suddenly awakened, she found that she had been listening to sounds and not words. To her confusion, she could not recall a single word he had uttered, so what could the poor girl do but blush, and answer a second time, "Yes."

Her simple reply was again satisfactory, judging from that peculiar quick glance, and the contented smile settling upon his lips. Once more he resumed the conversation, or, to speak correctly, his remarks, and this time Clarine really did endeavor to follow them. But she soon found

it impossible, notwithstanding her most strenuous mental efforts. She was constantly rousing herself from that dreamy influence which would steal upon her, and was only able to comprehend that he was talking a great deal about spirituality and materialism, something about the æsthetic mind, and the spirit of nature; and a good deal about the social elevation of soul and the world of empiricism, but as for any connection of ideas, or deduction of the least particle of common sense meaning to his words, she was utterly unable to make out either. And, in fact, in justice to my heroine, I must say that I think it would have puzzled a wiser brain than hers to have fathomed Mr. Maltby's discourse. She was only conscious of a flow of sweet sounds, and was but too content to be entranced by the fascinating melody. Thus for a long time they stood side by side, he murmuring the weird music of rambling sounds, and she quietly happy, until they were both roused by Mrs. Bell's voice, again admonishing them to come into the house, as the evening air was damp and cold.

Clarine ascended to her room warbling a love ditty, and in a few minutes had made such alterations in her toilet as were necessary for the evening. As she emerged from her room, she encountered her two aunts and Isabel in the hall, and together they descended the stairs and entered the drawing-room. A fire had been kindled, for the evenings were still very chilly, and its bright leaping flames threw a cheerful glow over the room, imparting an aspect of cozy comfort. Leaning against the opposite ends of the draped mantel, stood Mr. Bell and Mr. Maltby, talking pleasantly over old times.

"Are you not cold?" Mr. Maltby asked Clarine, with kindly interest, as she approached. "Pray sit here where it is warm." And he pushed an easy-chair into the corner by the mantel, and then, with that polished ease by which everything is made to appear as a matter of course,

he naturally placed his own chair next to hers. Now, to be sure, Clarine really was chilly, a little, so that the warmth of the fire felt very comfortable; but it is my own private opinion that had she been burning with heat, instead of shivering with cold, she would still have placed herself before that fire at his suggestion.

They were all in excellent spirits, and chatted gayly and pleasantly upon such topics as were suggested by the events of the day. They all took part in the general conversation except Clarine. She had scarcely uttered a word since taking her seat, nor had Mr. Maltby said much to her, but there was every now and then a turning of his head, and she knew that his glance rested for a moment upon her. And once when his attention seemed furthest from her, he had noticed that she could not refasten the bracelet which had come unfastened, perhaps not quite accidentally; and once her dress having got in dangerous proximity to the fire, he had drawn it away. All these actions were in themselves trifling enough, and doubtless unnoticed by others, yet to Clarine they tended to convey a certain consciousness of a delicate and flattering watchfulness which gradually brought the glowing rose-tint to her cheek—though it might have been the fire—at least so thought Mrs. Bell, who presently said:

"Clarine, dear, you had better move away from the fire. It is burning your face, and making it very red." You see Mrs. Bell had a very womanly and discreet regard for the complexion.

The conversation continued very animated, Mrs. Bell, as usual with her, sustaining the principal part, not so much on account of the number, or merit, or brilliancy of her remarks, as from a peculiar gift she had for constituting herself a sort of convolving centre-piece, toward which the remarks and attentions of others converged, and whence radiated the tokens of approval and disapproval.

At a request from her aunt, Clarine went into the music-room, and seating herself before the piano, dashed off some of her repressed animation in a brilliant bravura song. One cavatina after another followed, in each her tones becoming clearer and fuller. At one moment her voice, bright and ringing, played and skipped among the notes like a bird flitting on the wing, the next it rose full and grand, swelling the air with its rich harmony.

"What a magnificent voice Miss Rivington has!" said Mr. Maltby to Mrs. Bell.

"Yes; Clarine's singing has caused the envious ears of many a less gifted rival to burn with jealousy," replied Mrs. Bell, with the complacent smile of gratified pride. "But to hear her voice really to its greatest advantage, you should hear her in sweet, simple music, something in which there is pathos and sentiment. I will ask her to sing, *Du meine Seele*."

"Does Miss Rivington sing that wonderful song?" eagerly asked Mr. Maltby. "I should indeed enjoy hearing that; it is my favorite."

"She sings it charmingly; with so much soul and expression," replied Mrs. Bell, with a palpable attempt at casting some of the same charm of soul and expression into her own features. "Clarine, dear, sing *Du meine Seele* for Mr. Maltby."

There was silence for a moment, and then Clarine struck suddenly the accompaniment. But alas for certified praise! With the first bar came a visible shade of disappointment upon Mr. Maltby's face, which deepened as she proceeded, until a smile of sarcasm flitted upon his lips. Where was the pathos, the sentiment which Mrs. Bell's premature praise had bespoken? Clarine was dashing through this immortal song in very much the same style that a modern schoolboy would rattle off the *Marseillaise*.

As she finished, Mr. Maltby, with polite deceit, was

profuse in compliments. But Mrs. Bell could not altogether repress her keen disappointment.

"I am sorry Clarine has not done herself justice," she complained. "She usually sings it so much better."

"Indeed," returned Mr. Maltby, with a smile of flattering doubt. "Does Miss Rivington sing many German songs? I have several favorites, and should be highly charmed by her artistic rendering of them."

Graciously Mrs. Bell gave Mr. Maltby permission, couched in a request to go himself and ask Clarine if she knew the songs he spoke of.

The very permission he was anxious for. At last, and of his own making, had come the opportunity he had been wishing for all the evening, to be with Clarine. Indeed, it would have gone hard with him not to devise an opportunity for the accomplishment of any scheme working in that plotting brain of his, for he was too thorough a man of the world, and possessed too many of those society cards for social games, such as graces of person, fascinations of tongue, and *caractéristiques du diable*, to be easily foiled in any game in which a woman held a hand or was the stake.

Mr. Maltby's sudden presence brought the blush to Clarine's cheek, her blush the smile to his lips. He did not attempt direct praise of her singing, for he had already judged her too correctly to think of attempting open flattery, though deeming her, not unlike us all, amenable to the insidious enemy in some form, if not in words, in acts. With tasteful simplicity, he merely thanked her for the pleasure he had derived in listening to her voice, and added, with a playful pleading, that "he would fain turn child again, and cry for more, please."

Now Clarine was but human, but woman nature; and the heart which had borne the name "invulnerable," throbbed and fluttered and relented, as he leaned toward

her with such easy, dignified grace, pleaded with the eloquence of mild blue eyes, which, usually restless, were now bent calmly upon her face, and wooed her with such softly smiling lips, whence flowed, or floated, the gently-modulated tones—and here I feel myself in duty bound to assert that it is a matter of absolute indifference to me which of these two expressions I have used in reference to Mr. Maltby's "modulated tones," the reader may select, for they are equally appropriate. But I must in self-defence beg the reader not to accuse me of romantic sentimentalism in the selection of my terms, for I assure them that Mr. Maltby had a way of talking to a woman, not abruptly uttering his words, or letting them fall or drop like ordinary men, but simply allowing them to flow through the outlet of his lips as though they were a gushing stream of liquid joy, supplied by a patent, never-failing inner fountain of bliss; or else, his thoughts becoming etherealized, by a hitherto unknown chemical process, within the inner retorts of his heart, soared into more rarefied space, and floated out—in bubbles. There was one other remarkable peculiarity in this colloquial style of Mr. Maltby's, which was, that he never was known to talk in that way save to one woman alone, never to two or three women together. In fact, you would never catch him murmuring to more than one woman at a time.

Clarine's fingers rambled among the keys as, in compliance with Mr. Maltby's murmur for "more," she hesitated in her selection; then her firmer touch lingered upon the simple opening chords of the accompaniment to that charming, pathetic song, "The bride upon her Mother's Grave." With exquisite pathos she made the passionate appeal of the young girl who, on her bridal eve, goes to her mother's grave, and prays to that mother in heaven to bless her marriage, the

marriage she had so wished for, yet died ere her wish was fulfilled.

The last mournful cadence died away from Clarine's voice, but for a moment Mr. Maltby did not speak, then he said in low tones: "I, too, have a mother in heaven."

"And I," responded Clarine.

It was a link of sympathy; their eyes met.

"Shall we be friends?" asked Mr. Maltby, extending his hand to Clarine.

"Yes," she replied, in a low, but firm voice, and put out towards him her trembling hand.

He took her hand gently in his, and thus they clasped hands in a compact of friendship, a compact made in the name of their revered, their sainted mothers in heaven.

There was silence between them. Mr. Maltby's thoughts were busy; their nature might be guessed by the eager, questioning gaze he bent upon the bowed head and face before him. Clarine's thoughts were in a dreamy state, half sad, half blissful, and her nervous fingers again wandering produced vague, rambling melodies, and thus idling they once more glided into the exquisite running accompaniment of "Du meine Seele." But this time all and more of the pathos and sentiment her aunt had vouched for her, Clarine gave. This time she sang it, and like one inspired with the living genius, the very soul of its immortal author. The first trembling eagerness of the worship no longer able to repress itself; the sublime merging of the Ego in the Tu; the noble self-absorption of love constituting another its "peace," its "rest," its "atmosphere of bliss;" and the final bursting forth in grand assertion of the passion which claims by virtue of its holiness its twin spirit, its "other soul," in one inalienable union of love.

As the last burst of the impassioned spirit floated into silence, flattering praise came from those in the outer room. Clarine timidly raised her eyes to Mr. Maltby's face, mutely asking her reward. Reverently he raised her hand to his lips, and said in low, heart-felt tones, which for once were not a murmur:

"I thank you for the most exquisite pleasure of my life."

Something suddenly changed Clarine's mood; either the loud praise from the adjoining room jarred upon her sensitiveness; or there was a revulsion of the nervous excitement under which she had sung; or perhaps something in that light touch upon her hand. At all events, whatever the subtle cause, the temper of her mind had changed, and upon Mr. Maltby remarking: "You sing well,"—he was partial to laconic, wise-sounding asseverations—she replied pettishly: "Yes, I know I sing well, but it's the only thing I can do well."

Perverse, wayward Clarine, by her very pouting smile accepting her just meed of praise. Yet, I think she must have looked very pretty in her pettish waywardness, for Mr. Maltby smiled upon her with the amused, tolerant smile one bestows upon a fractious pet, and men, we know, are not apt to smile upon a wayward woman unless she is very pretty.

Clarine rose from the piano and led the way into the drawing-room, saying carelessly:

"I see that Mrs. Bell is laying the cards upon the whist-table. Shall we join them?"

But instead of herself joining the party at the card-table Clarine whispered to her aunt Helen, begging upon the plea of a headache to be excused for the remainder of the evening; though in pressing such a plea she should more carefully have dimmed the brightness of her eyes.

Clarine having won her aunt's reluctant consent, withdrew to her own room, and wrapping a shawl around herself sat down by her window to muse as young girls do. That day this stranger had stirred emotions within her such as had never yet, in all her associations with men, been touched. She was conscious of strange feelings, but it did not occur to her to sound them, for she was not a girl to question herself. Left from birth without the guiding care of a mother, educated in the hothouse of female frivolity, a fashionable city boarding-school, at the early age of sixteen, when a girl should still be in the nursery, introduced by her idolizing aunt into the mysterious circle of society, and since then in the constant whirl and excitement of the gay world, no wonder that she had not yet found time to stop and think. Yet there were moments when she wearied of all this and longed for a different life: moments when she would attempt to withdraw from light scenes and companions to give herself a breathing spell. She felt that this incessant round was wearing her out; there was a loud strong cry in her soul for a nobler life, and in such moments she would half resolve to break the gilded fetters which bound her to the treadmill of society. But then the hand of a gay companion would be outstretched, and bright eyes and bantering tongues coaxed and lured her back into the maelstrom of dissipation. These purer, holier aspirations were only like the bright meteors flashing in heaven's space, giving out a clear brilliancy in their rapid flight, then leaving the darkness darker, with not a trace of the glorious effulgence so lately illuminating their path. The allotted space in the firmament of her nature had yet to be filled by the luminary which was to shed the permanent light of self-knowledge into her soul.

The Creator had not yet said to her soul: "Let there be light." She was still in mid-chaos.

And yet, for all her want of self study, Clarine was certainly not what one would call a frivolous girl. She could entertain a serious purpose and consistently carry it out. When the welfare of another excited her interest she could think rapidly and well, with a depth of judgment surprising in one so unaccustomed to view life in a serious phase. It was only for herself that she was never in earnest. To her own stake in life she was careless and indifferent. For others she could be the thoughtful, counseling friend, the tender, self-sacrificing woman; for herself, she was content to be the gay little moth singeing its delicate wings in the ruthless flames of dissipation. Well, let her be, for awhile, the gay butterfly tasting the sweets of the wild flowers upon the hedgeway. Her hours of frolicsome glee were numbered. Already was the fiery odeal which lies in the pathway of all travelers towards the heavenly kingdom, fast being prepared for her. The first fagot was even now laid, and soon others would be piled on, the lighted match would be touched, and the flames would writhe around her. Would she therein be forever destroyed? or would she, nay, *could* she emerge from those flames living and purified? We are told that holy men were cast into the raging furnace, yet came forth unharmed. Can that thing be done now, and by a woman?

For a long time Clarine sat by her window, until with her lonely musings she began to feel low spirited and unhappy, and soon the tears began to flow; and so she sat weeping and fretting, and wondering why she felt so wretchedly, until she heard them leave the drawing-room and coming up the stairs. And separate, distinct from the rest, she heard Mr. Maltby's light springing step as he passed through the hall to his room, guided by Mr. Bell. Then her maid appeared and lit her lamp, then Isa-



bel came into her room,—Clarine had carefully dried her tears,—and the two girls laughed and chatted and made their night toilets, and then bidding a cheerful good-night, retired to rest.

Once in bed, Clarine's troubles for the day were over, for her head scarce pressed the pillow well, ere sweet slumber held her in its downy chains. She could still sleep the sleep of innocence.

## CHAPTER VI.

There is a calm upon the surface of the whirlpool, a stillness before the storm; such was the peace which had now reigned between Isabel and Mr. Rashleigh for the unprecedented time of four weeks. But a change came over this fair weather one day, when Mr. Rashleigh had promised to come up from the city to join her in a ride, and instead of himself there came the following note:

"DEAR BELLA,

"Forgive me for not keeping my engagement for to-day. My sister has received word of serious trouble among the workmen engaged upon the repairs of her country house. The necessity for my immediate presence is too urgent to be neglected. Need I say, my darling, how keenly I feel the disappointment, and how grieved I am at this unexpected parting? But it will only be for a few days, for I shall undoubtedly be able to return by the end of the week, and the joy of meeting you again, my own darling, will almost recompense me for the pain of absence. For well does my little torment know that she is the light of my life, the joy of the present, the hope of the future,"——

But why follow the wild rhapsodies of a confiding lover? why paint the fullness of his joy, when the picture must be turned to give place to its counterpart, sorrow? Little heed did she give to his assurances of deep, earnest love. She only cared to realize that he had left her upon business for his sister, the sister she so hated.



It is not to be supposed that a girl of Isabel's passionate nature could withstand the tempting opportunity thus offered for a quarrel. That there was really nothing in the facts of the case to afford food for her passion, had she chosen to inquire into motives, but added spice to the dainty morsel, and this way of searching for motives by Dame Justice is really very tedious and unsatisfactory sort of work when bare facts answer our purpose far better. And it certainly was an undeniable fact that Mr. Rashleigh, though her own lover and consequent property, had yet dared, without having first humbly begged her sovereign permission, to assume unto himself the liberty of acting for himself. Disappointment was one of the many things which Isabel's sensitive feelings could not brook. Days of perturbation followed the present one, and at the end of the week, instead of time being allowed the sweet privilege of mitigating the ire of the sensitive injured one, it was only aggravated by the receipt of another note from the delinquent, informing her, with many more tender regrets, that it would be quite impossible for him to return under a week or ten days further. This sad announcement filled her cup of just wrath to the brim, and the drop needed to run it over was added the same evening, when some visitors from the city mentioned, among other gossip, that Mrs. Livingstone had left town that day for her country-seat, accompanied by her young friend, Miss Newcombe.

The only question which now occupied the mind of the fair and equitably-disposed Isabel, was not *why* Mr. Rashleigh had done this thing, or whether she should, or should not evince displeasure at his egregious behaviour, but simply and solely *how* could she best impress upon him a forcible, and edifying conviction of her just indignation and severe displeasure (thus she complacently paraphrased her fierce anger) at his utterly inexcusable disregard of her feelings.

And day after day Isabel brooded and planned her revenge—brooded and planned for her own misery. A week or more passed by the family in quiet routine, in visiting friends, in the usual riding, driving and boating; and though Isabel did not communicate to any one, not even to Clarine, her usual confidant when in trouble, her punitive intentions towards her recreant lover, yet that there was mischief brooding, was evident in the fitfulness of her manner, vacillating from noisy gayety to sullen gloom, a fire flashing from her eye, and a worried gnawing of her under lip—all unfailing indications of a brewing storm. Towards the end of the second week, according to invitations already issued by Mrs. Bell, who was no master of inactivity, there was to be a picnic excursion, to which were invited their friends on the Island, as well as a number from the city.

The morning of the excursion arrived, and they were awaiting the return of the carriages which had been sent to the landing for the city guests. Their friend, Mrs. Wilson, had come by an early boat, and now sat chatting with Mrs. Bell in the drawing-room. Mrs. Wilson was a very comely looking woman, her two remarkable features being a pair of magnificent black eyes, and full rows of hard, white, glistening teeth. In talking she always showed her eyes, clear, bright and flashing; in laughing, she always showed her teeth well. She was very lively, fond of fun, had an easy, agreeable manner, could fascinate a good many men, and yet, withal, was a very practical sort of woman.

They had not been talking long, ere Mrs. Bell, with an air of confidential mystery, communicated to her friend the pleasing intelligence that Mr. Bell had the previous evening received a letter from Mr. Maltby, announcing his return from Washington that day.

"So he will doubtless arrive with the other guests," she

continued, in delighted tones. "But I have not told Clarine, for I wish to surprise her. You know we can judge of certain feelings by the tell-tale expression of the face," she concluded, with an immensely wise air.

"And so you expect to discover whether Clarine loves Mr. Maltby or not, by the effect of a little surprise?" asked Mrs. Wilson, curiously. "I fancy you will be disappointed, Helen, for Puss was never the one to let her face betray secrets. And it seems to me you take too much for granted. Mr. Maltby is only the lover of a day, if lover at all; and I should think it rather premature to expect a betrayal of love on either side."

"But even that one day showed me very plainly that he was very much impressed with her charms, and I thought that Clarine seemed very much pleased with him," returned Mrs. Bell, whose opinion once assumed was unconvertible by any reasonable argument.

"It may be just as you say," returned Mrs. Wilson, irreverently unconvinced by her sagacious friend, "but Clarine may receive Mr. Maltby as she pleases, for all the curiosity I have to detect her love. For my part, I prefer to watch Isabel as she receives Mr. Rashleigh. You know he returned to the city last evening, so, of course, he will hasten to appear before his well-beloved tyrant this morning, to receive his reprimand with due humility."

But now was heard the distant rumbling of wheels, and soon the carriages rolled up, and one by one deposited their respective loads of guests, and in a few moments all was bustle and activity, friends meeting with a bright jest and echoing laugh. Isabel stands slightly apart, near a large basket of flowers, one hand resting carelessly among them. She sees Mr. Rashleigh approaching with quick, light steps, and joyful smiles, but her head is thrown back, and a supercilious smile parts her lips as she bows with distant

formality and allows her fingers to touch his hand. The reception was observed by all.

"For shame!" cried Mrs. Wilson and Mrs. Mortimer simultaneously, in low tones, and the cry was repeated by Mrs. Bell, who stood near them.

"A sound thrashing would do that girl a wonderful deal of good!" was the extremely ungallant, but very just sentence pronounced in a low voice by Mr. Seymour to his friend Curtiss. The latter responded only by his eyes and a chuckling laugh.

Mr. Maltby now approached his fluttering hostess, and once more Mrs. Bell's company graces were displayed for his benefit. The eyes drooped, the handsome teeth glistened through the smiling lips, and the body bent gracefully as they mutually murmured the unintelligible but taken for granted greeting. How much brighter her eyes sparkled, how much more brilliantly the glowing color deepened in her cheeks, how much more of gracious condescension in her manner in receiving Mr. Maltby, than any other guest! Had one been suspiciously-minded, they might, oddly enough, have conjectured that Mrs. Bell was the one whose countenance was to be watched for signs of love, instead of the accused Clarine, who now emerges from the open window of the drawing-room, drawing on her gloves. Just the slightest start of surprise deepens the rosy flush upon her cheeks, as, with a bright smile, she welcomes Mr. Maltby's return; but the flush does not fade, and the dimpling smile is even brighter as she turns to greet Mr. Bronson. And, indeed, it would have required the curious scrutiny of the world-renowned "careful observer," to have detected the slightest change in either countenance or manner as she receives homage from each.

A few moments spent in lively conversation, during which the remainder of the guests arrive, and then the

word is given for the start. The different parties re-enter their carriages, some of the gentlemen riding by their side, and the long cavalcade winds down the avenue.

A pleasant ride of an hour over roads whose openings constantly disclose charming landscapes of hill, dale and water, brings them to the grove surrounding the lake to which their steps are bent. Alighting, there is a few minutes' walk along winding paths, the more romantic preferring to conquer difficulties over rough rocks, and through tangled brushwood and overhanging boughs, gallantly held aside by the gentlemen for the clearer passage of the dear, obstinate, venturesome ladies, and then the placid Silver Lake lies glimmering in half sunshine, half shadow. A short time given to admiration of the picturesque scenery, and then the company broke up into smaller parties, each seeking their own amusement; some wandering through the valley on one side, others ascending the cliffs which rose opposite, while still others, entering the little boats, roughened the smooth surface of the water, gliding from point to point of the shore, as each seemed most attractive.

But in all this large company there are but two or three couples possessing any special claim upon our attention. Upon the highest cliffs, where few feet would venture, upon some moss-covered rocks, commanding a full view of the lake and grounds filled with the gay excursionists, and yet so screened and shaded by foliage and old forest trees as to be completely hidden from view, are seated Isabel and Mr. Rashleigh.

"Bella, I surely have a right to demand an explanation of your manner to me this morning," he was saying. "Was it not enough that you disregarded not only my most sensitive feelings, but also your own self-respect and ordinary delicacy by such a reception? I object, if you

do not, to others being made witnesses to our endless dissensions. I assure you again that I do not deserve your anger, for whatever my offence, and it is plain to be seen that in some way or other I have offended you most grievously, yet, indeed, I have sinned most unwittingly. So do tell me, I beg of you, Bella, in what terrible misdemeanor consists my present unconscious offence."

He spoke firmly, though his tones were sad and weary; weariness of this old, old story, these incessant quarrels and reconciliations. How cold and hard was the face that turned towards him to answer his pleading.

"Mr. Rashleigh"—Isabel must be angry indeed, when she called her lover aught but "Edward"—"whenever you offend me you invariably plead ignorance of the cause. It is time such mockery of my feelings should cease. For the last time I consent to tell you why I am angry with you."

"Pray continue," said he, as she paused to gather her thoughts, and now his tone was dry and caustic.

"You profess to love me, and yet in all things you prefer another. Once more have my wishes been made to give way to another's pleasure. For another's sake I have been coolly told to wait, and have been made to wait until another chose to release you from what was doubtless a willing thralldom. Disappointment for me, it appears, is nothing. She must be pleased, no matter what my feelings may be."

So far Isabel proceeded in a tone and manner for her quite dignified, but the full tide of her passion fast surged upwards, and as her lover quietly listened, without the least attempt at remonstrance, her language became more violent.

"Do you think that I can bear everything?" she continued. "If you love your sister better stay with her. Heretofore you have left me without my per-

mission; but now you have it to go when and where you will. Your sister will be glad that she has at last succeeded in tearing you from me, and from this moment you will have no interference from me in your affectionate devotions to her. You are now free to go to your sister, and remain forever by her side."

"Do you really mean that we should part, Bella?" asked Mr. Rashleigh in incredulous tones.

"Yes;" was the heartless reply. "In all things you disregard my wishes, and prove very plainly that you prefer obeying the dictates of a sister to consulting the wishes of one whom you have idly flattered with the fond hope of one day being your wife. So now you are free!" Only the very madness of passion could have wrung such untruthful taunts from even Isabel's pitiless lips.

Mr. Rashleigh's face was blanched to a ghastly pallor as he rose and began pacing to and fro. He made a few turns, and then walking to a short distance leaned with folded arms against a tree. One might have supposed he was merely watching the gay revellers beneath him, but the set gaze, the livid lips, and the nervous working of the fingers betokened more truly the struggle of inward agony.

With feelings half frightened, half defiant, Isabel watched him. He stood so long and quietly by the tree that she became impatient and would have gone to him, but was deterred by a vague and unusual feeling of fear which his strange manner raised within her. At last he turned and came towards her, as she stood carelessly plucking some wild roses from a vine that clambered over the rocks.

He came close to her as he said, very gravely:

"Isabel, with your own free will you have pronounced your future." The words chilled even her.

They were so cold and stern, so unlike her lover, her Edward! "I know now," he continued in the same calm, inflexible severity, "that I have bowed to your caprices too long and too willingly. But now, happily, you have rendered me the service of removing, with your own merciless hand, the bandage which blinds the lover's eyes. Now I can see the past and judge the future to which it was leading. You have chosen, Bella, without reason, without a shadow of justice to assert claims of mere attentions of pleasure to yourself, over those of duty to the welfare of an only and widowed sister. From a causeless jealousy of a sister, who, I assure you now, as I have before again and again, has never had a harsh thought of you, from this silly, absurd jealousy of my care of one who has no one in the world to love her but her brother, for such a worthless reason you have decided that we should part. I must either forsake her, or give in a slavish submission to your tyrannical pleasure. This I cannot, I will not do. Had you asked me, Bella," he paused, his voice broke and became tremulous with emotion, "had you asked me for further proofs of love; had you merely wished to test the depths of a love which I know you do not doubt; had you asked me to brave unknown dangers, torments or death, that your happiness, your welfare might be secured, too well you know that no sacrifice would have been considered in your service: my life is in your hands. But you have done less and yet more than this. You have raised a barrier of cold selfishness between us, and by your own reckless caprice have parted us; and as you yourself have voluntarily chosen, so it shall be. I accept my freedom."

For once Isabel did not know what to say. She, of course, had not brooded and planned so long, and de-

terminated upon this desperate quarrel, neatly pre-arranged, however, to terminate in her favor, without calculating something of the effect of her daring. She was fully prepared for all the usual angry chidings, passionate protestations, and gentle entreaties; but for this calm and literal acceptance of her very words, and, above all, for the dignified exposure of her petty, unworthy motives, she was not in the least prepared. For one brief, honorable moment the impulse of pure love prompted her to renounce her heartless words, and with the tender pleadings of love insist upon forgiveness. But for the first time in the history of her love a timid doubt of her acceptance withheld her, and the next instant the evil spirit of her nature exorcised the good, and raised within the aggressive image of Grace Newcombe. Again the angry hue crimsoned the cheeks which had paled with the strife of emotion, her haughty head tossed contemptuously, and her lips quivered with passion as she coldly answered:

"Very well, then, I am glad you are so well satisfied with your freedom. They are calling to luncheon, so we had better join them. But before we part it gives me pleasure to congratulate you upon your future happiness with one in whose path I have so long stood. I wish every joy to yourself and—Miss Grace Newcombe!" And under the delusion that she had expressed herself with marvellous dignity, she drew her mantle more closely around her, and swinging her hat in her hand, turned away with insulting haughtiness.

Her last words brightened Mr. Rashleigh's face with a ray of hope. "Stay, Bella," he cried, as he caught her hand. "Tell me that it is only of Grace Newcombe you are jealous, and not of my sister! Tell me that it is only some idle, wicked rumor which has angered you, and I can forgive all the rest and let the past be for-

gotten." He put his arms about her in loving detention as he urged her with ardent tenderness. "This plea against my sister is only the excuse, not the cause, is it not, Bella? Only tell me, my darling, that it is merely some mischievous gossip about Grace Newcombe which has caused this jealousy, and let us be friends again!" Deep was the love that sought such excuse for reconciliation!

And Isabel! Did she relent? No. The pride of her temper forbade any concession which might seem like jealous fear of a rival. With a supercilious smile, she bitterly replied: "You mistake my meaning," and again turned away along the path through the woods.

The last hope of the lover was wrenched from him. For a moment Mr. Rashleigh stood with agonized gaze fixed upon the retreating figure of the woman he loved so well, and then slowly he followed down the hill. As they neared the edge of the little copse separating the grove from the open space where the company were gathered, he quickened his steps and came by Isabel's side. "One request, Isabel. Let there be no more exposure of our feelings to the curious gaze of gossiping strangers. Let there be no difference in our outward manner to-day, and,"—he added slowly, "upon our return I will explain to Mr. Bell."

Isabel started. An explanation was another thing for which she was not prepared. It really looked ominous, as though he were in earnest about leaving her. But in another instant she laughed to scorn the idea of his daring such a bold step. He might, indeed, seem to do so, but he would meekly come back, and this speaking to her guardian was but part of the seeming. A few more steps and two wretched hearts join the gay company, with faces vying theirs in brightness. Their laugh is the lightest,

their jest the merriest, their mirth, indeed, infectious. "How happy Miss Holmes and Mr. Rashleigh are to day!" remarks one to another. 'Wise judges are we of each other.'

At the head of the principal group of guests arranged about the damask spread upon the soft turf, and covered with every tempting viand, presides Mrs. Bell:—by her side the doctor. Ah, Mrs. Bell, many were the comments, not to say insinuations, of your dearest friends that day. The doctor's attentions were certainly very marked, but what harm could there possibly be in the mere polite attentions, the simple formal courtesies, in fact, which a married woman received from her family physician, and in the solemn presence of her adored husband, at that!

Near her aunt sits Clarine, and near to her Mr. Maltby. It is the first opportunity for anything like exclusiveness which she has granted him during the day. All the morning she has retained near her, as only such an accomplished coquette knows how, a constant crowd of attendants, flitting from place to place as he followed, yet with such finished art as never to allow him to more than half suspect her purpose. Did she fear him? or was it merely to avoid the prying remarks of that crowd of friends whose tongues she knew so well? Even during luncheon Mr. Maltby tried in vain to win a look, a word, a blush he could apportion to himself, to his own special influence. He might knit his brows in disappointment, but her looks, her words were the same to him as to all. The same sweetly smiling face upturned to him, was turned to the one who sat by her other side. With the same merry laugh she gave the brilliant repartee to him, or to the next that spoke.

One glance at the scene before us. Delightful music from the lake is carried towards them on the gently

flapping wings of the balmy summer breeze; bright sunlight shimmers through the half-leaved, blossoming trees, swinging the fragrant incense of delicate odors upon the scattered groups; some gather about a mossy knoll upon which the snowy damask makes pleasant contrast with the dark green sward; others around a friendly rock which offers its smooth surface for a table beneath a sheltering bough; while others have found a fallen trunk of an old forest tree to serve them for their resting-place; many voices raise a pleasant hum, and the merry laugh peals forth in joyous melody. Quickly passes the sunny afternoon. Where all are gathered for pleasure amusements are easily found, and the dancing hours vanish swiftly. All too soon the deepening shadows under the trees warn them to hasten home, and ere long they are wending their way through the woods redolent with evening sweetness, and driving through the golden sunset shedding its gorgeous effulgence upon the ocean's rippling waters. Soon they are again upon the broad, vine-shaded piazza of Mr. Bell's house, and in a few minutes the servants are busied serving coffee to the guests before departing.

Isabel watches Mr. Rashleigh, and presently sees him approach Mr. Bell, speak a few words, and they both enter the house and turn into the library. Then she waits for them to reappear, but how long they stay in that closed room! The guests are all departing, those from the city to the boats, those from the neighborhood to their homes, and still they do not come! There is something in all this which makes her uneasy. It looks very much as though Mr. Rashleigh's were a serious threat, put into serious execution. She enters the hall and paces restlessly to and fro. At last the library door opens. She catches the words, "My best wishes and heartiest sympathy go

with you, Mr. Rashleigh," and he is coming towards her. She turns with the pretence of ascending the stairs.

"Will you not bid me good-bye, Bella?" and her hand was held to detain her.

"Good-bye," she replied, coldly.

He looked at her silently for a moment, but she showed no sign of relenting. "Bella," he said, gently and sadly, "I would have wished all this could have been otherwise, and that our lives might have been passed together. As it is, you have my best wishes for your life-long happiness."

He releases her cold, lax hand, and moves a step from her, then turning, suddenly clasps her in his arms, passionately kisses eyes, brow and lips, murmurs his undying love in her ear—why did she not even then hold him back?—and then he desperately breaks from her.

"Are you also leaving us, Mr. Rashleigh?" asked Mrs. Bell, hospitably attempting to detain him.

"Yes; I have engagements compelling my return to the city. Good-bye, Mrs. Bell." He presses her hand, with the mockery of a smile raises his hat with a final bow to the rest, and is gone!

Isabel's mouse has escaped. But sometimes a mouse is to be found so foolish as to allow itself to be caught the second time.

## CHAPTER VII.

FLEETLY now Clarine's hours skipped by on dancing step to the music of a happy heart. She had at last met one who encouraged her to express those sentiments which she had hitherto concealed within the secret fastnesses of soul and brain. At first she had freed her ideas timidly, for it was a strange liberty she was allowing herself, or rather, a new and sweet privilege offered which she could not refuse. Mr. Maltby led her to talk freely upon subjects upon which she had heretofore only dared sometimes to think. Now the expression of long pent-up feelings rouses those feelings to greater activity, causing them to give birth to new emotions, new sensations, and forcing into new life powers of thought and feeling so long lain dormant that their very existence is unsuspected. As physical exercise develops the muscular action of the body, so does psychical exercise develop the mental resources of the soul; freedom of expression being to the heart and mind, what gymnastics are to the body.

It was through the action of this psychical power that Mr. Maltby sought to grasp and wield a controlling influence over Clarine. To herself Clarine seemed to have awakened from the torpor of a long sleep to a fresher, more vigorous life, and the new existence was as delightful as it was strange. Had she asked herself if she loved Mr. Maltby,—though that question had not yet startled her,



—she would without hesitation have answered, No. Even Mr. Maltby himself, who from knowledge derived from long and heartless experience of women, was a refined judge of their hearts, and could calculate with the nicety of a skilled practitioner every intricate working of their natures, was yet in doubt whether the emotions he had evidently aroused within Clarine were those of passion or mere sentiment. His doubts, also, of the extent of the power he would be able to wield over her, were increased by a more intimate insight into her character afforded him by a conversation he overheard one morning between her and Isabel.

He had been idling in the music-room looking over Clarine's songs, and while there Clarine and Isabel came out upon the piazza with their needle-work in hand, and took seats close by the window opening from the music-room, so as to be on the side of the house shaded from the morning sun. For a while he heard nothing of their conversation, was not even aware of their presence, his attention being fully absorbed in some sketches of Clarine's which he had discovered in a portfolio lying underneath a pile of music. At last a more decided remark from Isabel caught his ear.

"I tell you, Clarine, that Mr. Rashleigh will return to me. He cannot be happy without me, I know, and I am sure that you will soon see him suing again at my feet."

In Clarine's earnest tones came the answer to this confident assertion, "Bella, how can you delude yourself with such false hopes? Any man to return to a woman who had so trodden upon his most sacred feelings, as you have upon Mr. Rashleigh's, would be the most insane lover that Cupid ever deranged. You might triumph in such madness, Bella, I should only pity his weakness."

Mr. Maltby stepped softly to the door; but while he was in the room workmen had come to rehang some

of the paintings in the drawing-room, and in some manner had barred the doorway. Egress through the door was thus impossible, and there was no other way of leaving the room except through the very window by which they sat. It was too late now; he had heard too much to make his presence known, and perhaps they would only stay a few minutes. Willing or unwilling he was compelled to remain, and soon found himself more highly entertained than listeners usually are.

"Clarine," asked Isabel, after a pause in which her thoughts must have been very busy; "what would you do with a lover, if you had one and were mad with him?"

How merrily the silvery laughter rang from Clarine's lips!

"In the first place, Bella, I never had a lover; so how can I tell?" A certain manly heart throbbed wildly at this innocent declaration.

"But then you might have one; and of course you have often thought of having a lover sometime or other; every girl does that. And of course no girl has a lover without getting mad with him sometimes, and making up again, just for the fun of it. So what would you do, Clarine?"

"If I had a real, genuine lover, Bella, I think I should be too happy to quarrel with him."

"Now you are only making fun of me! But in earnest, what would you do?"

"In earnest, then," returned Clarine, more seriously, "if my affections were engaged, and I had solemnly betrothed myself to one who, I knew, sincerely loved me in return, I could not quarrel with him as you quarrel, Bella. But even with the best intentions unhappy differences and estrangements may arise. In such a case, I should earnestly seek for the true cause, and with whom it rested. If, upon explanation, I found that I was to blame, I think I should not hesitate to confess my fault, and beg to be taken back to favor."



"I did not suppose you could be so humble," replied Isabel, unable to repress a slight sneering smile. "You have such a proud, high-spirited manner of dealing with people."

"You mistake the nature of my pride."

"Yes, I know I never could quite understand it," said Bella, in a changed tone. "But you have not yet said what you would do with your quarrelsome lover, if, after this wondrous searching and explanation, you found that he and not you were to blame; for I suppose you will admit that to be possible, even with your paragon."

"Just for the sake of argument I will," replied Clarine, amused at Bella's questioning. "If I found, then, that he had been unconsciously to blame—for I will not admit, even for argument's sake, that my paragon could knowingly and intentionally do wrong—I would explain his mistake to him, and—and—well, there the subject would rest, and that would be the end of our quarrel."

"All except his asking pardon, and kissing and making up," suggested Bella, with a mischievous twinkle in her eye.

"I should stop him before he had half commenced asking pardon."

"Oh, Clarine!" cried Bella, in blank amazement at this incomprehensible self-abnegation. "Why, that is the best part of the whole quarrel!"

"Not for me; for I could not bear the thought that the man I loved could do wrong."

Isabel could find no answer to a sentiment she could not appreciate. Such pride, the pride which ennobles the beloved one, she could not understand.

For a while neither of the girls spoke. At last, Bella, who was evidently determined to settle the whole question to her entire satisfaction, recommenced:

"Suppose, Clarine," she began, slowly, "suppose—I

know this will make you angry, but just suppose, for once, that your lover had not only been to blame, but would not acknowledge it?"

"Really, Bella, I can scarcely suppose that possible."

"But just for argument's sake," persisted Isabel, coaxingly.

"Then, just to humor you, I will tell you that, in such a case, I would free myself from an engagement to any man who could knowingly persist in error, and unjustly hold me responsible. I would unhesitatingly break through the trammels of affection for such a man."

"You could not help loving him?"

"Every trace of love would be eradicated from my heart."

"But you would regret it afterwards?"

"Not for a moment."

"What if he should appeal to your feelings, your love, and try to win you back?"

"Impossible. With my respect once gone, all my love and compassion would be gone also."

The listener knit his brows.

"And could you be happy without him, Clarine?"

"I might not be happy, but I should be much better satisfied without him than with him."

Isabel sat thoughtfully quiet for a moment, then looking up into Clarine's face with wondering admiration, said: "I wish I had your pride and self-reliance, Clarine."

"Girls, girls, where are you?" called Mrs. Wilson's voice.

"Here," they answered.

"Come, get your hats and shawls; we are all going down to the seashore, take our luncheon with us, and eat it in Cedar Grove. Where is Mr. Maltby? He must be found to go with us."

"I thought I saw him go into the music-room a short

time ago," said Isabel, neither she nor the others noticing their proximity to the room in question.

Mr. Maltby trembled.

"No, he is not there," replied Mrs. Wilson, "for there is a heavy table across the door where the men are working, and he could not have got in there."

The prisoner breathed again.

"Perhaps he has gone down to the rocks by the lake," suggested Clarine. "He is very apt to go there in the morning to smoke."

"We can send John to look for him while we get ready," returned Mrs. Wilson, and the three ladies walked around the piazza, and entered the house.

Mr. Maltby was released. Very nimbly he jumped the low balcony, and with hasty steps struck into a side path hidden by a close hedge from view from the house, and then leisurely turned into the main path, and soon joined the waiting ones.

The carriages are soon conveying a gay, light-hearted party down to the beach, some two or three miles off. Fast horses soon put the distance in the background, and presently they all scatter up and down the hard, white beach, picking up shells, pebbles and seaweed strewn upon the sand, standing upon the edge of the receding wave, and rushing laughing back as the next white crest rolls creamily up to the curving line their feet just touched. The day is clear and bright with a warm, cheering sunshine, but there is a strong wind blowing, and the waves run high and break upon the shore with a rushing, roaring sound.

"This is playing with the ocean," said Clarine, turning with her fresh, bright face to Mr. Maltby, as she ran gayly back from the advancing waves. "Ah, beautiful, treacherous sea!" she exclaimed, turning her gaze from Mr. Maltby to the ocean, then back again to her companion;

"over how many lives wrecked upon your enticing wiles, over how many treasures swallowed by your insatiate rapacity, do you now come, with ever the same alluring graces, towards us!"

Were her words fraught with prophetic wisdom? Or by what strange instinct did she thus probe the depths of the man who stood by her side and smilingly met her innocent gaze as she thus apostrophized the ocean—symbolic of himself—surging with its mysteries of the dirged past and yet unknelted future up to her very feet!

"Are you talking to your old friend, the sea, Miss Rivington?" asked Dr. Tillman, drawing near. They had met him upon the road, returning from visiting some patients, and Mrs. Bell had, without much difficulty, persuaded him to join the party. "Water is your favorite element, is it not? I know from experience that you swim as though the ocean had been your home, and the sea-bird your companion."

"I believe I am amphibious," returned Clarine, merrily.

"I am sorry to see our privacy intruded upon," said Mrs. Bell, who now approached, with vexed countenance. "A family have just come down with several children."

"Rather an unsafe place for children, unless well watched," observed Mr. Maltby.

"We have a life-preserver here, in case of accident," said Dr. Tillman, bowing to Clarine, in allusion to a memorable occasion at Newport, when she had saved a man from drowning by bravely swimming out to his rescue. And notwithstanding Clarine's modest remonstrance, the doctor would probably have gone on and told the whole story, for it was a favorite one with him, had the subject not been cut short by the announcement of luncheon.

The sea air had given brave appetites to all, and they were soon making sad havoc among the tempting viands set before them. Cold punch made hot tongues, and the

light jest and gleeful laugh went round, making gayety and mirth. But what stays the half raised glass? A cry of horror, repeated by many voices. They all rise and rush to the spot whence come the sounds. The strangers are running towards the beach. "My child, my child!" comes in wild cry from the lips of an agonized mother.

A few questions elicit that the children had returned to the rocks to play, and one, the youngest, had fallen off into the sea, and was now being fast carried out upon the heaving ocean. Out to the rocks they fly! But what avails looking? The question is—who will venture to save the child?

All is fright and confusion, and the cry is raised for "a boat! a rope!" Dr. Tillman recollects having once noticed a boatman's hut on the other side of a point of land not very far distant, and thither he hastens to procure assistance. While the father of the child, unable to swim, can only walk up and down in despair, and join his fears to the alarm of the helpless women.

"Clarine, you shall not do it," cries Mrs. Bell, as she sees her niece preparing for the water, "Come back!"

"It is folly for you to attempt it," says Mrs. Mortimer, hastily.

A look of resolve is her only answer, as she impatiently hastens her steps to the edge of the rocks. In spite of the general cries of remonstrance she is about to make the plunge, but is arrested by a hand laid gently on her arm. "Stay! do not risk your life! I will save the child! For my sake, stay, Clarine."

The voice was low and entreating, and even in that hurried moment of excitement she was conscious of a strange thrill at hearing his voice whisper, "Clarine."

She stays, and the next instant Mr. Maltby plunges into the water. Clarine anxiously watches him. He has swum but a short distance when she turns to Mrs. Wilson

standing near her, and says, in low, determined accents; "That swimming cannot possibly save the child in these rough waves; I must go!" A leap, and her smooth, quiet strokes are fast gaining upon Mr. Maltby's more vigorous though less skilful ones. She shows immediately that she is by far the better swimmer. With easy speed she is at his side.

"Mr. Maltby, please return," she said hastily, "and if men should come with a rope, meet me with it."

"Miss Rivington, why did you venture?" he asked, in reproachful astonishment.

"To save the child," she replied, curtly, and would have darted rapidly past him, but his hand detained her.

"This is unkind, ungenerous of you!" he exclaimed. "I can easily save the child, and why do you risk your life, a life more precious to me than my own, than all else in the world to me, Clarine? For my sake, return."

A moment Clarine hesitated, her heart throbbing painfully; then she answered: "Mr. Maltby, I can soon reach the child, for I can swim very fast,"—she could not say that she knew she swam faster than he,—“and I know my strength in the water. Indeed you will render a greater service by doing as I request, for wind and tide are against us in returning, and without assistance it is possible that neither of us will reach the shore.”

"Then we will die together, Clarine."

"Why need either sink? Help will surely come; meet me with it and we are both safe."

He saw that she was right, and though it cost his pride a struggle to let her go alone towards the greater glory of the rescue, yet common prudence told him to follow her advice, and half unwillingly he obeyed.

A few rapid strokes in advance and then Clarine slackens her pace. She watches the child ahead of her, and measures her strength with the distance, her speed with the rapidity with which the child is being carried out.

To those on shore the distance seems so great, her movements so slow! "She will never reach him in time! He will drown before she gets to him!" exclaimed Mrs. Bell.

"It does not seem possible to reach him at the rate she is going," returned Mrs. Mortimer, "and the distance is constantly increasing, for the tide is taking him out so rapidly."

"Don't worry about her movements," said Mrs. Wilson, overhearing the remarks; "Clarine has undertaken to save the child, and you may depend upon her doing it."

A scream bursts from the women's lips! The child has sunk! Breathless with fear and anxiety, while the mother's heart-rending sobs and the dull roar of the rushing sea alone break the stillness of suspense, they all gaze with straining eyes upon the swimmer. And now they see her put out long, steady, cleaving strokes, which lift her through the water with immense rapidity. The time has arrived for her to exert her speed, and swiftly she nears the child as he rises and once more floats upon the surface. Nearer and nearer, with her easy, sweeping strokes, and with a few more lengths she will be up to him. Again he sinks, but now she is over the spot, and instead of waiting for him to rise, she dives! Another moment, and she raises him aloft to let them all see that he is safe. "Hurrah!" "Bravo!" "Well done!" bursts in joyful tones from every tongue.

"Hurrah!" cried Mrs. Wilson, clapping her hands in her excited glee. "I told you she would do it!" Her confidence in Clarine was always, and under any circumstances, unlimited.

Clarine has turned, but her progress towards shore is less rapid than in going out, for she is burdened with the child, and wind and wave are against her. But now men arrive with ropes; Mr. Maltby has swum out some distance

towards Clarine, but obeys her motion, and returns to receive the ropes as they are thrown out to him. The coil is thrown with dexterous hand, and with trained eye he catches it. Again he swims out towards Clarine. Heavily and with great effort she is breasting the waves. When near enough she signs hurriedly to Mr. Maltby to throw her the rope. He does so; and so true is the skilful aim that the noose falls easily over her lifted arm. With quick movement she fastens it around her body.

"Have you another rope?" she calls out to Mr. Maltby, as he comes nearer.

"Yes," he answers.

"Then tie it around yourself, and let them drag you in. You cannot make headway against this current and the waves."

He mockingly refuses, and goes to her assistance. They meet.

"Let me relieve you of the child!" he begs.

"No; I will keep him now," she replied. He bit his lips in mortified pride.

"Take my advice, Mr. Maltby, please do," she continued, "and tie that rope on. Indeed it will be impossible for you to swim back without help. I shall swim in as far as I can, and then let the men drag me in the rest of the distance."

At first Mr. Maltby was proudly unwilling to be assisted by the rope, but was soon obliged to do so, for he found that Clarine was right, and that he could indeed make but slight headway towards shore. Though Clarine's movements were now greatly assisted by the easy drawing of the rope, she yet found her strength fast giving way, and by the time she is but little more than two-thirds of the distance in, she tosses her arm for them to pull; and pull they do, with a will! But fearful to behold! Only the child's face is seen above

water! Clarine's face cannot be seen, only her white hands glimmering now and then through the surface of the swelling waves, as she holds the child firmly in her grasp.

"She is under water! Ease the rope!" cried Mrs. Bell.

"Can't be helped now, ma'am," answered the men. "The quicker she comes in now the better." And faster and faster, hand over hand, the long line of men haul in the rope with its precious burden, and now the last man of the line seizes them and carries the senseless girl and child in shore. All that fearful way she was under water; and the man who caught her tells, that when he grasped her she was lying on her back, holding the child upon her chest, that his head might be above water! Brave, heroic Clarine!

A few moments more and the men have brought in Mr. Maltby in a very exhausted condition.

Means are now employed to resuscitate the child and Clarine. With the child it is the work of a few minutes; his wet clothes removed, well wrapped in shawls, and a little wine soon bring him around. "Mamma, I've d'owned!" were his first lisping words as he sat in his mother's lap.

"You are not quite drowned yet, my little man," replied the happy father. "You will come to after awhile if you will take a little more of this nice drink," and the baby mouth is opened to take the wine that is to save him from further drowning.

But with Clarine, the exhaustion from her exertions, and that terrible dragging under the water, made restoration a more difficult task. They rubbed her feet and hands, and poured brandy down her throat, and after continuing this some fifteen or twenty minutes had at last the pleasure of seeing her open her eyes. For a few mo-

ments she evidently could not realize where she was. Her mind was trying to comprehend all that seemed so strange. Then came an anxious, conscious look, and she glanced around uneasily, yet too weak to speak.

"What is it, Clarine?" asked her aunt Julia. But she could make no answer; only that curious expression.

"It is the child she wants," said Mrs. Wilson, with quick comprehension. "The child is quite safe, Clarine, pet. He is laughing and prattling as though he rather liked drowning than not."

The quiet, satisfied smile showed that she had been understood. "Take me home, I am very tired," she whispered, and gently they raised her and carried her to the carriage. What a contrast the quiet, subdued party returning to the house, presented to the gay, merry one that had left it a few short hours before!

Clarine was speedily put into a warm bed, wrapped in soft blankets, a hot wine negus given to her, and then told to go to sleep; an order which she obeyed without effort.

More trouble in the house! Mr. Maltby's servant calling for the doctor! His master was very ill.

Dr. Tillman hastened to Mr. Maltby's room to find him suffering from severe pain in the heart. It seemed that upon entering the house he had hurried to his room to change his wet garments, and had mounted the stairs very hastily. This exertion, following upon the excitement of the past hour, had brought on an attack of his old enemy, heart disease. The paroxysm was severe, but fortunately of short duration, soon yielding to the remedies employed. Once relieved, entire quiet was imposed, an anodyne administered, and he was soon taking the res which over-taxed nature demanded.

## CHAPTER VIII.

IT was a bright, cheery day, a day when singing birds, whispering trees, and playing sunshine should have inspired all hearts with gladsome mirth; and yet Clarine had a very womanly fit of the blues—regular and unadulterated blues. She felt restless and unhappy, thoroughly despondent and hopelessly miserable, and yet the most critical research could not detect the least shadow of a reason for all this misery. Yet, that the cause was invisible, made the fact none the less a miserable fact, and so she went on, most unreasonably, having the blues the very worst way. She at first tried to work them off by out-door exercise, but this failing, and having learned by experience that solitude and an entertaining book, if she could only manage to get interested in it, were the best means of passing off these moods, she finally sought the retirement of her own room, to try these remedies once more. She was therefore inclined to feel greatly bored when, a few minutes after entering her room, Isabel begged for admittance, and began her complaints about Mr. Rashleigh's absence. It was now two weeks since he had accepted his freedom at her hands, and still no sign of his return. She had calculated upon his wounded pride supporting him for a longer absence than usual in their quarrels—diversions, Mrs. Wilson termed them—and

was therefore not much surprised or worried when a week passed without word from him. But as day after day still came and went unheralding his return, misgivings began to disturb the complacency of her meditations. She had not been troubled with any unpleasant family scenes on account of her rupture with her betrothed. She had listened patiently to a lecture from her guardian, patiently, because inwardly congratulating herself upon her victory when he should return and sue for pardon. But with the exception of this scolding—and she was not at all the girl to care for that, for, as she often laughingly remarked, she had been brought up on scoldings and whippings—a dignified remonstrance from Mrs. Bell, and a glance of triumph which she either did receive or imagined she did, (quite the same thing in effect,) from Mrs. Wilson's flashing eyes, there was nothing said or done by any of the family at all calculated to wound her feelings—if she had any!

In her uneasiness, for it was really nothing more, at Mr. Rashleigh's lengthened absence, she sought Clarine to enlist, if possible, her sympathy. But Clarine, in a fit of the blues, was not disposed to listen to her repinings, and to Isabel's surprise received her with petulant chidings, and told her outright that she fully deserved any worrying her lover's absence caused her. The unexpected adoption of this mode of address soon had the effect of sending Isabel angrily from her presence.

Once more alone, Clarine seated herself in an easy-chair by her favorite window overlooking the lawn and the park: while off in the distance gleamed the sparkling ocean, its creamy surf breaking gently upon the low rocks of the shore. She had provided herself with a book, and with industrious intentions began to read; but as she turned the leaves her glance would turn upon the outdoor charms spread before her, and soon the leaves turned slower, the glances were more frequent and prolonged,

until the leaf was held unturned between the fingers, and the dreamy eyes turned not back again to the page.

Clarine is thinking.

Shall I follow her thoughts? It is not very difficult; they can easily be guessed. She is thinking of Mr. Maltby. Of course! you say. She is thinking of the new, strange life he has brought to her; of the delight of telling to another those feelings which she has always perforce kept bound up so strong within the boundary of her lips,—feelings of repinings at her profitless, squandered hours, and of longings for a nobler life; of the kindly beaming of his eyes as she looks fearlessly into them for the sympathy she is sure of receiving; of his friendly words of encouragement to her ambitions for a life of purer action, a life of real, not affected feeling, a life amidst more congenial companionship than the vain world she lived in could grant to such a spirit as hers. She is thinking of the musical murmur of his low, gentle-toned voice, of the magnetic thrill of his touch as he sometimes lays his hand lightly upon her head at some burst of enthusiasm from her lips, while his voice in tender tones calls her, "My child," and her gleeful laugh is answered by a laugh boyish in its ringing merriment, and as light-hearted as her own:—The witchery of his presence is upon her. Of course! you say again.

But she is thinking, too, as the leaf of her book is fluttered by the breeze through her fingers, and her thoughts turn with it, that his coming to her sometimes brings with it a vague feeling of uneasiness, a flutter of something undefined at her heart; as his voice floats its seductive music upon her ear, a dim consciousness of being made captive by sound, not sense; a faint throb of something like disappointment as a stray look into his face catches a sharp knitting of the brows, a restless, uneasy depth in his eyes as they turn upon her with a strange look that would read

her unexpressed thoughts, and a misty wonder as to the meaning in all this portrayed obscures her mind; a dim feeling of a want unfilled, a longing unsatisfied; and with this and pervading it all, a vague sense of uneasy happiness which turns herself into a creature she does not know. You say again—of course!

But now the question steals gently in upon her mind of loving him. It does not startle her; but calmly she pictures to herself a life spent with him apart from the world; of always being by his side in the elysium of congenial spirituality, of mingling of souls; of always hearing that murmur of his voice, of listening to that hum of words, of thrilling under that touch; and all this she thinks without a flutter at her heart or a flush to her cheek; and she goes on thinking of an eternity with him, until in thought she raises her eyes to his eyes,—but what is it she encounters there? She starts from her seat with a low cry, the book drops with a noise upon the floor, and her look is wild and terrified, while her cold hands clutch her breast as though a pain were there! She gives a startled glance around the room, out upon the lawn, and half smiles a sigh of relief as the bright, warm sunshine recalls her wandering mind; 'twas but a reverie! But then she paces uneasily up and down her room. She is frightened, miserable, she wishes she knew why. Then she laughs at herself for her folly, gazes out upon the cheering sunshine flitting among the leaves, feels the cool breeze upon her burning cheek, then hastily rings her bell, orders her horse, dons her habit, and is soon cantering down the avenue, out upon the road to the seashore;—and returns in an hour to laugh at low spirits.

The same evening, as the family were assembled in the drawing-room after dinner, Mr. Bell handed Isabel the evening paper, requesting her to look at the list of departures for Europe.



With some astonishment she took the paper and looked under the heading—"Departures per steamer Sirius." Her face paled a sickly hue, and then the crimson dye of hot blood covered face, neck, even empurpling her hands, and her lips quivered as with passionate emphasis she exclaimed: "It is not true! he has not dared"—then throwing down the paper she abruptly hastened from the room. In the long paragraph of closely printed names, she saw the one,—Edward Rashleigh.

Presently a servant brought a message to Clarine from Isabel, begging her to come to her. Clarine found her in an agony of passionate despair.

"Oh, Clarine, tell me it is not true!" she cried, clasping her hands wildly. "Has he really gone? Do you think he could leave me? He has not gone! He has only done this to try me!"

"Bella," replied Clarine, calmly, "you know perfectly well that it is true, and you know, too, why he has gone. It is useless to rave now and tear your hair," she continued, as Isabel paced the room with rapid strides, and drew her long, heavy hair in disorder down upon her shoulders. "You have brought this misery upon yourself wilfully. You have sent Mr. Rashleigh away from you simply by your own uncurbed temper. You have even had two weeks in which to repent and attempt a reconciliation, but you have scornfully disdained one word to soften his bitter anguish. Can you wonder that he has fled from all that can remind him of his lost happiness?" Clarine spoke with more spirit than she was wont to display in scolding Isabel, for her anger had been fairly roused by her unwomanly and inexcusable treatment of her lover.

"Oh, Clarine, do not scold me so!" returned Isabel in a pleading voice. "I know I deserve it all, and more. I see now how foolish, how wrong, how wicked I have been;

but, Clarine, if you knew how very miserable I am, you would not be angry with me."

Humility from Isabel was something so entirely new and unexpected that Clarine could not withstand it. She could have opposed anger to anger, could have fought Isabel with her own weapons, but this humble grief completely disarmed her of all resentment, and as impetuous as had been her chidings to the wilful woman, so gentle were her soothings to the miserable girl. Instead of descending to the drawing-room again she remained with Isabel, endeavoring, though almost in vain, to assuage her grief. Isabel was one who, in triumph defiant, in defeat would not be comforted.

The evening in the drawing-room without either of the young ladies was somewhat dull. Mr. and Mrs. Wilson were staying at the house on a visit, and they helped to enliven the evening. Mrs. Mortimer was happy in the presence of her betrothed, and they were both contented to slip off to the music-room where they could be unmolested. Mr. Wilson undertook to sort and arrange for his host some memoranda for "The Widows and Orphans," "Foreign Importation," and various other charitable societies of which Mr. Bell was a leading and efficient member: every now and then calling Mr. Bell's attention for some instruction in his labor. While Mrs. Wilson played with a little Skye terrier belonging to Clarine, which she had coaxed to make friends with her, and then rewarded by bringing it into the forbidden precincts of the drawing-room. But every now and then she threw a pleasant word into the general conversation, answered Mr. Maltby's philosophic ramblings with a bantering jest, and met the glance of his laughing blue eye by a piercing flash from her own sparkling eye which told him plainer than words that she thought she could read him and understand

him. Perhaps she did; but I do not think that any one in that family read him aright just at that time.

Supper was served early, and shortly afterwards they separated and retired to their apartments.

As Mr. Maltby passed Clarine's door, in going to his own apartment, she noticed his step. It was remarkably light and elastic, yet firm, and as she listened to the retreating sound along the hall, the quick, regular, elastic tread, she romantically wondered if it were symbolic of his heart. But she was in bed now and very sleepy; and soon, with confused ideas floating and mixing of the sound of those steps, and like throbs of a heart that pulsed with the same light, firm beat, she fell asleep.

Mr. Maltby is in his room. It is a cheerful, homelike looking room. A room that looks comfortable and makes one feel pleasant to enter. All the rooms in Mrs. Bell's house have the same inviting look. Mr. Maltby moves backwards and forwards. There is a pleasant smile upon his face, and he hums the air of "Du meine Seele." He arranges writing materials upon the table, selects books and places them upon the table within reach of the large arm-chair he draws up. His movements are all quick and changeable, yet bear the impress of being guided by orderly thought. He goes to a little stand, selects a cigar, lights it, turns the lamp down, draws an easy-chair before the open window, throws himself into it, and smokes and thinks.

A pleasant scene, conducive to pleasant thoughts. Through the open window he gazes upon the dew-sparkled lawn, listens to the rustling trees, and watches the silvery ripples of the ocean as they dance to the music of the mermaids in the pathway of their lunar queen. The cool evening breeze stirs the lace curtains and plays upon his brow, gently lifting the light waving hair that

rests upon his temples. The shimmering moonbeams creep in past him, meeting and mixing with the softened glow of the shaded lamp, making a mystic, dream-like light which rests upon the rich, sombre hued carpet, steals within the mirrors, and embraces him within the broad halo of a mellowed brightness.

A puff of the fragrant cigar; a snatch of the same familiar love song; a pleasant, satisfied smile; another puff; the ashes fall unheeded. His thoughts are evidently serious, though not troublesome; but they must be interesting, or he would not follow them so long.

He is thinking of Clarine Rivington. He is thinking that she has interested him, fascinated him, but—not quite captivated him: he stills holds himself within his own power. But that is not sufficient; he must hold her in his power. He does not reflect that to hold another in our grasp, we must part with a certain portion of our own freedom. He is thinking with satisfaction upon the fact that his host and hostess that evening renewed their invitation to him, and urged him to remain their guest until after the approaching wedding of Mrs. Mortimer and Mr. Seymour. That was very well, but then the wedding is very near, but two weeks more. He complacently leaves it to his own good luck and some convenient excuse to have his invitation renewed to suit himself. He is conjecturing how far he can bring Clarine under his influence. To what purpose? He has scarcely defined for himself his purpose. As yet he merely wishes to influence her mind, and bring it under the control of his own mental power. Her character, in its strange mixture of inward depth and outward superficiality, in its freshness and purity, interests and, unknowingly to himself, enslaves him. There is an intensity of latent power in her mind which he is anxious should be developed by himself,

moulded by his mind, wielded by his brain, be made subject to his will. Her spirit, her untamed, untrained spirit, must be turned to meet his spirit and acknowledge its supremacy. Her self must bend to his self. It is, then, a dominion of the mind he would acquire? But he is a man capable of all things for the accomplishment of a purpose, particularly if he can once convince himself that his purpose is spiritual, not material; pure, and of the soul, devoid of sensual considerations. And for the time being he has speciously convinced himself that such is the nature of his object in acquiring an ascendancy over Clarine. But in considering her character he is doubtful of success. He reflects upon the conversation he overheard between her and Isabel. She revealed there a clearness and purity of heart, a power of reason, and, more than that, a probable force of will, that threatened a strong opposition to any sovereignty to which she did not yield a voluntary submission. But neither was he ignorant that the weakness in Clarine's character was that she exerted her power and strength for others, not for herself. In sentiment for others she was strong, in action for herself she was weak: she was indifferent to all considerations of self. He had noticed that with himself, though a break from his influence, which was gradually pervading her, would be made now and then, though his ideas were occasionally questioned, his sentiments combated, and a caustic, natural logic would sometimes dispel the glittering illusions of his sophistical ramblings, yet, after she had enjoyed her freedom for a while, she returned to the docile, unquestioning acquiescence to his supremacy. Her attempts to free herself from her bondage, from the powerful, yet, to herself, unconscious control he held over her, grew less and less frequent; and from all this he augured well.

His cigar is out, but he is satisfied with his reverie. He

rises, turns up the lamp, and sits down to his writing; and with pen in hand, following the guidance of his active, energetic brain, filling page after page of the spotless paper, we leave him.

## CHAPTER IX.

MRS. BELL was once more in her normal condition of worry and excitement,—still life being to her an abnormal state of existence, possessing few if any attractions. The day for Mrs. Mortimer's marriage was drawing near, and, as it was the first occasion of a wedding being given from her house, she was anxious that everything should be conducted on a scale of quiet elegance, a sort of subdued magnificence quite unprecedented and hopeless to be surpassed. She of course managed to keep herself very busy, though grieving greatly in words at the severe tax upon her strength being really more than her feeble health could bear. When remonstrated with by her husband for her over-exertion, with touching resignation she acknowledged her weakness; and then somehow, by some ingenious process, the patent of which was secreted within Mrs. Bell's own mind, her devoted and anxious husband was led to suggest the necessity of a visit from the doctor, to which the obedient wife meekly assented, and then a polite note, which the reader will courteously suppose to have been of Mr. Bell's own original dictation, would be despatched to Dr. Tillman. The doctor would hasten to his patient to find her reclining languidly upon a sofa, in elegant home costume, and with the latest literary effusion in her hand, which everybody had read, and was therefore quite proper and necessary that she should read; and then would follow a long professional

interview. For it was a well understood point in the house, that when Mrs. Bell complained of feeling unusually miserable, spent several hours over her toilet to the distraction of her dressing-maid, and betrayed much anxiety as to what and which was the most becoming, and when said symptoms were followed by a visit from the doctor, that the interview which ensued was to be strictly professional. It may be as well to observe here a curious but none the less a positive fact, that though Mrs. Bell had been a sufferer from ill health for a number of years, yet the most quick-witted of her friends had never been able to discover the exact nature of her disease; a point of ignorance, by the way, likewise shared by all of Dr. Tillman's illustrious professional predecessors, an ignorance which, I must say, considering the amount of learning usually ascribed to the body of the medical profession, was truly astonishing. Another nice little point, which I had nearly overlooked, connected with these professional visits, was, that subsequently, when Mr. Bell sat at his domestic hearth in confidential converse with his loving spouse, in reply to his affectionate anxiety she would give him a full account of said interview, and assure her own "dear love" that she had obeyed the doctor's injunctions, of rest and quiet, and consequently felt much better. Then would follow another embrace, an affectionate kiss, several "dear idols" and "dear loves," and then, very likely, in return for his wife's impartial summary of the doctor's visit, Mr. Bell would give her a detailed account of the latest meetings of The Widows' and Female Orphans' Society, The Society for the Better Protection of Female Emigrants, or some one of the many charitable associations of which he was an active and efficient member. Ah! these matrimonial confidences are really very charming!

In the midst of Mrs. Bell's busy excitement preceding

the wedding, she naturally had little time for minor domestic cares, and there were consequently two members of her household who were at liberty to enjoy a freedom from careful supervision which Mrs. Bell had seldom accorded any one under her charge. These two were Clarine and Mr. Maltby. But there was one, however skilfully Mrs. Bell's eyes might have been blinded, whose affection for Clarine made her anxious and clear-sighted in all things connected with her welfare. Mrs. Wilson had carefully watched her with Mr. Maltby, had also studied him well, and after serious deliberation her opinion of him was decidedly unfavorable. Some of her fears and misgivings she had ventured to mention to Mrs. Bell, but the latter would listen to nothing against one who had found such favor in her eyes as Mr. Maltby. In vain Mrs. Wilson represented that Mr. Maltby's attentions to Clarine were such as would excite unpleasant remarks unless terminated by an acknowledged engagement of marriage, or his departure from the house. Mrs. Bell insisted upon having every confidence in Mr. Maltby, and effectually silenced Mrs. Wilson by saying that she had referred the whole subject to Mr. Bell, and that he was perfectly willing to wait until such time as his friend chose to speak for himself. After this Mrs. Wilson could only wait and watch.

It was towards the close of a pleasant afternoon that Mr. Maltby and Clarine were returning from a ride, upon which Isabel had refused to accompany them, and after a quick canter were now quietly walking their horses.

"Where does this lead?" asked Mr. Maltby, pointing with his whip to a secluded pathway which turned off from the main road.

"I really do not know," she replied. "I seldom ride this road, and I don't recollect ever having noticed that side path."

"Suppose we follow it, and see where it will lead us," he suggested. "I think I see water glimmering through the trees, and, at all events, the opening into the woods is quite pretty enough to be inviting."

With these words he turned his horse's head down the path, and Clarine followed him. Through the deep shade of the close trees, now rustling the fallen leaves, now over rough stones, and again treading quietly the soft grass, around a large moss-covered rock; and they stayed their horses' steps to gaze in mute admiration upon the scene of quiet woodland beauty lying beneath them. They stood upon a level, grassy platform of high rocks; below them a wooded basin, in the hollow of which lay a small lake, its placid waters gleaming with the rich hues of a glowing sunset; and a golden haze in the atmosphere throwing a soft, refulgent veil over the beauties nature spread before them.

"Shall we go down to the water?" Mr. Maltby asked. Clarine smiled assent, and, dismounting from their horses, they wandered along the narrow path that wound by a gentle declivity down the rocks to the head of the lake. The lake was quite narrow and not very long—an expert could have thrown a stone from one end to the other—but with its surroundings formed a very picturesque scene. The shores were gracefully indented, fringed by drooping willows, and overshadowed by thickly wooded cliffs rising high above and completely enclosing and secluding it from the outer world. The intense stillness pervading the glen, scarcely broken by the twitterings of birds, impressed its beauties the more sensibly upon the mind. The two stood a long time enjoying the vivid loveliness. Clarine was the first to break the silence.

"How entirely one is here shut out from the distracting world, and how clearly such a scene opens our eyes to the delusions of our vain lives." Her voice was low and

dreamlike, for she was learning, of late, some of his murmuring rhapsodies, and as she turned her sweet, girlish face up to him her soft eyes beamed with a melting lustre from the pure emotions the scene stirred within her.

"Are you really conscious of the delusions of your vain life, Clarine?" he asked, returning her look with one as calm. It was not the first time he had called her Clarine, though he carefully refrained from using the familiar title so often as to allow its effect to be materially lessened.

"Can you suppose that I do not realize the glittering follies of my life?" she asked, in response to his question. "You surely cannot do me the injustice to believe that my heart and soul are centred and bound up in beaux, dinner parties and balls!"

"No; I do not believe it: for I know that you are too pure in soul, and your mind is too lofty in its aspirations to be satisfied with such shallow superficialities. But why allow yourself to be chained down to such a grovelling life? You should break from it; you should make a change."

"A change! What change can I make? You forget that I am not a man, free to act as I will, but am only a woman, and woman dare not break from the trammels with which dictatorial society binds her to the tread-mill. Not only her own sex—from them she expects injustice—but even man binds the tether around her limbs, and pointing her to the soulless circle within which she must forever pace, calmly bids her be content!"

"And yet, within that circle you will not remain. You are formed and destined to tread with a firm step the broad road of a freer life, and you should obey the ambitious promptings of your spirit which are urging you to free that soul beating so loudly against the prison bars of your heart, and let the flappings of its wings be heard in a

purser atmosphere, where companion souls will give responsive throbs."

Upon an ordinary occasion one might suppose the man was recommending suicide upon the most favorable terms. However, Clarine, as you may already have remarked, was something of an enthusiast, and she therefore, I presume, comprehended his rhapsody far better than either you or I should have done.

She replied to his words by the very simple question, asked in rather a sad tone, as she turned her calm eyes upon him: "How shall I free it?"

"You must love!" was the equally simple and calm response. But his calmness was effectually disconcerted by the merry, musical laugh which instantly pealed forth in blithesome tones from Clarine's rosy mouth.

"There was sarcasm in that laugh," he replied, after he had given her mirth time to subside, "and it is the first time you have bestowed upon me any of that sarcasm so liberally accorded to others." His accents were mellow with mild and touching reproach.

"The sarcasm was not intended for you," she returned in smiling apology, "it was at the absurd idea of me, a belle of three full blown seasons, knowing anything at all about love," and she half laughed again.

"It is not ignorance which causes you to disclaim all knowledge of love," he observed, in slightly severe tones.

"What then?" she asked curiously.

"It is because with woman's reserve you would conceal the real sentiments of your heart, and, dare I add, with woman's perversity you do not care to acknowledge the truthful teachings of your soul."

She blushed in modest confusion at his words, and pursuing his advantage he continued less vehemently, but still earnestly—"You have asked me how you can best free yourself from the thralldom of your present life, and I

have shown you the only means of escape. If you would be free you must love, for without love a woman's life is but prison labor. You have confided to me, Clarine, the innocent secrets of your heart, and by that sweet and treasured confidence I know all the burden of your unhappiness. In return I would claim the privilege of teaching you happiness, the happiness for which you have longed and dreamed. Hitherto life has given you only its foolishness, and the heavenly aspirations of your pure soul have met only the mockeries of the world; but light has now fallen upon the stream, and revealed to you its shallowness. Is it not so, my child?"

Clarine turned her lovely face, pale in its earnestness, towards him, and as she raised her eyes to his, the innocence therein should have turned him from his purpose. "Mr. Maltby, you, and you alone know how weary I am of the life I have led, and how gladly I would exchange it for one of nobler aims. I have tried to be content with the frivolous gayeties surrounding me, I have tried to satisfy unhappy longings in the fashionable dissipations to which I have been trained; but in vain, for something, a voice to which I would not listen, still kept whispering that God had placed his creatures in this world to strive and struggle for something more than idle pleasure. I have sought to discover this something, but it has eluded my grasp, and my searchings have only brought heartache and vague desires. You have sympathized with my fears and doubts, you have read my nature and its needs. You have given freedom to my thoughts, and aspirations to my soul. You have taught me to despise the degrading frivolities of my present life, and have encouraged the better teachings of the purer spirit God has implanted within us all. You have taught me what happiness may be, and yet—and yet,

lately, somehow, I am more than ever dissatisfied with life and all that it has to offer."

He smiled to himself, well pleased at the aptitude with which she had learned the lesson he had been teaching her. "You mistake," he answered, gently. "I have not yet taught you happiness. I have but revealed to you the spirit of your nature, and it is that spirit which has partly drawn aside the curtain of the future, and disclosed visions of love and purer joys. You once confessed to me that you had your dream of love. Clarine, tell me your dream, for it would refresh me, who am weary of this stale, trite world, to listen to the whisperings of nature in the spotless heart of her purest child. My dear child, tell me what you think love to be."

He noted that his demand brought no blush to her brow, and he wondered how to read the omen. The worried, perplexed look was still upon her face, but as she proceeded in her answer, emotion softened and lit up every feature.

"I must not answer you from my late dreams, Mr. Maltby, for they have been sad, or, at least, perplexed; for I know not why it is, but lately I cannot shake off a vague, mysterious dread of danger which creeps over me, and my heart is often filled with a restlessness, an uneasiness which makes me miserable in spite of myself. But I will tell you my dreams as they used to be, when they pictured the future bright and joyful"—

"Ah! the rosy dreams of girlhood!" he interrupted, in his softest manner.

And now she blushed, as she smiled, and continued: "Then I dreamed that fate meant only bliss, and that its path was hedged by roses and all sweet-scented flowers, musicked by the melodious song of birds, and only perfumed breezes swept our cheeks; and that this pathway led onward to where the golden mists of the future en-



wrapped the spirit kindred to my own, my twin love ; that with him the road of life would be over gorgeous clouds, and that we would breathe an atmosphere of heaven ; that with him grief would be unknown, and every sorrow would show its silver lining ; that every joy of earth he would exalt to a bliss divine, and every care of daily life would vanish beneath the magic of his tenderness ; that with him, death would be an ecstasy immortal, without him, life would be mortal death ; and that his spirit should so entwine my own, that the grave could have no power to divide the union, which had found its birth in the sphere beyond. This has been my dream of love."

"And this dream I will make reality," he answered passionately, as he clasped her with his arms. "Be mine, Clarine, and your life shall indeed lie over gorgeous clouds, and every joy be exalted to a bliss divine. Rest in my arms, my loved one, and casting aside the trammels by which an impure world seeks by force to bind love to itself, we will wear only the flowery chains of a love born in the purer sphere beyond, and unheeding cold forms we will revel in the ecstasy of joys supreme!"

Clarine started from his arms, her heart throbbing with a vague affright, her cheek paling and flushing by turns. She dared not understand his words, for they alarmed her, and yet they thrilled her with a thrill of exquisite joy. "Mr. Maltby, hush ! I cannot listen to you ! I do not love you, I know, and I" — Fright and strange emotion were choking her.

"My dear child, why are you so frightened ? Can you not trust me, Clarine ?"

His words produced an instant revulsion of feeling in Clarine. They told her that she had wronged him, and though her face was suffused with modest blushes, she turned to him, and with innocent frankness put her hand in his, as she raised her glowing eyes, and answered :

"My friend, how can I doubt you ? Our friendship is sacred, for the bond was in the revered memory of our sainted mothers in heaven. Such friendship means perfect trust and confidence, and therefore do I have faith in you and your words."

Her innocence, her truth disconcerted him. For the first time the purity of a woman's trust in himself confounded him. Utterly at a loss for a reply, he turned down to the edge of the lake, stripped a twig of its leaves, and cast them one by one upon the rippling water, and watched them sail away, propelled by the gentle wafting of the light summer breeze.

Then Clarine came by his side, and spoke. "It is late. Had we not better think of returning ?"

He had recovered himself, and could again return her bright smiles. "It is only the shadows here which make it seem late ; the sun still rides high in the heavens. Come, let us rest here a few moments upon this fallen trunk of a tree, and lay aside your hat and gloves. It will refresh you after the heat of your ride."

As she obeyed him the rays of the golden-tinged sunshine streamed through the green leaves, and played caressingly with her clustering, waving tresses, and as she upturned her blushing, happy face to him, he smiled, well pleased with her loveliness. And then, relentless, he commenced the devil's pleading.

"Clarine, listen to me, for I would teach you the way to happiness by life-giving love. I shall talk to you not as to a child still in the nursery of the world, whose weakness must be fed upon the pap of pretty sentiments, and led by the apron-strings of mawkish fears which an ignorant, timid world calls moral truths. But I shall talk to you as to a woman who has herself tasted of the bitterness of the world's hypocrisy and pierced through the mists of its folly and deceit, who has sifted its stupid teachings ; to "

woman who has felt the purer truths of the sublimity of nature, and who has thrilled to the yearnings of nobler aspirations. I would have you spurn a life unworthy of your loftier spirit, and which would bow your soul to the dust in which baser natures grovel. Ignore the pernicious warnings of those ignorant tyrants who would tell you that the pure instincts which God himself has breathed into his noblest creation are sinful unless sanctified by the heartless words, and still idler forms of other men, as though that which God has stamped divine could be purified only by man's finite code. Clarine, be mine, and together we will plunge into the deeper, broader, purer stream of united aims and joys, whose every billow shall lave us with renewed delights, bearing us onward through an ecstatic present to a future of blissful hopes."

He marked the flush of emotion deepening in her cheek, the fire of enthusiasm kindling in her eye, but he knew she had not yet comprehended him, or she would not listen so quietly. Still more melodious was his voice as he continued :

"I do not ask you to pledge yourself to a false, ceremonious bondage, for I know that we cannot answer for our hearts, unless we are masters of ourselves. God, in his infinite wisdom, has made us creatures of liberty. If our bodies are enchained we chafe and pine away, and life in its weariness welcomes death. And so, if our spiritual self is bound to a nature unsympathetic with our own, then does our spirit fret and die away. That life should be sweet, both body and soul must be free, that spirit should mate with spirit, and that our soul, disenthralled from the impurities of perfidious ages, may seek in its new sublimity for its companion-soul, its 'twin love,' with whom to wander through an elysium where ethereal clouds embosom the fragrant dews of ever refreshed love ; where the atmosphere is laden with the incense of congenial hearts—com-

panions in love ; where melodious birds teach innocence in union ; and where the anthems of harmonic nature arise to teach us the purity of that love which God created pure. Then together our souls will soar to heights sublime, and love shall unite only by every throb of our hearts, by every pulse of our thoughts. My own love, say you will be mine."

Clarine started away, quivering in every nerve, but an encircling arm withheld her, her hands were fondly imprisoned. With agitated voice, she gasped forth: "But, Mr. Maltby, you are urging me to—to—oh ! I cannot understand you ! You would not lead me wrong ?"

"I am urging you to that which God's own laws, throughout all divine nature, prompt. I am urging you to accept a freedom which alone can give you the happiness you seek. I would have you break from the trammels with which dictatorial society binds woman to the treadmill ; cast off the tether which man binds around her limbs, and break from the soulless circle within which he bids her be content,"—with cruel skill he made her own weapons to recoil upon her.—"I ask you to be free with the freedom accorded to man, to ignore the despotism which makes womanhood but a synonym for shameless slavery, and to accept the joys, the heavenly bliss which true love alone can give."

Again his voice sank to its most musical accents, and the mellifluous flow of sound went on and on ; nor was Clarine Rivington the first woman, nor, I fear, will she be the last, to be led to sin by specious eloquence and lying vows of constancy.

## CHAPTER X.

A STORMY evening in June, a driving, beating rain, the air cold and raw, with a penetrating chill that makes one draw their cloak shiveringly closer; a night, in fact, in the middle of June, which might honestly have kept in countenance the middle of March. It is on such an evening that Leonard Seymour's bachelor rooms are in gala trim, for he is giving his farewell supper to his two friends, Will Curtiss and George Bronson; but two more days and his bachelor life ends at the hymeneal altar. The mirth within, the clinking of glasses and roar of laughter drown the sound of the storm without.

"By the way, Bronson," said Curtiss, after some time had been spent in discussing the tempting dishes, "how are you progressing in your devotion to our charming friend, Miss Clarine?"

"You had better question him about Miss Isabel," suggested Seymour, as he set down his emptied glass.

"Ha! that's your game, is it?" exclaimed Curtiss. "Good fellow, to console the poor girl in her loneliness! I admire your magnanimity. It is real good of you, my boy, indeed it is, to sacrifice your feelings for one who is otherwise appropriated upon the altar of Miss Isabel's fascinations. But I would, as a friend, advise you"——

"Hold on there, Curtiss, for heaven's sake!" cried Bronson, whose long enduring patience at last began to give way under his friend's tantalizing strain. "I understand

your allusions. You mean that because I find that Miss Clarine is so infatuated by that d—d Malt"——

"Take care!" cried Seymour, "no swearing allowed here to night; if you can't speak respectfully of one whom Miss Clarine favors, you must keep your jealousy and anger to yourself. Mr. Maltby is a gentleman, and as such you must speak of him, at least in my presence."

"I accept the amendment," he returned, with a light, sneering laugh, as he tossed off a brimming glass of sherry. "You allude, then, Curtiss, to my forsaking Miss Clarine, and paying my attention to Miss Isabel"——

"Stop there a moment," Curtiss interrupted, "you don't put the thing quite in the right light. You say forsaking, Miss Clarine. By that you of course mean that she would undoubtedly have accepted your love, had you condescended still to flatter her by your notice!"

Bronson winced under Curtiss' irony. Conceited egotist and vain-glorious boaster though he was, he yet did not relish having his self laudatory accounts sifted. But neither Curtiss nor Seymour were the men to listen in silent indifference to reflections upon women.

"Why the deuce don't you come right out with the truth, Bronson," cried Seymour, "and confess that you made love to Miss Clarine, and because she rejected you, you turned to Miss Isabel for consolation, thinking that in Rashleigh's absence she would accord you the encouragement Miss Clarine refused!"

"Yes, Bronson," said Curtiss, as Bronson in moody silence ate on without according Seymour any reply, "just take this nice little bird on your plate, and then tell us all the truth; how you proposed to Miss Clarine, and how she refused you."

"I should like to know how the devil you fellows know anything about that!" exclaimed Bronson, looking up in sheer amazement.

"You talk at other times than in your sleep," observed Seymour.

"I certainly have not been tight since then," remarked Bronson, thoughtfully.

Seymour and Curtiss exchanged meaning glances. "Never mind how or when you told us," said the latter; "just go on and give us the particulars. We only had the bare assertion of the fact before."

And so credulous, unsuspecting Bronson, perhaps the more unsuspecting from beginning to feel the effects of the wine he had not spared, began the recital of his unsuccessful suit. His account was rather long and tedious, interrupted every now and again by his friends halting him at some unfair charge against Clarine, or broad encomium upon himself; yet, withal, his representation was quite humble for him. To condense his statement, it seems that observing that Mr. Maltby's suit was received with so much favor by Clarine and encouraged by her aunt, and finding his own passion for her growing deeper and deeper every day, he was at last driven to desperation and decided to risk all for happiness or misery. He had gone down to the Island one day expressly for that purpose, and was enraged and consequently still more determined by finding her alone in the music-room with Mr. Maltby, singing for him. He, however, succeeded in inducing her to accompany him in a walk through the park, and had then and there cast the die, confessed his love; but to have his hopes crushed. He had left her with a heart bitter and enraged, but I doubt if one whit the wiser.

"Your story is pretty well told," said Curtiss, as he filled Bronson's ever empty glass. "The next question is, how long is it going to take you to forget your lovely enchantress?"

"The angelic Isabel can, perhaps, answer that question best," observed Seymour.

"After all, she is by far the more fascinating of the two," rejoined Bronson, testily. "I believe if it had not been for that Rashleigh I would have made love to her long ago."

"And been accepted, of course," said Curtiss, with his quiet, provoking sarcasm. "By the by, if my memory serve me, the fair Isabel is the fifth siren who has lured you to love, broken heart, etc. There was pretty Nannie Brewster, whose cruel father, not being a friend of the bottle, put his veto upon your prospective happiness; and who married, by the way, three months afterwards, notwithstanding numberless vows of fidelity till death, and so forth. Then there was the charming Julia Pollard, who sacrificed you upon the altar of old age and millions for your thousands. And then"—

"For heaven's sake, hush, Curtiss," cried Seymour, laughing, yet wishing to spare his friend's feelings.

"Let him alone," returned Bronson. "He does not interfere with my digestion." And he helped himself to another truffle.

"How long since you discovered Miss Isabel's attractions?" queried Seymour, sympathetically.

"Too long for my own peace of mind," he replied, sullenly. "Just pass me that bottle there, will you?"

"Don't drink too much, Bronson," suggested Seymour, passing the required bottle.

"No danger; I am out with sober intents and purposes to-night," though his words seemed in danger of being falsified, as he tossed off another brimming glass.

"And so the fair Isabel is really luring you by her charms and fascinations, is she, Bronson? I declare I am very sorry for you!" Curtiss was unable to let the annoying subject drop. He had to pursue it for the sole reason that it gave a chance for annoying his friend.

"She certainly has a great many charming ways," re-

plied Bronson, "but as to being fascinated, that is another thing. She is certainly very sweet and kind to me, and not miserly with her smiles."

"For heaven's sake, Bronson, don't be such a fool as to count upon the smiles of such a temptress as Isabel Holmes!" exclaimed Seymour, with severity; for he was incensed at the egotistical, self-complacent tone with which Bronson spoke of Isabel's favor. "There was good excuse for your falling in love with Clarine Rivington, a girl whom every one admires, and who would disdain to use the deceitful arts by which Isabel Holmes lures her victims. Miss Clarine has the name of being a coquette, it is true, but she is only so in the most lenient sense of the term, as applicable to almost any beautiful girl, the spoiled pet of society. But as for the beguiling Isabel, she is simply that creature called a flirt."

"You speak with so much heat, one might suppose you to be one of her victims," returned Bronson, evidently not relishing these truthful accusations against his latest siren.

"I regard you as my friend, and wish to warn you of your danger," was Seymour's dignified reply to this senseless sarcasm.

But Curtiss burst into a hearty, jovial laugh. "That is good, Bronson, I like that! Get up your spirit, old boy, and give it to that tyrant there. It is not often you are sarcastic, so it hits all the harder when it does come!"

Bronson was by this time so much under the influence of the wine he had drunk, that he scarcely knew whether to join in the laugh at his expense or be angry.

But the supper was now over. They had yet to drink the final congratulations to the bridegroom elect; and then one glass in silence, standing, to the memory of bachelor days. But this was done quietly and without

much ceremony. There was no regular toasting, no speech-making. Each friend was content to express his wishes in a few earnest words, perhaps with a half laugh to disguise his emotion. It was late before the three friends rose to separate. As Bronson threw the remnant of his cigar into the fire, he proposed their drinking a brandy smash before breaking up.

"Nonsense!" returned Curtiss. "If you commence on any such drinks, Bronson, you will get on one of your regular sprees, and not be fit for the wedding."

"I tell you what it is, Bronson," added Seymour, with a menacing look, "if you get tight and can't come to my wedding day after to-morrow, I will never forgive you, old boy. So, you had better go home sober."

Bronson reflected a moment. "I believe you are right," he said, with an air that bespoke the effort it cost him to nerve himself to the point of virtuous sobriety. With determined mien he linked his arm within Curtiss', and with a farewell blessing upon the room wherein so many pleasant hours had been spent, the three friends sallied forth. The storm was rapidly clearing off. The rain had ceased, a high, drying wind was blowing, and through the broken, fleeing black clouds the moon was steadily cleaving her path. It was one of those sudden changes after a severe three days' storm so common in our climate.

As the three friends were about to separate in their different directions, Curtiss, in an aside, suggested to Seymour the propriety of seeing Bronson safely home. There was certainly something in Bronson's manner, fitful and moody, to incline Seymour to the same opinion, for he quietly assented by turning in the direction of his hotel. A short, leisurely walk brought them to the Astor House, where they bade Bronson good night, with a good-humored injunction to keep sober till he got to bed. He laughed a ready assent.

When the door closed upon his friends, Bronson turned, walked the hall, and began to ascend the stairs with a determined air. When about half way up his step slackened, then he halted, then turned, and with more hasty step descended and made his way to the bar. It was just being closed, though there were still one or two loungers about. Bronson walked up and ordered a whiskey cocktail, at the same time inviting a business acquaintance whom he recognized in one of the loungers to join him. One drink was followed by a second, the second by a third. The evil spirit was now in full sway over him. He had tasted temptation with the wine at supper, but had he stopped there it would have been well enough with him; for men are not so apt to get drunk on light wines, though their brains may become heated under their influence. But it is the hellish mixture of toddies, smashes, cocktails, juleps, and that whole class of brain and body-deranging trash compounded in fiendish triumph by Satan's bar-tenders that makes man drunk, dead drunk, beastly drunk.

Bronson drank his third glass, ordered a fourth, and then gazed at it in utter imbecility, helpless to touch it. He was drunk.

Bronson turned from his untasted drink, bade his companion a pleasant good-night, and ascended to his room. This being only the first night, he was able to undress himself without assistance, and even to wind up his watch. The first thing in the morning, with the mania full upon him, was to rush down to the bar, and drink two brandy smashes before breakfast. He was now fairly started for the day. Once down town it was a drink every few minutes; first a cocktail, then a smash, then a julep, and finally soda and brandy; then begin again through the same round. During the day he encountered Curtiss, who, seeing his condition, threatened him with the Tombs

if he were not sober enough to appear at Seymour's wedding the next day. He promised compliance—he was strong on promises; swore to keep sober—was strong on swearing, too, and took another drink as soon as Curtiss left him. That night he threw himself, clothes, boots and all on the bed together. The watch being sober had to take care of itself. The next morning, at his usual hour for rising, he went through the routine of toilet, drinks, breakfast, and going to his office. Almost the first one he met was Curtiss, who berated him soundly. He plead the penitent, and promised to be "all right," for the wedding, but the hour for the ceremony found him at the bar with another julep.

That evening about six o'clock, as Bronson stepped out of a Broadway drinking den, instead of being decently at home at his dinner, he came face to face with Curtiss. The latter said not a word, but took him quietly by the arm, hailed a carriage, and placing the helpless, unresisting fellow into it, jumped in himself, and ordered the driver to the hotel. He led Bronson to his room and put him to bed, and then left him, locking the door upon the outside and giving the servant strict orders not upon any account to release the prisoner until he himself appeared in the morning.

The next morning Bronson awoke from his heavy stupor, for it was not sleep, feeling—I really do not know how to go to work to describe to the uninitiated (they being the only ones needing a description)—the morning's sensations of a man who has been on a jolly tight! But I let him appeal to any one who has been "through the mill," to allow his memory to recall for one bitter moment the coming to sensations of a "dead drunk." Being naturally of an ingenuous turn of mind myself, I am willing to confess, in the despairing style of newspaper correspondents, that "language fails me" to express the utter

confusion and bewilderment of the struggling brain, the consuming fire raging through the blood, the thousand pulses throbbing from head to foot, the doubled and trebled and constantly increasing dimensions of all surrounding objects, the futile attempts of the prostrate mind to recall upon the memory the events leading to this moment. And then, that taste! that terrible taste in the parched and furrowed mouth! The dry tongue rolling in vain for the relief of moisture; always that revolting, acrid taste compounded of all the vile mixtures it has helped to swallow. That horrid taste and foetid breath fill the mouth and send the sickening shudder over the supine frame of the sobering drunkard. But "man being reasonable will get drunk," and man being mortal must get sober. About the first tangible idea entering upon Bronson's mind, was the sound of the unlocking door and the appearance of Curtiss bearing a fragrant cup of coffee.

"Halloa! old fellow!" cried Curtiss, cheerily. "How do you feel, this morning?"

"O-o-o-h! don't ask me!" returned the miserable man, as a shudder of disgust at the odor of the coffee shook his frame.

"Well, now, don't you feel like a wretch, as you are?"

"Oh yes; and like a damned fool, and anything else you choose to call me, only don't preach to me now, old fellow. Pa-a-ah!" and another grimace distorted his features.

Curtiss assured him he had no intention of lecturing him just then. He compelled him to drink the coffee, and firmly refused his pleadings for "just one glass." He then had breakfast brought up, forced him to eat a little, and would not listen to his going down town, but insisted upon taking charge of him for the day.

The first rational question Bronson put to his friend, after he felt somewhat brightened up, was "if he thought

he would be fit to appear at Seymour's wedding the next day?"

At this innocent query Curtiss burst into his heartiest laugh. "Why, you old rascal you, don't you know the wedding is all over? Ha, ha, ha, that's a good joke! first-rate!"

Then, as well as he could for laughing, Curtiss explained to his bewildered friend his situation. When Bronson learned that he had been on one of his old sprees and was totally unconscious of two days' occurrences, he could only gaze in stupefied amazement; and then his intense mortification at having missed, by a drunken spree, being present at his friend's marriage, together with his physical sufferings, his headache, his trembling weakness, all well nigh crazed the poor miserable man. Truly, his day of awakening was wretched.

In following Mr. Bronson I have run ahead of my story, and so must go back one day to the wedding of Mrs. Mortimer and Mr. Seymour. The description of weddings and wedding-days must be so stereotyped upon the minds of all novel readers that it would be superfluous for me to say more than that this particular one was a balmy, sunshiny June day, the summer birds singing blithely, and nature wore her brightest garb, as though herself a wedding guest vying with the gay apparel decking the marriage party. With the exception of Mr. Bronson's absence there was not a blemish to mar the expectations of all present. The bride looked modestly beautiful, the groom radiantly happy, and Mrs. Bell was at her acme of glory, for her entertainment was a brilliant success.

For many days Mrs. Wilson had been watching and studying Clarine and Mr. Maltby, watching them anxiously, with the fear and love of a friend; for she loved Clarine well. She noticed a change in Clarine's manner, but a change so slight, so gradual in its coming as only to be



perceived by the close scrutiny of loving eyes. There was merely at times an unusual quietness, a nervous starting when spoken to suddenly, and, at times, a drawn look as of painful thought about the lines of mouth and eyes. And she had noticed, too, with wonder, that once or twice Clarine had directly avoided being with Mr. Maltby, and yet they were more often alone than at any time before. Mrs. Wilson's fears drew but one conclusion, and that a most unhappy one, from these slight, though portentous signs. On this day she fancied that Clarine's manner seemed fretful and nervous, and her gayety merged at times upon flippancy; and at such times the deep crimson blood flushed her cheek a dark red, instead of the delicate pink hue which usually tinted them, and her eyes had more glitter than sparkle. And once, as Mr. Maltby approached Clarine while her head was turned away, she saw her start nervously at the sound of his voice, and then look away and move slightly from him with a timid shrinking. And as Mrs. Wilson noticed all this, and glanced at Clarine's pale, half-averted face, over which every now and then crept a strange, weary look, her heart saddened.

There was one other person whose keen, observing eye had detected the change in Clarine. This was Will Curtiss. He was one of the kind of men concealing a great deal of calm reflection under a very careless exterior. He carried a loose, easy manner, had a pleasant word for everybody, and was dubbed by boon companions "a right jolly fellow." Yet there were few men who possessed a more thorough knowledge of the world at large, or were more constant students of human nature.

Between Mrs. Wilson and Curtiss had for long years existed a warm friendship, and they were both fond of confidential interchanges of their individual ideas upon matters and things in general. So it was not surprising

that Curtiss, on this day, should ask Mrs. Wilson to escape from the heat and bustle of the crowded rooms and join him in a quiet saunter through the park, nor that, once there, the thoughts which were disturbing the minds of each should find mutual expression. At first they parried one another's remarks, each unwilling to acknowledge their fears. At last Curtiss broached the matter plainly by saying: "What do you think is the matter with our Clarine?"

"I am sure I don't know," replied Mrs. Wilson, more truthful than direct, for she was not yet prepared to confess her scarce more than half formed fears, even to her confidant.

"Do you really think she loves that Maltby?" was Curtiss' next question, half musingly.

"Sometimes I think she does, sometimes I think she does not," was the woman's next evasive reply.

There was a pause; then Curtiss said slowly, "There is mischief in that man."

"There is more than mischief; there is the devil in him!" impulsively replied Mrs. Wilson with far more emphasis than choice of expression. But she was not a woman to mince language when very much in earnest, and she was very apt to shock the proprieties by the use of very decided terms.

Curtiss laughed at her vehemence, and there was a comical twinkle in his eyes as he turned towards her and said very quietly: "So it seems we both think alike, after all!"

Mrs. Wilson gave one startled glance into his face,—she was caught. She tried to brave it out with a laughing denial, for, woman-like, she did not care to confess to being entrapped, but she saw by Curtiss' manner that it was useless, for he suspected as much as she did. With a trivial excuse of its being time to return to the house,

she turned in their walk. Before they quite emerged from under the trees Curtiss stopped short, and taking Mrs. Wilson's hand in his, his full meaning gaze met hers as he said in earnest tones: "We will be her friends."

"Yes we will," she replied, as her dark eye answered his, and her hand returned his firm clasp.

And thus, with few words, was formed a compact of union against Clarine's evil-doers. Let your best wishes be with them.

## CHAPTER XI.

THE household now settled down for a short season of rest. The wedding had finished one round of gayeties, and they needed a respite before commencing another. But there was one to whom the simple routine of home life was irksome and intolerable. Need I say that this one was Mrs. Bell herself? Staying quietly at home and attending to family duties was to her an insufferable bore. She sought relief from the general dullness in much visiting, an occasional day's shopping in the city, or in a sudden aggravation of her physical ailments and sending for the doctor. By these simple means she succeeded in diverting her overtaxed brain from the many cares and troubles pressing upon it. It was a favorite, self-delusive theory of Mrs. Bell's that all the affairs of her household (and the private business of her friends) could not possibly be carried on without the powerful control of her energetic mind. A pleasing fallacy, which she could apparently substantiate by producing, upon the shortest possible notice, a list of cares and duties longer than any twelve of her neighbors. But while there is little or no doubt, in my own mind, that these cares and duties actually did exist, there is considerable doubt, amounting to a dead certainty, as to the actual performance of these self-same momentous cares and duties. Mrs. Bell was, indeed,

one of those rare women who are a good deal prouder of talking than doing, of seeming to be than being.

And did no one question aught between Clarine and Mr. Maltby all this while? No. Mr. Bell was not the man to suspect an old friend, and Mrs. Bell was too much delighted with the prospective honor of having such a distinguished man, whom society was eager to appropriate, for her nephew-in-law, to allow any such preposterous idea occur to her as the propriety or prudence of questioning his motives.

And yet she loved Clarine. She was her only niece, her brother's pet child, placed with her for safe-keeping: and in her own judgment she was keeping her safe. She had hitherto been careful to keep her under all the restraints which autocrat society deems necessary for thoughtless, inexperienced girls. She was careful in keeping her well up in her accomplishments, and in continually striving to give that polished, graceful manner a still more perfect finish. And, above all, she had succeeded—for she flattered herself that the prize was all her own winning, though when the golden apple turned to ashes she denied having aught to do with the plucking of it—in procuring for her the most brilliant match that had appeared in the matrimonial market for many seasons. In all this she considered she was doing the duty assigned her well, and that her widowed brother was wise in placing his treasure, his only jewel, in her charge. She thought she would return his precious gem to him with a more brilliant sparkle than when he reluctantly gave over its keeping into her hands.

During this time Mr. Bronson's visits to the house and devotions to Isabel became more frequent and more marked. He was decidedly favored, and encouraged by both Mr. and Mrs. Bell. Isabel's conduct towards Mr. Rashleigh had annoyed and mortified them beyond measure, and

they were not unwilling to free themselves of such a troublesome charge as she had proved to be. They would gladly consent to her marriage with Mr. Bronson, who was in every ordinary acceptance of the term a good match. He was a man of wealth, and a gentleman by birth and position. As for his dissipated habits they knew little or nothing of them, for to the occasional rumors which reached their ears they gave slight heed. They did not belong to that strictly moral sect whose self-saving, world-damning tenets hold "getting tight" to be an unpardonable sin. True, they did not know that when he drank, he drank "not like a beast but like a man; for beasts know when to stop drinking, and only man gets jolly drunk!" True, they did not know that his little sprees now and then consisted of days of utter and entire drunken oblivion! True, they did not know that drink, intoxicating, brain, body and soul-destroying drink, was with him a ruling, thought-absorbing passion! Nor did they know that he was a man paying but an outward, compulsory respect to woman; that in his heart, and before those whom he dared, he sneered and scoffed at woman's purity, at woman's virtue. That because he knew some women to be false, he believed all to be alike. That he believed no good of man or woman, because he knew no good of himself. That he was not a cynic, but a scoffer. That his was not the heart of a good man turned to question the sweetness and purity of human nature from having himself drunk of the Marah waters of life's bitter experiences; but the spirit of a wilfully depraved man, whose natural impurities could form no appreciation of purity, and who perversely discolored all beauties with the overflowing gall of his own darkly-tinged bitterness.

All this they did not know. But if they had known it! would they have withheld the charge placed in their keeping from a "good match" because he was a drunkard and

a scoffer? Or would they not have accepted the wealth and position, and have relied upon wifely influence to reform the drunkard, and the virtue of woman to convince the scoffer?

As for Isabel, she undoubtedly favored Mr. Bronson's visits. Mr. Rashleigh was reported to be going restlessly from place to place upon the continent, and it was said that in his last letter he had talked of going to Egypt. Now though she had, in the first moments of mortification at his departure, yielded to a very natural despair, yet her elastic nature soon recovered its tone, and she immediately began plotting and planning schemes for his return; just as she had plotted and planned all that had induced his leaving. She loved not only him but herself too well to contemplate in calm resignation the possibility of his permanent absence. Her plan was skilfully laid, and showed considerable talent for intrigue. In the first place, she decided upon the wise precaution of not relying upon her own unaided influence, the recent developments of her course having taught her that she had enfeebled her own power, and warned her not to rely upon her own unassisted efforts. But her assistant must be one in whose truth and sincerity Mr. Rashleigh had the utmost confidence, and whose representations he would implicitly believe. Such a one was to be found in Clarine. Clarine, therefore, must be coaxed or compelled (either mode being a matter of indifference to Isabel) to become her intercessor. Clarine must be impressed, not only with a conviction of her humility and repentance, but also with a proper sense of the great impending danger that in her remorse and anguish and despair generally she was being led to cast happiness to the winds, and to throw herself away upon one who was unworthy of her regenerated self, and whom she could never love—*alias* Mr. Bronson; and being so impressed she must

write to Mr. Rashleigh begging his return. A bold plan, but as we shall see, well carried out.

She had found that her first expressions of humility, which were doubtless genuine enough at the time, had been favorably received by Clarine, and had won for her a degree of tender consideration for her distress which had never been accorded to her violent bursts of passion. She therefore wisely concluded to act upon the idea thus given, and had accordingly become the humble penitent. The change was rather sudden and unexpected, of course, but it seemed such an entirely natural one to Clarine's more gentle mind, that she easily credited it, and she was heartily glad that the wayward girl was at last reforming. Slowly but surely, by very careful degrees, Isabel was warily bringing Clarine around to the conviction that a reconciliation between herself and Mr. Rashleigh was the one thing desirable, as offering most satisfactory inducements for the future happiness of both. This belief once formed, it was easy for the wily Isabel to plead her case so ingeniously that she soon had the satisfaction of seeing Clarine take up her pen to write. This letter written and despatched, Isabel was satisfied to wait patiently for the answer—himself: and while waiting continued to encourage, or at least allow, Mr. Bronson's suit.

But now a note of alarm was struck. Mr. Maltby had been absent for a few days, travelling on some business, and while away he had written to Mr. Bell announcing the receipt of government despatches recalling him home immediately. His letter was full of courteous regrets for his sudden departure, of complimentary regards to the ladies of the family, and concluded by saying that he bade his farewells with the less regret from expecting to return in a few weeks, when he trusted he should again be permitted to present his respects in person to Mr. Bell's family. The whole letter was a model of

polite composition, and replete with friendly sentiments. Ere they received it he had taken his departure by steamer from Boston, and Mrs. Bell had to summon all her pride to conceal her disappointment.

## CHAPTER XII.

IN the comfortable dining-room of a stately looking house in a fashionable street in London, West End, two gentlemen sat over their wine after dinner. The elder of the two was of a figure neither spare nor stout, and somewhat above the strict medium height. His hand, as it rested upon the table, its tapering fingers idly playing with the wineglass, was small, round and as delicate as a woman's, but its raised veins and the texture of its skin were of a man no longer young. His face was mainly calm and intellectual, though the small, sparkling, restless eye indicated passionate impulses which might at times overrule reason, and the peculiarly curved, firmly closing lips, a mind which could be set in prejudice. Yet the faults in the face were such as to be perceived only by critical observation: it was in the main a pleasing, attractive face, and the soft gray hair lying so lightly upon the well shaped head gave it still greater benignity.

Any one who had known Clarine Rivington, and who saw this old gentleman for the first time, watched the play of his features, heard the thrilling, musical tones of his voice, and noticed his pleasing, courteous manner, felt rather than saw a resemblance to somebody whom they knew, though this semblance and this somebody were faint as in a dream. Gradually the impression became

stronger, the semblance more tangible, until it finally shaped itself into Clarine Rivington; and then one realized how much father and daughter were alike;—for this old gentleman was the Rev. Mr. Rivington, Clarine's father.

The other gentleman who sat at the table was Mr. Rivington's host and physician, Dr. Purdon. He was a young man of about twenty-six or eight years of age; of a tall, slender, well built figure; and a face that was handsome not from mere regularity of fine features, but because it was so thoroughly and entirely good. Not a line of evil could be traced in all that face, and yet it was a countenance full of feeling and passion, of strong, manly characteristics. The dark, waving hair massed upon the firmly set head whose clear brow walled in an active intellect. The large, dark grey eyes sparkled with a laughing light, or beamed with the warmth of earnest thought. The thick, curling beard crept up towards the mouth and helped to give that very tender curve to the soft limned, lightly closing lips, the upper one of which lay so very gently upon the lower. There was free, noble character expressed in every lineament of the man.

The Rev. Mr. Rivington had been in England now for nearly a year, though not expecting when he left home to remain more than about six months, but his health had not recruited as soon as he had expected, and his physician would not listen to his returning until his health was entirely re-established. He had come under Dr. Purdon's medical care from having been a friend of his father's in his younger days, when the Dr. Purdon of that day was a very successful, rising practitioner. But the elder Dr. Purdon was now numbered with the gone of the past, and his son had succeeded to his practice. The letter which would have informed Mr. Rivington of his friend's decease did not reach America until after he had taken his depar-

ture, and when, upon his arrival in England, he turned his steps to his friend's home, his friend was not. He had then accepted the services of the son, and the memory of the father and friend had linked these two, this old man and this young man, in a strange friendship of the past. Mr. Rivington had been the guest of his friend physician almost entirely since his arrival; for with the exception of an occasional visit to some of the friends whose acquaintance he had formed in his younger days when travelling for some years through Europe, Dr. Purdon would not allow of his father's friend making his home at any other house than his own.

Thus it was that we find these two gentlemen sipping their after dinner wine in this bachelor's dining-room; for Dr. Purdon had no family of mother or brothers or sisters to gather around him, for his mother had preceded his father to the world of spirits, and his one sister was married and keeping house for herself. They were talking, and the subject of their conversation was Clarine, or what amounted to the same, a letter from her, which her father held in his hand, and upon extracts from which he was commenting with fatherly partiality and tender remembrances of the idolized daughter.

"The dear child is flattering herself with the pretty notion of being able to keep house for me upon my return, as her aunt Julia's marriage will now leave us entirely to ourselves," smilingly remarked the fond parent, and he then read the following extract to Dr. Purdon:—"You know, dear father, now that Aunt Julia is to be married we will be quite alone by ourselves, and then I shall have to keep house for you; but you will see how very nicely I shall do it."—"The poor child knows no more about housekeeping than I do," said the father with a laugh, as he looked up from the letter and took a sip of wine; then resumed:—"You must not think that because you have al-

ways petted and spoiled me I can't do anything useful, for I am not quite such a baby as when you left me : I have learned to be quite a woman. To be sure, I don't know much yet about servants or puddings, but I shall soon learn, for I have made up my mind to do it."

"Then she will do it," interposed Dr. Purdon, "for making up one's mind is a secret of success ; but the great secret," he added, thoughtfully "is not only to make up one's mind, but—to keep it made up."

"I fancy there is a good deal of latent energy and determination in my little girl, though the circumstances of her life have never been such as to call them forth," replied Mr. Rivington in a tone which plainly indicated that he could not bear even the imaginary possibility of his daughter not being true to the letter.

"Is Miss Rivington still waging war with me upon the question of your detention, sir ?" asked Dr. Purdon, not wishing to notice the tone of the remark.

"Yes, indeed ! In the very next passage she berates you soundly, young man, for keeping me away from her so long," and he looked up in smiling reproof, which was not very hard for the young man to bear, for it was not by any means the first time he had listened to scoldings from the other side of the water for his merciless detention of the young lady's father. She had a way of expressing her complaints very freely in her letters, knowing full well that they always reached the doctor's ears. Indeed, now as usual, Mr. Rivington read from Clarine's letter, which was in answer to the one in which he had informed her of his further detention of three months ; "I think it is very unkind of Dr. Purdon to keep you away from me so long, and he must be of a very cruel nature to be so utterly regardless of my feelings. If I could only see Dr. Purdon I am sure I could talk to him so as to make him feel some touches of remorse, and induce him to release you : but

you can tell him how intensely indignant I am, and then, perhaps, he will let you come home. Though you may just whisper to him, at the same time, that I am indeed very grateful for his kind and friendly attentions, and that I am very glad, after all, that you have had the happy fortune of coming under his good care ! I am very thankful and really grateful to him, only, father, I do want you home so much !"

Thus it was that Dr. Purdon gave a genuine hearty laugh, and did not feel deeply injured by Clarine's prettily worded reproaches.

"Miss Rivington's indignation is so justly founded," he remarked, pleasantly, "that I have not a word to offer in extenuation of myself. But why not let your daughter carry her threats into execution, and allow her the opportunity of scolding me face to face ? If you are detained here much longer," he continued more seriously, "why not send for your daughter to cross the big waters and join you ? Do not let considerations for my cowardice prevent you," he added, again smiling, "for I think I could summon sufficient courage to brave Miss Rivington's indignant charges."

But Mr. Rivington evidently did not hear his words, for when he looked up his eyes had the glisten of tears in them, and his voice was slightly tremulous as he said, in saddened tones, "Poor child, I suppose she does want me home. She has never been so long without me before, and I have always made such a pet of her ! 'Only, father, I do want you home so much !' he slowly repeated.

Dr. Purdon saw the sort of homesickness which his daughter's words had induced in Mr. Rivington, and immediately set himself to work to cheer him up. Not a very difficult task to accomplish, for the rest of Clarine's letter was too cheerful to allow her father's mind to dwell long upon those few sad words.



"There is one thing you must not forget, Doctor," remarked Mr. Rivington, as Dr. Purdon was picturing in bright terms to him his happy return home, and his daughter's joy at seeing him restored to health, "and that is your promise to visit us in America. After I am at home and my little Clarine really does get to keeping house for me, and has learned to make her pies and puddings, you must take your long talked of trip to the States, and then do not forget that my house is your home." In the graceful suavity with which the old gentleman renewed this oft-repeated invitation, one saw whence Clarine derived some of her own charm of manner.

"I am afraid that my tour through America will be like most of our long-planned pleasures of life, slow of fulfilment. I do not see any prospect, at present, of my business letting me off for several years."

"But when you do come!" urged Mr. Rivington.

"Then I shall certainly not forget my father's friend and my own," he returned, courteously, "and my first pleasure shall be to recall myself to your friendly recollection."

"And by that time Clarine can have her scoldings all nicely prepared for you," replied Mr. Rivington, his jesting good humor having quite returned.

"Nay, by that time, I trust that Miss Rivington, in the pleasure of having you with her again, will have quite forgiven my many offences."

Mr. Rivington's days continued to pass quietly and contentedly enough in the society of his friend, Dr. Purdon. Though there was such a great disparity of years between them, though they no longer had aims and ambitions in common,—for the one was nearly done with life, the other but attempting life's schemes—yet the two agreed admirably well; and one could scarce have told which they resembled most—old friends who had seen all

that life had to show them, and were prepared for all that the future might offer; or young friends starting fresh upon the paths of inexperience, ignorant and hopeful of life's lessons. The minister and physician had much in common, for to both are unfolded more of the secrets of daily life than are confided to the ear of other professions. Their knowledge of life, learned mostly from the one source, the sick-room, brought their judgments of the world's occupants to a common level. This was one bond of union between them. Another, and a greater, was that the heart of the one was throbbing in strong, full beats with a love for one who was dearer than life to him; his heart had one great living centre for its love; there was one dependent on him for affectionate care and guidance; between himself and that one there was the purest love given to man, that of parent and child. The other was alone in the world with no one claim of love upon him. The only love he knew was that calm, indifferent sort of family affection which married sisters give to bachelor brothers. There was none to take a warm, loving interest in him and his life; he had to be all in all to himself; and so his lonely heart went out in sympathy towards the father who had a child, that child a woman, to love and give love in return. His heart softened and thrilled with a new pleasure at being drawn into participation with this strong love binding these two; and he was happy in being allowed to bask upon the verge, for he was scarce within the circle, of this warm, vivifying sunshine of love shed so brightly by father and daughter. The father was sure of sympathy in his love, and the friend was made happier by being allowed to share in that love; and this was the second bond between the two.

### CHAPTER XIII.

SEVERAL weeks have passed, and changes, unpleasant changes, are occurring in the Bell household. After Mr. Maltby's departure, the stream of family affairs had flowed on again very smoothly. There was a long lull of calm, fair weather, and though the storm threatened, the low, distant rumblings of the presaging thunder had fallen unheeded upon their ears, and the faint, warning flashes of lightning had failed to let their blinded eyes see the dangerous nature of the ground over which they heedlessly trod, and when at last the storm burst, its force bowed their heads.

Mrs. Wilson had gone to the Island one morning, and had surprised Mrs. Bell in tears and much trouble. Her previous fears, her womanly instincts divined the trouble, her friendly sympathy probed the secret, and she soon knew the story of Clarine's shame; and then she gave her sensible advice, and with generous offers of assistance lightened some of the grievous burden. And then she returned homewards, and though the sun shone brightly overhead, her heart was oppressed under its cloud of sorrow.

Upon reaching home, Mrs. Wilson, remembering well the friendly compact, the bond of union against Clarine's evil doers between herself and Will Curtiss, sent for him, and took him into counsel.

"So it has come at last!" he remarked, musingly, as she told him all she knew. Then, quick to propose action, he asked: "Pray, what are we to do to help her?"

"I have a plan, if it can be accomplished," replied Mrs. Wilson. "You see, I have been prepared for this, for neither you nor I have had a high opinion of Mr. Maltby. And so I have considered that as the Doctor insists upon change of air and travelling, let her at once go to England; for the further she goes, the better."

"But who is to go with her to take care of her? She must not go alone."

"I have thought of all that. I shall go with her myself. You need not look so surprised, Willie. It is all quite simple. You see, my uncle John has been writing to me for a long while, urging me to make him a visit, and also, at the same time, attend to my portion of my grandmother's estate. He advises me to sell out and have the value in cash to invest here. But to do so requires my presence. So I have decided to go with Clarine."

"What will Mr. Wilson say to your going without him?"

"He has already partly given his consent, and I think I shall have no difficulty about that. You know, Willie, my husband is real good, and I can coax him to do pretty much as I please." And the womanly, wifely triumphant power sparkled in her mischievous black eyes. "But what troubles me most, is, how are we two women to manage alone in a strange country?"

"And more than that, in trouble," added Curtiss. "Let me think a moment what is best to be done." And for a few minutes his thoughts were busy. Suddenly he slapped his hand down upon his knee. "I have it! I know what we can do!"

"What?"

"I will go to England and take care of you both!" and he looked radiantly exultant as he spoke.

"Will Curtiss, you are raving!" cried Mrs. Wilson. "How can you go with us without causing remarks? What would Clarine think? She must not suspect that you know anything of this."

"Nor need she," he returned. "Let me tell you my plan. You see you two will not be ready to start for, perhaps, two or three weeks yet; in the meantime I can start ahead of you and have apartments engaged, and everything prepared. I have been talking a good deal lately about a trip to Europe, and as I am such an odd sort of fellow nobody will think anything strange of my going off all of a sudden. So if you agree to my plan, I will start by the next steamer, will arrange everything in London so as to be always near you, and so that you can call upon me for any assistance, and yet Clarine can be kept in entire ignorance of my presence. Now, what do you think of it, little woman?" he asked, as he concluded this, for him, long speech.

"Think of it? It is excellent! I knew, Willie, you would give me good advice, but I did not think you would render such valuable personal aid; that you would sacrifice yourself."

"Did I not say that I would be her friend? I would not do this for any other woman on the face of the earth, but Clarine Rivington."

He spoke so earnestly that Mrs. Wilson looked at him, at first, in surprise, and then a shade came over her face that told of womanly sympathy. "Why do you take such an interest in Clarine, Willie? Why are you willing to sacrifice so much more for her than any other woman?"

His answer came in more serious tones than she had ever heard from his lips. "For the woman whom I have

loved well enough to be my wife, I would make any sacrifice to save from harm."

"I never knew that you loved Clarine," Mrs. Wilson replied, in some surprise.

"No one else ever knew it. I loved her, and love her still, for when she refused my proffered love, she did so in such kind terms, and with such noble, delicate consideration for my feelings, as only served to increase the esteem and admiration, the high respect I already had for her pure, womanly character."

"But now, Willie, have you still the same respect and esteem for her?"

"You mean because she has sinned? Do not think for a moment, that I reproach her. I blame that villain, that devil Maltby, not Clarine. Her pure heart is untouched; she is still the same true woman. And even now, with her sin, I would rather trust Clarine Rivington for thorough nobility of character than many of those women who carry themselves unspotted before the world."

At these fearless, manly words, Mrs. Wilson's face brightened with pleasure. She extended her hand for him to clasp in his, as he had done once before for Clarine's sake, and said in heartfelt tones: "I am glad to hear you say that! I, too, blame that Maltby, and not Clarine. And, Willie, if we two are true to her, perhaps we can save her from some of the evil consequences of her act. Let her have the comfort of friends to give her firm support in her trouble, and in time she may recover from the blow."

"So far as I can do for her, she shall be saved," returned Curtiss, impressively.

"And so far as I can do, she shall be saved," replied Mrs. Wilson, with equal earnestness.

Were not these two noble, staunch friends for a woman to have? If only every weak, erring fellow-being had the

like, how many evil consequences of sin might be stayed; how many sinners restored to virtue!

"When does Mr. Rivington return?" Curtiss asked, as he rose to go. "I thought they were expecting him about this time."

"They were. His last letter stated his intention of leaving the next week. In that case he would be home in two weeks from now. I hope that Clarine and I can get off before he returns; it would be such a terrible shock to the poor old man."

"Then the sooner you leave, the better," returned Curtiss, emphatically. "I shall make all my preparations to-morrow for leaving by next day's steamer, and people will only say once more, 'What a queer fellow that Will Curtiss is!' So good night; my best wishes be with you."

The next day when Mrs. Wilson went to the Island, and communicated to Mrs. Bell her plans for Clarine, (of course concealing Mr. Curtiss' participation,) she accepted them with eagerness. "It was," as she said, "a great load taken off her mind." The only difficulty now remaining was that of communicating their plans to Clarine, for she had not known of the revelation to Mrs. Wilson the previous day, and it was hard to tell her that her secret was imparted to another, even a friend. But it must be told, and upon Mrs. Bell complaining that "it was hard for her to have to do everything," and bemoaning her fate at having so much trouble, Mrs. Wilson volunteered to take the unpleasant task upon herself; whereupon Mrs. Bell's overburdened mind was much relieved.

And so Mrs. Wilson sought Clarine in her room, and very gently and with winning tenderness told her how she intended to be her friend. Calmly Clarine heard her, accepted the arrangements for the departure to England, listened quietly to every suggestion, and, to tell the truth,

rather staggered Mrs. Wilson by the perfect equanimity she displayed in the discussion. But Mrs. Wilson was determined to shake this equanimity, if possible, and see of what stuff Clarine's feelings were made, that she could accept everything so calmly. With ready penetration she chose the only subject which could reach the depths. She spoke of her father.

"I understand, Clarine, that you are expecting your father soon." The tone was purposely careless.

"Yes;" was Clarine's only reply, but there was a change in her voice, and she turned away towards the window.

"I hope your father will not reach home until after our departure," said Mrs. Wilson, pursuing her advantage.

But Clarine looked steadfastly out of the window, and made no reply.

Mrs. Wilson again spoke, this time with more serious intonation in her voice. "Clarine, how do you think your father will bear the knowledge of this?"

Ah! this merciless stroke hit too hard. The stony figure turned, and one glance at its agony-worn face brought the hot tears of pity to Mrs. Wilson's eyes.

"Mrs. Wilson! Carrie!" gasped Clarine, "do not speak of father! That is more than I can bear!" and with a great sob of pain she rushed, not walked, into the next room, closing the door behind her. And now Mrs. Wilson wished more earnestly than before, that they might be gone before Mr. Rivington's return.

The time for their departure rapidly approached, and but one day remained before that of leaving. Mrs. Bell and Clarine had been out for a morning drive, intending to return by way of the boat-landing to take up Mrs. Wilson and Mrs. Seymour, whom they expected by the boat. But the new coachman, whom Mrs. Bell had only

had in her service a few days, not being well acquainted with the country, missed the road, and in the circuitous route they were thus obliged to take they were prevented from being in time for the boat. The sound of the carriage driving up drew Mrs. Wilson and Mrs. Seymour out from the drawing-room upon the piazza, and as Mrs. Bell and Clarine raised their glance to them, their eyes followed further beyond, and there, in the window, stood—Mr. Rivington!

"Clarine, there is your father!" exclaimed Mrs. Bell, turning to her niece with a smile that was half glad, half pitiful.

But one glance at Clarine showed her aunt that there was no need of telling her. One great, wild leap of her heart had drawn every trace of color from her face, and one could scarcely tell whether there was more of joy or pain in that startled, fixed look. In another instant she was out of the carriage, up the steps, and with a heavy, sobbing cry of "Father! father!" was clasped close and firm in his arms.

The others withdrew, and left the father and daughter alone in this, their first meeting.

The twenty-four hours between that meeting and the parting were short and bitter indeed. Clarine, at first, had not the courage to check her father's delight at again seeing his darling, his treasure, by making the heart-breaking confession of her sin. She thought that she would tell him herself, that her loved lips might possibly soften the first severity of the dreadful blow. But though she began, and tried again and again, each time her confession was lost in sobs and tears. She could only repeat that she was going away. Her words, her anguish raised a strange fear in her father's heart, and in his fright he called his sister, Mrs. Bell. She came, and after Clarine left the room, she told him as gently and tenderly

as such rough, jagged knowledge could be told, the story of his child's wrong-doing. Well might Mrs. Bell's heart swell with pity for her brother, with pity for the poor old man who had left his child a happy, guileless girl, to come back to his home to find her a sinning, broken woman.

The hours sped on. The last sad farewells were wept. One short, beseeching whisper, "Father, only say you forgive me!" The low, choking answer, "Yes, Clarine, yes," and parent and child parted from the embrace of tears.

Clarine was gone. Gone upon that journey which was carrying her away from all she loved, among strangers in a strange land, to bear her trials and endure her burden with such desperate courage and strength as is given only in the hour of need. She was alone, save the presence of the brave woman who, defying the dangers of a confiding husband and suspicious friends, was now by this erring sister's side to console, protect, and maybe, save. The one other saving friend was waiting for her. And when that terrible sense of desolation, of loneliness swept over Clarine, as she stood on the steamer's deck, preparing to enter her refuge among strangers, she little suspected the presence of the real protector who, during the long, weary months which followed, was always near with friendly aid.

And they waited, too, at home. Mrs. Bell, not having Clarine's presence to remind her constantly of her trouble, and feeling confident that the bitter secret was safe from the censuring remarks of the world, allowed the realization of her trouble to grow dim and distant, and but for Mrs. Wilson's regular letters she might almost have forgotten that it had been.

And one other waited through the weary months, and they noted as the slow days wore on, that the lines in his face sank deeper, the gray hair grew grayer, and the old man grew older.

## CHAPTER XIV.

IN Copenhagen :—In an elegant saloon of Denmark's stately capital is gathered a brilliant assemblage of her fair men and lovely women. Witching music fills with melody the delicately perfumed air. The soft sounds of woman's rippling laugh, and the rich hum of man's deeper tones; the light rustle of flowing garments, and the measured tread of manly steps; the misty lights, the wafted odors of scattered flowers, the musical buzz of many sounds, all the weird intoxication of festive scenes casts its spell of charm and fascination upon all around and within this elegantly brilliant saloon.

But among all this gay crowd I note but two. The woman is a fair, delicate beauty, and she leans upon her escort's arm with the yielding, clinging air of one whose nature demands support and protection. And, surely, no man feeling the gentle pressure of that graceful form,—hearing the soft accents of that sweetly toned voice, gazing down into the depths of those dreamy blue eyes, could refuse the protection thus so womanly claimed. Surely not the man whose elegant figure was bent above that fair head in courteous reverence, whose expressive eyes beamed so tenderly upon the lovely face upturned to his, and whose low, mellow laugh chimed in rich unison with the lighter laugh of those rose-bud

lips. No, he could not refuse tender care and protection to this delicate beauty; for the maiden is lovely, high-born and wealthy, Awilda Oxenstierna, the daughter of a noble house of Denmark; and the man is—Mr. Maltby.

A few words will suffice to tell the subtle poison his dulcet tones are pouring into the pure maiden's sensitive mind. Awilda Oxenstierna is betrothed to Valdemar Struensee, a man whom she has never seen, yet whom she is willing to love, for she already admires and respects his character. She is to see him on the morrow for the first time, and her heart is beating high with bright, maidenly hopes.

Mr. Maltby leads her into a conservatory, where amidst the heavily perfumed flowers and the song of birds he talks to her of life and love; of married life and married love. In the seductive music of his well modulated voice he tells her that pure love scarce exists in the world save in theory; that men and women marry from motives of interest, not from the promptings of the heart; that though men plead love to win woman, they know it not, save as a base passion; that marriage is a cold mocking ceremony binding hands, not hearts; that no formula of words should dictate to the passions of the soul, and that the heart should be free to give where it listeth; that the laws of church and state which lend themselves to the degrading bondage of unloving marriages, should be null and void, and obedience rendered only to the higher laws of nature which plants in our hearts purer and holier love, the love upon which the gods smile. And all this falsity he clothes in beautiful language and drapes in a light veil of truth: for though he would find no beauty in the cheek that knew not how to blush, yet he would spare the maiden's brow the hue of shame.

And then he paints, in passionate, glowing touches the life of united love. Wittingly he cleaves her soul with thrilling doubts and fears, and sends the first faint thrill

ling throb of unholy passion quivering into the wild beats of her tortured heart. Wittingly he sends that innocent girl that night to toss and turn with uneasy spirit upon a feverish, wakeful couch. Wittingly he sends the ignorant maiden to meet her betrothed husband with cold, doubting heart. Wittingly he sends to the altar an unhappy bride, and to the arms of a loving, trusting husband, an unloving, untrusting wife.

In Cairo:—On the low banks of the Nile men are busy carrying luggage and provisions upon the low, flat boat lying quietly on the dark water. All is ready on the boat for its slow voyage up the fabled river; and in the city, before the window of his room in the hotel, looking down upon the strange, motley crowd of all nations passing in weird confusion beneath his fixed, unnoting eye, sits a man in deep, sad reverie. It is his last night in Cairo, for the morrow starts him, on the boat resting behind those huts on the river bank, for the long voyage which will carry him for months away from the last resting place where, still, tidings can reach him of home. He but waits for the mail to bring him his European letters, and then a long farewell to all which yet connects him with his forsaken home.

Edward Rashleigh has wandered into Egypt a lonely, heart-broken man. With spirit worn and weary with flitting travel he comes to find rest for his disquiet in the golden monotony of the Nile. His thoughts that night, as the dying sunset floods the rich-hued atmosphere with parting rays, are sad and dreary. In all his long months of absence, though many letters and tokens of affection reach him from his friends, not one word has come to him of the one he loves best, of her who sent him so ruthlessly upon his weary wanderings. He knows not, in the silence which enwraps her, whether this separation, which

has been but living death to him, has brought joy or grief to her; and his desolate yet still loving heart longs for just one word to tell him somewhat of the woman he loves, and from whom this parting to-night, this breaking of the last link which holds him to countries which seem nearer to her, this parting is almost as bitter as the one desperate parting which severed them so entirely. The sadness of his heart clouds his judgment, and his thoughts of her to-night are more gentle and lenient than they are wont to be. He thinks that perhaps she too has suffered pain from this separation, and that the anguish of this bitter absence has taught her truer knowledge of herself, and repentance. He reproaches himself as he reflects that he has been too harsh with her, for he has given her no opportunity during these long months for one word which could lead to reconciliation, a reunion of their sundered hearts; his own complete silence to her has, he thinks, completely closed the door of conciliation; she could not approach him, if she would.

But amidst such reveries the last rays of the fleeting sunset have sunk into the desert sand, and quick darkness envelops this Eastern city in slumber and silence; and then with cold and heavy heart he retires to wakeful unrest.

With the first flushing beams of the gorgeous sunrise, with the first freshness of the new morn, his light slumber is gently broken by the strangely musical chant of the muezzin call to prayer. Like angels' heavenly chorus it floats upon the still morning air, and falls like dewy balm upon his weary, aching spirit. Rousing from waking dreams he goes forth to greet the king of light, who mounts his throne in gorgeous array, and floods the earth with the splendor of the skies.

Later, and Edward Rashleigh is opening his package of European letters. It is only a small package, for he has



not allowed many to follow his movements. But there is one letter in unknown hand which claims his curious attention. It has evidently followed his changing steps for many months, for it is covered and scarred with postmarks. He would open it first, but next to it lies a letter in his sister's well known writing, which has come direct. Her letter receives first attention, though a lingering glance of idle conjecture falls upon that other, that strange letter.

A few minutes gives him the contents of his sister's epistle, which contains but little news, scarce more than a repetition of previous letters, and then his fingers unaccountably tremble, as they hurriedly break the seal of that other. A vague, fluttering hope thrills his heart that it may be—

But now his eyes are fixed, and his chest heaves with heavy breathing as his rapid glance follows word after word of Clarine Rivington's powerful pleading. His heart bounds and throbs wildly at this petition for mercy, and writhes in the relentless grasp of torturing pain as the eloquent pen so vividly portrays the anguish of remorse, the utter hopelessness which threatens the happiness, the life, of the idol he still so sacredly enshrines within his heart.

Can any one doubt the result of that appeal upon this weakly loving man? A few hours, and the party of English travellers whom he was to have joined in their voyage up the Nile, departed without Edward Rashleigh to make one of their number; and the swarthy face of the disappointed dragoman brightened again, as the full purse which was to have been his at the expiration of his services, was put into his hand by his happy master. That master had now turned northward, homeward.

In London :—A darkened room; hushed voices; moans of pain; a woman in travail. Over the sufferer leans another woman, pale, anxious, sympathizing. In the outer

room, before the fire, the only thing bright and cheerful, stands the physician biding his time. Later, and the silence which follows that last piercing shriek, is broken by the wail of new-born life.

Clarine Rivington's child is born. One more mortal doomed to a life to be recorded: one more unwived mother doomed to rear a living monument of her shame.

## CHAPTER XV.

NEARLY a year has elapsed since Clarine left her home to seek a refuge from disgrace in England, and spring has once more returned, bringing in its course but few changes. Mr. and Mrs. Bell, after the usual winter season of gayety in the city, have again returned to their residence upon the Island, and Mr. and Mrs. Seymour have rented a place quite near them for the summer, intending to go to Europe in the autumn for a couple of years travel.

Mr. Rashleigh has been back some two months or more, and he and Isabel have been very happy in their renewed love. During all this time she has not quarrelled with him once! a state of affairs quite unprecedented in the history of their love. This sort of bliss *ad infinitum* doubtless tended greatly to strengthen Mr. Rashleigh's belief in Isabel's repentance and reformation; though perhaps my readers, like myself, are still somewhat sceptical upon the matter. However, Isabel's unbreaking sweetness and amiability for such an unwonted length of time made her doubly bewitching and captivating to her tempest-tossed lover, who had hitherto been led by sheer force of habit to expect a storm for every calm. But, you see, Isabel had fairly caught her mouse now, and she was determined that no temptation should induce her to relax her grip. The case of the poor mouse was this time hopeless.

They were all awaiting Clarine's return, and one there was who awaited with such patience as might be possible to misery; that one her father. He was bearing the trial not with the patience of mere grief, but with the sullenness of bitter repining. With his lips he talked resignation under this burden put upon him, but in his heart he rebelled against bearing its weight. At first his love for his child had overpowered all other feeling. He sorrowed for her, and tried to palliate her offence by censuring himself for having left her in her youth unprotected; for he saw now that his sister Helen was not the woman to have been trusted with the keeping of his one little lamb. Many a time in his bitter musings did that plaint in Clarine's letter come back to him: "Father, I do want you home so much!" "Ah!" thought the now miserable father, "if I had only come home then!" How often that simple "if" adds poignancy to grief, to remorse!

Nothing had ever yet occurred in Mr. Rivington's life, though not uneventful or monotonous, to sound the depths of his character, and there were elements of turmoil therein entirely unsuspected. When, a few years after his marriage, death took from him his wife, he, being a minister of the gospel, could resign himself to a decree of providence, though he loved his wife well, and sincerely mourned her loss; yet he still had his children, a boy of two years, and a babe, his Clarine, then but a few days old, to care for and to engross his affections. When, a few years later, the dishonesty of a false friend and the failure of a bank had together robbed him of the greater part of his private fortune, leaving him but little more than his annual stipend from his church, he could again recognize the visitation of providence, and, with a sigh, be resigned, as he recalled: "Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through and steal." And he thought

that he was content to lay up his treasures in heaven. And when, years later, he had parted with his only son upon his marriage and departure for Calcutta, though he regretted his absence, scarcely expecting to see him again from such a distant country, yet it was but natural that a man should seek foreign climes, and, marrying, take his wife to make his home. And again, as Christian and clergyman he comforted himself, because it was according to the orderings of the Almighty that partings and griefs should be in the world : and he still had his Clarine, his one fondly loved child, to be a comfort and a joy to him. But now this comfort, this joy,—ah ! this was the soreness of the trouble ! It was just because Clarine had always been his comfort and his joy, the spring and source of all his happiness in life, that now what was her ruin was also his ruin. It was because his Clarine had done this thing that there was such bitterness in his misery, and for such misery he scarce thought of turning to his Bible for comfort and consolation. In his daughter's sin he could see no decree of providence.

Sabbath after sabbath had he preached from his pulpit God's mercy and loving kindness to man ; God's overruling guidance and friendly intervention in the affairs of his children, wisely ordaining all things for their good ; day after day exhorting to forbearance and resignation under trouble and affliction, for that the loving God did not needlessly bring sorrow upon his chosen ones. Yet now, in the hour of his own sorrow, he forgot his God and turned not unto him ; and though he still preached the same doctrines, they but fell from his lips without coming from his heart. He still preached the hand of God visible in all things, but his own pride had been stung, and the pang had so blinded his soul that he could no longer see that friendly saving hand outstretched for himself. His

idol was dethroned, his god broken, and for him there was no longer any God.

In the first burst of this sorrow upon him there was too much confusion of grief in his heart for any other feeling than love towards the sinning one ; there was only a deep tenderness for his unfortunate child. But now that time had allowed mere emotion to subside, judgment resumed its sway ; and the judgment of this loving parent was not lenient. For the child of his flesh this man still had deep tender love ; but for the child of his pride who had sinned this minister of God, this professor of much religion and preacher of humility and mercy, this Christian had no judgment for the transgressor save the judgment of perdition. She had sinned, therefore was her soul lost. This was the judgment of the man whose idol had been dethroned, and whose pride was broken.

Mr. Rivington had written to Mr. Maltby, shortly after Clarine's departure for England, such a letter as only an outraged parent could write, and demanding of him the only reparation in his power, marriage. To this Mr. Maltby had returned an immediate response, consisting of his usual multiplicity of words and chaos of ideas, from which confusion they were enabled to deduce in substance, that though he regretted deeply and sincerely that his affection for Clarine had resulted so unhappily, yet he had always passionately loved her, and considered himself honored by making her his wife, as he had always intended. The sentiments were all very pretty, the language very fine, and with these assurances the family were content to await his return, which he promised should be a few weeks after Clarine's.

During these months of waiting, weary and painful months for some, the stream of domestic bliss upon which Mr. and Mrs. Bell's marital ship had been tranquilly sail-

ing, began to be ruffled by faint, catching breezes of coming high winds. During the winter a friend, a Mrs. Hartt, came to visit them. Her husband had gone to Europe on some diplomatic mission from the United States government, and they had invited her to remain at their house during the two or three months of his absence. Mrs. Hartt was a slight, delicate little woman, with a very refined nature and remarkably sensitive feelings, rather good looking than otherwise, with a very lovely way of rolling around her large blue eyes, and with the very faintest lisp imaginable from her full red lips, just enough lisp to be very fascinating to impressionable young men. And then, too, she had a way of expressing shocked or wounded feelings with a genuine emotion that was really touching. This woman's specialty during her stay at the Bells' was her devoted love to her absent husband.

Between this Mrs. Hartt and Mr. Bell there immediately sprang up a most charming friendship; a friendship so delightful, indeed, as to call forth the freely expressed admiration of Mrs. Bell, who declared that she was really so much pleased that her husband had at last found a lady friend whose companionship he could enjoy, that their minds were so congenial, and they had so many tastes in common, and that she had never known her husband to sacrifice so much personal convenience for any lady as he did for Mrs. Hartt; all of which statements were becoming quite patent to everybody without need of explanation from Mrs. Bell. Indeed, it is more than likely that it was just because this delightful companionship and congeniality of mind were so very evident to all their friends that Mrs. Bell felt it incumbent upon her to sanction by her acknowledgments that attraction which frequently brought Mr. Bell home from business so much earlier than usual, and led him to pay Mrs. Hartt innumerable little attentions which under other circumstances might have been

deemed by the censorious utterly inexcusable, but which from a host to his guest were entirely justifiable.

Now whether this charming congeniality of mind and assimilation of tastes between her husband and guest had anything to do with Mrs. Bell's health or not, I really cannot say; but certain it is that just about the time that Mr. Bell's and Mrs. Hartt's tastes assimilated the most congenially, and while Mrs. Bell was constantly assuring her friends of the delight it afforded her to witness this friendly companionship, entirely Platonic in its nature, just about this same time, Mrs. Bell's health, at all times quite delicate, as the reader is fully aware, became still more delicate, and the doctor's visits consequently still more frequent. Some there were of Mrs. Bell's dear friends who maliciously remarked that the doctor's visits, at this time, were merely an offset to Mr. Bell's and Mrs. Hartt's congeniality. But as Mrs. Bell herself justly observed, upon some of these insinuations being in some unaccountable manner conveyed to her ears:—"No one of refinement or good feeling would cast such slurs upon either her or her husband; fortunately, they were both above such innuendoes. And she had no respect, whatever, for any one who would pollute their lips with such uncharitable remarks; especially," she would conclude with heightened color and emphatic firmness, "when there was not the slightest cause upon either side for remarks, though evil-minded persons could make harm whenever they were so disposed!"

Now my reader must not suppose, for an instant, by my record of this trifling incident, that I intend the slightest insinuation against the perfect confidence which Mrs. Bell had in her husband, or the undoubted faith which Mr. Bell reposed in his wife; against, in fact, that entire and undisturbed confidence which all husbands and wives so happily place in each other.

## CHAPTER XVI.

CLARINE had returned, was back in her old home, her own rooms, and except for the harassing consciousness in the hearts of those of the family who knew her secret, they might not have realized that she had been away, or why she had departed. A few days after her return, her aunt, Mrs. Bell, whispered to her as they were going into the dining-room, that she wished to see her in her dressing-room for a few moments after dinner.

Clarine foreboded what was wanted of her, and with trembling and dread in her heart, though outwardly composed, she obeyed her aunt's summons. Once in the room alone with her niece, Mrs. Bell was at a loss how to open the delicate subject. In her nervous uneasiness she had recourse to displaying her last new dresses, very elegant and stylish, to which Clarine must needs give in admiration. Then some new laces which she had just had imported expressly for herself, and then a handsome new brooch her husband had presented to her on the occasion of her last birthday; and all this while wondering how she should commence, and Clarine dreading lest the next words should be the decisive ones. And then Mrs. Bell busied herself with some trifles upon her toilet table, until, at last, Clarine, nerved by all she had passed through to the desperation of an uncaring, almost unfeeling self-

possession, broke down the leapless barrier by saying in her low, quiet tones—"Aunt Helen, what is it you wish to say to me?"

Clarine's voice was ever soft and musical, but now its music seemed to float from her lips upon the wave of such a wearisome sigh that Mrs. Bell's heart, which had certainly held some harsh thoughts towards her erring niece, yielded entirely to the natural gentleness of her love for her darling; and so she came up to Clarine and took her in her arms, and wept over her, as she said in broken tones, "Clarine, my pet, I do not wish to hurt your feelings, but you know there are some things which must be said."

"Yes, I know, Aunt Helen; but say what you wish; I will not mind." The woful dreariness there was in her voice, though its tones were still low and so musical! But those few simple words, "I will not mind," spoke such a heart-load of wearisome indifference! She had evidently nerved herself to bear all that might be said or done to her. Her aunt vaguely felt all this, and wept the more; but Clarine's eyes, as she raised herself from the endearing arms, were dry and tearless. She knew all her love and grief, but her aunt's tears could draw no sympathetic tear from her eye; her aunt's sorrow could not make her weep. Leaving her aunt's side she drew near the open window and sat down upon a low seat, and without noting it, was in the soft yellow moonlight as it streamed in through the parted curtain. The low turned lamp had been placed in the back part of the chamber, and its subdued rays now mingled with the moonbeams in the room, and in this mingling and mystic light the two women sat and talked, Mrs. Bell resting upon a lounge in the dark shadow, and Clarine's face upturned in the shimmering moonbeams as her head rested against the open casement, while the warm

June breeze wafted itself lazily by whiffs in upon them.

"Clarine, my pet," began Mrs. Bell, in gentle tones, "it pains me to say anything unpleasant to you, more than I can help. Neither your father nor I would willingly grieve you, and for that reason we have not said anything to you, since your return, alluding to what has occurred"——

"Yes, I know," broke in Clarine quietly, as though wishing to cut short this preface, and bring her aunt directly to the point.

"But still you know, my dear, that we cannot help remembering what has occurred, and making our plans for the future accordingly." Mrs. Bell doubtless meant all her words kindly enough, but they somehow jarred upon Clarine's feelings. She continued, in a sort of monotonous plaint, "You know, of course, that we have arranged for your marriage with Mr. Maltby, and that he will be here in a few days." Clarine moved in her seat, turning her face further from her aunt. "And yet, Clarine, Mrs. Wilson tells me that you do not intend to marry him"——

"How could Mrs. Wilson tell you that?" interposed Clarine, hurriedly, turning towards her aunt. "I have said nothing of the kind to her!"

"She merely said she supposed so, from a few little remarks she had heard you make."

"Oh!" and Clarine, with an air of relief, turned back again to the window.

"But it was her saying that," resumed Mrs. Bell, "which has led me to ask that which I should otherwise have taken for granted:—Do you intend to marry Mr. Maltby?"

Clarine was silent.

"Tell me, my pet; you need not be afraid to speak to

your aunt," and Mrs. Bell rose and came and put her arms around her niece, and spoke in loving, coaxing tones, "Will you marry him?"

Then Clarine, still and unbending in her aunt's arms, answered, and her low voice was cold and steady:—"No, Aunt Helen, I cannot."

"Oh, Clarine!" cried Mrs. Bell, in a voice of keen disappointment, and she rose and began to walk the room.

Clarine did not change her position, but her little thin white hands were clenched tight as they lay in her lap, and her voice took on a pleading tone as she spoke:—"Aunt Helen, I will do anything else you wish, only please do not ask me to marry him; I cannot."

"My pet, you must marry him."

"Why must I, Aunt Helen?"

"To save us all, to save yourself from disgrace," said Mrs. Bell, stopping in her walk before Clarine. "If this were known to the world it would ruin us all. Only marriage can save you from disgrace."

There was a moment's pause, and then Clarine spoke with more spirit than she had yet betrayed, "Aunt Helen, I cannot see that marrying the man who has wronged her saves a woman from disgrace."

"You know, Clarine, that the world deals more leniently with married women. As Mr. Maltby's wife, should the past ever become known, the world will not condemn you as harshly as though you remained single."

To this world-wisdom Clarine made no response. She again turned her head away, while on her face the passive dreariness settled into a hard, stony look, and the hands remained clasped together in the same tight clench.

Presently Mrs. Bell stood still, and in a lower tone,

as though cautious of what she was saying, said, "Clarine, if you do not marry Mr. Maltby, what will you do with your child?"

Clarine's stillness was oppressive. Her aunt would rather she had answered anything at random, opposed her with violent language, anything but this silence, silence expressive of misery. Again she spoke. "Clarine, my darling, we have not mentioned your child to you, yet have seen you go to the city, knowing well your errand. Why do you withhold it from us and not let us see it? You know, Clarine, we would love your child and care for it for your sake."

How could Clarine resist the tenderness of such an appeal? There was certainly more leniency in her aunt's words than she could possibly have expected; and yet the girl still sat in the same immovable position, without giving sign of emotion, and there was scarce a tremor in her voice, as she replied,—“Aunt Helen, I shall never let any one see my child. I know that I have done great wrong, but the consequences of my folly, of my sin, shall be hidden, so far as lies in my power. And, Aunt Helen,” her voice hesitated, and then she finished more impetuously, “It is no use asking me, for I cannot marry Mr. Maltby; I have thought about it, for I knew by your letters that you had all so arranged it, but I cannot, I will not. Ask me to do anything else for you, but not that!”

She remained in her seat until her momentary excitement had subsided into her old passiveness, and then she quietly rose to leave the room. Her hand was on the door when Mrs. Bell spoke. “Clarine, how can I tell this to your father? He has set his heart upon this marriage, and now to tell him that you will not be Mr. Maltby's wife will break his heart.”

And having said this she gave way to a full flood of tears, and throwing herself upon the sofa sobbed bitterly.

Perhaps her tears fell for her own disappointment as well as her brother's.

Clarine stood with her fingers idly working at the knob of the door, and then, half irresolute, she slowly came towards her aunt. “Aunt Helen, do you really think that father will mind it so very much if I do not do this?”

There was something in the simple wording and its tone so like the old childish Clarine, the Clarine that was before all had gone wrong. It touched her aunt's heart strangely, and, turning, she drew Clarine in her arms down by her side. “My pet, my darling, I do not like to pain you by urging you against your will, but your father desires this marriage, and his disappointment will be so hard for him to bear. He has been resting his hopes upon your marriage; but now, if you positively refuse”—Mrs. Bell paused, but Clarine said nothing. Her breathing was hard and hurried, and even in that dim light her aunt saw the glitter in her eyes, but could not tell whether it came from tears or excitement. “I will break this as gently as I can to your father, and then we must consider what else is best to be done. But whatever we do, Clarine, remember we only wish to make you happy.”

“Yes, I know,” replied Clarine, and her tones had turned cold and passive again. It seemed as though her aunt had failed to touch one single chord of sympathy or feeling in her heart, for she returned no caress or endearing word to soothe the suffering so plainly shown, and it was only at her father's name that the least trace of emotion appeared.

Clarine sat quite still by her aunt's side for a few minutes, apparently unheeding her sobs and tears, and then rose and again approached the door. With her hand upon the knob she turned,—“Aunt Helen, you need not speak of this to father, I will tell him myself,” and then the door opened and closed, and she was quietly gone.



## CHAPTER XVII.

THE next day Clarine did not go to the city by the morning boat, as she had been in the habit of doing since her return. Shortly after breakfast, as her father sat on the piazza reading the paper, she approached him, and laying her hand lightly on his shoulder, said, "Father, may I speak with you a few moments?"

"Certainly, my dear. What is it?" and he looked up lovingly into her face.

"Not here, father," she replied, turning her head away from that look; and she led the way into the library where they could be more quiet, and were less likely to be disturbed.

Throughout her life Clarine had never yet tested any feeling in her father save love. From babyhood to girlhood and now to womanhood, she had never received aught but love from this doting parent, never a harsh look, never an unkind word. Even in the bitter, trying hour when her sin became known to him, he had uttered no reproach, only love. He had bidden her farewell with a loving embrace, and had received her again with fond caresses; all this time only love. Why, then, did she fear one more trial to his forbearing love? Because she knew that for the first time she was about to offer him opposition. Hitherto she had been gentle and yielding to him, he to her; neither exacting concessions which their

mutual affection did not readily give. But now she was to oppose her wishes to his wishes, her will to his will, and she dreaded the strange encounter. She had never studied her father's character except through the half-blinded eyes of filial love, and she therefore knew little of its depths; yet she knew it well enough to surmise that in its strata there was a vein of decision which might run into obstinacy; that in his heart slumbered an impulsive passion which, when aroused by anger and driven by prejudice, might be unbridled by reason. With her own lips she was now about to free whatever elements of antagonism might be resting latent between her father and herself, and she trembled before the coming struggle.

Mr. Rivington had taken a seat in a large easy-chair, and as his eyes turned upon Clarine they moistened with tears. His eyes were weak with tears, like a woman's, for, like woman, there was in his nature that quick passion which weeps easily.

The voice which spoke was very childish in its plaint:—"Father, must I marry?"

"Marry! marry whom?" asked Mr. Rivington, for the moment perplexed.

"You know, father, Mr. Maltby."

"Of course you are going to marry him," her father replied, still not comprehending her meaning.

"O father! you do not understand me! I know that you have arranged for me to marry Mr. Maltby, and Aunt Helen says that if I do not it will be such a disappointment to you, it will break your heart. But, father, I cannot marry him; I cannot, father, indeed, indeed I cannot!" And her eyes gazed with a strained, suffering look into her father's face.

"My dear Clarine! I was not expecting this!" answered her father, in a surprised, pained tone; for this passionate, childish plea thrilled to the core of his heart.

"I thought, my child, that you were quite willing to marry him."

"I had no thought of doing so. I cannot marry him!"

"Do you not love him, Clarine?"

"Love him, father!" she cried, with passionate vehemence. "Love the man who has wronged me as he has done! Father, I hate him! I loathe him! I will do anything and everything else you may ask of me, but I cannot marry him. He has robbed me of all that a woman holds dear, and he has implanted the venom of remorse so deep in my heart that a lifetime of anguish cannot wash it out! He has cursed me with the curse of sin, and I hate him for it!"

"Clarine, hush!" Her father's voice was stern and angry. "Such language from you is unjust, is wicked. You have sinned, and your sin rests on your own head. You are more to blame than he, for he loved you with a sincere, earnest love that wanted to make you all his own, to make you his wife; and he now proves his love by being willing and anxious to marry you. He is acting the part of a man of honor, you, of a faithless woman, and your sin will be doubled on your head."

Clarine recoiled from the heavy blow. To be thus addressed in such harsh terms by her loving, indulgent father! To be thus condemned so entirely, without measure, by the parent she so loved! She glanced at his flushed face, the angry set of his lips, and the flashing in his eyes, and then she turned away with a sickening chill running through her nerves, and a sinking at her heart worse, far worse than any she had yet known. Her father's words rang in her ears. "Acting the part of a man of honor!" Yes, she knew better than he that it was but *acting*. "A faithless woman, and your sin doubled on your head! You are more to blame than he!" Was it then possible that she was to bear all the blame, all the sin,

and he go unscourged? Was he only to be praised, praised for the sincere and earnest love which he was proving by being willing to marry her? Was his base desertion in her trouble to count for naught against him? It was too painful, too crushing to believe. If she could only tell them the man as she knew him; with all his baseness, all his subtlety, all his wily fascinations, his fair professions which were but cloakings to foul acts! But there was a feeling at work in her heart which sealed her lips from uttering one defaming word against him. There was a pride of self-respect which forbade her telling that the man whom she had allowed such power over her was such an utter, despicable villain. No; she would let them still be deceived by his fair exterior, be blinded by his veil of fascinations, and as the burden of the sin was laid upon her shoulders she would bear it without a murmur of complaint at its injustice; but she had not expected this of her father. She was roused from her painful thoughts by her father again speaking, and his voice had become more gentle again.

"Clarine, if you attempt to withdraw from this marriage, you must have some sufficient reason for it. It is, perhaps, only natural that you should have some hard feelings against him; I can understand that. But remember, my child, that his great love for you is his extenuation for a moment of passionate forgetfulness, and such can be your only plea. What excuse have you for withdrawing that love?"

"That love! Father, I never loved him!"

"Never loved him! Then, in heaven's name, what tempted you to the sin?" and he rose and confronted his daughter with an aspect of passionate severity.

"I don't know, father! I do not understand it myself," came the wailing response. "It is all a terrible mystery to me. I have tried to think of it, but cannot; it is like

thinking back upon a vague, frightful dream. Oh, father, do not ask me of the past. I know nothing of it; I can not fathom it. I only know that it is there, and that its spectre stalks ever before me in the dim, dark future!"

The intense, hopeless sadness in her words penetrated the anger which had been gathering in Mr. Rivington's heart, and pity mingled with his sternness as he saw the misery so plainly depicted in the ghastly pallor, in the dampness gathered on forehead and lips, and in those dark lines of mental pain drawn around her eyes and mouth. From his soul he pitied her suffering. For the sin he had no toleration: but for the daughter, ah, how much!

The eyes of father and daughter turned towards each other and met. He went to her and gathered her close in his arms, and then her anguish found vent in sobs and tears. In her father's arms she could weep. She forgot his severity, his condemnation, all he had said that sounded so harsh; she only knew that her father's arms held her, and that he still loved her. Presently she asked in her simple, earnest tones,—“Father, will it grieve you so very much to give up this marriage?”

“My dear child, it is not for my own sake I wish this marriage.” (How the old man deceived himself.) “It is for your sake, for the sake of the family, and for the sake of your innocent, nameless child. It is to give your child a father's name, an honorable protection, and to save us all from disgrace, that I insist upon your marrying him.”

Clarine quietly withdrew from his embrace, and took up her old position at the window. “Father, I cannot understand why marrying the man who was base enough to seduce her should save a woman from the disgrace of her sin. It certainly cannot retrieve her honor in the sight of God; why, then, should it before men?”

“Clarine, you do not view the matter in the proper light,” returned Mr. Rivington. “Mere marriage alone

certainly can make no difference in the sight of God. But you must remember, my child, that some atonement is necessary for your sin. You cannot expect much happiness in this world after the wrong you have done, and you must be willing to accept some suffering as a punishment, and to sacrifice yourself somewhat as atonement.”

“Father, is not the atonement of repentance all that our Saviour demanded?”

“Yes, Clarine; but you must prove your repentance by sacrifice”——

“Yes, father, by the sacrifice of a contrite heart. All that our Saviour asked for his Father in heaven was “a broken spirit and a contrite heart;” and how much of that sacrifice I have to offer, God alone can judge.”

The minister felt the truth of her words, but the parent would not acknowledge it. The truth combated his wishes, opposed his prejudices, and though for the moment silenced, he was by no means yielding. “Clarine,” he said, at last, “you are right, and yet wrong. An outward, visible sacrifice is necessary, as well as an inward, invisible one. As I said before, you cannot expect much real happiness in this world, and this marriage is but for this life, for our short sojourn here, for a few years at the most. You must conquer your aversion to it. And, after all, what can there be so dreadful, Clarine, in being married to a man who loves and serves you, even if you do not love him quite so well? Without him you have before you a life of loneliness, and, after I am gone, a life unprotected, uncared for. Better be a loved and honored wife, Clarine. You will be far happier, even if you do not love your husband so well, and perhaps, after awhile, you will learn to love him as well as he loves you.”

His argument was specious and, from a parent, powerful. Possibly Clarine wavered for a moment in her decision. If so, it was only for a moment, for she soon turned towards

her father, and there was an intense, an overwhelming power of passion in the words which burst from her quivering lips. Her voice was deep and thrilling with its earnestness, and though only the strongest excitement could at length have given vent to her long imprisoned emotion, there was no movement, no gesture more than that nervous clutching of the hands, and in her voice and features alone was heard and seen her passion.

"Father, do you know to what you are urging me; urging with a power which no one else could wield? You are urging me to marriage with a man whom I loathe and despise. You are urging me to a marriage which would be the greatest curse of my life, and a greater sin than any other I could commit. Father, you are a minister of the gospel, a teacher of the Bible, and you, of all others, should know what the marriage vow enforces. A woman at the altar vows to love, honor, and obey. The last, in a measure, I might do. I might render some outward obedience to that against which my spirit rebelled; but to swear to *love* where I *hate*, to *honor* where I *contemn*, this I cannot do. You ask me to forswear myself before the Almighty; you, a minister of God, yet dare ask me to lie to my God. I am willing, if you wish, to lie before the world, to let my whole life be a lie before men, but to vow a false oath to the Almighty, to swear to a lie before my God, is the one sin I cannot commit. Father, you are a chosen public officer in God's service, and yet you dare counsel me to break God's commandment, dare counsel me to false witness. More than that, you are a parent, and yet dare urge upon your child the blackest guilt which can be stamped upon the human soul—a false oath to God." She paused an instant, and now her voice changed and became inexpressibly tender and thrilling. "Father, I love you dearly, so very dearly! Your love has been the most precious thing on earth to me; it has been my joy

and pride through life, and has shed the one ray of comfort through the darkest hours of my sorrow, and through that love, father, you know that to this hour I have never in my life opposed you, never disobeyed you; but, father, though I do not think that I love God more than you, yet I know that I fear Him more, and—I *dare* not disobey Him."

Every nerve in Clarine was racked, every limb was trembling. She had at last dared the trial, had leaped the dread chasm, and she was now appalled at her boldness. Not that she wished one word recalled. Hers was not the timidity which feared an act committed.

It would be difficult to describe the diverse feelings which battled in the mental storm roused in Mr. Rivington by his daughter's eloquent and powerful appeal. Angered by the boldness of the truths so daringly uttered, enraged by the opposition so unflinchingly offered, disappointed at the failure to his hopes; and over all, the fear in the heart of the minister when the veil was removed and the true coloring given to his counsels, the dread of sin before God, all these waged wild warfare until, at last, they yielded to the one passion of love and pity which ran molten in his heart at that conquering outburst of his child's love for himself, as she acknowledged so tenderly that his love was her joy, her one ray of comfort. And the heart of the father and the minister thrilled with a fearful joy that his child did not *love* God more, but *feared* Him more, and only *dared* not disobey Him. Love unchristianizing the Christian. At last Mr. Rivington spoke, and considering the excitement he was laboring under, he spoke very calmly.

"Clarine, I will not force this marriage upon you. If it is really so abhorrent to you I will no longer urge it. I own that it is a sore disappointment to me, for I had hoped to see you settled happily and honorably in

life before it pleased my Lord to call me away. But if it cannot be I must try to be satisfied without it—happy. I cannot be. I will say no more to induce you to become Mr. Maltby's wife, though it does seem to me that although your reasons for refusal are good enough in themselves, yet that you are wrong for having those reasons, are to blame for indulging such feelings. You ought to forgive the wrong he has done, as he offers all honorable reparation, and you should try to love him and give him a wifely duty. And do not forget, Clarine, that in thus disregarding your own honor before the world, you also disregard not only the honor of your child, but also of your family and of your father."

"Honor thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long in the land which the Lord thy God hath given thee." Suddenly this commandment revealed itself in vivid impression upon Clarine's mind. Wherefore it came, why suggested, she knew not. She only knew that now it was there burning its ineffaceable stamp upon her heart. "Honor thy father." How could she honor him except by obedience, by saving him from possible disgrace? Must she then suffer this marriage that her father might be honored? And her dead mother! Could she hope ever to meet that spirit in heaven, if she did not honor her memory here? These questions sprang up suddenly, but they none the less racked and tortured Clarine's mind as her father talked.

"There is one question which I must ask. If you do not marry, what will you do with your child?"

"I don't know yet. I shall never neglect it." "Honor thy father." How the words haunted her!

"It is easy for you to say, Clarine, that you will take care of it: but how? You know that I am mainly dependent upon my salary, and at my death there will be but a mere pittance left for you, not enough to support one in

the comfort to which you have been accustomed, let alone two. I had hoped to see you provided for before my death by some one who had a right to protect you; but now I must leave you helpless and dependent, or else to labor for a living. This is a hard thought for a parent, Clarine."

"Honor thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long in the land which the Lord thy God hath given thee." These words were torturing her; they would not leave her, and, the grief-stricken face of her idolized father before her, they were slowly conquering.

"Father, I have talents. God has blessed me with the gift of voice, and by that I can easily earn a competent living."

Mr. Rivington was silent, and as he leaned back in his chair Clarine saw the tears glisten in his half closed eyes. "Honor thy father." Was this honoring, thus to let him grieve over the consequences of her sin? Glancing into his face she saw that he was looking old, the lines were deepening and numbering, his hair was whitening, and truly he could not have many years to live. Must she be the one to darken those years, to blast with misery the last days of her loved father's life? Would he really be satisfied, be happy in his old age if she were by this marriage to let him think her honor retrieved before the world? And after all, was it not more selfishness, more indulgence in her own wickedness, more regard for her own happiness, than love and fear of God withholding her? The tears in her father's eyes rolled down his cheeks, fell down upon his hands. "Honor thy father."

The slight figure was kneeling at her father's knee. With one little hand she clasped his, the other rested upon his shoulder, and with upturned head she gazed into his face.

"Father, would you really be more contented, would

you really be so very much happier if I were to marry?" and in a lower tone,—“Would you feel more *honored* by my marriage, father?"

“Clarine, my child, it is now my one earthly wish ungratified. If I could see you honorably married I could then die happy.”

Simply came the reply. “Father, I will marry Mr. Maltby.”

“Clarine, you will! But no! After all that you have said, I cannot enforce such misery upon you.”

“Father, do I look like misery now?” and as she turned her sweet face full upon him there was a smile upon her lips, and her eyes, too, tried to smile, but they only softened. Her face was winning in its loveliness, her voice was coaxing in its low music, her manner beseeching in its tenderness. After all, perhaps it was not such a great sacrifice, she would really be happier after she was married. “Clarine, do you positively consent? Will you marry Mr. Maltby?”

“Yes, father, I will.” The smile was still upon her lips.

“My child, I am very glad for your sake!” And he wound his arms around her; he took her upon his knee; he kissed her fondly; the sacrifice was accepted. “For her sake,” he had said. Well, it was no great matter, such a little deception. He was happy; and she—Do not ask.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

TIME sped on rapidly. There was a constant round of gayeties with the Bells, for not only was there the usual round of festivities preceding the wedding, and of which opportunity for brilliant display Mrs. Bell took full advantage, but the fashionable summer season was now at its height, and there were unceasing parties for dancing on the green, for picnics, for riding, driving, boating, in fact for all the imaginable reunions which a gay country life suggests.

In all these varied scenes of fashionable mirth Clarine had to join, and was compelled to present a bright, cheerful face, let her heart be as sad as it might; for again she was placed on the pedestal of favoritism, and made to rule, the belle of society. Her girlish grace had lost none of its winningness, that it was more matured; her artless fascinations none of their witchery, that they were slightly more imperious. That her once blushing rose tint had faded and left her cheek with scarce a deeper tinge than her brow, made her none the less lovely to her admirers; that her manner was fitful and changeful, one minute gracious and affable, the next wearied and cold, made her none the less attractive to her devotees. Let Clarine Rivington be what she would, do what she chose, she was still the idol of society; for



she was beautiful, graceful, cultured, and withal, in speech and action, *very womanly*; and therein, in her sweet womanliness, lay her greatest, her most potent charm.

Clarine could not always feign the mirth she did not feel, and she sometimes betrayed a heart ill at ease by the ghastly pallor and the care-worn expression of her face, the dulness of her eye, and the extreme lassitude of her mien. But once Mrs. Wilson, ever watchful, had whispered, "Clarine, unless you take more care to preserve an outward cheerfulness, people may question the cause of the change in you. You are looking miserably ill and wearied now. Try and cheer up, my pet." Clarine thanked her friend, and with an effort roused herself. From that evening her color never varied, her gay spirits never flagged; and it must have been an artistic brush that painted both, for none knew, doubtful if any suspected, that the brilliancy of cheek and manner were not tinged with the hues of the heart. This was part of the lie she was willing to live before the world.

As the time drew nearer for her marriage Isabel was very busy and very happy. She was sure now of her hold upon her lover, no fear of his withdrawing from his bonds. Not an unpleasant word had occurred to mar their happiness, for she had resolutely been all sweetness and amiability, and Mr. Rashleigh, in consequence, a model of love's slavery. And Isabel sometimes thought that Clarine had been a very false prophet when she so gravely foretold misery to her if she persisted in making such a slave of her lover; for here was the errant one returned more of a slave to her despotism than ever; and "after all, she had not been so very miserable during their separation!"

As for Mr. Bronson! Recollect that the fair Isabel was the fifth woman with whom he had been desperately, passionately, madly in love. Is it, therefore, to be wondered at that the adequate language fails to flow with the ink from

my pen when I attempt to portray his anguish and despair at being the fifth time so bitterly, so cruelly disappointed? I feel that the best description of my friend Bronson's harrowed feelings is in the few condensed words—he drowned his grief in brandy for three oblivious days! Upon recovery to a state of sobriety he immediately began to look about him for some other and more tender hearted angel in female guise, unto whom he could unburden his many sorrows, and receive in return that sympathy for which his naturally loving heart yearned.

The wedding day at last came, and, as all wedding days should be, was bright with a genial sunshine, and pleasant with a balmy air. The festivities were upon a grander scale than upon the occasion of Mr. and Mrs. Seymour's marriage, but otherwise much the same; there was but the difference of the principal parties in the ceremony. Isabel looked exceedingly handsome in her rich bridal robes. The sweeping, heavy folds of the elegant satin, softened in its glistening sheen by the encircling veil of creamy lace, well became her rather severe and haughty style of beauty.

In the family party which gathered around the chancel, as these two were joined in wedlock, Clarine stood furthest from the altar steps. Every word of that marriage service, as it was read by her father's lips, fell cruelly distinct upon her ears, dropped with unutterable pain upon her heart, aching with the cold of its agony. At every word came the bitter thought that in a few days she too would be standing at that altar, vowing those vows, kneeling to those prayers; and she shivered and shrank as she thought of the dreary echo those utterances would make as they sank down into the deep hollowness of her heart; and she quivered and trembled as her soul gazed across the wearisome desert, the great Sahara of the future, wherein would be no oases save ever recurring misery, which the life she thus gave



away must tread ere reaching the end of its dreary journey.

Was it strange that some should have remarked, that day, that Clarine's laugh seemed harsh and heartless, her manner cold and frivolous? that Clarine was unlike Clarine? Reader, do you think that *even you* would have had the strength to let your laugh be merry, your manner blithesome, under the crushing burden of such a load of misery as Clarine Rivington bore? She had none to blame for her trouble but herself, do you say? That our own hands placed the burden on our shoulders, makes our back none the stronger.

Among the guests staying at the house during the wedding festivities were Mr. and Mrs. Hartt. Their invitation was owing to the urgent suggestions of Mr. Bell to his wife, who was just at the time again suffering from her unfortunate health, over exertion, etc., and she therefore did not feel herself equal to the exertion of refusing. They therefore came: and Mrs. Bell's delicate health slowly began to improve again; which was perhaps rather strange, but extremely fortunate, and made her fully sensible of the blessings of good health; for, if the state of her nerves or her general debility had been at a very low ebb, just then, she would, of course, have been prevented from joining in the numerous excursions which Mr. Bell invented for the pleasure of his guests.

After the wedding party returned from the church and the guests were gathered in the drawing-rooms, while the mirth and gayety were at their height, Clarine, wearied by the restraint under which she labored to appear cheerful, escaped from the company and wandered out into the grounds to refresh and strengthen herself by a walk. She chose the path to the lake as being the most densely shaded and also the most secluded of the walks, and from the lake being at a sufficient distance from the house to ensure

her against meeting with any stragglers who, like herself, might be seeking the inviting quiet of the park. Leisurely she sauntered along, enjoying the cool shade of the close overhanging trees and the peaceful calm, in such pleasing contrast to the heated, noisy rooms she had left. She slowly neared the end of the walk; a few more turns and she was facing the lake; but that last step brought her upon a scene which turned her eyes away from the lake she had come to see. Just before her, so near that her tread must have been very light not to have disturbed them, upon some low rocks by the water's edge, partly concealed by overhanging bushes, sat Mr. Bell and Mrs. Hartt. His arms were enclasping her, his lips caressing her, and her head rested upon his shoulder, while her large languishing eyes were raised to his, and she wound her arm closer about his neck. In the name of all Platonic friendships, what did this mean?

Noiselessly Clarine turned and hastily retraced her steps. Stunned and stupefied by what she had witnessed she for a time forgot her own troubles in thinking upon this unexpected revelation. That her uncle, the meekest and smoothest of men, could commit even an impropriety, still worse, should be guilty of a sin, was more than her shocked senses could, for the moment, realize. She was not so much surprised at Mrs. Hartt's participation in the guilt, for she had never liked the woman from the first moment of seeing her, and a more intimate acquaintance had not raised her opinion, only she would scarcely have supposed that she would ever have chosen Mr. Bell for the victim of her wiles and deceit, for he was one of those severely sedate men with whom most women would have hesitated and thought twice to themselves ere risking anything so terribly improper as even a flirtation. Well, very likely Mrs. Hartt had thought twice, and had thus detected the texture of which his coating of severe virtue was made.

For a time there was a strange and—let it be said—a wicked feeling of satisfaction in Clarine's heart at this disclosure of her uncle's sin. Wicked, but natural, for the discovery of another's guilt seemed to lift some of her own load of sin from herself. But she was too noble hearted long to harbor such unworthy feelings. She tried to crush them and let truer, purer considerations rise in their place.

Clarine had not proceeded very far on her returning way ere she heard hurried footsteps coming along a side path, and presently Mrs. Bell turned into the main walk, and seeing her niece, approached her with anxious, excited mien. "Do you know where your uncle is, Clarine? I have hunted all over for him. We are just going to breakfast, and he is not to be found. So strange he should disappear at such a time above all others! always something going wrong! Have you seen him, Clarine?"

"Yes! No! that is, I did see him with some guests—walking—showing them the park, I believe." Clarine's charitable evasion did not serve her kind purpose, for her hesitation, her blushes; her general air of guilty confusion, aroused her aunt's suspicions.

There was a flush and a frown upon Mrs. Bell's face as she demanded, "Who was with him, Clarine? Was it Mrs. Hartt?"

Clarine could not lie. "Yes," came her simple response. The flush and the frown darkened. The eyes of aunt and niece met; instantly Mrs. Bell assumed an air of dignified indifference. "It was very thoughtless of Ernest to leave his guests for such a length of time. I see you have come from the lake, I presume you saw them there," and trying to appear at ease she turned down the lake path.

"Aunt Helen, let me go!" cried Clarine, willing to spare her aunt any such scene as she had witnessed, "I can go quicker than you; I will run there."

"No, you are wanted at the house. I heard them asking for you as I came out;" and Mrs. Bell pursued her way.

Clarine felt sincere pity for her aunt as she watched her retreating figure, and she ardently hoped that her uncle and Mrs. Hartt might by this time be retracing their steps towards the house, that the wife might not see what she had seen; for her genuine good feeling was now uppermost; that transient gleam could not dwell long in her generous heart. As she walked along she could not help wondering what, in the first place, had induced her aunt to search for her missing husband herself, instead of sending a servant, and, secondly, *why* had she so readily suspected him to have only a single companion, and that one, Mrs. Hartt? Ah! unsuspecting Clarine. You did not know that the same quick eye which had missed the husband from his proper place amid his guests, had also detected the absence of his congenial friend!

But Clarine's reverie had to give way, for she was out from under the trees, in the midst of the gay revelry; and while she is answering with smiles to welcoming reproaches, let us follow Mrs. Bell in her search for her missing husband.

She hastily proceeded towards the lake, somewhat expecting to meet the delinquents on their returning way: but pitiless fate had destined her to an ocular demonstration of her husband's perfidy. On she hastened, down the long path; her irate expectation and marital rage gradually gathering and fermenting, until, with one short turn, she would be in full view of the lake; that turn taken—Ah! there stood the luckless pair! Their arms entwined, their eyes gazing with fond looks of tender love, their lips uttering low murmurs which must have been very alluring, for see! those lips meet in sweet caress! a kiss!—

"Ernest!"

The spell is broken! Platonic friendship has met with an untimely end. The interesting couple start, and behold Mrs. Bell severe in injured conjugal dignity.

"Mr. Bell, the breakfast waits," and with a mocking smile and low bow to Mrs. Hartt, Mrs. Bell turns and leaves them to pursue their homeward path unmolested, until quite near the house, when she awaits their approach, in order that the Argus eyes of the world might see them enter the house in pacific companionship.

Mrs. Hartt shortened her visit considerably by inducing her unsuspecting husband, a mild, inoffensive man, to leave that afternoon, instead of remaining during the week, as they had intended. But for the few intervening hours Mrs. Bell treated her perfidious guest with marked, indeed, with oppressive kindness. She also had the self-control to treat her husband in the presence of "that woman!" with most courteous kindness, and likewise preserved unbroken the inner peace between themselves, saying not a word in allusion to his—ah well, call it misdeemeanor—until after all their guests had departed. But the scenes which then ensued baffle description.

Hitherto this couple had played a sort of confidence game, each professing unlimited faith and unbounded confidence in the other. But the day of pretence was over, and neither hesitated now to confess that "they had all along suspected something wrong." Mrs. Bell informed her "own dear love" that her eyes had not been blinded, though for the sake of peace her tongue had been silent. She even had the wanton cruelty to introduce some sceptical and scathing remarks upon the subject of the various charitable societies of which her husband was such an active and efficient member. She wound up by affirming that she had seen from the first how all this congeniality of tastes and friendly regard between him and

that detestable woman would end. It was no more than she had expected.

To which retorted Mr. Bell by assuring his "sweet idol" that he also had kept his eyes and ears open, and had neither been deaf to the censorious remarks of others, nor blind to the fact that his wife and Dr. Tillman were on rather more friendly terms than he had ever supposed were strictly warrantable between physician and patient. Besides, he had always presumed that physicians usually took the appearance of both house and patient just as they happened to find them; and that the fuss of preparation which she always made for his visits, such as her anxiety for becoming toilet, etc., was more than patients usually displayed for physicians. In addition, he had also not failed to remark, that whenever Dr. Tillman's duties called him elsewhere for a time, that his wife was invariably the possessor of remarkably good health, but that upon the doctor's return she again soon became a sufferer; from all of which he naturally inferred that his "sweet idol's" health would be actually benefited by the doctor's permanent absence.

Such was the substance of their mutual recriminations. The strife was well contested; they fought upon pretty equal ground; the stock of ammunition was evenly divided; they answered gun for gun; and it ended in a drawn battle. At the close of the contest neither side had much the advantage.

There was at one time, in the heat of the struggle, a faint suggestion from Mrs. Bell of a divorce. To which, if silence gave consent, Mr. Bell was certainly not averse; for he said not a word in opposition. Whereupon she concluded that her devoted husband was only too willing to let her seek happiness in her own way, and that she had therefore better not insist upon a line of action which she had not the least intention of adopting. For Mrs. Bell had too

much worldly wisdom to resign the satisfactory position which she now held as Mr. Bell's wife, for the rather questionable and certainly unenviable position of a divorced woman.

And so after a few skirmishes, the warfare ceased, and both belligerents retreated into matrimonial peace. Not that the peace could be the same as before the contention ; for both parties were now fully unmasked to the other, and the neat little confidence game was over. But appearances must be preserved before the world, and they therefore continued to live upon apparently the most amicable terms.

But though the peace was signed there still rankled in Mrs. Bell's sensitive moral nature one bitter consciousness. She had not failed to tell her husband that it was upon Clarine's information she had traced him to the lake. Now for Clarine to have known they were at the lake she must have been there herself ; and, if so, how much had she seen ? Ah ! that was the question ; how much did Clarine know ? Well she recollected her niece's blushes, confusion and evasion ; and to Mrs. Bell the recollection produced most decidedly uncomfortable sensations, for certainly, all things considered, her niece, herself under the ban of sin, was the very last one she would have chosen to submit such a secret to. Her erring niece was now beyond her power ; but would she ever retaliate for the knowledge possessed of her own sin, by using the power thus thrown into her hands ? Had Mrs. Bell known her niece's character she need not have feared. Clarine was incapable of petty revenge. The knowledge she had that day so unexpectedly acquired she allowed to pass from her mind as though it had never been. She was one to place around another's secret the same jealous guards she set up about her own.

And as for Mr. Bell he only irritated his wife by the ut-

ter indifference he displayed upon the point. She could not understand that with the discovery of his little dereliction once revealed to his wife, his manly nature was callous to the opinion of all the world besides

## CHAPTER XIX.

THREE days after the wedding the Great Western landed her passengers, though too late in the day for Mr. Maltby to present himself at Mr. Bell's; but the next morning found him on his way to the house. There was no one to receive him except Mrs. Bell and Mr. Rivington; Clarine was out in the park. They received him kindly, though the innate consciousness in the hearts of each prevented the ease of cordiality. Still, his reception showed him plainly, if he had not known before, the footing upon which he would be accepted,—that of an esteemed member of the family; and he smiled to himself, and was satisfied.

Clarine was sitting upon the rocks close by the water's edge, arranging a quantity of bright flowers which filled her lap. The time had been when with flowers and sunshine about her Clarine would sing; but much sorrow had stilled her voice, and she now pursued a pleasure as silently as a task. As she sat thus the sound of coming footsteps reached her ear, and steps she knew well. She rose with her arms still full of flowers, and Mr. Maltby stood before her. His hands were outstretched, his smile was bright and tender,—“Clarine, my darling Clarine!”

Clarine stood immovable before him. She neither spoke nor smiled; only a calm, steady gaze from her clear

eyes into his. Few women could have given such a greeting!

Mr. Maltby's outstretched arms fell, his smile faded. “Have you nothing to say to me, Clarine? Is this your welcome?”

A contemptuous smile answered before her words. “Welcome!” was the scornful echo. “Mr. Maltby, you will find that with my family, who wait to receive you with open arms of welcome—and pardon!” Haughtily she turned from him, and in the movement her arms loosened, and the flowers fell and scattered upon the ground, their beauty unheeded.

“Clarine!”

Clarine shuddered. There was a time when she had thrilled with pleasure at his assuming the privilege of thus addressing her; but now she recoiled from his having the right to the familiarity.

“Clarine,” he repeated, in a reproachful tone. “I have already received my greeting from Mrs. Bell and Mr. Rivington, and they received me kindly, far more kindly than I expected, or perhaps deserved. I was prepared for some coldness from them, and was surprised, though gratified, that they met me otherwise. But from you, Clarine, I certainly did not expect this cruel disdain. My love does not deserve this greeting from you, even though I have wronged you. Clarine, I cannot bear this! Give me one kind word, one gentle look, and I will plead humbly, if you wish, for pardon. My dear child, look at me.”

Almost fiercely Clarine turned upon him. “Mr. Maltby, I am not your ‘dear child.’ I am no longer a child. I was once. I was a child, a very child when you first came to me; now all childhood is tortured out of me, and I am a woman, a woman with a blasted life: and the change you have wrought. You have snatched the roses of childhood from my heart, and in their place have im-

planted the seed from which I believe fiends must be made. You have wronged me, and I hate you for it. You have lured me to your iniquities, and have doubtless smiled at the easy victory; but Mr. Maltby, victory is not always the end: you have wronged me, but you shall not altogether ruin me. You shall not have the gratification of seeing me rush headlong down the steep of destruction merely because you stand beckoning at its foot. You have come back to me upon compulsion, because you fear the tainting of your honor before the world; and you may gloat in your heart that you have me in your toils; but I tell you that I am not in your toils! I am your victim, I know, but a victim who defies you with loathing and contempt!"

There was a cold glitter in Mr. Maltby's eyes as he listened to Clarine's words. They roused the evil light of his nature; but he was too keen a judge of human hearts not to know how deep must have been the wound which brought forth such a torrent of reckless defiance. He saw the anguish and pitied it, and the anger which had at first risen within him at her violent language sank before the realization of the extreme suffering which must have been endured ere it found such vent. There was tenderness in the man's heart, and it was all aroused by this plain story of acute agony. He took compassion upon her misery, and resolved to attempt the soothing of this pain, the pacifying of this anguish.

"Clarine, upbraid me as you will," he began, in humble, deprecating tones. "I know you think I deserve it all, but I do not, indeed I do not. I am not quite so bad as you deem me. I love you, Clarine, and desire only your happiness. To promote your peace, your happiness, to repair the wrong I have done, I have come now to devote my life to you, a life of loving slavery. I ought to have staid with you I know, and not have left you to your

trouble for all this long year, but now that I have come back to you, my dear child, you will forgive me for that. And your consent to be my wife, Clarine, shall be rewarded by a life of tender, loving servitude, and all that a husband's care and devotion can do to heal the pain of the past, and bring joy and peace once more to your heart, believe me, Clarine, I will do for you, my loved one, my only loved one."

His voice sank to a whisper, his tones were exquisitely tender. Some of the old witchery still lingered in those accents, still some of the old thrill in the touch of the hand which clasped hers, in the arms which were gently folded around her form. The magic mist of old seemed again to roll slowly over her soul. Closer she was drawn to him, and he bent his head, and pressed one soft kiss upon her forehead. The mist was dispelled. Withdrawing herself from his encircling arms, she again spoke; but this time she was calmer, more self-possessed. The harshness had left her voice, and her speech was more quiet, more womanly.

"Mr. Maltby, it is useless longer to attempt deceiving me. The mask which so long disguised the true features of your character to me has long since fallen; you may continue to deceive others, but not me. I know you now as well as you know yourself; I know you better, far better than you know me: so I tell you again that it is useless to attempt further to blind me. You say that I will forgive you for having left me, because you have now come back! Do you think I can forgive you for having proved all your vows to be false? Do you think I can forgive you for having deserted me in my sorrow; for having withheld your hand when it might have saved me from shame? Do you think I can forgive you merely because fear for your own tainted honor brings you back to take me for your wife? Once, Mr. Maltby, to be your wife might

have seemed to be an honor ; now I feel it to be a disgrace. You tell me that you love me ! I believe you. I know that you love me—*with your love!* But I do not want your love, for I scorn the love of the man who could wrong a woman, as you have deeply, irretrievably wronged me. You have embittered all the long future life of a woman who is yet but a girl in years. I have a long and dreary path of years yet to look forward to, and I tell you that your loving servitude can plant no flowers by its wayside ; your love can bring no soothing balm to my pain. And yet, for all this, though I scorn your love, though I hate you for the curse you have stamped upon my life, though your love, instead of healing, blights what it breathes upon, though your love brings no joy nor peace to my aching heart, and your ever-present care would only serve to quicken its throbs of anguish, still, for all this—I am to be your wife ! You need not look so at me ! You see that I dare to tell you the truth. I repeat it, I am to be your wife."

Clarine's voice and manner were terribly calm. There was a heart-sickening monotony in those low, steady tones, and in the manner so utterly free from gesture. It was a sadness too deep to know fear ; a sadness so entire it could brave all things. There was not the slightest tremor in voice or feature as she continued with the same placid steadiness :

"It was not I who sent for you to come back. I knew nothing of it until it was done : and then I refused—do you hear?—I *refused* to marry you. But my father wished it. I saw that my refusal would break his heart, and therefore I consented to become your wife. And so we shall be married. You dare not retract, for you must keep your honor inviolate before the world. Our marriage will take place as speedily as possible, and the world will envy us each ; you, for having won the beauty, the

belle, the 'lovely and accomplished Miss Rivington,' and me, for having secured 'the most brilliant match of the season, the wealthy and aristocratic Mr. Maltby.' "

It was a hard, scornful laugh with which Clarine ended. Every one of those cold, merciless words cut Mr. Maltby to the quick, but scarce deeper than Clarine, pitiless, wished or intended. She knew she spoke the bare truth when she said he dared not refuse to marry her, and therefore she dared defy him ; but it was a cruel, lashing defiance.

Mr. Maltby answered not a word. He was wise enough to see that retort to a woman in Clarine's frame of mind was worse than folly, and with wonderful self-control he contented himself with silence. He turned and walked down to the edge of the lake, and picking up a handful of pebbles began dropping them into the water.

Presently Clarine said, "Mr. Maltby, I am returning to the house. Perhaps you had better accompany me. It is quite a long walk to take alone, and—well, I suppose I may as well accustom myself to the trammels of my coming bondage."

Now Clarine had no excuse for taunting Mr. Maltby, and her natural good feeling regretted the taunt as soon as uttered. Justice, delicacy led her to apologize, but pride for a moment struggled hard against it. The next instant justice conquered, and approaching Mr. Maltby she said in a gentle tone, much altered from her previous voice : "Please forgive those words, Mr. Maltby. I was very wrong to say them."

A gleam of conquest flashed upon him, and he smiled very kindly as he replied, "Most willingly, Clarine. I know you only spoke them hastily, without meaning them, my child."

Clarine did not respond to the tenderness in his accents. She was satisfied that her apology was accepted, and with



a quiet "Thank you," she turned up the walk. There was little conversation between the two, that little of the most general kind, and they reached the house almost in silence.

Mrs. Bell was sitting upon the piazza, with some light fancy work in her hands, as they approached. Clarine left Mr. Maltby with her aunt, and ascended to her own room. Presently she reappeared equipped for the city, and at the same moment the carriage drove around to the door.

"Mr. Maltby, will you drive with me to the boat?" The pleasant smile and graceful manner proffering the request forbade a refusal. Mr. Maltby handed Clarine into the carriage, and then followed her.

"Such an elegant-looking couple!" was Mrs. Bell's internal comment, as the carriage rolled away, and she reflected with benign satisfaction that her ambition for her well-beloved niece was rapidly closing upon a brilliant fulfilment.

As they drove leisurely along, Clarine's manner assumed an easy, charming grace strongly in contrast with the harshness and haughtiness of the previous hour. In her natural, unrestrained manner there was a girlish gayety coupled with an easy dignity, a graceful abandon veiled by a modest reserve, a polished brilliancy softened by a very womanly tenderness, that rendered her exceedingly charming. As she talked her words rounded so prettily from her daintily curved lips, her smiles sank imbedded in such coyly flitting dimples, her eyes glowed with such a lambent yet subdued lustre, and her laugh was just the most musical laugh imaginable.

All these graces of manner and speech Clarine now exerted for Mr. Maltby; and he was not insensible to their effect. As he gazed and listened he wondered at the powers of fascination which had developed and matured

during the past year. Clarine Rivington as he had first known her was a beautiful, bewitching coquette: Clarine Rivington as he now saw her was a lovely and elegant woman. He saw and realized that in one year she had grown many in the perfection of graceful, lovable womanhood. One year ago he had deemed her a heart-entrancing maiden, now he deemed her a soul-absorbing woman. An hour ago he had told her he would be her slave; now he felt that he was her slave. An hour ago he had told her that he loved her; now he knew that he did love her, that she was the only woman he could love.

Clarine's motives for this sudden change in her demeanor to Mr. Maltby were easy to define. She had defied him with his fate, she must now reconcile him to it. She had promised her father that she would marry him, she must now take care that he should not render that promise nugatory. She must bind him, not only by his honor, for that he might disregard, but by his heart, which he would be certain to follow. Motives enough, surely, for the unwonted display of her witching, womanly graces.

## CHAPTER XX.

A STILL, calm Sabbath morn. The brightness of the sun obscured by misty clouds casting a soft veil of shadow over nature; the tolling church bells summoning the servants of God to assemble and render praise unto Him.

The carriage stood before the door, and Mr. and Mrs. Bell waited Mr. Rivington's coming. He soon joined them.

"Where is Clarine?" were his first words. "She ought to be ready."

"She is not going to church," answered Mrs. Bell.

"Not going! Why not?"

"She said she did not wish to go. You know, Robert, Clarine has not attended church lately."

Mr. Rivington went to the foot of the stairs and called: "Clarine!"

"Yes, father," she answered, appearing at the head of the staircase.

"Are you not going to church this morning?"

"No; I had rather not," she replied, gently.

"Come here."

Clarine descended the stairs and stood by her father.

"Clarine, do you know that there is communion service to-day?"

"Yes, father, I know it."

"You missed the communion last month, also."

She made no answer.

"My child, it is sinful to refuse the holy sacrament."

Low and timidly Clarine answered: "Father, you have taught me that it is still more sinful to partake of it unworthily. I cannot go to communion to-day; please do not ask me. I would rather you would go without me." Mr. Rivington then turned away from his child with feelings nearer akin to anger than sorrow.

Clarine returned to her room with that unceasing pain in her heart keener, that ever weighing oppression in her breast heavier, a choking, bursting sob in her throat. To tell her father to go to communion without her was the hardest trial of all. She had been brought up strictly in the forms and teachings of the church. Her religious training had been the sole part of her education to which her father had himself given personal and special supervision. He had first taught her baby lips their simple prayers, had first unfolded to her childish mind the interpretations of the Bible, had first instilled into her youthful heart the principles of her faith, had first impressed upon her matured intellect the doctrines of her church. From childhood to girlhood she had yielded obedience to her religious duties, and all her acts had been consistent with such training. Had Mr. Rivington at any time previous to the last year have wished for a model of a Christian woman, of a woman whose heart was so tempered by Godly love that she could join in the gayeties of the world, yet maintaining the sanctity of her soul unstained by its follies; who could find pleasure in the amusements of society, yet her greatest pleasure in the observance of her duties towards God; a woman innocent without ignorance, pure without seclusion, humble without sanctimony, and holy without pretension;—for such a woman his heart would

have turned towards his child ; in her he believed he had a pattern of Christian virtue. But over a year had passed since that belief existed, and now only its ruins lay crushing and smothering his heart.

And before this same year, had Clarine questioned her own heart, she would have believed herself a Christian, a chosen child of God. But then she sinned, and in her sin she lost not her faith in her religion, but her faith in herself. Her religion still stood before her firm and untarnished ; it was she who had turned aside to avoid its purity. Her God was still God, a just, a merciful God ; it was only she who had offended. She did not blame the prop upon which she had seemed to lean, for failing its support ; she blamed herself for casting it, in its strength, away from her weakness.

It was this, the knowledge that her sin had rendered her all unworthy the love of her God, which added the torture to Clarine's suffering ; and it was this, the consciousness of her unworthiness, which made Clarine Rivington in her sin more the true Christian, the sincere child of God, than when unerring in her virtue. It may be a hard saying, the fallen better than the upright ; but are we not told :—" Christ came not into the world to save the righteous, but to call sinners to repentance ? " I do not say that the sinner is better than the righteous, but I do say that he who has sinned and repented is better, if not purer, than he who has never erred, has always worn the garment of virtue, yet never felt the saving humility which contrition alone can teach.

Upon first consciousness of her sin the woman's feelings had been those of keen mortification and upbraiding self-degradation ; for in erring she had degraded herself, and in losing virtue she had lost self-respect and proud esteem, but after mortified pride came remorse for sin committed. Her mortification arose from the blow to that self-re-

spect inherent in all human nature, but strongest in the proudest ; her remorse was the necessary consequence of her religious faith. From that first moment of fearful consciousness until now, this hour of racking thought, marshalling the dread review of the good and evil past, Clarine had passed through all phases of mental suffering. And it had seemed to her that none of them could possibly be intensified, and she endure. Her heart had not known one moment's ease, her brain never a moment's rest, for there was a constant aching pain in her heart, a never quieted turmoil in her brain, and she sometimes wished that she dared wish she were dead ; but she was afraid to die in her sin.

At first she had struggled to accept all with more composure, and had even succeeded in wrapping her spirits in the garb of cheerfulness for the sake of the one whose life was to be stamped with the impress of her own inner state. But after that demand upon her self-control had ceased, all the forces of a nature exalted in its pride, its refinement and its purity, became the torture of self-accusation. Weary days of heartsickening endurance, followed by long nights of wakeful torment ; neither night nor day came rest, save only when outraged nature cast its saving spell of helpless slumber. Even her child brought no solace to her heart, for it was a living reproach. She saw other mothers proud of their children, demanding of friends the praise their own hearts so freely gave, not ashamed to confess their offspring : her child she had to hide. Other mothers spoke in dwelling terms upon their love for their children : upon her love she had to seal her lips. And she loved her child, loved it with a yearning love ; but there was no comfort in the love which was only a constant reminder of sin. She had indeed entailed upon herself a fearful burden. Where should she find strength to endure to the end ? Well she knew there was but one

fount whose life-giving waters could refresh and support through all. But she dared not drink. She shrank from the vivifying stream, lest its waters should turn to gall upon her lips.

Is it strange, then, that with such strife of soul Clarine Rivington refused the communion?—sent her father to the holy table without her? The agony of that denial none knew save herself and her God. It was with a wailing despair that she refused the healing cup.

Clarine was roused from the painful thoughts overwhelming her by the faint sound coming through the still air of the clicking of the distant park gate. They were returning from church. She was not surprised by the lapse of time which had held her in suffering reverie, for she was now used to the quick flight of unconscious hours: time could no longer startle her by its oblivion. They were coming; she heard the crashing of the carriage wheels, but she could not stay to meet them. Her feelings had been wrought to too sensitive a tone to bear the confusion of their tongues. Besides, her father might call her to an interview, to chide her for her guilty refusal; and that she knew she could not endure. Throwing a light mantle about her shoulders she sped down the stairs, around to a side door, and was out in the park hidden by the hedges and trees before the carriage reached the house. On she hurried, along the many winding paths, until in the main one leading to a grotto by the lake. She reached the end of the last path and turned off upon the shaded stretch of mossy sward, was within the arching circle of trees, and—started with the shock! Mr. Maltby rose to greet her!

"Clarine, child, what is the matter? Are you ill?" She had turned white to her very lips, and her eyes fixed upon him in a wild stare.

"No, nothing is the matter. Only I have been running, and—I suppose—the heat—has made me—turn

faint!" She gasped her words, and making an attempt to turn away, fell swooning upon the ground.

Very gently he chafed her hands, and with his large Panama hat fanned the air to give her breath. But she lay still and lifeless. A brook ran a short distance from the spot. He ran to it, and returned with his hat full of its cool water. Once, twice, he dashed the water in her face without any signs of its effect. A third time, followed by a slight shiver and a low moan, as she tried to turn her head, and half raised her hand. Slowly she revived. Then very tenderly he raised her in his arms, laid her gently upon the moss-covered rock, and made a pillow for her head of some loose gathered grasses.

Clarine had fainted from simple nervous shock, for this sudden meeting was so totally unexpected. Mr. Maltby had come from the city in time for breakfast, and had shortly afterwards left the house for a walk, promising Mrs. Bell to return in time for church, but church hour came and passed, and he had not returned. Clarine had left the house with the one longing to be alone. She had fled to solitude, and found an occupant of its isolation, and that that occupant, at that moment, should be Mr. Maltby, shocked her heart into stillness.

"Lie still, Clarine," he said, soothingly, as she attempted to raise her head. "You are not able to sit up yet. Lie and rest until some color steals back into your cheeks." And so Clarine lay quite still, passively unre-sisting his caressing touch upon her head, the soft, tender hold upon her hand. He well knew how to be exquisitely gentle with a woman. And was it the languor of exhaustion that made his touch seem soothing? Or was his kindness melting the hardness of her heart towards him? Clarine thought thus, and then rushed the companion thought,—was she so utterly broken in spirit by her many sufferings that she could welcome even his winning care, his alluring

tenderness? A tumult of hysterical emotion swept over her, a convulsive movement, a half cry, and with her face clasped close within her hands, she yielded to the storm of sobs and tears which now surged over her with subduing power.

Mr. Maltby did not utter a word to stay the tempest. Once he tried to raise her head in his arms, but she forced it back, and he desisted. He did not further attempt to soothe her, for he knew that such tears come only from long repressed emotion, and that when once they burst the bonds of self-control they give relief to the surcharged heart and brain; and so, knowing that these tears were needed, he would not stop their flow. He had not been unobservant all this while of Clarine's concealed anguish. He knew woman's nature too well, and had studied Clarine's nature too closely to believe in the reality of that happiness so bravely put before the world. He saw through the courageous duplicity of her cheerfulness. He well knew that no true, pure woman could sin and be content under all the bitter consequences of that sin; and therefore he knew that under all this calm and blooming surface raged the consuming flames of a volcano of suffering, and that these tears were but its lava. Silently he had watched her struggles under her trials, and while he pitied, he admired. Her tears now distressed him, for he was kind at heart. He was a man who could wrong a woman, could tempt her to ruin, to the very brink of destruction, yet never give her an unkind look, a harsh word to wound her most sensitive feelings. He could hurl a woman into the dread abyss, but he would waft her to its edge upon roseate clouds, and cast flowers into its depths to receive her in her fall. And so, at sight of Clarine's weeping, sobbing misery, his heart melted in compassion, and he would have pacified her, but he felt that he

could not. He could only let her weep unrestrained by unwelcome word or caress.

Clarine's tears ceased, her sobs became only shivering sighs. Then she lifted her head, and Mr. Maltby assisted her to rise. She felt very weak and miserable, and leaning back she rested her head dejectedly upon her hand.

"Clarine, are you very unhappy?" he asked in low, loving tones. She made no answer. Why need she? She knew that he understood her tears.

"I need scarcely ask you, Clarine," he continued, "for I know too well that you are." He appeared to hesitate a moment, then in tones inexpressibly tender, he added: "My darling, can I not make you happy? Can I not soothe some of that pain in your heart? Do not think, Clarine, that because I have been silent and unquestioning all this while I have failed to see your wretchedness. Believe me, my dear one, your misery has found its sympathy in my heart. I love you too well now, Clarine, not to wish you to be truly happy. You have taught me to love you with all the strength and intensity of my soul; to love you as I thought I never could love woman. You are my first, and will be my last love. This you know; you know now in your heart that I love you. You have won me by your beauty and fascinations, by those powers of wonderful witchery you so well know how to wield and have not spared. I know that I have been won, been captured, but never was more willing captive. I tell you this, my darling, that you may not think your first cold, harsh reception of me when I returned, remembered; it was very bitter, but long since forgiven. But, Clarine, my dearly loved one, is my love to meet with no response? to be checked with coldness? I know that you do not love me now, but I only ask you to let me win your love. My darling, I only ask you to accept my willing devotion, and let my love redeem some of the error of the

past." And soft was the tender kiss then pressed upon her hand. It was the old harmonious flow of sound, only with the added force and power of some genuine, earnest truth.

Clarine believed every word that he uttered. She knew that in telling his love he was telling the simple truth. She knew that she had won him, that he was her willing captive; she believed him implicitly when he said that he loved her as he never thought to love woman, that she was his first, his last love; she believed him in all this, and yet not a pulse beat the quicker, not a throb the more: she sat unmoved by his appeal, his promises of devotion. She knew that he meant his words in kindness; but all his kindness, all his sympathy, all his love and truth and sincerity *now*, could not atone for the falsehood of the past, for the cruelty of the one blow he had struck *then*.

"Clarine, why are you so still? Have you no answer to give me? Why do you not speak?"

"You weary me!"

The man's self-control was wonderful. Clarine scarcely felt the very slight twitch of the hand which held hers. He did not say a word, and in the silence Clarine, while inwardly appreciating his self-command, could not help wondering if his countenance would betray any effect of her cutting indifference. Coldly she raised her calm eyes to his face. Her glance was unexpected, and so she just caught the knitted brows, the perturbed eyes, the heightened color, the trembling lip; but instantly as she looked the signs vanished, and his features softened and brightened into a tender, anxious expression.

"True, my darling," he said. "I should have remembered your being ill and weary, and should not have taxed your patience with my long speeches. Please forgive, and I will not offend again. Some other time you will listen to me."

Clarine did not fail to catch the faint intonation of triumphant assurance in those last words, but his answer altogether amused her. She gazed at him with the slightly raised brow of amazement, then her eyes flashed a quick, lambent light, then her lips parted slowly, and then the merriest laugh imaginable pealed forth from her prettily opened mouth. It was the old musical laugh bursting bondage and escaping through the portals her heart had so firmly closed upon it, and it rippled and sang as though it enjoyed its freedom.

"Why do you laugh?" he asked, smiling at her merriment.

"I was laughing at the coolness with which you accept my impudence. You take the effrontery of my indifference as calmly as though I were uttering the most gratifying sentiments."

And then he, too, laughed, his light, boyish laugh, only it was not as musical as usual; there was a slight harshness which hinted at a mirth that was forced. Clarine's laugh was the more genuine.

"Come, Clarine, shall we walk? Suppose we stroll down along the lake,—if you are not too weary!" His tone was light and unrestrained, with a dash of irony as he spoke the last words.

Clarine laughed again right merrily as she rose from her seat; only there was now a mocking ring to her laugh, and a scornful curve to her lip, as she said: "Mr. Maltby, your self-possession is most admirable."

Again that knitting of the brows, again instantly fleeing, and his smile was unruffled as he placed Clarine's mantle around her shoulders, and said with pleasant voice: "Why do you praise my self-possession? I certainly have had no need of its display this morning."

Haughtily her eyes met his. "Mr. Maltby, we each understand the other too well to require that courtesy

should entirely supplant truth." All her coldness and severity had returned as she moved away out of the grotto, and turned towards the lake.

Mr. Maltby followed her with an evil rage at work within that calm exterior. He was determined to conquer this girl who braved and taunted him with such an audacious defiance, to conquer this woman who dared so boldly show him by word and deed that she neither loved nor feared him. He would give his life to force her heart from her, to win her love; but he would conquer by the magic of kindness, would win by conciliation. Once master of her affection he would then put the torture to her love until she bent humbly to his power and supremacy. But could he succeed? he asked himself. Could he so mask his bitterness that she would not penetrate the disguise, nor read the meaning of his conciliating kindness? Would she accept his love as all love? He feared not. Since his return he knew that he had not been able to deceive her one iota. Often, as he discoursed his fine sentiments or rambled his philosophy to others, he would turn to find her calm gaze fixed steadily upon him, and as he looked she would turn away her head with a contemptuous smile upon her lips. But alone with him, her manner was invariably gracious. With the exception of the first hour of his return and now, this hour, she had never allowed him to see with unmistakable clearness the icy contempt which held her heart in such frozen bonds. But he would overcome this scorn. She had conquered him, had taught him to love with all the strong passion of man's nature, and now he, too, would be victor in turn, would melt from her heart its icy seal, and compel the woman's very soul to pour forth its intensity of love; and in the hour of his hoped-for triumph would his present vows of loving fealty prove true, or false as other vows

had proved? He knit his brows, and left the question for time and his love to answer.

Such thoughts and resolves rushed with tumultuous speed through his excited brain as he followed after Clarine and came by her side. They walked on for some minutes in silence, broken at last by Mr. Maltby's saying, in low, pleading accents, "Clarine, some of these days you will learn to love me!"

"Would you be content with my *learning* to love you?"

"Certainly, why not?" he answered, surprised.

"Because, I should think—I don't know—but it seems to me that the love which is learned is a very paltry love, though it may be a very safe one."

Baffled again! He could have stamped with rage!

"Why safe, Clarine?"

"Because I should think that a man might safely trust a wife who had taken all the trouble of learning to love him, as though love were a task to be studied and acquired by patient labor!"

Every word was a wasp. "You seem to have thought about it," he replied, with an ironical smile, such as he rarely indulged in.

"I have."

"And you have thought that if you learned to love me, it would be a very paltry love?" He still smiled.

"Yes." The little word came fearlessly.

"Still, you have thought that you *could* love me?" He took her hand gently and drew her closer to him, while his voice sank to its most winning and musical murmur.

"Yes," answered Clarine, with tones unchanged, and voice quite steady, "I have thought that I *could* love you, but"—

"But what, my darling?" he whispered.

She looked up with a full, calm gaze into his face, bent upon her with a tender anxiety, and she slowly spoke each



word with deliberate emphasis: "But only when bereft of my woman's nature!"

He did not attempt to detain the hand she withdrew. Feeling was stunned within him. His first conscious thought was: "This is surely not the Clarine I found here only a year ago. Is it I who have so changed her? changed the timid, tender girl, to this dauntless, hardened woman?" and for a moment a spasm of feeling something like remorse convulsed his heart; the next, "*She can love me, and she shall!*" Her coldness only heated his love. He would win or conquer. He would either melt or break this icicle which defied him with its fearless transparency.

He drew her hand within his arm, and while leading her to the house talked upon the summer beauties of the park, of the welcome dusk of the umbrageous foliage, the delicate play of light and shade upon the soft green sward, streaked by the golden rays of the sinking sun; and plucking flowers as he passed, he put them into her hands, and painted them with new beauties in the glowing colors of poetry.

Mr. Rivington did not demand the interview Clarine had dreaded. After returning from church he spent the rest of the day in the retirement of his study, musing in harsh, merciless judgment upon his daughter. She had voluntarily absented herself from the Holy Sacrament, refused the offered communion, and to him such refusal was the very acme of impiety. He was not one to have mercy for the sin of humility; he judged by acts, by outward, visible signs, and never searched beneath the surface for those invisible springs whence flow the currents of actions. He believed that all Clarine's late cheerfulness was genuine, proceeding from a heart which closed itself against the consciousness of its sin. He did not care to realize that the heart can be bowed with the crush-

ing weight of an unspeakable woe, the soul darkened with the heavy pall of remorse, yet the face lit with smiles, and the lips ring forth the careless laugh. Not that he supposed the contradiction of laughing face and mocking heart impossible. His experience as clergyman had long since taught him how often the eye and lip give the lie to the misery beneath. Many a sufferer and many a penitent had come to him with a tale of woe, or a weeping confession, and he had afterwards seen the same one mingling in the world the gayest of the gay; and while he looked he pitied; for had he not read the inscription upon their hearts? But with his daughter it seemed different; and here was the secret;—he never once thought of judging his own child by the broad laws of human nature. Her acts, the acts of his own flesh and blood, came home with piercing effect, and the leniency, the toleration his judgment, his unprejudiced reason might have accorded a stranger, his pride and affection withheld from his child; for love is not always lenient. He thought his religious teachings should have made her strong to resist temptation. Perhaps had Clarine been one to have moaned forth a pitiful plea for pardon, weeping the while loud tears of wordy repentance, he would have accepted the plea and with many prayers condoned the penitent; but with such confession he would have clothed the transgressor in visible sackcloth and ashes; he would have drawn the lines of her face in keeping with loud-mouthed anguish. He would not believe in the hidden woe, in the remorse and humility which cloaks itself in darkness by holding the brilliant light of deceit before the world.

And so, at dinner, that evening, as he noted his child's sparkling eyes and brilliant color, listened to her merry laugh and merrier jest, he sighed in bitter censure. Little he recked of the many hours of delirious suffering

which had wrapped her in unconscious time, of the long day of exhausting woe which had stilled every throbbing pulse into apathy. Thus many a time has the light laugh rung from lips in gayest tones but to echo in hollow, mocking reverberations through the empty chambers of the heart—empty or but filled with the flitting spectres of joys forever lost. Judge not of our happiness by the gay laughter bursting through our lips, the sparkling light dancing in our eyes, or the roses that deck our cheeks; for the laugh may be but the strangling of a sigh in its birth, the sparkle but the glow of unshed tears, the roses but the fitful fever of an anguished heart.

## CHAPTER XXI.

THE time for the marriage of Clarine and Mr. Maltby drew near, for Clarine's peace of mind too near. The busy preparations were actively though secretly progressing; secretly, for Clarine had rigidly stipulated that her coming marriage should be unknown as long as possible, and so, notwithstanding its near approach, the family had not yet announced it to their friends. But this silence was at last to be broken, for on the morrow the cards for the ceremony were to be issued, and then all the world would know that Clarine Rivington was to be married to Mr. Maltby.

Clarine shrank from this avowal of her engagement, for with its public acknowledgment her doom was sealed: there could be no withdrawal when once the world was told that she had accepted this man to be her husband. Not that she had any serious intention of retracting from her promise to her father. No. She had not once thought of changing her determination by her own act, only she had thought that perhaps something, that vague, indefinite, wished-for *something*, might occur to thwart their plans and give her freedom. Again and again she asked herself "How can I marry him?" Vain question without an answer. Yet it repeated itself with harassing persistency. As encroaching time lessened the numbered days of her

freedom,—for even this fearful engagement was comparative freedom to the crushing slavery of this marriage,—as the passing hours tolled her to her doom, she cowered in quivering fear. She crouched in the apathy of overwhelming despair, or, with the benumbed efforts of utter wretchedness, groped for some outlet of escape from this cavern of hideous tortures, this charnel house of dead hopes. As this grim spectre, marriage, drew nearer and nearer, it loomed with fearful distinctness before her anguished brain, until she panted aghast at the horror of her fate. All her powers of thought, of feeling, of passion were appalled by this coming terror, this marriage. To link her life within the chains of this man whom she hated and despised, to bind herself to one whom she so loathed and recoiled from, was more than her nature seemed able to endure and live: even the future of her child could not reconcile her to such misery. Through the long waking nights she writhed in the distress which knows no sleep, and in pitiful rebellion her struggling spirit cried for help; but there was no help; for she cried unto unechoing space. She dared not cry unto the Almighty, for her sin had broken down all courage and made her a coward shrinking in fear and trembling before her God. And the long night hours wore on, and the cry for help remained unanswered; then, before the searching light of day she drew the veil of false happiness. . . . Reader, young girl or woman, do you think the tempting romance of ideal fortitude sufficient recompense for such torture? Young girl! dreamist! do you envy Clarine Rivington her heroism—the heroism of sin?

On this, the last evening of her freedom, there was to be a dinner given by Mrs. Bell to Mr. and Mrs. Rashleigh. Of the guests Mrs. Wilson was the earliest, for she came from the city by the morning boat so as to pass the day with her friends. She had not seen Isabel since her mar-

riage, and was glad of an opportunity of meeting her once more. Not that her anxiety was caused by any overplus of affection, for there had never been much love wasted between the two; but she was curious to know which was master, Isabel or Mr. Rashleigh: whether the bride of the honeymoon still ruled an imperious sway over a submissive lover; or whether Mr. Rashleigh had taken such a wise hold upon the conjugal reins as to hold well in hand his unruly wife, and keep in check her headlong pace of ungoverned temper. But she was still more anxious to have a friendly, womanly talk with Clarine upon her approaching marriage. She wanted to know if she were yet reconciled to that which was unavoidable, or if she were still wearing heart and brain out in the vain strife of a hopeless rebellion. She thought that if she would unburden her mind to any one, that one would be herself, and if she could not at this last hour help her to a freedom, which yet was scarcely to be desired, she could at least give her the aid of friendly sympathy, the support of loving counsel. The time had been, just at the first, when her friendly, womanly impulses were the strongest, that she would have encouraged Clarine not to marry in violence to her own happiness; but since then reflection and worldly reason had been at work, the image of one little helpless innocent had been pleading for its dishonored future; and now her lips should not be the ones to forbid a name to the nameless, to sacrifice the child that the woman should be spared. Still, if her friend were in trouble, then such strength and support as her warm, loving sympathy could give should be hers to the utmost. And so she determined to question Clarine.

Mrs. Wilson received the same cordial, hearty welcome which was always accorded her by every member of the family. Isabel's smile was as careless as ever. Marriage had not effected much change in her demeanor, unless,

indeed, there might have been a touch more of the old haughty indifference marring the added brilliancy of beauty and manner.

In the midst of an animated exchange of the latest gossip, in which the ladies were soon actively engaged, Mrs. Wilson suddenly exclaimed: "There, I quite forgot to tell you that our house was entered by burglars night before last!"

"Is it possible! Did you lose much?"

"No! very fortunately. Mr. Wilson thought he heard some disturbance in the house, and got up to find out the cause, and he probably alarmed them and started them off. We found that they had several bundles tied up, ready for taking, but they only succeeded in carrying off a few silver spoons and forks which the servant had carelessly left in the sideboard; not more than a hundred dollar's worth."

"Have you any clue to them?" Mrs. Bell asked.

"O yes! one is already caught. The police tracked him last night to one of his haunts, and they are on the track of the other one. But where are you going, Clarine?" she asked, seeing Clarine rise to leave the room.

"I am going to gather some flowers to fill the vases."

"Let me go with you," said Mrs. Wilson; "I want to take a walk through the park. I have not seen it for such a long time." So the two sauntered out together.

At first they talked those little nothings which, in conversation having a special object in view, serve the useful purpose of a feint to disguise the main attack. Mrs. Wilson led up and beat around her subject until each came to a dead lock, a pause, and then at last the main question had to break forth:—"Clarine, you do not seem to be very happy over your coming marriage."

The quick color rushed into Clarine's face, and her usually soft smile was ironical, as she replied: "And I suppose you

think with the rest, that it is a marriage which ought to make me very happy?"

"No, Clarine, I do not think so. I think I can understand your feelings towards Mr. Maltby, and I know you must hate the man; for under cover of a fair and fascinating exterior he conceals the black heart of the deepest dyed villain that ever"—

"Mrs. Wilson, hush!" Clarine turned haughtily. "You forget that Mr. Maltby is to be my husband."

Mrs. Wilson was petrified at this wholly unexpected rebuff. "Clarine," she replied in grieved, reproachful tones, "I have said nothing to insult you, that you need turn upon me so savagely. We both know what Mr. Maltby is, and there certainly can be no secrets between us, between you and me, Clarine, about him."

"It is not that there are any secrets between us, Mrs. Wilson," Clarine answered in softened tones. "Nor is it, as you might think, that I do not thoroughly appreciate the true friendship which prompts all your words and acts to me. But to-morrow the word is issued which publicly holds me to a promise given. From that moment I stand before the world the same as Mr. Maltby's wife. But a few days more and I shall be his wife, he will be my husband, each bearing the same name; and that name must not be tarnished by the breath of censure. As my husband, as belonging to me, Mr. Maltby must be beyond reproach. I do not wish to conceal my real feelings from you, Mrs. Wilson," Clarine continued, as they now walked slowly along the path. "You have read my heart too well for me to disguise from you that I marry Mr. Maltby without an atom of love for him. But I have promised my father that I will marry him, and I will keep my promise with what strength I may find in these last hours, and try to let the thoughts of my child's future reconcile me to the marriage. So, Carrie, you may talk to me, if

you wish, about my own heart, but I have never yet allowed my lips to utter one defaming word against that character which yet I know so well; for Mr. Maltby, as my husband, becomes part of myself, and to allow censure of him would also be casting myself into the same shade."

Mrs. Wilson was silenced. She admired, as much as one can admire that which they only half comprehend, this haughty pride of self-respect which extended the cloak of protection to all belonging to her. She knew not how to pass the distance which this proud reserve placed between them, and silently she pondered over it all.

Clarine broke the spell of the long pause. And her voice was now gentle and even in its modulations. "I know, Mrs. Wilson, that you are reflecting upon the state of feelings with which I contemplate this marriage. Without any love for him, and worse, only aversion, you pity me that I must yield this sacrifice. But although I know that you understand all this well, yet I cannot talk about it. What I have brought upon myself I will abide by without a murmur. My heart must learn to still its own wailings."

Mrs. Wilson looked at Clarine with tears in her eyes. There was such penetrating sadness, such martyr-like firmness in her simple, truth-telling words.

"Shall we return to the house?" Clarine asked, after they had walked on some time in silence.

Mrs. Wilson silently assented, and they turned into another path.

"What do you intend doing with yourself the rest of the day?" she asked, in the idleness of anxiety to break the silence. "Can't we all drive out after luncheon?"

"The rest of you may, I cannot. I promised Mr. Maltby to go with him sailing this afternoon. He has found some little cove on the other side of the island where

there are a number of very pretty shells and ferns, and he wishes me to help him collect some for his cabinet. He comes from the city by the mid-day boat, so that we can have the afternoon for our sail."

Nothing more was said by either until within a short distance of the open space beyond the trees; then Clarine slackened her pace, turned slowly towards her companion, and in those perfectly clear, steady tones peculiar to her of late, though with diffidence and hesitation in look and manner, said mildly: "Mrs. Wilson, I am afraid you think me harsh and unkind to you, and fancy, perhaps, that I do not return your love for me. I was abrupt, I know, but I did not intend to be severe in my harshness, and I did not intend any unkindness. This may be the last time that I shall have an opportunity of speaking freely to you, but if we should be parted for years, or forever, I want you to understand, to believe how truly, how entirely I appreciate your brave friendship for me, how deeply my heart responds to your love."

Clarine had taken Mrs. Wilson's hand in hers, and her eyes were glowing dark and bright, while her voice had lost its bell-like clearness, and was mellowed with the warmth of her feelings.

"I have never told you of this before; I have never returned your kisses, your caresses of tender sympathy, but have, I know, always repelled you with coldness; but it was a coldness which struck within and pained my own heart more, far more than yours. I do not know what it is, but there is always a strange aching and tightening here about my heart which seals my lips in silence, it seems, and holds my arms in the bonds of frigidness so that I cannot tell my love by either word or touch. But I do love you, my dear friend, and I only wish that I had other means of proving it than by this weak and tardy acknowledgment. Some day, perhaps, I may be able to prove

my feelings by acts. Still, the time may never come when I can serve you by acts of friendship, and so I can only ask you to take my words; and I know you will believe me, that my reserve towards you has not arisen from coldness but from misery; I could not bear to speak of my trouble."

There was pain in Clarine's accents now, but she tried to smile as she wound her arm around Mrs. Wilson, and continued in her low, gentle tones:—"But never mind that now! There was a time, Carrie, when I showed my love for you by showers of kisses and by tender, frolicking caresses. Then I was young, merry and frivolous, now I am serious, sad and so *old*! That time will never come back, and in the change I scarce know myself. The love for you which was then so light and easily told has sunk into the depths of my heart, and through all the changes of my life, though now it does not seem that any more changes can come, but through all and everything my love for you will always remain warm within me, and the gratitude which affection renders a light burden will always preserve fresh in my memory your steady love, your unvarying kindness, your noble, unflinching friendship." Clarine pressed Mrs. Wilson close in her arms, gave her lips a quick, loving, passionate kiss, and then releasing her, started away without allowing her time for a response.

A few steps more, and they were out upon the broad lawn, in full view of the house, and in the group gathered upon the piazza they saw Mr. Maltby.

"Where have you been all this while?" cried Isabel. "We have been waiting luncheon for you ever so long!"

"Yes, ever so long!" echoed Mr. Maltby, in playful mockery of her distressed tone. "And we are all so hungry and so glad to see you!" and, smiling, he advanced with outstretched hands to greet them.

"Why, Clarine!" exclaimed Isabel, "where are all the flowers you went to gather?"

Clarine glanced with comical dismay into her little open basket, in which lay scarce half a dozen buds and leaves.

"I think I must have forgotten all about the flowers," she answered, with a demure smile.

And laughing and chiding her for her idleness, they all sauntered into the luncheon room.

## CHAPTER XXII.

THE afternoon was sunny and warm as Clarine and Mr. Maltby drove down to the beach where the boat lay. There was such a dead calm that Mr. Maltby found it would be useless to set the sail, and so, furling it and laying it in the bottom of the boat, he took to the oars, and an hour's easy rowing brought them to the inlet where lay the little cove so snugly ensconced within its embracing arms, in the deep, cool shade of overarching trees. Clarine was delighted with the spot, with its clear, transparent water, the pretty shells glimmering up through its shallow depths, the beautiful mosses clinging to and covering the low rocks, with the chitting and chirping of the birds flitting among the umbrageous trees in brilliant fluttering of their gay summer plumage; with all, a fairy spot. And in her freely expressed pleasure Mr. Maltby was amply repaid for having imparted his discovery.

Time passed unheeded. Clarine busied herself in sorting the shells under Mr. Maltby's direction, as he collected them and laid them by her side. This task finished, Clarine then begged, as a reward for her labor, that he would cut some of the prettiest mosses from the rocks for her to carry home for her flowers. Most willingly he complied, and soon the basket of shells was covered with the varied mosses.

'Now, that our work is all done,' said Mr. Maltby, after they had finished their collection, 'I have something in reserve which I think will repay you for your kindness in coming here,' and he gazed smilingly down upon her raised, inquiring face. 'Around the other side of this promontory lies secreted another little cove smaller than this, and much prettier. And what do you suppose I have found there?'

'I am sure I don't know. Flowers?' she suddenly asked, at a random guess.

'Flowers are always uppermost in your mind, Clarine. But you are right this time. There are the most beautiful flowers there that I have found anywhere on the island this summer. I will put the basket into the boat, and row you around there. It is but a short distance.'

'Why not walk across the point? I am tired of sitting still, and would much prefer the relief of exercise.'

'You can walk if you wish; but I must carry the boat around.'

'Why not leave it here until we return?'

'It is not safe; stragglers often come this way. The other day I was surprised by the sudden appearance of two or three ugly looking customers. I believe there is an oyster bed not far from here, and occasionally a rough character will stray in this direction, and if any of them chanced to find this boat unguarded, they would not be likely to hesitate long upon taking possession from any scruples of proprietorship.'

Mr. Maltby put the basket into the boat, and directing Clarine to follow the line of the shore, so as to be under his protection, he took his seat, and pushing from the shore began rowing out of the cove, but rowing very slow so as to accommodate Clarine's leisurely pace.

No sooner did he emerge from the secluded inclosure of the inlet, out upon the open water, than he noticed a very



perceptible change in the atmosphere. Though the sun was shining bright, the air was fresher and promised a wind.

"I think I shall set the sail," he called to Clarine. "If this should mean a breeze it will soon carry me around the point. At all events, we shall need it in coming back."

He took in his oars, set the mast and unfurled the sail; then tautened the sheet and slackened the tiller rope, all with the dexterity of a skilful boatman, and then took his place at the rudder and waited to catch the wind; but the freshness of the air had suddenly and strangely died away, and there was only a more intense calm, a boding lull. By the time he had completed his preparations, the boat had drifted half way down to the extreme end of the point where Clarine now stood waiting for his approach, and as she glanced around she noticed in amazement that the atmosphere was thick with a peculiar haze of strange yellow light.

The wind for which Mr. Maltby had waited came soon enough. First a gentle puff which scarcely flapped the sail, and the air was as calm as before; then a whiff, and again the dead calm; while the little boat idly rose upon the swell, and kept on lazily drifting down towards the point. The sun suddenly darkened, the air was heavy, tiny waves in motion tipped with the playing foam, two or three whiffs in rapid succession filling the sail upon the tautened sheet, and in an instant the terrific squall had burst! The sea, a moment before so calm and placid, was now a roaring mass of rushing waves and boiling seething foam. The shrill, whistling wind rushed over the waters, gorging them into leaping cataracts. The flying gale held the ocean in its merciless grasp; and over these foaming, plunging waves, before the rushing maddened tempest helplessly drove the powerless boat. In

vain did Mr. Maltby try to make for the shore. The wind and the storm ruled the waves, not he, and steadily they forced him out towards the surging, boiling ocean.

Clarine, paralyzed with horror, watched the tempest from the shore. She had retreated from the close edge of the water, and clung to a tree for support, for the wind lifted her from her feet. Breathless with emotion, her eyes were riveted with straining gaze upon that frail boat rising and sinking from one foaming abyss to the still blacker depths of another yawning chasm. Firm and self-poised sat Mr. Maltby amidst the peril of the storm, steadily grasping the now almost worthless rudder. Clarine motioned him to try and round the point, so as to get between the shore and a low ledge of rocks which ran some forty rods distant, and which seemed to break the force of the gale, for there the waves did not rage and boil so fiercely. But even as she motioned a madder shriek of the tempest lifted the boat from the surface of the waves, and the next moment only the keel was up.

Clarine's scream was echoed by the mocking laugh of the gale. Faint and giddy she grasped the tree firmer for support. Slowly, shudderingly she turned her wild eyes out upon the raging sea; only the white caps of the waves, no life upon their surface: and, O God! was that a pang of joy cramping her heart! This was a freedom of which she had not dreamed! Was this the answer to her cries of agony? Were these yawning gulfs her deliverance? No; such deliverance was too horrible! Choking, gasping, she strained her maddened gaze! He must rise from that fearful abyss! For such liberty she dared not wish! "Oh God, not this, not this! Save him! save him!" There burst forth from the woman's lips her first condoning prayer for him who had wronged her.

Something which was not the storm moving on the surface of the deep, struggling and battling with the waves.

He had risen from the depths! The relief to this dread suspense struck Clarine low down upon her knees. He lived! and she—was not free! Was that gratitude tightening every chord, and creeping through every nerve? Was that "Thank God!" which moved her whitened lips without a sound?

Her eyes were fixed by the charm of horror upon that struggling man. He was striving to reach the rocks, the boat having cast him into the water but a few yards from them. Two, three desperate strokes, and he had grasped the ledge, but the next instant the rushing waves had sucked him back into their gulf! Again he reached them, and with despairing strength held on until he grasped the next rock which raised its head clear above the water. At this moment, suddenly as it had commenced, the squall ceased. Scarce five minutes had it raged, and now the storm lulled, the roar hushed, the sun shone out its brightness, and only those wild, furious waves still raged and surged, still tossed by the dying, moaning wind.

"Clarine, help!" came the cry across the water.

Help! Was he mad? What help could she extend across that turbulent space? There was neither rope nor boat to cross from shore to rock, and no human soul near save herself.

"Help!" cried the wind again; and she saw, with eye and brain aghast, the gaping waves again overwhelm and engulf him in their chasm. Another struggle, and again he clung desperately to the rocks. This could not last; another such sweep of the waters, and he could not rise again. Could she stand there paralyzed, and watch him sink without one effort to save? And to save for what? Withhold her help, and she was free! The strife of temptation within vied with the storm without. Could she risk her life for him! Save, at such a cost!

"Help!" The cry was weaker.

Dared she try? Those black, white-crested waves were appalling; yet once, she remembered, she had risked her life on water almost as rough—yet no; the waves had not run so high nor so fierce: but then the distance had been greater though the waves were not so furious, and now the distance was so short, so very short, and the turgid waters were fast quieting down. Yes, she dared to risk her life; but—hesitate a moment longer and perhaps her help would be too late; she would be powerless to save! She could not blame herself if she hesitated to cast her life upon such frightful chance, and time were not allowed to save! How hard the tempter was at work! No, no; she had not strength to save! Stand still, and liberty might yet be sweet! Withhold her help, and life might yet be worth the living!

"Help! For God's sake, help!"

"For God's sake!" One instant of stunned suspense; the next, quick fingers cast off heavy garments, and "help" was breasting the waves! For God's sake Clarine Rivington had saved herself from crime. Short and severe had been the battle, but the tempter was conquered; God's name was again victorious.

The sight of Clarine plunging into the water, coming to his rescue, renewed life in Mr. Maltby's heart, imparted fresh strength to his relaxed hold. He had not dared to think she would risk her life in such fury of elements, yet he had called unto her for help, knowing that there was none to give save by the hazard of life. His cry for help was indeed but the natural outcry of the human soul in danger, even though that danger come in the midst of solitude and darkness. But his cry was answered; the hazard of a life was taken.

Rapidly Clarine was nearing him. Her action was so easy and quiet, even in the midst of the turbulence which

had not yet subsided, that no motion was perceivable ; she appeared to be only floating on the water, and with worn-out anxiety he thought she was making no headway, and would not reach him in time. But he soon saw that she was fast lessening the distance. Nearer and nearer she came, with even, steady stroke, and at last, riding on the wave, she was on the rocks beside him.

"Thank God you have come, Clarine !" burst in heartfelt gratitude from the lips of the weakened man, exhausted with his long struggle.

"You may well thank God ; but for God's sake I should not have come."

Had there been one pulse of tenderness left in that woman's heart for the man before her, it would have throbbed at that look of mute, agonized reproach which answered her.

"Now that I have come, how am I to save you ?" Clarine asked. "There is no one to bring ropes this time, and even the boat has drifted far out to sea, so we must rely solely upon swimming. But I am afraid that the water is still too rough for you to attempt the distance, though the waves are rapidly quieting down. If you can hold on here a few moments longer, I think the water will soon be calm enough for us both to swim across."

"I will try, Clarine ; but I feel very weak."

She looked quickly at him, alarmed by his tones, and saw by the pallor of his face that he was near fainting. She threw her arm around him to support his sinking form, and hurriedly cast her eyes to measure the distance from rock to shore. If he could but keep up she would risk carrying him across, for she had started to save his life, and she would do it.

"Mr. Maltby, rouse yourself, and I will save you ! Nerve yourself to one last effort. Only a few minutes more strength, and you are safe."

Her words roused him. He opened his eyes, and the color of life came back to his face. Clarine directed him to place his hold upon her shoulders, and the two were soon swimming towards shore. It was a severe tax upon her skill and power of endurance in the water. Already worn by the strife going out to the rocks, and now burdened in her return by the support of Mr. Maltby, who was too weak to give much assistance, it became a question to her if she could accomplish the distance which seemed to lengthen with every stroke. The question resolved itself into but one answer : she must.

"Clarine, are we nearly there ?"

"Yes ; but a moment ; only a stroke or two more !"

And with a stroke or two more she dragged her lifeless burden above the reach of the waves, and herself sank down helpless by his side.

Barely ten minutes had elapsed since the bursting of the storm, but danger past, temptation overcome, had lengthened those minutes into hours. Eternity is the unconscious passing of time ; heart and brain carry us through that eternity by throbs and thoughts.

Clarine soon rallied from the stupor of exhaustion which had overcome body and mind. Looking at Mr. Maltby she was startled by his pallid face and lifeless appearance. He was in a heavy swoon, like death, and she alone without the least means of assistance. She staggered as she rose to her feet, for she was weak from her exertion, and for a moment turned faint and dizzy as she realized the loneliness, the responsibility of her situation. She allowed herself but short time for indulgence of weakness, however, for the vital necessity for instant action of some kind electrified every nerve into freshened strength. She loosened such portions of Mr. Maltby's garments as confined the free circulation of blood, and there her means of further relief ended. In sad perplexity she asked her

self what she should do, miles from home and, for aught she knew, from any habitation, no means of conveyance, and Mr. Maltby in this fearful swoon which might end in or already be the trance of death. Suddenly she recollected his remarks about leaving the boat; about the stragglers, the oyster bed not far distant. Perhaps some of these men might happen this way now; or the road might not be far distant. She knew the direction in which it must lie; she would try to reach it, and there she might possibly meet with some one to give her assistance. With some difficulty, she hurriedly made her way through the close bushes, not even pausing to pity the poor flowers storm-cast upon the ground, whose beauty she had come to see; then a few steps through clear woods, and, to her surprise, she found herself upon the road; it was nearer than she had supposed. Wistfully she gazed up and down the long stretch of lonesome road, neither man nor house in view, only the bright sun beaming down upon silence and solitude. Uncertain which way to turn, whether to venture a piece down the road in the hope of coming upon some hidden house, or to go back to Mr. Maltby, who might by this time have revived, she was suddenly startled, and at the same time relieved, by a loud burst of men's laughter close at hand, then the clanking of chains, loud talking, and in a few moments a horse and cart came rumbling out from under the trees about twenty paces off, followed by three men. They did not see her, and turned down the road in an opposite direction. They were a rough-looking set of men, and it was with a feeling very much like fear at work in her breast that she hastened towards them to ask the assistance she must have.

The men turned in surprise at a woman's voice arresting them in such a spot, but they listened to her stammering story very kindly, and without many wasted words

turned to accompany her to where she had left Mr. Maltby. She was leading them to the opening where she had emerged from under the trees, but they checked her, and showed a well-trodden path leading from near where they stood by a short cut down to the cove. It was evident they were familiar with the locality. Mr. Maltby was still lying immovable, as senseless as when Clarine left him. The men went to work removing his wet clothes, substituting a coat belonging to one of them, while one went back to the cart and returned with a heavy horse blanket in which they wrapped him up warm and dry. A bottle of brandy was produced from a deep pocket, and some of its contents gradually poured through his forcibly-opened mouth, and at last these remedies produced their life-saving effect. The blood coursed freely again through his veins, his limbs moved, a moan broke from his lips, his eyes opened, and slowly he revived.

The men assisted him to the cart, and placing him in it, one of them supported his head on his knees, and with the aid of an old canvas they had, made him as comfortable as the circumstances would admit. They put Clarine on the only seat the dray afforded, by the side of the driver. Noticing that she shivered, the man asked her if she were cold. "Yes, a little," she answered, wearily. Her wet garments clung miserably to her, and the dry clothes she had replaced, only made them cling the closer. She felt chilled and wretched now that the demand upon her strength was over. The man, without a word, took off his coat, and, not regarding Clarine's remonstrances, rather feeble ones, to be sure, wrapped it well around her. And these were the men who would have had few scruples of uneasy conscience had they found the boat unguarded.

That was a dreary, wearisome five miles' ride home, that bright, sunshiny summer afternoon.

The appearance of Clarine and Mr. Maltby in this deplorable condition produced intense excitement at the house, where the utmost alarm and consternation for their safety had prevailed since the bursting of the storm. The guests for the dinner had arrived, and were now gathered with the family upon the piazza, awaiting the return of the carriages which had been sent in different directions, when their fears were first relieved and then renewed, by seeing them brought to the house in such a state. The gentlemen hastened to their assistance, and while helping them out of the cart heard the story of their adventure from the men, who had been told it piecemeal by Clarine and Mr. Maltby on the way. By Mr. Bell's direction these men were now gratefully cared for, and under the butler's protection were soon enjoying the hospitality of the kitchen, and delighting the tale-loving ears of the domestics with richly-variegated accounts of the perilous rescue.

Clarine was so benumbed with the chill of her wet garments, and so depressed physically by the natural reaction of the excitement and exertion she had undergone, that when Mr. Seymour and others proffered her their assistance to descend from the cart she found herself powerless to move. She put out her arms stiffly and tried to rise, but her limbs refused their office. With a faint smile she said, "I can't move, I am so tired. I think I would rather sit still for a few minutes."

A questioning glance at her pallid face and heavy, blank eyes told how it was. "Poor Clarine, this has been too much for you!" said Mr. Seymour, as, stretching out his arms, he lifted her gently and carefully from the seat, and carried her into the house, calling to his wife, as he passed, to follow, and kept on up to Clarine's room, where he laid her on the bed. He was immediate-

ly followed by his wife and Mrs. Wilson, who, in trouble, was first by the side of her friend.

By their efforts Clarine was soon made comfortable in a warm bed, hot, soothing drinks were given to her, and she promised her nurses to keep quiet and go to sleep; the first clause of which promise she kept, perforce, through excessive fatigue, but now that rest had come to her body, mental excitement, which was not so readily under control, chased all sleep from her wide opened eyes, bright from the fever within of the overwrought brain.

Mrs. Bell found no leisure, beyond a few inquiries, to care for her niece's health, for her tender anxieties were entirely engrossed by Mr. Maltby's welfare. From her first startled look into his ghastly face her warmest sympathies were absorbed in his behalf. She watched with painful interest, while her husband and Dr. Tillman and one or two other gentlemen supported and almost carried him into the house and up to his room, and then fretted in obvious impatience during the half hour while waiting to hear from the doctor the further account of his condition. Her sufferings were finally relieved by the appearance of her husband, who reported favorably of the well tended patient. There had been some apprehensions of his heart, for the excitement had hurried its action, and its increased palpitation and his extreme prostration threatened a recurrence of former paroxysms; but the timely administering of proper anodynes, and the observance of strict repose had succeeded in allaying the premonitory symptoms, and there was every hope of his being entirely restored by the night's rest.

### CHAPTER XXIII.

AFTER the long dinner was over, and the guests being all in the drawing-room the hum of conversation was at its height, Mrs. Wilson sought her opportunity, and slipped off to Clarine's room to see how she fared. Upon entering her room she found Mr. Rivington seated by his daughter's bedside, reading aloud from the Bible. Clarine's face was flushed crimson, and her eyes were glowing dark and feverishly bright. Mr. Rivington made a motion to desist from reading, but Mrs. Wilson begged him not to allow her presence to be any interruption; and then, taking a seat a little apart, she listened to the reading.

Strange selection was that reading from a parent and a minister to an ailing child, even though a sinner. He was turning over the leaves and reading a few verses here and there, but no one chapter through. Clarine lay quiet; not a word or sigh of comment.

"How many are mine iniquities and sins? make me to know my transgression-and my sin." The leaves turned and the plaintive monotony continued, "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving kindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me."

Mr. Rivington was again turning the leaves, when Mrs. Wilson's cold, severe tones stayed his hand. "Mr. Rivington, why not finish that chapter?"

"Why so?" he asked, in some surprise.

"If I remember right, there is one verse in that chapter which would make a fit ending to what you have read. And, rising, she leaned over his shoulder, and pointing with her finger, read:—"The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise."

She resumed her seat, and for a moment Mr. Rivington attempted no reply; then with quiet irony he said, "I have chosen that which I deemed most appropriate," and turned to a new selection.

Mrs. Wilson's eyes flashed at this undeserved censure of his daughter. Clarine's face was turned away upon the pillow, and its expression could not be seen. Again Mr. Rivington read, but now his voice had lost its plaint, and instead was cold and hard with displeasure:

"How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity? and the scorers delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge? Turn you at my reproof: behold, I will pour out my spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you. . . . Ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof; I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh; when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you."

Much longer he continued to read, until Mrs. Wilson could listen to this strain no longer. In all this severe condemnation there was not one word of the gospel of peace, not one soothing consolation from the Saviour who said to the erring one: "Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more." Going up to Mr. Rivington, she said

in her gentlest tones: "Will you let me have the Bible a moment? I should like to read a few passages from it."

He could not well refuse, though, as he placed it in her hand, there was a shade of irritation in his face. Mrs. Wilson seated herself on the side of the bed, and opening at the New Testament, to the words of mercy and reconciliation, she read out in calm, unfaltering accents:

"Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged; and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again. . . . Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy. . . . Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful."

Turning the leaves again, for she was following his example, reading a verse here and there, she continued: "Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment. Ye judge after the flesh; I judge no man."

Glancing into Mr. Rivington's face she saw that the irritation had deepened into anger. Still she continued, though now her accents were gentle and pleading: "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and holy in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light. . . . For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned."

Then closing the Bible, she repeated: "Christ came not into the world to save the righteous, but to call sinners to repentance. . . . Verily, verily, I say unto you, there is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just men that need no repentance. . . . Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: forgive and ye shall be forgiven."

"You seem to be extremely well versed in scripture," remarked Mr. Rivington, as Mrs. Wilson ceased, and returned him the Bible.

"Mr. Rivington, I have studied the gospel of love and mercy, the doctrine of salvation, as preached by our Saviour's lips."

"And you believe in all being saved?"

The covert sarcasm roused Mrs. Wilson. Indignantly she replied, "Mr. Rivington, I cannot argue theology with you, but this I know, that if I were a minister of the gospel of peace and hope, I would not preach despair and perdition to one I loved, as you have done this moment to your child!"

Mr. Rivington started to his feet, his face flushing with anger.

"Mrs. Wilson, you are bold, indeed, to accuse me before my child!"

Quietly she laid her hand upon Clarine's hand as it lay upon the coverlet, and looked up with a smile, as she replied, "Mr. Rivington, here I have a right to be bold."

"True, madam; pardon my momentary forgetfulness, I beg," courteously replied Mr. Rivington, brought to sudden recollection by this gentle reminder, yet chafing under the gratitude which bound his tongue in peace. For, sincerely thankful though he was to this woman for her exceeding great kindness to his child in the hour of direst need of a friend, yet he was angered that her strangely tried friendship should give her the right to confront him, to come between him and his child; to say to him, "thus far shalt thou go in judgment."

Mr. Rivington did not intend to be unjust to his child, but he did intend to be severe; for he deemed no severity too harsh for her sin. And he fretted under the words of peace and consolation which had now been offered to her as balm to soothe the wound, which he judged should



never in this world know ease, never be healed of its pain. Yet this was the judgment meted out by one who called himself a minister of the just God, a disciple of the merciful Redeemer, an humble Christian; and he had preached "faith, hope, and charity; and the greatest of these is *charity*."

"Carrie, will you give me some water; I feel a little faint?" said Clarine, and her tones were weak and trembling.

Mrs. Wilson gave her the water, first adding some wine to it.

"Clarine, shall I leave you with Mrs. Wilson for awhile? If you want me again you can send for me."

"If you please, father; I feel tired now."

Mr. Rivington bent down and kissed his daughter, and with a polite bow to Mrs. Wilson, left the room.

No sooner was the door firmly closed, than Clarine started up in bed:—"Mrs. Wilson, to-night father has made me feel that I could hate him?"

"Clarine, child! hush! What do you mean?" cried Mrs. Wilson, in amazement at Clarine's excited words and mien. But in those wild words she heard a tone of terrible earnestness.

"Oh, Mrs. Wilson! to-night father has tried me too much! That reading! You heard nothing of it; that last part was merciful to what it was before you came in. All the time, lately, father has been putting me further and further away from him! He seems to have mercy and pardon for all but me! Oh, Carrie! I have thought all my life until now that I loved father, but now I believe he is turning my heart away from him."

And letting Mrs. Wilson fold her in her arms, she laid her head upon her shoulder, and wept, with heart-rending, hysterical sobs. And Mrs. Wilson could give no word of soothing, she could only let her weep on until the force of tears was spent.

"Now, Clarine, tell me how all this came about. What led to this excitement?"

"Let me get up first. I am too miserable to stay in bed."

Thinking it best not to oppose her in her present nervous state, Mrs. Wilson assisted her to put on her dressing wrapper and slippers, and set her in the easy-chair. The action relieved her nerves somewhat, and her manner was more composed when she again spoke, though it gradually grew more excited and passionate as she proceeded:

"Mrs. Wilson, I thought never to have spoken of my late feelings towards father. I have tried to hide them, even from myself. I have tried, indeed I have tried so hard to hold my lips in peace, to press all these bitter feelings down; but my lips will no longer keep still, my heart must have voice. The past few hours have opened my eyes from their blindness, and I see now through all that was dark. The feelings which I have striven so hard to crush down, down low where they could not rise, have risen, and I can no longer keep them crushed and cloaked out of sight; but they are dreadful, oh! they are dreadful!"

With hands clenched Clarine was now pacing the floor, as she gave utterance to these moanings of her heart. The gates of her soul, so long fastened by the bars of strong will, had at last forced the iron locks, and the flood of dyked-in passion now rushed forth in the uncontrolled torrent of sudden freedom. Will was conquered at last, and soul was now master.

"I have told father that I must break from this marriage, and he will not listen to me. But I cannot marry him! I cannot be the wife of the man I could so nearly murder!"

"O Clarine, my pet, do hush! You are ill, or you could

not talk that way!" exclaimed Mrs. Wilson in affright, thinking that worry and excitement were causing her brain to wander.

"No, I am not ill," she answered, standing still before her, "not as you think; there is no delirium here," putting her hand to her head, "there is only suffering: but I know well what I am saying, and I tell you that to-day I found it in my heart to murder; to withhold my help and let him perish. I did not want to save him. I stood there willing to see him sink, to see him die, for then I should have been free. I had only to stand still, and the waves which rushed over him in death would have washed to my feet the boon of liberty. I wanted to do it, I wanted to be free, but somehow I could not. The temptation was so strong, I think I could not have resisted it; I almost believed I should have let him die and thus have freed myself, but, at the last moment, he—he called to me in God's name! I scarcely recollect more. I only know that when he cried to me for God's sake a sudden fear came upon me; I was afraid to stand still and let him die. So then I saved his life, and saved myself from the crime of murder."

Again the restless feet resumed their weariless pacing to and fro.

Mrs. Wilson gazed at Clarine with yearning pity. Her eyes moistened and her heart ached with its weight of loving compassion for the wretchedness she could not ease. This, then, was the secret of the rescue! Only through this woman's victory over temptation had his life been saved! But the strife had racked the strength of the victor beyond endurance.

"Did you tell your father this, Clarine?"

"Yes, all this and more. I begged him to forego this marriage, to release me from my promise, not to bind me to the man my heart so hated, hated with the hate of a

murderer. I concealed nothing; I told him all the fearful struggle for liberty even at such a price; and I even told him of the sudden joy which flashed in upon my heart at the tempting thought that this death would set me free."

"And does he still insist upon the marriage?"

"He says that I dare not retract now, at the last moment. But I do dare to retract, I will break through these burning, festering bonds; it is not yet too late. When I plunged into those waves to-day, I said in my secret heart I will not marry him, and now I say openly with my lips I will not marry him; and to God I commit the future of my child! When I said all this to father, when I told him that I could not marry this man, that it was useless urging me, he"—Clarine stopped with a shudder, and her crimson face paled—"I cannot tell you all that he said, but I think he almost found it in his heart to curse me. Oh, Carrie, why is father so hard and unjust to me! Why does he turn my love so far away from him?" And sinking into a chair her overwrought feelings again yielded to tears.

Mrs. Wilson drew near to her, and putting her hand upon hers, said gently, "Perhaps some of this is mere imagination on your part, Clarine, or your father's anger is only for the moment, and will all pass away. He has not intended to be unkind to you."

Clarine leaned back in her chair, and put up her hands to hold back her drooping hair, as well as to press her throbbing temples, as she replied earnestly: "No, Carrie, I tell you that father means all that he says. His heart is bitter towards me, he lays all the burden of sin upon my shoulders, and he can find no mercy whereby to forgive me. You do not know all, no one knows how father has by his words and looks not only reproached me, but, as it seemed, actually taunted me with my sin. Since that

morning I gave my promise to father to marry Mr. Maltby, he has scarcely given me a kind word or look. It was only my love for father which won that promise, though I believe I thought then that I consented through obedience to God. All my life long I have loved father, but since that day my love has been slowly fading, and it makes me miserable, so very miserable!"

Clarine's tears choked her speech, but soon controlling them, she continued:—"At first father was gentle and kind to me, and his tender love then made me humble and willing to consent to anything for his honor and happiness. But after the sacrifice he demanded was made, after I had given the consent which cast out every stray hope of happiness from my heart, then he changed. Since then every look he has given has spoken consciousness of what I have done, every word has been fraught with the remembrance of my sin, and constant sighs are given to my ears to tell me that I have done this thing. Worse than this, for these reproaches I could have borne, knowing that I deserved them for having laid this burden upon his heart; but not content with that, since one Sunday morning that I refused to go to communion he makes me listen to his reading of the Bible, and he selects only those parts which speak of the horrors of sin and the terrors of its punishment, of the degradation of soul and hardness of heart in which the sinner delights. He has scarce read me a word of the salvation the Redeemer offers to sinners: all of the gospel he reads is where the wicked are warned to repent, as though he thought me so hardened that remorse could not touch me, and even a Saviour could not lead me to repent."

Clarine's breathing was heavy and hurried, and her glowing, burning eyes betrayed a raging fever within, and under the impetuosity of this fever she still continued, after a brief pause, the complainings that would not be stayed:

"Why does he do this? Though I have sinned I am not wholly bad, not entirely depraved; yet father would barely give me even the hope of a Saviour's promise. He seems to want to frighten me into repentance; but if he really thinks I am so hardened, why not try to win me to repentance by love and mercy? If father had only preached mercy to me instead of judgment he might have softened my heart into obedience to anything he wished. But his harshness has only strengthened me in my opposition, and he has turned cold all my warm love for him: and I have only had father to love, but now I have no one."

The inexpressibly plaintive wail of these last words, the sadder conclusion to a sad story, brought the quick rush of tears to Mrs. Wilson's eyes. "Ah," she thought, "if her father could only hear the wrong he has done by his mistaken severity." Then she spoke in soothing tones to the weeping, wretched girl. "Clarine, darling, do not grieve so over the loss of your father's love; it will all come back; he surely loves you still."

"Yes, Carrie, I know that father loves me, but—somehow—it does not seem to be the right kind of love."

Poor girl! she did not know how it was. She could not analyze her father's nature. She only knew by the instinct implanted by the teachings of her own loving, clinging heart, that the love which is hard and unrelenting is no consolation, no satisfaction to the love that wants to be forgiven and taken close within the protecting shelter of a tender, merciful heart.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

THE next morning Clarine sought her father in the secluded library, where he usually devoted his morning hours to his professional studies and occupations.

"Father, I wish to speak to you again about what we were talking upon last evening." Her tones were low and tremulous, and her eyes were cast down in nervous trepidation.

"You have changed your hasty decision, then!" he replied, with some eagerness. "I presumed, my child, your sudden resolve was due to over-excitement, and that a night's rest would open your eyes to its folly."

It was hard to answer this with the bare truth. But with firmer accents and manner less nervous, she replied: "Father, I have not changed. I cannot—I *will not* marry Mr. Maltby."

"Clarine, this is raving folly! You are mad, you are crazy to give up this marriage!"

"No, father! I am not mad or crazy; though I believe I have been both; but I am sane at last."

There was a plaintive earnestness in her words which turned Mr. Rivington's eyes with inquiring gaze upon her, and he saw in her sad face and mien an unmistakable air of resolve. Perhaps it was seeing this that lowered his tones, and made his next words come calmer.

"Clarine, this determination is to me most heart-rending. Will nothing change it?"

"Nothing."

With a heavy sigh he leaned back in his chair, and then she saw him draw forth his handkerchief and wipe his eyes. She trembled, for the ordeal of his tears was far worse than any storm of reproaches. With fingers uneasily working and twisting the fringe which trimmed the arm of her chair, she waited for his next words. They came in tearful voice.

"I suppose I must try to bear with patience the few remaining years of my life. I did look forward with some hopes of a little happiness to seeing you settled for life: but now there is only misery for me in my old age."

Clarine felt all the power of the insinuating reproach of such a plea, yet was at a loss to know how to reply. Gently she spoke:—"I cannot see, father, why this mere marriage should make all the difference. If it is the consciousness of—of what I have done which causes your misery, why, marriage surely makes my sin none the less."

This mode of reasoning only angered Mr. Rivington. "That is your old obstinacy, Clarine! I have already told you why this marriage is best. Not that it changes or lessens the nature of your sin; but marriage with Mr. Maltby gives you a position from which no after discovery by the world can displace you. And besides," he added in a changed tone, "marriage gives you a husband to protect you from future temptation."

"Father!" The shock of the sudden pain started her to her feet. In indignant voice she answered that cruel aspersion. "Not even from you, father, will I allow that. I need no marriage, no husband to protect me now. My one sin of the past is my best safe-guard for the future. Oh, father! I am not wholly lost!" Her voice ended in a sobbing wail, and sinking back into her chair she covered her face, and tried in vain to check the scalding tears which would come.

Her father offered no soothing word to soften the severity of the blow. He had only expressed that which his ready suspicions led him to believe was the truth, and he would not attempt to palliate one single harsh word.

"Clarine," he said at last, "I did not say you were wholly lost. No one who believes in our Saviour can be lost; but he demands of all who would be saved repentance and conversion of the heart hardened in sin."

Clarine forced her tears to cease, and raised her head to answer her father. "Father, what right have you to judge that my heart is so hardened? Why do you think that repentance has never touched me? And if you really think that I am so very bad, why do you not try to win me from my impenitence by kindness and gentleness, instead of by your harsh, unquestioning censure, doing everything to confirm my obduracy?"

Mr. Rivington started in amazement. "Clarine, explain yourself! What do you mean by addressing me in such bold language? Accuse me of harshness and severity! Do you think, child, that I do not love you?"

"No, father; I do not think that. I know that you love me, only—you do not show your love in the right way."

Her father was silenced. He knew no answer to such a charge. But at last his busy thoughts found language. "This is a very strange way for you to talk to me, Clarine. I have done nothing to deserve such reproach from your lips. I have been kind and loving to you through all, and now for you to tell me that I have not shown my love is unjust: it is false, Clarine." His eyes were flashing and he spoke vehemently, but his anger gave Clarine the courage to answer him with the full truth. She could brave his temper; it was only the softening influence of his tears which was so very hard to resist.

"Father, since that morning I gave you my promise for this marriage, you have been changed to me. I gave you that promise because your entire happiness seemed to depend upon it, and your love was so very tender that I thought no sacrifice could be too great to compensate for the sorrow I had caused you. You were gentle and kind to me then, and so I consented to a sacrifice which drew a dark veil of misery before all my future life. I believed in your compassion, and I consented to marry the man whom I despised for the wrong he had done. I regarded your honor before the world, father, and I consented to perjure myself before God. My word once given, the sacrifice made, I tried to bear the fate to which I had consented with such cheerfulness as I had the courage to assume. I thought by obeying your wishes to have retrieved some of the wrong I had done you, and in regarding your happiness and honor I tried to be contented. For the first few days after that, father, you did appear satisfied and happier: but then gradually you changed. In all the long weeks since that day you have scarce given me a kind word or look. You may not think so, father, but I know it. Every look from you has borne a reminder of what I have done; every word has carried some allusion to my sin; and even your caresses have been burdened with sighs of remembrance; all your demeanor to me has been a constant reproach. You were angry with me for refusing the communion that Sunday, and without asking why I had refused, you thought my motives must be bad, and that there was naught but wickedness in my heart. So then you commenced reading the Bible to me. And how have you read that book which God sent alike to the sinner and the righteous for comfort? You know, father, that you carefully selected those parts which pictured the baseness of sin, and so taunted me with mine; those parts which lamented the hardness of heart and depravity of

the sinner's nature, and thus told how you judged me: you read with cruel repetition all those passages which threatened the sinner with the horrors of his punishment, and so you told me my condemnation. Not once, father, have you tried to comfort me with the Saviour's promises to the penitent, not once tried to win me to repentance by Christ's merciful teachings. You have tried to frighten me into the depth of bemoaning degradation, instead of leading me by gentle means to the humility of repentance. Oh, father! why have you so misunderstood me? If you have loved me, why have you not been gentle and kind to me? You have done everything to turn my heart away from you, and if you have wanted me to repent, father, you should not have hardened my heart by putting my love away from you, for—I—oh father! I have only you to love, and it is so hard to be turned away!"

What parent could resist such an appeal? Clarine was folded in her father's arms, his kisses and caresses soothing her while she wept. During his child's address, Mr. Rivington's heart had swelled in angry refutation of her charges; the whisperings of their truth only irritating to stronger denial. He did not know himself or his bitterness, and therefore thought her complainings unfounded on truth and unjust. But the exquisite pathos of that plaint over the loss of his love was too flattering to a parent's feelings not to melt the most obdurate severity, and his anger turned to compassion.

The silvery chiming of the mantel clock startled Clarine into remembrance of the fleeting hours. Raising herself from her resting-place she again spoke, this time in accents of milder entreaty. "Then, father, you will no longer oppose me in giving up this marriage?"

Mr. Rivington hesitated, and his drawn lips again expressed annoyance. He had hoped that in his arms his daughter might have yielded her opposition. He an-

swered her coldly: "Clarine, you appear to have so determined upon your course of action, that the giving or withholding of my permission is of no consequence. You decide without consulting me."

The bright color of indignant refutation flushed her cheek. "Father, I have consulted you. I never act upon any decision until I have apprised you of it; and the last time," she lowered her tone, "it was only because I consulted you and regarded your wishes that my decision was overcome. And now, though I own I have resolved upon my present act too firmly to be easily shaken, yet I have informed you first of such resolution before speaking to Mr. Maltby."

"Yet now, Clarine, having notified me of your resolution, whether you receive my concurrence or refusal, you will still act according to your own determination?"

"Yes."

Mr. Rivington heaved a deep-drawn sigh, and Clarine walked away to the window and leaned her head wearily against the casement.

"Clarine," said her father, after awhile, "if you have not intended all this time to marry Mr. Maltby, why have you deceived me with the supposition that you would, and thus allowed me to comfort myself with false hopes?"

"I did not intend deception," she replied, with a simple earnestness, the color slowly mounting to her brow under the accusation. "I thought at first that I could marry him, and I did intend to keep my promise. But then—I—oh, father!" she cried, her voice breaking into the wailing tones of passionate anguish, and her hands clutching in a tight grasp as she turned away from the window and confronted him with beseeching gaze, "I told you last night how I have tried to keep that promise. That every day and every hour the trial has seemed harder and harder to bear; that the pain of the struggle here in my

head and in my heart, has seemed more than I could endure and live. I told you that as the time drew nearer and nearer my agony made me frantic, that it gave me no peace night nor day. The thought of marriage to him is worse than the thought of death, even in my sin; for I believe that God would be more lenient in punishment than to impose a worse fate. To become his wife, father, would kill me! Married to him I could only look forward to an early grave; without him I might learn to look beyond the grave. Father, father! do not urge me any more to marry him, for I cannot; I know now that I cannot. I told you yesterday how terrible was the struggle of that temptation; how that I found it in my heart to see him die and be glad! Father, can you not understand how deep must be the hate that could murder? And I tell you that it was murder in my heart which prompted me to withhold my help and see him perish. His death set me free, and that freedom would have been so welcome. Father, had it been any one else in those raging waves calling for help, do you think I would have hesitated one moment because of the risk to my own life? As I swam those waves from shore to rock, I knew then that it was impossible for me to become the wife of the man I was going to save. He had called upon me for help in God's name, and the same spirit of God which impelled me to obey, likewise bore in upon my mind the warning not to perjure myself to that God by falsely swearing with my lips vows which my heart belied. Breasting those rough waves I resolved, and from that moment a calm came down and settled upon my heart, a calm it has not known for many a weary day; a calm too entire, too welcome in the peace it gives for any words of others to displace. And I know by that peace and quiet in my heart, I know by the cessation of that wearing turmoil in brain and heart that what I have resolved is right."

Her father knew at last that persuasion and command were alike useless; and wisely he did not attempt either. While he was pondering a reply, the door opened, and Mrs. Bell entered hastily, with a package of enveloped cards in her hand.

"Robert, can you give me the address of Mr. and Mrs. Edgerton? I am just sending the first package of cards to the city, and at the last moment find I have forgotten—why, what is the matter?" she exclaimed, as she suddenly noticed the perturbed countenances of her brother and niece.

Mr. Rivington arose, and closed the door which Mrs. Bell had left open, and then said, quietly: "Helen, you may put down your wedding-cards; they are of no use."

"What do you mean, Robert? I do not understand you."

"I mean that Clarine refuses to marry Mr. Maltby."

Silence followed this announcement to Mrs. Bell. For a moment she could not take in its full meaning, the fixed, startled expression of her countenance showing how entirely she was overcome with pure and unalloyed astonishment. Then, with sudden comprehension, her affright and disappointment found vent in vehement language. "Clarine, you are a little fool to give up this marriage! It is the veriest folly I ever heard of!" and with wrath glowing from every feature, she threw down, with a violent gesture, the package of cards which she held in her hand, and they scattered all over the table, and upon the floor. She was commencing again her excited address to her niece, but was interrupted by her brother, who sighed heavily as he said: "It is useless talking to Clarine about it. I have said everything I could to dissuade her from such a foolish resolve, but she says she is determined not to marry Mr. Maltby."

"Have you considered all the consequences of not marry-



ing Mr. Maltby?" said Mrs. Bell. "Recollect, Clarine, that your rejection of his hand is not an ordinary refusal of marriage. There are fearful consequences involved, and you must weigh well what you are doing."

"Aunt Helen, I have considered and weighed well all the possible consequences, and I tell you that were all evil consequences of my present refusal doubled and trebled, and certain to arise, still I would not marry him. It is not only that I will not marry him, I tell you it is simply that I cannot marry him, oh! indeed I cannot! Every instinct of my being recoils from such a marriage, and I cannot do such fearful violence to my nature. Terrify me as you may with the consequences, yet I tell you again and again that I will not marry him!"

It was Mr. Rivington who replied to this. The anguished vehemence which silenced her aunt into something like sympathy for the suffering which forced such an outburst, only served to irritate her father into censuring severity of that recklessness which dared cast consequences out into the dark obscurity of the future.

"Clarine, one train of consequences you certainly cannot have considered. Your child; what will become of it? Is it to grow up to womanhood without a father it dare acknowledge to the world?"

"I will take care of it, father; it shall never suffer. I intend to devote the one talent nature has endowed me with to the service of my child. My voice shall no longer lie idle."

"You are talking now like a fool!" returned Mrs. Bell, with angry impatience. "For you to think of supporting yourself and child is sheer nonsense. Do you imagine that if you remain unmarried you can keep your child near you? You must be crazy to think of such a thing for a moment. If you do not marry Mr. Maltby, you must give up your child."

"Give up my child? How?"

"Strangers must take it, of course. Some one can easily be found to take it, and rear it as their own by being well paid for it, or the same woman who has it now can carry it back to England, and you need never be troubled with it again."

With a strangely grave and determined voice Clarine answered her aunt. "Aunt Helen, I will never let strangers have my child. I will take care of it myself. Do you think I shall let my child grow up to reproach, perhaps to curse its mother for neglect? No, I have sinned once in bringing motherhood upon myself, but I will not dye that sin still deeper by neglect of my offspring. My child owes its birth to me; it shall also owe the care and protection of its life to me, its mother."

"That is all very fine and heroic talk, Clarine," replied Mrs. Bell, in vexed, ironical tones, "but unless you wish to disgrace yourself and family you must either marry Mr. Maltby, or give up your child."

"Aunt Helen, it is useless to talk to me in that way," replied Clarine, with passionate decision. "You are asking me to do what I have told you I cannot do. You ask me to redeem the sin of a lost virtue by a false marriage, a lie to God; you ask me to redeem the sin of unsanctioned maternity by heresy to nature, by desertion of my child because it owes its life to an unwedded motherhood. I tell you I will do neither. I will neither be false to God nor to my child."

Rejoinders to such outbursts of overwrought passion were vain. Mr. Rivington either could not or would not understand the mental anguish which must have been so long at work ere it roused feeling into such strong expression, and there was extreme heaviness, cloaking anger, in the sigh which told of his resignation to his daughter's decision. But Mrs. Bell being a woman, and moreover,

having possibly herself been touched by some of the heart-pangs which even a slight dereliction from duty and honor will enforce, was moved to some comprehension of this long repressed and painfully nurtured agony ; and the tears which moistened her eyes, as her silence showed that she too had yielded to Clarine's resolve, were perhaps more from kindly sympathy, than vexation at the disappointment to her own wishes, which such resolve imposed.

Mrs. Bell and Mr. Rivington were now troubled in considering the unhappy effect upon Mr. Maltby of the sad and perplexing announcement.

"How are we to break the force of the blow to him?" exclaimed Mrs. Bell. "I dread the task myself, for the shock to him will be dreadful."

"I will relieve you of the trouble, Aunt Helen," said Clarine, mildly. "I intend to inform Mr. Maltby of my determination myself." An assertion which evidently relieved both her aunt and her father of a much dreaded labor.

"You had better be careful how you impart your decision to him, Clarine," suggested Mrs. Bell, "for he loves you so well that it will be a terrible shock to his heart."

"I think I can safely undertake to divulge the sad news to him without breaking his heart, even in its present delicate state," returned Clarine, with a dash of irony in her tones.

"His heart is indeed very delicate," returned Mr. Rivington, taking his daughter's words literally. "You know the doctor says that the least shock, or any long continued trouble would certainly end in death." And then turning his full gaze upon his daughter, he added, in a slightly changed tone: "And have you thought, Clarine, that if you married Mr. Maltby, that with this trouble of his heart he might not live long?"

Clarine started, and there was a flush to her cheek, and a tremor of scorn in her voice, as she answered: "No, father; even my thoughts have never sunk so low as to calculate upon the chances of a husband's life or death!" and without waiting for further words, for the long conflict was mastering her self-control, she hastily left the room.

## CHAPTER XXV.

AN hour later, two persons strolled out under the shade of the trees, amidst the grateful odor of flowers and the blithesome singing of birds, the one to give, the other to accept a fate.

Clarine had thought to herself that she could impart to Mr. Maltby the decision to which she had come, could tell him of the changed aspect in store for his future, without hesitation or restriction of regard for his feelings; she imagined, in fact, that she had no care for the effect of her communication, and that she could make her avowal in a few simple words, and that he would as simply and easily accept a decision which he would readily see was so firmly resolved upon. But she had miscalculated her own gentle goodness as well as the strength and unyielding firmness of his love for her; she was ignorant both of the weakness of her womanhood and the power of his manhood. For, when her lips would have opened upon the harsh truth, her heart refused her tongue its office. Compassion for the great disappointment she was about to cause, pity for the misery she knew she would inflict, quickened the throbs of her heart, and sent a tremor of fear through her nerves, which broke away her heartless courage and sent a kindly sympathy flowing in its place, to soften into more womanly tenderness the cold and hardened coating which long trouble had encased about

her heart. Now that the time had come for her to speak, she felt strangely embarrassed, and she shrank with painful diffidence from the task which had so unexpectedly become unpleasant. Listening to her companion's happy and careless talk, as they sauntered leisurely along the pleasant paths, she pondered what she was wishing to say and how she should best say it.

"Clarine, you are absent-minded this morning," remarked Mr. Maltby, suddenly noticing that she was performing her part of the conversation mainly by smiles and monosyllables. "What is the matter with you? Are you not well? Though I need not ask, for you are looking too bright for any doubts of your physical state. Do you know, my child," he continued, as he took her hand and spoke in endearing tones of tender flattery, "that you are appearing remarkably well this morning. Your eye is clearer and calmer than I have seen it for weeks, and your cheeks are tinged with their rosiest, their most delicious hue, and you are as charming and lovely as—as what? To what beautiful object in all nature," raising the passive hand caressingly to his lips, "can I compare my darling?—my one sweet flower, my one treasured gem of all the pictures nature has tinted for my joy!"

Her hand resisted the persuading clasp, and questioning how she could say what was oppressing her mind, she could only give a laughing, half-vexed reply to this strain of overwrought flattery of love.

"Your late rest and seclusion, Mr. Maltby, do not seem to have abated your zest for exaggerated compliment. A little less exaggeration and a little more truth would please me better." The possible harshness of her words, which at another time might have been accompanied with scornful looks, was now entirely softened and dispelled by the brilliancy of the smile with which she returned his gaze.

He replied as pleasantly: "It is only the language which seems exaggerated, Clarine, for you know that my love is too deep and too earnest for false flattery."

"Yes; I know, Mr. Maltby; and I only wish that you did not love me so well, for then it would be easier for me to say what I have to say." His own words had led her to the point towards which she had been struggling.

"What is it you wish to say, Clarine?" he asked in some astonishment, for her smile had vanished, and her countenance was serious and perturbed.

"I want to tell you, Mr. Maltby, that"—and looking down with averted head she scraped the gravel with the tip of her daintily slippered foot—"that—I cannot be your wife."

At last it was said, and as abruptly as long pondered words are apt to be finally uttered.

For an instant Mr. Maltby paused before replying to this unexpected assertion, which, under the circumstances, might have appalled some men, but not him. He felt too sure of his prize to be readily frightened. He was not at all alarmed by Clarine's words, but in that instant's pause, had she turned her glance up to his face, she would have caught that quick movement of the brows which she had long since learned denoted baffled will and suppressed anger. But she did not raise her eyes from the ground, and his answer fell calm and gentle upon her anxious ears.

"I do not like to hear you say that, my darling, even in jest."

Clarine looked up. "But I am not in jest, Mr. Maltby!"

"Then do not, above all, say such words in earnest," he returned, with a light laugh.

"But I must say them when I mean them," she replied, earnestly.

"Then, my darling, you must not mean them," he re-

joined in a more serious tone. "You certainly cannot intend now, refusing to be my wife! Have I not yet won your heart, Clarine? or what thoughtless omission of tender attention on my part has led to this pouting vexation? Tell me how I have offended my darling, and she shall see how humbly I will sue for her sweet pardon." He would have put his arm caressingly around her and coaxed her into retracting her words, but she withdrew from his embrace and raised her head with some of her old haughtiness.

"Mr. Maltby, you are treating my words lightly, pretending that you do not believe them; but you do believe them. You know that I am in earnest when I tell you that I have resolved not to marry you, and that nothing now can induce me to alter that resolve."

"You are speaking very decidedly, Clarine," replied Mr. Maltby, unusual anger shading the tones which he seldom allowed to betray irritation. "And you seem to expect me to accept your decision without any questioning." Then with sudden modulation of his voice to tender persuasion, he again took her hand in his. "At least tell me, my darling, to what cause I am to attribute this sudden rejection of my love. Some explanation is due to me; is it not, my dear child?" One might have supposed he was coaxing a petted, wayward child to confess some trivial fault.

Clarine allowed her hand to rest where it was held, and she stood before him with bowed head and a diffident, crouching attitude peculiar to her when she said anything which she knew was unpleasant to her listener, and the utterance of which broke through her natural reserve; her low, clear voice, in its simple, winning accents, was very powerful in disarming resentment; and altogether there was that in her tones and manner as she spoke, a certain indescribable air, which, had she been a young girl uttering her first words of guileless love, would have been termed

merely bashfulness; but she being a woman who had known, suffered, and endured, it was only modesty, God's last gift to woman.

"Mr. Maltby, I will give you all the explanation that is possible, and I can only wish it were more satisfactory. From the first I have been unwilling to become your wife, and you know that I have not attempted to conceal my real feelings towards you. I know that you love me, and that this ought probably to make me feel sorrow and pain at having to reject that love, but—somehow—I have almost come to believe that unless one has some love, they have not much pity for the one they make unhappy. Perhaps, too, I ought to have tried to learn to love you, but I never could. From the first I was only infatuated, and with me that infatuation did not turn to love; with you it seems it did. For this I might have felt some regret, only that I have to confess, what you must have already discovered, that, upon your return this summer, I tried to win your love for the sole purpose of binding you more securely to me, so that I could be certain of being able to fulfil my promise to my father, the promise that I would become your wife. That promise I find now I must break; I cannot keep it. And my only reason for not fulfilling that promise, for not marrying you, is, that I do not, I never can love you, and that to become your wife I must forswear myself to God."

There was a storm of passion sweeping over Mr. Maltby's face, but Clarine did not raise her head, and in deepened tones she continued:—"I thank you sincerely, Mr. Maltby, that you have so rigidly kept your word, and that you have gratified my family by your willingness to redeem the past by doing that which they and the world deem just and honorable and—sufficient! And I thank you, also, that you have been so merciful as to spare me the mortification of being the rejected, as well as the de-

served one. You have been careful in making promises, but those promises which you have lately made you have kept honorably, and I thank you for having done so." Clarine had the rare nobility to give credit and honor where it was due, even though to a hated foe.

She had to wait some moments for a reply, but when at last it came, the words were unruffled by a tremor of annoyance. "Am I to understand, then, Clarine, that you wish me to release you from our engagement of marriage?"

"I have already released myself, Mr. Maltby. I have broken the engagement by having said that I will not become your wife."

This was a retort which few men could have borne; but though Mr. Maltby's face clouded still more, and his eyebrows knitted again, he still forbore to speak harshly to Clarine.

"That you have not loved me, Clarine, it has been my sorrow all this while to know; yet you have certainly intended to keep your promise to become my wife, or you would not have encouraged me with false hopes. There must, therefore, have arisen some special cause for this sudden decision which you seem to regard as final. So, pray tell me, what special reason has now so unfortunately influenced you at the last hour?"

"Mr. Maltby, I cannot tell you all that has influenced me. It has been a hard struggle for me all the while, and many times the trial has seemed more than I could endure. Still, I thought that I could bear it all, and keep my promise, but then, somehow, as the time drew nearer and nearer my agony made me frantic. And then yesterday,—when you came so near drowning, and I went to help you,—I had some such strange,—such wicked feelings,—that I then made up my mind—that it would be better for us both—if I did not become your wife!"

Lower and lower sank her voice, and lower and lower

bowed her head at each hesitating word. But her sophistical evasions were at least charitable. She was willing to spare him the bitter mortification of knowing that he could rouse such dire hate as had manifested itself in the temptation which had battled so fiercely ere conquered. But Mr. Maltby was not the man to be easily deceived. Those few words, "such strange, such wicked feelings," the hesitation, the embarrassment, and above all, the sudden recollection of those startling words when she had answered his cry for help—"But for God's sake I would not be here!" told him all the plain story. But while the fearful knowledge cut him to the soul with a keen, an agonizing pain, it yet gave him a clue by which to oppose Clarine; and he was determined to oppose her with all the powers he had ever wielded. He would talk her out of her decision by argument or persuasion, by threat or entreaty, by demand or concession, he would win or be won, to anything he was willing save losing the prize which had been so close within his grasp.

"Clarine, my own darling," he began in gentle, deprecating tones, which, at another time might have been winning in their fond reproach, "I think I see now what has turned you so coldly from me. The trouble you have undergone has so weighed upon your mind as to embitter your heart towards me, its cause; and you have so dwelt upon the wrong that has been done you that you exaggerate the sin of the offender. In your own misery you have condemned me so entirely that you have crushed all the semblance of the love which I once elicited from your soul in response to my own, and have cruelly decided to give me only—shall I say it, my child?—only hate! You deem it now perhaps a merit to hate where once you loved, because you think you loved weakly. I do not blame you for this, Clarine. It may be only natural; all your reproaches of me are only natural for a woman: but, my

darling, do not think that I do not also reproach myself. My censure of myself is far more severe than any your gentle nature can bestow."

His voice had sunk to its lowest, its most musical depths, and his words were sounding in those murmuring cadences which once upon a time had been wont to prove so witching. But the ill-timed witchery fell upon heedless ears. There was a tone of bitter irony mingled with all this seductive softness which was slowly, yet surely, rousing her to indignant refutation. Still, she only listened.

"I have asked you, my darling, to forgive that which I never can forgive myself. I am willing to be punished, but do not let your punishment doom me to a life-long misery. I cannot be happy without you, my Clarine, and I think you can never be happy without me; or, at least," he added with a light laugh, "I think I can teach you that you would be happier with me,—even though you were so sorely tempted to let me drown in those stormy waves, and thus free yourself from the incubus of a hated husband!"

These last words came forth with an emphasis which startled Clarine, and she attempted to withdraw her hand, but the clasp upon it tightened into a grasp, and her attempted reply was hastily interrupted, his momentarily harsh tones modifying as he proceeded:

"I can imagine, Clarine, that you allowed that temptation so to work upon your already excited mind, that you seemed to yourself the most wicked of God's creatures, the most depraved of sinners, and that your only means of redemption lay in refusing to marry him who loves you so devotedly. My dear child," he continued, as he pressed his lips lightly and lovingly upon her hand, "this is but the insane idea of an overwrought brain. You have been suffering from physical exhaustion after your extraordinary efforts in my behalf, and the consequent excitement of

your nervous system has given you a few hysterical notions which a few days' rest will entirely cure. My darling needs quiet and repose for awhile, and then her hasty severity will melt into sweet forgetfulness, and her unkindness will gladly be forgiven."

He bent forward to imprint a kiss upon her forehead, but ere his lips could touch her flushing brow, she coldly drew herself away and disengaged her hands. This strange sophistical mixture of cynical pity and indulgent compassion had fully roused her indignation. She scorned his pity and would have none of his compassion.

"Mr. Maltby, you may spare your pardon; it will never be entreated. You are treating my assertions with absurd levity, and assuming a disbelief in their sincerity which you do not really feel; for in your heart you know that I am in earnest, and that my decision not to be your wife is final and irrevocable. For you to trifle and pretend that you do not credit me, is simply ridiculous. You might believe me now, when you know that I have never loved you, and that this marriage with you has been a dread and a torment to me ever since I agreed to it; and you do know all of this, for you have not been slow at reading feelings which I have scarcely attempted to conceal." Scorn and disdain marked every word so firmly uttered.

Mr. Maltby could no longer control his anger; or, at least, he chose no longer to conceal it. He again seized her hand, though this time with vehement force, and while the crimson blood of hot passion flooded his face, he demanded in harsh, grating voice: "Clarine, how dare you refuse my proffered love? Have you no fears of the future? no dread of the consequences? Have you thought that your rejection of my hand throws you entirely into my power? that I can disgrace you for life?" The inner man had at last spoken.

Haughtily Clarine cast off his hold, and replied to these base threats with icy contempt. "Mr. Maltby, I have certainly no fear of consequences coming through you, for you well know that you cannot disgrace me without an almost equal disgrace to yourself; and there is little danger to dread from your avowal, for your own honor before the world is dearer to you than any other consideration,—even dearer than the honor of your dead mother's memory!" She gazed fearlessly into his eyes with a steady, penetrating gaze, as she clearly and distinctly spoke the last words.

A sickly pallor replaced the glow of wrath in Mr. Maltby's face, and though his lips opened they were speechless, and only his eyes questioned that which his conscience already forestalled.

Without removing her cold, glittering eyes, and speaking in firm, relentless tones throughout, she answered him. "Mr. Maltby, do you remember the first evening of your coming to us; when I sang for you? We spoke of our mothers in heaven; and you asked me to pledge myself in friendship with you for the sake of our mothers; and so we clasped hands in a bond of friendship made in the name of the honored dead, your mother and mine, Mr. Maltby. That pledge was sacred to their memory, and in revered memory of those loved ones in heaven it should have been kept inviolate. And you broke that sacred bond. You disregarded the honor of your mother's memory, and lured me to trust you and so to forget mine. The most sacred pledge I could have given, you made to turn upon me in a false vow; false, when we both stained the purity of friendship. You have made my dead mother's memory bring the blush of shame and remorse to my cheek: and do you think I can forgive you for such a scourge upon my conscience?" A moment she held him



under the spell of her piercing gaze, and then added, in tones crushing in the fulness of their bitterness:—"Do you wonder now that I hate you?"

Slowly she withdrew her chilling gaze, and then, with a proud scorn hardening in every feature, she turned and walked away.

## CHAPTER XXVI.

MR. MALTBY had gone, had departed from the house where his coming had wrought only dire confusion, bearing with him the friendly wishes and kindly outspoken sympathies of the aunt and father of the woman he had wronged; and the reproaches which their disappointment turned to heap upon the woman were soon silenced by other fears and forebodings.

It was not in human nature to endure the long continued strain upon the nervous system, such as Clarine had borne, without finally betraying its effects in physical exhaustion. The burden had been one such as grows heavier with the carrying; and as with the first relief from the onus of the load the toiler springs from beneath the bending task, so Clarine, for some days, was elated with the vigor of a new life. But even as the first rebound is high, so is the after sinking very low. Strength overdrained, in ensuing weakness nature seeks her saving rest, and recuperates in the slumber of exhaustion. A few days of delusive brightness, and then Clarine sank under the long continued taxation, and the utter prostration which followed told its own true tale of the too great heaviness of the quietly borne burden. At first it seemed mere languor, a disinclination to any exertion, a constant fatigue, seeking frequent rest upon her couch, accom-

panied with heaviness in the head, and now and then slight shooting pains through the temples, until one morning, upon attempting to rise, there was a sudden nausea, her head swam, and she fell in a swoon upon the floor. The doctor was sent for, and at his command the house was kept very quiet, for Clarine was very ill.

The first positive symptoms which threatened immediate danger soon passed away, but they were succeeded by a low fever, which, with its accompanying nervous depression, was slowly merging into a typhoid state more apt to prove serious in its results than any more decided form of active disease. Day after day the same simple answer—"Better, thank you; only so tired!" was given in weary tones to the tender inquiries of those who watched and waited for some break in the monotony of that exhaustion, that unrestless fever, that same passive weariness which asked only for rest. "Better, only so tired!" at last only brought heavier aching to its hearers, for the great fear arose and would not be quelled, that this constant weariness would find only the one rest.

It was at this period that Dr. Tillman's visits (which of late had been at long intervals, owing, I presume, to Mrs. Bell's vastly improved state of health since those few matrimonial discussions already recorded) were resumed, and he was again placed upon the same intimate, friendly footing as of old, and which all parties, by the bye, seemed utterly unconscious of ever having been interrupted. The reasons for this resumption of visits were very obvious. As Mrs. Bell sagely argued,—and what woman cannot in her own behalf argue with consummate sagacity?—Clarine's condition at the present moment was entirely too critical to be trifled with; and though old Dr. Warren was a good enough sort of doctor in his way, (and his way had been considered quite good enough to treat all the maladies—saving Mrs. Bell's—which had occurred in the

family for the last twenty odd years) still, Clarine's disease, whatever it was—and its precise nature Dr. Warren frankly admitted he dared not positively assert—evidently required more active and decided treatment than he was giving. Now any remarkable decision in a professional way, as Mrs. Bell justly observed in the course of her reasoning upon this interesting theme, was only to be expected in a younger man, full to the brim and running over with modern knowledge, and with the ambition of the future to spur him to constant energy: and though Dr. Warren was undoubtedly an able physician, still, he was old foggyish in his practice, and as such was certainly not safe to be trusted with Clarine's critical condition. Now Dr. Tillman did not indulge in the sin of old foggyism, and besides there could be no doubt whatever of his professional skill, for there were quite a number of men with very good looking wives who were ready to aver that Dr. Tillman was a physician of rare talent and ability, for he had restored their wives to perfect health after unheard of failures by the most celebrated physicians of the day; and he was, moreover, quite young enough to possess all that energetic decision which was such an essential requisite in the present case. Following these weighty considerations there could be but one sensible action in the matter: Dr. Warren was induced to request Dr. Tillman in consultation, and after the first consultation regular visits, not however supplanting Dr. Warren, became an easy domestic arrangement.

This very reasonable conclusion to this very reasonable argument, which, by the way, was principally elucidated by Mrs. Bell herself, was mainly arrived at on Mr. Bell's part by the aid of a few simple yet logical considerations, viz.:—In the first place he was humane enough to be seriously anxious on Clarine's account. And, in the next place, the papers of the day had announced that the distinguished

General Hartt was expected to arrive in the city in the course of a few days ; and something else, still the newspapers, likely, had also announced that it was Mrs. Hartt's intention to accompany her husband ; an intention, as any unprejudiced person will admit, reflecting great credit upon her conjugal devotion. I am aware that some ill-natured people might deem it a rather strange coincidence that Mr. Bell should conclude that Dr. Tillman's visits were necessary for Clarine's safety just at the very time that he was expecting Mrs. Hartt's arrival in town. I can only say that such persons must be left to their pitiable scepticism in marital confidence and truth.

Thus, I trust, I have made clearly evident, that, as Dr. Tillman's visits were a natural conclusion to Mrs. Bell's fears for her niece's health, so Dr. Tillman's visits were likewise a necessary sequence to Mr. Bell's fears—for his niece's health ; and that I have skilfully traced a code of reasoning in the minds of each, husband and wife, the logic of which must be patent to every intelligent mind.

Notwithstanding the combined skill of Dr. Warren and Dr. Tillman, Clarine's health did not improve as rapidly as could be wished ; but now circumstances occurred which gave her that assistance towards recovery which purely medical remedies alone had failed to afford.

Letters had been received by Mr. Rivington, containing sad news. The first was from his son, announcing the death of his wife, and begging permission of his father and sister to send his two children, the youngest a babe of a few weeks, home to their care, for he had none but servants to entrust them to. The second letter was from the captain of the East India packet, Ocean Bird, enclosing one from George Rivington's solicitor, giving the still sadder news of his death, a few days after his wife's, from the malarial fever of the country. The lawyer went on to state, that, having already been entrusted by Mr. Riving-

ton on his death-bed with his wishes regarding his children, he had placed them in charge of the captain of the Ocean Bird, to be carried to England, and thence by steamer to America. The captain's letter was of few words, stating that on the voyage the babe had sickened and died ; and that he had confided the other child and its nurse to the care of the captain of the Great Western, crossing the Atlantic.

Mr. Rivington groaned under the weight of this fresh trouble. He had looked forward, as men do, to his son being the prop and strength of his old age, as Clarine was to have been his comfort. But now his prop was taken from him by the hand of Providence, for in the call of death he could hear the voice of God demanding his own : and Clarine, his comfort ; alas ! she was no longer his comfort ! and in this sorrow came no thought of the hand of Providence and voice of God. Certainly it was strange that this man, this Christian minister, would not admit that the same God who gave and consoled the one sorrow must also allow and would console the other. But such is man's inconsistency, ascribing to God only his own equity.

Mrs. Bell, after her first burst of grief was spent in tears, went to her brother, and for a long time the two talked of the dead, as friends love to recall by memory those whom their eyes can never again behold. They talked of the child he had left to them, and to which they were ready to give love and care for his sake ; and then deeper into the delicacies of the present and mysteries of the future neither dared venture ; for with the thought of the one forsaken child thus cast into their arms, would come the thought of another child, also forsaken, and towards which they did not outstretch their arms.

No sooner did Mrs. Wilson hear of this succession of sad intelligence ; than her friendly heart and brain imme-

diately conceived and carried into successful execution a plan for Clarine's happiness. The idea occurred to her to let Clarine's child take the place of her brother's dead babe, and thus be reared in an honorable position, and under her own loving care and protection. The plan presented one or two difficulties, but events favored its feasibility. Her first task in its furtherance was to win Mrs. Bell's consent, she being the most difficult opponent to convince; Mr. Rivington, she knew, was more easily persuaded. Mrs. Wilson nerved herself to the desperate task, braced with all sorts of formidable arguments, and was somewhat confounded when, after the first momentary surprise, Mrs. Bell acceded almost eagerly to her plan. She made fewer objections, and indulged in fewer fears and lamentations over what the world might say if it ever became known, than was usual with her, and she even volunteered to convince her brother, and assist Mrs. Wilson's plea. And even with him there was no resistance. Mr. Rivington was one whose self-opinion and judgment succumbed under the force of whichever passion happened uppermost. Now he was overcome by grief, and under the depression of trouble of any kind, he was weak and easily influenced.

"Whatever they thought was best," he said, "for Clarine's sake and for all. It made little difference to him, for he would soon be out of the world; he was old and had but few years to live, and God would judge whether they were right or wrong."

They endeavored to present matters in a more cheerful light, but he was blinded by grief, and would see nothing but misery for all; and they had to be contented with having procured his acquiescence.

Once again was Will Curtiss sent for, and taken into counsel. He listened gravely to the details of Mrs. Wilson's plot, as with persuasive eloquence she entered into

explanation, and with woman's readiness guaranteed a successful result. He found but one difficulty in the simple scheme, and that was the presence of the Indian nurse. He insisted upon the imperative necessity of sending her back immediately to India, before she was allowed any opportunity of becoming unpleasantly familiar with facts. Upon this point Mrs. Wilson fully agreed with him, and they accordingly determined to accomplish this portion of their task as soon as possible. All the other details of the arrangements Will Curtiss himself undertook to see safely carried out. And thus all was easily prepared for the reception of the little stranger, and for the introduction of Clarine's child into the family as her sister; the two orphan children of George Rivington.

And now again Death waved his scythe to befriend their plan. When Mrs. Wilson's carriage, with herself and Mrs. Bell and Clarine's child, whom they had taken from the woman in whose charge it had been, drove to the steamer's wharf to receive George Rivington's child and its nurse, Mrs. Bell went on board the steamer to receive them. In a few minutes she returned with the child alone. The nurse had not been able to resist the change of climate from India's burning sun to England's chilling winds, and she, too, had sickened and died the third day after leaving the English shores. Taking in her arms the little one who seemed to have been borne to them on the wings of Death, Mrs. Wilson's first awe-struck words were: "Helen, this would appear like the intervention of providence in our purpose, only"—and then she suddenly stopped, for she would not give utterance to the next words on her lips—"only that it would seem as though providence were blessing sin," for she instantly realized that whatever benefit or blessing accrued from this sudden turn of events would be Clarine's.

Upon George Rivington's solicitor forwarding his

papers, it was found that he had added a codicil to his will leaving Clarine a sufficient sum for her independent support through life. He had taken for granted her consent to take charge of his children, and finding death coming upon him, had chosen this, his only mode of recompensing her.

## CHAPTER XXVII.

WITH his increased family, Mr. Rivington was now obliged to resume housekeeping. It was also necessary to have some lady in the house as companion to Clarine, and who would, at the same time, relieve her of the charge of housekeeping, of which she knew absolutely nothing. Accordingly, Mr. Rivington invited a widowed cousin of his, a Mrs. Mordaunt, whose limited means made the offered position a welcome one, to superintend his household. A few days sufficed for all preparations, and then Clarine and her father were once more reinstated in their old home. The middle of autumn found them comfortably settled, and Clarine at last fairly started upon that round of housekeeping duties of which she had written to her father while he was in England such cheerful prophecies; prophecies which in their realization dissolved all romance of expectation.

Clarine entered upon her new round of duties with a heart full of good intentions; she thought she could win from the future an oblivion of the past. Her father's household should be his home, where he should always find peaceful, cheerful rest, and she, his child, would be the one to make his home a happy, welcome one; and then the two children were there to give her an object in life to work for. The present really seemed to be throwing a gleam of light into the future.

Clarine's anticipations might have been in a measure realized had her father shared them, but his was a disposition to regard human troubles under the gloomiest aspect, and the change in their life which turned his daughter's eyes towards the future, turned his back upon the past. The one sought to forget, the other persisted in remembering. And, naturally enough, the more Mr. Rivington allowed himself to brood and dwell upon his daughter's offence, the more it grew in magnitude, until the transgression which at first was a grievous sin became a sore iniquity, in its enormity constituting any judgment, however severe, still a just punishment for her who was a transgressor before the world and her God. Condemning the transgressor thus, yet loving the sinner still with the love of human pride, he dreaded her disgrace before the world, he feared her punishment before God. Had there been no world to fear, he would still have trembled before his God; had there been no God to fear, he would still have trembled before his world.

The transgressor whose sin arrayed itself in such appalling iniquity before his mind must be saved. He knew there was but one power could save her,—repentance; and he thought, he blindly believed that, as her lips were silent, and her actions were not loud, her heart must be hardened in its wickedness, and untouched by the healing dew of divine love.

It was with such feelings towards his daughter, with such judgment of the transgressor, that Mr. Rivington prepared a sermon to be delivered before Clarine so soon as he could induce her to attend church again; for of late she had absented herself from services. Clarine herself was no less anxious to resume her former regular attendance at church, and she was ready to avail herself of the first opportunity which would break down that terrible barrier of the first time. Trained as she had been to a

close observance of the outward forms of worship, she naturally felt that in thus absenting herself from divine service she was only binding herself more firmly in her sin by depriving herself of the redeeming power as well as the consolation which religion offers through the church: and though she was not yet fully prepared to yield in spirit to all the demands of that religion, she yet felt that she would be happier if only bowing in reverence to its forms.

It was therefore a welcome opportunity to both Clarine and her father when courtesy to Mrs. Mordaunt made it incumbent upon Clarine to accompany her to her father's church. Doubtless had she had the least apprehension of the ordeal awaiting her at her father's hands, she would have waived courtesy and remained at home; and happier would her days have been had she done so, for the influence of that one Sabbath day retarded the coming of peace within her soul for many a long and dreary year.

A commotion of many feelings stirred within her breast as she stepped into the church she had so long forsaken. There was shame as she thought of the cause which had kept her away; there was joy as she felt that she was once more within the loved and hallowed precincts of the house of God. Very humble was the remorse which brought the tear to her eye, as she felt that every word of prayer was appealing to God in her behalf; very humble was the fear which trembled in her soul, as she felt that every exhortation to the sinner was asking for her repentance; very humble was the joy which thrilled her heart, as she felt that every anthem of praise was ascending to the God who was also her God. At the conclusion of the service every emotion conducive to repentance was roused to action in her heart: then her father ascended the pulpit, and with lowered eyes she waited for the preaching of the

gospel. With a pause which made the silence impressive, the clear, steady voice announced :

"Proverbs : the thirteenth chapter, and part of the fifteenth verse : 'The way of transgressors is hard !'"

Clarine shivered and shrank within herself at the sudden chill of those words. From such a text given by her father she well knew what the sermon must be. And of that sermon she heard, without listening, every word as it fell with terrible force from lips eloquent with passionate power, eloquent with the conviction of the truth and justice of that which they uttered. Every word fell with icy distinctness upon her quivering ear, telling with pitiless detail the story of the transgressor's progress ; from the first step towards wrong, when the follies of the world have jeered the heart into careless neglect towards God ; through to the last judgment, when the crowd before the Throne are divided, and those upon the left are cast into outer darkness. Skilfully he portrayed the temptation, fall and punishment of the transgressor, who having once been placed in the path of right, yet turned aside ; who knowing sin, yet sinned ; who knowing the judgment, yet feared not the power of the Judge ; who knowing the Saviour, yet turned away from his mercy ; and knowing God, yet refused Him. He pictured the heart of the transgressor untouched by remorse, mocking at repentance, dead in its sin, and with pitiless fidelity he followed the transgressor through every phase of guilty renunciation of his God, of guilty adherence to the iniquities of the devil, patiently sketching the way of the transgressor from the first wilful blindness at the approach of the tempter, to the full and completed acceptance of the sin. With vivid touches he traced the path of the transgressors who in this world met not the judgment due their sin, but in merry scorn and scoffing jest danced along the inviting road to destruction, the road paved with glittering baubles,

their feet unmindful of the bleeding wounds cut by the sharp but gilded pebbles, the path bordered by gorgeous flowers withering at the touch and refusing the perfume so eagerly sought ; thus far leading along a road opened broad in delusive allurements. Then he painted the end thereof ; the hell yawning to receive those revelling travellers ; until, in one final burst of masterly but maddened eloquence, he foretold the end of the transgressor's career, as, with soul awakened, he received the doom allotted him by the Great Judge ;—the casting away from the inconceivable beauties of heaven down into the everlasting tortures of the black abyss, with eyes beholding the joys of the blessed, writhing in the torments of the damned.

From the first word of that sermon to the very last there was not one inviting plea of love, not one consoling promise of pardon, not one saving hope of mercy instead of justice ; only bitter denunciation, extreme judgment. He stood there the appointed preacher of the gospel, but he preached the gospel of wrath, not peace. He spoke not the words of his Great Master, the Sole Judge, loving promises of rest to the troubled sinner, gentle allurements to win the erring one to repent and sin no more. He uttered no call to come and seek refuge from temptation in the bosom of the Lord, to let the weepings of contrition cleanse from the pollution of sin, that in true humility they might receive the merciful pardon of Him who came not into the world to save the righteous, but to call sinners to repentance. From the beginning to the end he had only condemned, and the judgment he had thus ruthlessly hurled upon the transgressor he had draped in all the beauties of oratory with the specious veiling of scriptural truths. And in that mass of hearers enthralled by the eloquence of that fervent portrayal, there was one who, in the cruel trampling, was crushed into the cold, the



lifeless infidel. The transgressor wanted no God who could judge without mercy.

Clarine Rivington had entered her father's church that morning with a heart struggling towards good; at the close of that sermon every atom of remorse, every particle of repentance had vanished, and she became as one from whom had been suddenly wrenched both heart and soul, leaving all cold, barren and lifeless, where before had been warm, fruitful and life-giving: and with that storm of blight was swept away every vestige of the tender love which through life until now had blossomed and bloomed in her heart for her father; and the colder grew this withering chill upon her heart, the more did she harden into cynical infidelity every one of those noble impulses which of late had moved her soul towards her God, her Saviour. She recoiled from her father's religion, a religion of unquestioning condemnation; she shrank from her father's God, a God of wrathful judgment; and it was with this turning away from the father's religion and the father's God, that she also turned away from the father who could appoint himself the willing medium of vengeful ire from his God to his child.

Clarine did not for a moment attempt to justify her father's sentence, nor seek to palliate the verdict which he had thus suddenly and unexpectedly pronounced upon her. She felt that this sermon was but the conclusion, the final act to a long course of secret judgment; that through all these long months he had been utterly condemning her every word and act: and the few doubts with which she had hitherto comforted herself, that perhaps her father had not really felt in his heart all the bitter severity which his words and manner had so clearly betrayed, were now entirely dispelled, and she knew for a certainty that in her father's anger there was no mercy. And with this entire absence of mercy she questioned the

presence of love: for how could love be so full of wrath? That day had another mortal been thrust down to the bottom of human despair,—without faith in man or God.

Without faith in man:—For her father's love, the indulgence and compassion of the only human being upon whose love and justice she had ever relied, had now failed her in the time of her greatest need of such love and compassion; her father's religion, the only religion she had ever known, had been made the means of crushing denunciation in the time when she needed its greatest support; and her father's God, the only God, had been presented to her as the God only of wrath and vengeance. Is it any wonder, then, that in the sadness of her despair she should deny the efficacy of that religion; have denied the truth of that God? Is it any wonder that the woman who had that morning entered God's sacred edifice with passionate desires throbbing in her heart for a new Christian life, should, on the evening of that day, when her faint, fluttering hopes had been crushed by one unsparing blow, have sunk altogether away from the God who was withheld from her view?

Without faith in God:—She had sought the God of mercy, and been shown the God of vengeance; she had struggled to the Cross of Redemption, and been dragged to the pit of damnation: and this by him whom she loved as her father, and revered as the appointed minister of the God whom he preached. Clarine Rivington that morning was a Christian; Clarine Rivington that night was an infidel; an infidel without faith in God or man.

Fearful as was the result of that morning's work—for it is a fearful thing to dash from a woman her hopes of heaven,—yet on which, father or daughter, rested the most blame? On the father; because, in the great bitterness of disappointed love and broken pride, his severity

had been extreme? Or on the daughter; because, in the anguish of her humiliation, her lips had been sealed upon her remorse, and in the torments of her sufferings she had drawn a veil over the workings of that worm whose gnawings never cease?

But, let the blame rest where it will, the succeeding years of Clarine Rivington's life were not the years they might have been had her father denied himself the gratification of delivering that sermon. He had at length satisfied himself by giving full vent to the wounded pride, the anger, the suspicions and the religious fears which he had so long but half repressed. He had finally pleased himself by expressing indirectly that which he had not the courage to express directly. And this pleasure, this gratification he had purchased at the uncounted cost of his child's Godly faith.

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

"COME, Bronson! why don't you talk? You look as serious as a judge, and as dismal as though your latest sweetheart had deserted you and married some other 'deuced fool of a fellow.' I believe that is how you dub the men who marry the women you chance to fall in love with."

"No, Curtiss, you are out this time, for I have not been in love, that is seriously in love, for about—um—ah—well—I think it must be well on to a month since I last had a desperate case on hand."

"Ha, ha! what a lonely time you must have had of it! A whole month without a broken heart! But I thought that the fair Isabel was your last love, and she has been married several months now."

"O yes! you see I gave her up"—

"Ah! did you really! That was a great pity, for"—

"Come, Curtiss, stop there. I know what your are going to say, but I don't care to have one of your satirical tirades thrust upon me to-night. I, for one, am willing to change the subject. Let us drink to each other's long life and happiness," and with a good humored laugh the two men tossed off their respective glasses of sherry.

The two friends, Will Curtiss and George Bronson, had strolled into a fashionable restaurant, and in a private room were leisurely enjoying a cosy supper. Several

times during the supper Bronson had relapsed into moody silence, for which he gave no reasonable cause, and Curtiss had in vain attempted to rally him. At last, after another pause, in which Curtiss had closely watched Bronson's countenance and movements, he said, in that grave, laconic manner to which there is no gainsay:—"Bronson, my boy, you have been drinking to-day."

"You are wrong there, Curtiss," he replied pleasantly, too much accustomed to such truthful accusations to resent them. "I swear I have not touched a drop to-day, or, at least, not until about an hour ago, when I did take a glass of water, with a drop, just one weak drop of brandy in it. I am on honor now."

"Then what the deuce is the matter with you? You are as dull and stupid as a stuffed owl! If you have any guilt on your conscience out with it, old boy, and I'll shrive you with full absolution. So unburden your heart, that you may rest in peace."

"I've got nothing on my conscience, man," returned Bronson, rousing himself, "but I'll tell you just what it is; it is a deuced queer story."

"Oh, a story, is it? That's good. But here come the coffee and cigars!" he exclaimed, as the servant entered. "So here, start your story with this fine Havana." And leaving the table, they drew their chairs before the fire, and sipped their coffee set on the little stand between them.

Bronson leisurely puffed his cigar into a glow, jerking out between each puff, "Well—I'll tell you—Curtiss—it's strange—but"—the cigar was lighted, and the paper lighter laid upon the little bronze ash-receiver: a full puff drawn. "Do you know, I've heard something deuced queer about some one we know,—and"—a bit of the leaf of the cigar had got upon his tongue, and he stopped to pick it off.

"Yes! Who is it?" Curtiss asked, with lazy indifference. It was evidently some of Bronson's petty gossip, which he was forever and eternally retailing gratis.

"It is a woman"—

"Oh, of course!"

"That sneer will do very well at some other time, Curtiss, but just now I think I can shake you out of your devilish cool indifference. My strange story is about a young lady who, I know, was at one time very dear to one of us, and rumor has it was likewise very dear to the other; only just as with the rest of us poor devils, it turned out to be no go."

"Whom are you talking about?" asked Curtiss quietly, but with a shade of earnestness in his tone.

"I mean just our friend, Clarine Rivington!"

A moment, and then Will Curtiss burst into a hearty, jovial laugh, such a laugh as only a friend can assume. And then he jumped up and lightly tapped Bronson on the back. "Some of your old jealousy cropping out again, old boy! What good looking fellow has been making love to Miss Clarine now, that you are again the green-eyed monster?" He said this very gayly, but there was a peculiar light in his eyes which had not been there a moment before.

"It is damned strange, if it is true; but it is rather hard to tell on a woman unless you can swear to it, and—even then"—

He was evidently having some qualms of an undeveloped conscience about the vile meanness he was perpetrating.

"Never mind, my dear fellow; you have got started and are in for the story now; so you may as well tell the whole of it. Only, by the bye, just leave off swearing when you use Miss Clarine's name." Will Curtiss to encourage scandal! and from such a fellow as Bronson!

Thus encouraged, Bronson opened his story. But let me

spare the reader his coarse, sneering statement. That was a terribly sickening chill which sent the blood curdling through Curtiss' veins, and spread that deathly pallor over his face. Not only was the thing told hard to listen to, but the manner of telling was simply brutal. He could have throttled the scoundrel then and there. But he must hear all that was to be told, let it be the very worst. Under the pretence of setting the hands of the ormolu clock on the mantel, his back was turned to Bronson, and so he listened with seeming calmness to the following story:

It seems that the servant maid who attended Bronson's rooms in his hotel had once been very kind to him in nursing him faithfully through a long and severe illness, and afterwards, in order to return the kindness, he had bestowed several favors upon her, such as helping her mother pay her rent, and procuring a porter's situation for her brother. The girl thus learned to come to him with all her troubles, and also frequently amused him with her lively chat about her numerous beaux and flirtations, for she was quite pretty, and soon dwelt upon one young fellow in particular, whom in time she promised to marry. Then she began to tell of a certain Bridget, a cousin of her beau's, whom she frequently visited, and who lived with an Englishwoman, a Mrs. White, and her child, an infant of a few months old.

Curtiss started, and a cold chill passed over him.

This Bridget was fond of talking to Mary and her beau of a beautiful young lady who used to come every day, to visit Mrs. White, and remain several hours. The three soon suspected that the infant did not belong to Mrs. White, but to the beautiful visitor, a suspicion which Bronson thoughtlessly helped to foster in Mary's mind. It soon struck him that the description given of this young lady was remarkably like Clarine Rivington's, but he only

gave it a passing thought, until an after circumstance gave force to his suspicion. Mary's gossip about the party soon ceased, for it seemed her friend had lost her situation. For several days, she said, this young lady had not been to the house, and at last, one morning, Mrs. White had received a letter, and had then been busy all day packing and preparing to leave the house, had paid Bridget her wages and told her she would have to leave the next morning, for she was going away. And that the next morning two strange ladies had driven up in a private carriage and taken the child away, and shortly afterwards a hack had come and taken Mrs. White away, she having first locked up the house. And now came the point of the story which had given strength to Bronson's suspicions. It seemed that this lover of Mary's was the same fellow who was under arrest for having robbed Mr. Wilson's house. And both Mary and Bridget, believing, of course, in his innocence, were in great distress. His lawyer had told them that if Mr. Wilson could be prevailed upon not to appear against him he would get clear, the case going by default, and the two women had therefore gone up to Mrs. Wilson's to plead for him, hoping naturally enough to reach the husband's leniency through the wife's charity. Mrs. Wilson had listened kindly to their plea, and promised her intercession, though, as the result showed, without avail, for the fellow was tried and sentenced to ten years in State Prison. But as they stood talking to Mrs. Wilson a young lady had come into the room, whom Bridget immediately recognized as the beautiful visitor of Mrs. White and her child. To make certainty more certain, Bronson had asked them if they heard Mrs. Wilson address this young lady by name. And both Mary and Bridget had heard her called "Clarine." "Of course," concluded Bronson, "neither Mary nor Bridget know, or care either, beyond the idle curiosity of their gossiping

class, who this Clarine may be : but I know, Curtiss, and now nothing could convince me that this Clarine who was at Mrs. Wilson's house, and the beautiful young lady who visited that Englishwoman and infant, are not one and the same—Clarine Rivington."

Again and again that sickening chill crept over Curtiss as he listened to all this "confirmation strong," and knew that not one word was kindly false.

"Bronson, you are a scoundrel to harbor one word of such scandal. You know while you speak them that every one of your suspicions is a damned lie !"

Bronson started. It was the first time he had ever heard Curtiss swear, and in his surprise he forgot to be angry at the language : still, he spoke up cross and sharp, as he replied : "I don't see why the deuce I have not a perfect right to my suspicions."

"Such base suspicions are unworthy the woman you once loved well enough to make your wife."

"Bosh ! That is all very pretty in talk, Curtiss, but when I loved Clarine Rivington—she would not have my love !"

The temptation was strong in Curtiss to knock Bronson down at the covert threat in those words.

"And I don't see, for my part, Curtiss," continued Bronson, "why the devil you should have any right to make any fuss in the matter."

"The right devolving upon any man when a woman's good name is in peril, to use every means in his power to save her ; and a right I intend to exert now."

"The deuce you do ! I am curious to see you make the attempt," replied Bronson, in coarse derision, and assuming an indifference which he was far from feeling. Then suddenly starting and looking earnestly at Curtiss—"Do you really intend to say that you do not believe this story against Miss Clarine ?"

"I certainly do not believe one word of it: and, furthermore, I know it to be a lie !" was the prompt answer.

It had come to this, then, that he had to lie it down ! Will Curtiss, the soul of truth and integrity, was willing to lie ; and that, too, without a shade of doubt as to its right. A lie ! It is told every day among men of honor ; but for woman, or to save a friend.

Bronson was staggered by such confident assertion right in the face of what he had supposed to be conclusive proof. He sat quiet and sullen for awhile, having taken just enough wine at supper to make him moody and violent by turns. "Curtiss," he suddenly exclaimed, "it is all very well for you to pretend you don't believe this story, but I do. And as for the Rivington"—

Instantly Curtiss' hand clutched heavily upon his shoulder, and there was a look in his face he had never seen before, and did not like now.

"I swear to you, Bronson, if you ever hint a word of such belief, or use that term again, I'll thrash you till you cannot even howl for mercy !"

The hot blood surged purple into Bronson's face. "Take care, Curtiss," he cried angrily, as he shook off the hand upon his shoulder. "You are talking to the wrong man this time."

"No ; it is you, Bronson, who have been talking to the wrong man," answered Curtiss, as he turned away.

"It appears to me you take a deuced strange interest in Miss Clarine all of a sudden," retorted Bronson, sullenly. He had several times during the hour raised the full glass to his lips, and set it down empty.

Curtiss would not notice the taunt. He was so thoroughly sickened and disgusted with the man and his vulgar coarseness. He was not so much vexed with him for crediting such a straight-forward story, that was perhaps but

natural; but he was disgusted with his mode of expressing his belief. In all of Bronson's words there was such an utter absence of pity or regret for that which he believed to be true of this woman, such an utter want of compassion in his telling of a woman's sin. He seemed to glut himself to the full with the knowledge of this woman's shame, to gloat over her downfall. This knowledge was certainly a terrible weapon, and Curtiss trembled to see such a weapon held in such hands. Some means must be devised for blunting its edge, or for wresting it from his grasp. But how? In vain he expostulated with him upon the absurdity of the whole affair, swore to his own immovable belief in her innocence, and cursed Bronson's too willing readiness to believe scandal of a woman. In vain he appealed to his honor, his gentlemanly delicacy in her behalf, to at least pass his word never to breathe his suspicions to other ears, picturing the fearful consequences of such suspicions being whispered abroad; and then, finding entreaty of no avail, fell to abusing him in good round terms for his baseness in harboring such stories, threatening him with the most insulting threats one man could use to another, if he ever dared hint a reproach against Clarine Rivington. Not one word did a whit of good. Bronson was not in the mood to be either persuaded or insulted. He declared he had not the least intention of mentioning his suspicions to any one, and only laughed at threats, and sneeringly asked, "what the deuce put him into such a devil of a fever about a girl who had jilted him?" Curtiss was nonplussed. He found he had to deal with a man who would neither be conciliated nor intimidated. And yet he dared not let him go with such dangerous belief unshaken. With such belief intact in Bronson's mind, and his lips unsealed by any bond of silence, Clarine Rivington's name was but a breath, her honor before the world a feather. What, then, was to be done? He thought long

and carefully, and then—he did that which I believe many a man would have done.

Drawing his chair nearer, and resting his arms upon the table by which they both sat, he looked at Bronson with a confidential smile upon his face, as he began: "Bronson, if I tell you something about myself, you can keep a secret for a friend; can't you?"

"Certainly, Curtiss. Why, deuce take it, you ought to know me well enough for that," replied Bronson, in earnest tones, evidently hurt at the half doubt implied in the question; besides, there was evidently a revelation on the tapis.

"Then listen: and remember that I am now confiding myself to your honor."

"There is my hand and my word of honor with it."

"That lady," continued Curtiss, "who visited that woman and child, was—a friend of mine."

Bronson gave a prolonged whistle.

Curtiss flushed crimson; but he continued steadily: "I have tried hard to keep the whole affair a profound secret, but as you seem to have ferreted it out, I must throw myself upon your friendship and your honor."

"And you can trust me, Curtiss; I'll be damned if you can't," returned Bronson, in words more earnest than refined.

"Your story is quite correct, Bronson, in every particular save one. The resemblance of this friend of mine to Miss Rivington is indeed very marked. I have frequently noticed it myself, and am not at all surprised at the mistake having been made by that woman in supposing this Clarine, of whom she obtained merely a cursory glance, to be one and the same lady whom she had seen at the house. It is merely one of those strange resemblances, seeming duplicatures, we so often come across in this world. As for the rest of your story, it is sufficient

for me to say that your informant told you the truth, but of course you will excuse special confidence from me on details."

"All right, my boy!" returned Bronson, both satisfied and delighted with the explanation. "I am your friend, and, as I said before, you can trust me. But why didn't you tell me all this before, and have spared all the fuss and hard words between us?"

"I certainly did not feel obliged to reveal my own personal secrets, until I found that I could not otherwise convince you of Miss Clarine's innocence. But I was in honor bound to free her name from slander. And, now, where shall we stow ourselves for the rest of the evening?" and he rose, as he asked the question, and shook himself into his ordinary free and easy manner, at the same time that something like a heavy sigh heaved his chest.

"Suppose we stroll around to the Bells'? This is their regular reception evening, and one is sure to meet lots of people there."

"Very well! Let us be off, then. I feel as though the fresh air would do me good."

## CHAPTER XXIX.

EVER since Mr. Bell, after an instructive course of reasoning from his wife, had admitted the logical necessity for the resumption of Dr. Tillman's visits, the mutual display of affection between this husband and this wife was really beautiful to witness. That simplicity of confidence which had always been such a charming feature of their conjugal relation, and which, as we know, had been somewhat harshly dealt with, resuming its former sway now shone forth with the more dazzling brilliancy from the scattered vapors of distrust which had temporarily obscured its lustre: and it continued to shine until a certain evening, one of those weekly set apart for the reception of their friends.

At dinner Mr. Bell had informed his wife, with many regrets, that the regular meeting of the Society for the Protection of Female Emigrants had been appointed for that evening, and much as he lamented the necessity of absenting himself from their friends, yet, as secretary of the society, his presence at the meeting was unavoidable.

And here it may be but proper to observe that, of the many charitable societies of which Mr. Bell was an active



and efficient member, this one, for the protection of female emigrants, was his favorite. He, as well as all its benevolent members, undertook the charge, disregarding the self-sacrifice of the labors involved, purely from noble considerations; for Mr. Bell was a man having great regard for the morals of the community at large.

Mr. Bell's laments upon this enforced absence were numerous, (and ingenious) but his wife, who must certainly have been of the clay of which earthly angels are made, smiled sweet encouragement as she assured her "dear love," that much as she was disappointed at not having his pleasant assistance that evening, still she could not conscientiously oppose his going, for the society was for such a worthy object, was actuated by such charitable motives, and withal was so well calculated to call forth the most noble attributes of manly character in its disinterested and self-sacrificing members, that she could only rejoice that her dear husband had so many opportunities of exercising his impartial charity.

It was therefore with perfect satisfaction on both sides, and with an unusually affectionate caress, that this interesting husband and wife separated.

Upon Mr. Curtiss and Mr. Bronson entering Mrs. Bell's cheerful drawing-room that same evening, they were at once attracted by the view of their hostess displaying her best company graces in all their charming phases to a circle of smiling admirers, chief among whom stood Dr. Tillman.

"By Jove, Curtiss!" exclaimed Bronson, in an undertone to his companion, as they advanced together up the room, "one might have sworn to finding that deuced poke of a doctor snugly ensconced by the side of the love-sick Mrs. Bell. What a fool the woman makes of herself! I'll lay you any wager old Bell is off to some of his

benevolent societies for the protection of innocent females!"

Curtiss made no reply, only laughed slightly, and the next moment they had presented themselves to Mrs. Bell, and, of the two, Bronson's respects were paid with the greater deference.

As they turned away they encountered Mrs. Wilson and Clarine. Bronson passed them with a bow, but Curtiss was detained by Mrs. Wilson, who began in complaining tones: "Is it not too unkind that Clarine insists upon returning home, and the evening is not half spent?"

"I must go, Mrs. Wilson," rejoined Clarine, gently, "I do not feel well; I have a severe headache. And besides, little Jeannette did not appear quite well when the nurse put her to bed, and I feel anxious about her."

The few further remonstrances which Mrs. Wilson offered having no effect, Curtiss gave his arm to Clarine to escort her to her carriage.

As he felt the gentle pressure upon his arm, and thought of the peril from which he had that evening rescued her, as he looked down into her face, and noted the lines of care which the repose of feature plainly betrayed to his critical eye, a great swell of pity, of tenderness rose up from his heart, softened his mien, and beamed upon her in a kindly glow from his dark, earnest eyes. He felt sad for her, and his sadness took on the outward form of greater kindness.

And there was one, George Bronson, whose roaming glance fell upon these two, and with the quick intuition of a jealous mind, saw that tenderness and that pity so akin to love, and, instantly lighting up with its lurid glare all surrounding thought, there flashed upon his mind the foul flame of burning suspicion, and this darting tongue of fire scorched and blackened his heart with its fierce blaze. "This, then," showed the light of flaming suspicion, "is the solu-

tion of all the mystery ! This accounts for the strangeness of his words and manner to me this evening. His story was true, but so was mine, and the strange lady and Clarine Rivington are, after all, the same. But Will Curtiss a betrayer of woman ! and of this girl for whom he has always professed such sincere friendship !" and he could not repress a groan of jealous misery as the two passed out of his view.

Upon Mr. Curtiss' returning to the drawing-room and searching for Mrs. Wilson, so as to communicate to her the substance of that evening's conversation between himself and Bronson, he found that she had joined a circle of conversationists, of which Mrs. Bell was the brilliant centrepiece. While the interchange of gay jests was at its height, a young gentleman, a late arrival, made his way up to pay his respects to his hostess. Mr. Fitz-Hugh Brown was quite a nice young man, radiant in patent leather boots, diamond studs, and fashionable perfume, and was one of those unfortunate individuals forever doomed to do the most awkward things at the most awkward moment. Scarcely had he stammered and blundered over a few phrases, which prior incubation had intended should be smooth and flowing, his pleasure in greeting Mrs. Bell, ere he blurted out :

"Ah, by the bye, Mrs. Bell, I have just had the pleasure of seeing Mr. Bell. I called to pay my respects to our friends, Gen. and Mrs. Hartt, and there I met Mr. Bell."

For a moment only was Mrs. Bell dumbfounded. Then she rallied well to the charge. With her blandest smiles, she informed Mr. Fitz-Hugh Brown that their friends, General and Mrs. Hartt, had arrived in town that day, and, as a severe headache had prevented her calling upon them herself, she had requested Mr. Bell to pay their respects either upon going or returning from his society meeting. She was rejoiced that he had found them at

home. Rather a lame account, perhaps, only better than none. But the awkward break in the conversation had been made, and those bystanders who were well enough posted in the Bell gossip to understand the full bearing of Mr. Fitz-Hugh Brown's sudden burst of intelligence, found it unpleasant to remain longer by their hostess' side, and gradually mingled in other groups, and in the general scattering Mrs. Wilson and Curtiss withdrew to the retirement of the library. Here he repeated to her all that had passed between Bronson and himself concerning Clarine.

"With this knowledge in that man's power, poor Clarine is ruined," was Mrs. Wilson's first sorrowful remark, as he paused at the end of Bronson's story.

Then, with modest hesitation, Curtiss went on to tell how he had baffled Bronson's suspicions by taking the onus of sin upon himself.

Then Mrs. Wilson's lustrous black eyes were raised to him with wonder and admiration in their smiling depths. "You took dishonor upon yourself for her sake ?"

"You forget, that to a man of George Bronson's stamp such assertion bore no dishonor," Curtiss replied, with a smile strangely scornful for his lips.

"But what are we to do ?" asked Mrs. Wilson, with whom something to do, help in practical form, was always the ready thought. She was not the kind of friend to sit in idle commiseration.

"I can see nothing for it but to let him alone. He is safe enough at present ; his suspicions are quieted,"—little did they suspect the turn those suspicions had now taken,—"though should he ever suspect the lie I told him to save her, then, I fear, his is the nature to make mischief. I have lost all the trust I once had in him."

"He never deserved your friendship from the first. You and Mr. Seymour made him a boon companion, and

then called him friend. You are not apt to misjudge characters, Willie, yet you must see now that his was not the character to stand the test of intimate friendship."

"You are right, as always," was the hearty endorsement given to her words.

"Poor Clarine!" sighed Mrs. Wilson, after a short pause. "I am afraid this is an omen of more trouble in store for her. I am almost ready, now, to wish with Mrs. Bell that she should get married. She would then be safe from such tongues as Mr. Bronson's."

"How does Mr. Rivington act lately?" Curtiss asked, suddenly.

"His spirits and manner are improving, I think. His is the character to feel a shock very severely at first, but to recover from it the more rapidly; but any one who watches Clarine can see a great change in her, though she does try to bear up bravely. Poor girl, I wish she could be happy."

The wish found its ready echo in her listener's heart, but he had no response to give in fruitless words. There was a pause, and then Mrs. Wilson, glancing up at Curtiss with an expressive light in her eyes, asked in low, hesitating voice: "Willie, why can't you take her for your own wife? You say you love and respect her now as ever."

No sooner was the question asked, than, from the shadow which swept over his face, she regretted her words. But he smiled bravely, as he replied:

"It is true that I love and respect Clarine now as ever, but"—he stopped, then added in changed tones: "My dear friend, you asked me this question once before. The idea seems to please your mind, and to set your desires at rest I will tell you the true reason why it can never be." He looked at her with mild, earnest eyes. "I was with

Clarine as events were passing. I shared her misery, and can never forget, though I can easily forgive. Do you understand me? Had I met such a woman after her sin was past, I think that possibly I might have pardoned her error and asked her for my wife, as though such sin had never been. Another might take her now in the purity of her penitence, but I have known her in her innocence and in her guilt; and for me to reach her innocence, I must pass through the memory of her guilt. I love Clarine Rivington still, I shall always love her, but it is no longer the love which could make her my wife."

She was answered; in the light of the truth the shadows of vain hopes were cleared away: but it was not until the futility of her secret wish was so plainly visible, that she saw how strong it had been. She too had been scheming for Clarine's marriage, but hers was the scheming of love, not ambition.

And this man, this drunkard whom they were discussing, what had become of him? The sight which had aroused suspicion had driven his easily excitable mind well nigh to frenzy, and to cool his burning thoughts he had rushed for the open air, to walk the night streets for hours. With him suspicion was conviction, and the clearer the light of his new suspicions shone upon the many shadows of the past, as they now glided in quick succession before his fevered view, the more firmly was he convinced that this new light was of the color of truth. And then, as he thought of all this past, of all that might have been, yet was not, of all that had been and now was, of the woman he had tried to win honorably for his wife, but who had rejected him to become another's toy, of the girl whose pride was so haughty, but whose pride he could now bring so low to the dust, as he tampered with these burning coals of thought, there flickered hellish gleamings upon his mind; and then, slowly smouldering at first,

steadily blazing at last, there dropped one brand, a devilish purpose, down deep into his heart, charring to the core all that had until now been living. From the moment of the settling of that fell purpose, there remained not one vital spot to recuperate that blasted soul from the death-sins of the past.

Was it love or hate this man now felt for that woman? He called it love; the love of the past renewed. I have seen revenge draped in rich mantle, bearing in embroidered tracings the golden word, justice!

Wildly rushing onward, impelled by reckless thought, he saw nothing, heard nothing of passing things. Once a voice checked him with a "Good evening, Mr. Bronson!" He blindly returned the salutation, and hurried on to spend the night in the oblivion of drink, steeping his mad senses in the stupor, the death hastening coma of intoxication.

The voice momentarily arresting him was Mr. Bell's. He too, was onward, but not rushing, not hurrying, for he was only going home, it was only his wife awaiting him. Nothing to hurry for, certainly, still, even without special haste, home must be reached some time or other; and so, after awhile, Mr. Bell was standing in his wife's dressing-room, apologizing for being so late; but the meeting had had a great deal of business to transact, and had not broken up until quite late.

Now Mrs. Bell was altogether too dutiful and too affectionate a wife to receive her dear husband's excuses with aught but the most charming smiles, or even to hint in the remotest manner that she knew her darling husband was lying. Tenderly she put her arm around his neck, and said very mildly: "By the bye, my dear love, I must tell you that I have had one of my fearful headaches all the evening, and Dr. Tillman happening to be here, he says that nothing but change of air and travelling will

benefit me, and advises your letting me go to Europe in the spring."

Whereupon Mr. Bell entered upon full and explicit and affectionate explanations of how and why it was utterly impossible for him to do anything of the kind: to all of which course of argument Mrs. Bell assented with wifely humility. And it was doubtless a mere slip of the memory on Mrs. Bell's part, that she carelessly omitted mentioning to her husband at the time, that Dr. Tillman had incidentally remarked, in the course of the evening's conversation, that professional business would probably call him to Europe during the present year.

It was not long after this particular evening's conversation before Mrs. Bell confided to one or two friends, as a great secret, the probability of her going to Europe, and soon it was known that the spring would witness her departure, and that Mr. Bell was not to accompany his wife, but would meet her in Paris in the autumn.

## CHAPTER XXX.

AND how had it fared with Clarine herself the long winter? None too well!—with her a winter of outer cheerfulness and occupation, of inward trials and sufferings. For she had not yet learned to bear, only to seem to bear patiently. Forced to retain a prominence in society she recoiled from, burdened with the responsibilities of a position from which her mental abstraction unfitted her, and taxed with cares and duties requiring a lighter heart than hers to discharge properly, her days and nights were but series of conflicting excitements. She rushed into society to flee from solitude, and fled from society to seek solitude. She sought excitement as a relief from her own thoughts, she sank back into her own thoughts as a relief from excitement. Wearied with all things she knew not where to turn for rest and peace. Afraid of God, yet hating the world; turmoil without, turmoil within; seeking anything, fleeing everything: nowhere rest.

In such a state of mind it was not unnatural that circumstances failed to impress themselves, and that passing events were not realized. When Mr. Bronson renewed his visits she was unconscious of their intent, and forgetting that a rejected lover can rarely be a friend, she accepted him as the friend he assumed to be, and received him as she received all.

Carefully, with the cautious fear of the coward, Mr. Bronson laid a plot which he intended to result in the evil consummation which one night's devilish suspicion had suggested. His first steps were easier than he expected, for as he drew near to his intended victim, to his surprise he found no guard to his approach.

He brought the freshest flowers, and she smiled soft, bright smiles as she took them. He brought her the latest novel, and she assured him gracefully of the pleasure it would afford her to read it. This, and much more; but the same devotion many another gladly offered, and she did not think of singling out this one. And if at such times as the crowd wearied her she gladly sought the escort of one whose old acquaintanceship allowed a relief from exertion, is it surprising that as she leaned upon his arm, rather than another's, he should feel flattered by the preference?

All this did flatter him, and he congratulated himself upon his success; yet at the end of three months he suddenly awoke to the consciousness that he had not advanced a step further in her favor than he was at the commencement of his suit. The discovery startled him; yet there was no denying the fact that her smiles were no brighter, her words no kinder than at first. Clarine at the end of three months was still to him the same Clarine. He saw now that he was but one of many: and he clenched his teeth, and swore that the end should come now. No honor towards the friend he believed himself betraying, no pity for the woman he had once loved, no thought of his infamy deterred him from his vile purpose. Maddened by his passions he approached Clarine with a bold disclosure of that which he called love. The hitherto reserve was cast aside, the respectful distance overstepped, and he dared reveal to her the infamous truth.

First, thinking to win the more readily, he presented

the more honorable offer of marriage. Enraged by the refusal, gentle though it was, he unveiled in all its hideous deformity his base, his hellish purpose: to force her compliance, shamelessly he revealed to her his knowledge of her secret. Till then she had only trembled in scorn and indignation: but when he spoke of that, a low cry of pain and helplessness burst from her pale lips. She crouched shrinking in her chair, crushed and broken. The worst had come at last! But then a name escaped his lips. She started! The sudden flush rose to her brow, and a gleam of light shot into her eyes. Thank heaven, he had the wrong name! The woman forgot that he knew of her sin, in thanks that he knew not him who had the power to accomplish that ruin.

Inflamed by his surging passions he recklessly taunted her with her sin, and madly dared her to brave his power by refusal, but suddenly stopped, hesitated, gazed in sudden fear! Eyes were fixed upon him which would have checked a madder career than his. Not one word from her lips, only that lurid light in her eyes. He was awed into silence, by he knew not what, only he dared not meet that gaze. He had never dreamed of such terrible still anger as was now subduing him from those fixed eyes. Without a word, scarce removing that burning light from his face, she moved towards the door, opened it, and stood there steadily. He understood and dared not disobey the silent mandate. Abashed and conquered he passed her with lowered eyes and dogged mien, out of the door, into the street.

A moment Clarine stood, then slowly turned, and with heavy step, as in a dream, passed up the stairs, on to her room.

Who would wish to paint the humiliation of that hour?

The night that had been cold and gusty, became a storm of wind and hail and sleet. Trees bent to the blast,

shutters clattered in the wind, the hail rattled on the roofs and sidewalks, then ceased awhile to listen to the hiss of the furious sleet, and again renewed its clatter. Lights gleamed dim in the mist, streets were deserted, and the few led by the search for pleasure or by stern necessity to brave the elements, shrank shivering in their warmest wrappings. The city was dismal in the storm and desertion; even the nightly little beggars seeking rather the protection of obscure doorways than the frozen charity of the well-cloaked passerby.

At midnight, as this storm raged the fiercest, a carriage drove rapidly up to the Astor House, and two policemen, alighting, assisted, or fairly dragged thence an object dripping with rain, covered with the slush of the storm, helpless in the abjectness of intoxication. They carried it into the hotel, and the proprietor was summoned to establish its identity. This object was George Bronson.

He had been found by a policeman,—where? In a gutter; where he had sunk down in helpless, drunken prostration. By prolonged questioning the policeman had managed to make out that he lived at the Astor House, and then calling to his aid a brother officer, the two had picked him up out of the filth, the mud and the mire, and conveyed him as we have seen. The proprietor had the servants carry him to his apartments, where they removed his soiled and saturated clothes, and put him to bed. But their task could not end here, for he was talking wildly and incoherently, or muttering to himself in low ramblings none could understand. He raved in delirium tremens.

In the dead of night Curtiss was roused from his slumbers to face the pelting storm. At first, heavy with sleep, he could scarcely comprehend the strange summons, but a hard working of the eyes, and a second reading of the note which had been despatched to him by the proprietor



of the hotel, and he understood at once the demand made upon him. He was wide enough awake now, and in a few minutes, wrapped in his heaviest cloakings, he was driving through wind and hail and sleet to stand by the bedside of a raving drunkard.

The days which followed upon this hasty midnight summons were one long stretch of horror, the horror of days and nights with a maniac. With calm decision Curtiss took his place by the bedside of this madman whom he had once called friend, determined to watch and wait through all that might come until the end, the change of health, or death.

Curtiss' first resolve was to watch Bronson entirely alone. He feared lest in his ravings the one name and its secret should escape his lips. Had he had more experience with delirium he would have lost that fear, for it is seldom that the ravings of delirium follow the path of daily life. The freed mind rambles incoherently over barren wastes, and in its craziest mutterings seldom or never connects the train of thought with the least coherency. It has been thought that the mind uncontrolled in delirium, reveals those important facts which in health it conceals with the utmost care. But the mind once subjected to a powerful and consistent control, is never entirely freed from that control. The mental doors of the brain are not opened simply because the physical hinges are loosened: there is still a lock, perhaps double bars, remaining. For three days and nights Curtiss watched and struggled with a raving madman. He talked almost incessantly, the greater part of the time with excited vehemence. He was troubled with the idea that enemies sought his life, and to save himself from their hands tried to jump out of the window. Curtiss' strength was barely sufficient to prevent the leap, and after that the windows were barred, a fact which he seemed to realize, for he did

not again approach them. Pursued by the serpents and devils, the pistols and daggers of his diseased imagination, his efforts to escape them were fierce and violent, and at first, not knowing how else to manage him, Curtiss had called in other assistance, and the strength of three or four men had sometimes been all but exhausted before he could be brought under subjection. But on one of these occasions Curtiss had chanced to speak unusually sharp and severe, and when the struggling man looked up he met a calm, steady eye fixed upon him. Instantly the maniac was subdued, his ravings quelled. And from that time forth Curtiss had but to speak in a peculiar, low, calm voice, and fix a steady eye upon him, and the madman was tractable; he knew his master.

Medical efforts proved unavailing in inducing the sleep necessary to control the delirium and produce a more healthy state of the brain. On the third day pneumonia sounded its notes of alarm, and in a few hours pleurisy added its dangers, and then it was known that death must be the end. The delirium had ceased, and sleep had come, but too late; the long exposure to the cold and wet of the storm had done its work too thoroughly.

When Bronson knew that he must die he made but one request, to see Mrs. Wilson. She came to him immediately. He seemed glad of her presence, and thanked her for her goodness in coming to him. Then he seemed to hesitate a moment, and then he slowly gasped between his struggling breaths—"Will you go—to Clarine Rivington,—when I am dead,—only when I am dead,—and ask her—to forgive me?"

The promise was given, and then Mrs. Wilson pondered over that dying request, his only one. Why had he asked for pardon? What wrong had he done to Clarine Rivington which she herself had known; so great that it



haunted the rest of the death-bed? Questions which were never answered.

All that day and that night the dying man still lived, and still the next day he lingered, though death was slowly implanting its certain marks. The bluish pallor, the sunken eyes and falling mouth, the haggard, anxious countenance, were all the ineffaceable stamp of death. And that night, in the stillness of the mid-hours, the mysterious blue veil was spread over the features which the soul casts as it swoops upward in its flight. That veil, the filament which envelops the soul in its earthly tenement; the last sign of the mortal dross it casts away as it wings itself to purity. The last sigh was heaved, the last breath drawn, and the living became dead.

There are few of us who can number many friends whose hours would be darkened by our loss, and we should feel satisfied if we know that we have one friend whose life would be shadowed by the sorrow of our death; and there is not one of us who would not feel a thrill of strange pity for him whose death gives gladness. Of the many who uttered the conventional formulas of regret over George Bronson's death, but few turned away with a sigh; and there was one who was glad.

When Clarine Rivington was told that George Bronson lay dangerously ill, there was a flutter at her heart, and a whisper that he might perhaps die. When Mrs. Wilson, filled with compassion for the dead, gave her in pleading accents his dying request, she remained silent.

"Will you forgive him, Clarine?"

"No."

"Clarine, he is dead now, and that should soften your resentment," replied Mrs. Wilson, softly.

Clarine's face was pale, and her usually soft features were stern, as she coldly answered: "Mrs. Wilson, you do not know for what you are pleading."

Mrs. Wilson made no comment, dared ask no question, but she wondered what that offence could have been which had entreated pardon on a death-bed, of which death could not appease the resentment.

Clarine Rivington, then, was the one who was glad of George Bronson's death. She was glad because there was buried with him in his grave his knowledge of her secret, and so long as he lived he could have held her in the bondage of such knowledge. She was free from him now, and the freedom was too welcome to regret the means.

But now that he was in the sealed grave, why could she not forgive him? Why was her heart so bitter that even death could not soften its wrath?

I know of but one reason. If it be at all times hard to forgive an insult, it is still harder if one is conscious that their own hand has opened the path for the approach of that insult. It was not until Clarine had learned to beseech the Mercy which reigns on High that her own trespasses might be forgiven unto her in heaven, that she also learned to forgive them that trespassed against her on earth.

## CHAPTER XXXI.

IN the early autumn after their marriage Edward Rashleigh had yielded to the entreaties of his charming young bride for a European tour, and they had now been in Europe several months. Marriage, a husband and European travel had not improved Isabel's temper one jot. Isabel Rashleigh was, if possible, more wilful, passionate and imperious than Isabel Holmes had ever dared to be. Before marriage she had been compelled to submit to some restraint, even though partial, under parents, guardians and a lover: but a husband once secured, the coveted prize once in certain and indisputable possession, and all restraint was at an end. It was not long after marriage before Isabel began again to act true to her nature, and upon the least provocation displayed all the wilful caprice and recklessness of her violent temper. But now it was her turn to be surprised. To her discomfiture she found that the husband had no idea of submitting to that which as a lover he had patiently borne, and that the whims and caprices which had once turned even the lover from her side, now brought down upon her the husband's authority. To her supreme consternation she found that whatever liberty had been allowed to Edward Rashleigh's beloved mistress, Edward Rashleigh's wife had to obey; a discovery by no means pleasing.

These months of travel did no good to Isabel. She was naturally over-fond of display, gayety and admiration. The first was gratified by her husband's purse, the second by the life of European dissipation, and the third was accorded to her beauty, which was attractive more by her dashing, lively and imperious ways, than from soft, womanly graces. She was always animated, was easy and entertaining in conversation, and always had some charming little secret to confide to the chosen one. Moreover, she had few women companions; she did not like her own sex. Though many men disliked her, she always found a sufficient number of devotees to satisfy her never-ceasing craving for adulation. This craving, which, in the girl, had been mistaken for natural youthful vanity, had become an important characteristic of the woman; a trait in a married woman most dangerous. Her husband, proud of the admiration she excited, did not notice how eagerly she sought the insidious flattery, and gratified her frivolous taste for display and the seductive charms of fashionable dissipation by carrying her from place to place of gay resort, as, satiated with the pleasures of one, she longed for change. The whirl of cities in the winter, and the buzz of watering-places in the summer gave one continuous round of pleasure to Isabel, and, for a time, to her husband, whose delight was in his wife's happiness, and who smiled when others smiled on her. But all this was not the sort of life to restrain the evil and develop the good in any woman's character, still less in Isabel's.

Things went on smoothly enough for awhile, but it was not very long before even Mr. Rashleigh's eyes, the abnormally blind eyes of a loving husband, were opened to the fact that his charming wife had a peculiar, and to him unpleasant fancy for singling out some one of her bevy of followers to favor with special notice. Like a sensible husband, he then ventured to suggest to her, in the most

pacific manner imaginable, if she did not think she was a little, just a little incautious in permitting such marked devotion as certain gentlemen offered? "Really, my darling Bella, you should be more careful."

As this was the first of such remonstrances the darling Bella listened with supreme good-nature, and acknowledged, with the prettiest humility, that, "to be sure she had been imprudent, but she really had not thought of it, and it had not occurred to her what ill-natured people might say," and with a kiss she penitently promised to be more cautious in future. Now it was all very well, according to Isabel's moral philosophy, to be good-natured at the first remonstrance, and even when that was followed by a second, and that by a third. She had certain indistinct, confused notions about the duty of wifely obedience and humility, which vague notions, combined with her natural inclination to scoff inwardly at the idea of her husband seriously opposing her, were sufficient, for a time, to keep her temper beautifully lulled. But when these remonstrances became more frequent and took on the more irritating nature of actual chidings, why, then all such romantic stuff and nonsense as humility and obedience vanished from within that haughty head, and she openly braved him with scorn and disdain and tempestuous language. Thus came outbreaks, high words and quarrels between the two.

It was at this time that Mrs. Bell's arrival in Europe created a pleasant diversion in Isabel's course, for the occupation of chaperoning was for a time quite effectual in distracting her from her partiality for solitary admirers; whereat her husband subsided into quiescent happiness.

Mr. Rashleigh was gratified in being able, by his present courteous attentions to Mrs. Bell, to repay her for some of the care she had bestowed upon his darling Bella while under her guardianship. The trouble and anxiety occa-

sioned Mrs. Bell by her sometimes unruly ward, was a fact which she had never been over-anxious to conceal; and though before marriage Mr. Rashleigh had secretly hooted at the notion of his pet being the source of any special anxiety to her guardians, yet since their marriage, he had begun to appreciate the fact that such might possibly have been the case to a very considerable extent.

The course of their summer touring took them to Baden-Baden. Among the visitors at this fashionable resort was a young French marquis just escaped from the thralldom of the domestic nursery, by virtue of having, in the natural course of time, grown out of his minority, and thus come into the full and undisputed possession of his paternal estates. He had been the idol of his widowed mother, and the tyrant of the secluded household, and had fretted grievously at the apron-strings of his fond mamma. But he was now of age, and at legal liberty to wander unwatched into the wicked world. He was a sweet young man, with luxuriant down for a moustache, and coal-black eyes. Now Isabel had a fondness for fledglings just fresh from their mother's nest, and this young marquis with the incipient moustache and coal-black eyes, which were always roving save when fixed upon her, was just the sort of youth which she delighted to experiment upon in testing the strength and ardor of manly devotion.

Now, making love to married women is doubtless admirable training for very young men, as it teaches them the beautiful formulas of the all-absorbing passion, without any of the perplexing inconveniences of proposing matter of fact marriage. But this kind of schooling, though excessively delightful to the youthful lover and the artless, unsuspecting wife, is unfortunately not so fascinating to the less liberal-minded looker-on of a husband. Loving husbands are apt to be despots over their wives' affections, and Mr. Rashleigh was doubtless somewhat tyrannical in

desiring to have his wife's love centre exclusively upon himself. But Isabel had no notion of succumbing to any such inconvenient despotism, and when her husband undertook to find fault with her for her folly towards this infatuated young fool of a marquis, the fair but irate Isabel resorted to the only effectual defence known to her—tempestuous language, scorn and derision.

There were soon others of this little family circle whose happiness became slightly disturbed. They were expecting Mr. Bell's speedy arrival, and they all returned together to Paris to be ready to receive him. Suddenly, from some inexplicable motive, Mrs. Bell took the notion into her head to go on to Havre to meet her husband, instead of quietly awaiting him in Paris. She explained to Isabel upon the plea, that "such a proof of her loving anxiety to meet him would please dear Ernest so much!" She went and returned with her husband, to all appearance very happy with her "dear Ernest!" but the keen eyes of Isabel were not slow to discover a certain indefinable restraint and coolness between the husband and wife, which, considering the amount of loving anxiety and devotion previously displayed, was certainly unaccountable.

In fact, Mrs. Bell's little journey to Havre had not been productive of that perfect peace of mind which the mind had perhaps been led to anticipate. Not that her husband's arrival had not been conducted in a perfectly proper manner, and his meeting with her was really touching in its affectionate appreciation of her loving devotion. Everything was very correct. But Mrs. Bell had an unfortunate habit of reading the papers, and in the list of the steamer's passengers she saw the familiar names of General and Mrs. Hartt. This was right enough in itself, but during a few confidential remarks she incidentally happened to ask her husband if General Hartt were still in the army, or had he resigned? He was still

in the army. The name being once introduced, Mr. Bell, in his turn, casually observed that he believed the general and his wife were travelling somewhere on the continent, had been over several months; and had his wife chanced to meet them?

Now these two statements were simple and natural enough, each in itself, only they clashed. There could be no doubt whatever that Mr. Bell was telling the truth, only there was a discrepancy between him and the newspaper.

Affairs being in this condition with the family, it was not surprising that talk was soon made of a change in travelling. Mr. and Mrs. Bell wished to make a tour to Italy and Switzerland, and Mr. Rashleigh decided to take his wife home to America, where, he trusted, the change and domestic quiet after the excitement of the last few months, would produce a beneficial change in her disposition. Accordingly, in a few weeks, each couple had started on their separate journeys.

## CHAPTER XXXII.

TWO or three years of travel, during which he sought in new scenes to forget those of the past, brought Mr. Maltby back to his home in Copenhagen, tired of all that life gave him, and satiated with all things of the world save peace and happiness; of them he had never tasted. He obtained from his government a position which retained him at home, and again mingling in the society of his native city, he once more became its distinguished favorite. Society felt honored by his presence, and sought in return to crown him with its favors. The elegant, the courtly Mr. Maltby was the welcome guest wherever the beauty and grace of woman reigned supreme, and men felt honored by his acquaintance, even though they sometimes feared his friendship.

Thus in Copenhagen he had again met the fair Awilda Oxenstierna, now the countess Valdemar Struensee. He was well pleased to see her again, and eagerly sought a renewal of his previous acquaintance. Not that he took any special interest in her through affection, for the question of love had never come between them. He had merely cared for her as a convert to his wily doctrines, and now he simply had the curiosity to know if she had remained true to her conversion, or if, possibly, love and happiness had made her a trusting woman and confiding wife.

Carefully, with delicate caution, Mr. Maltby had gradually regained with the countess Struensee the same position of confidence he had held with Awilda Oxenstierna. It had not been a very difficult task, for a woman when unhappy soon accepts a confidant; and Mr. Maltby was such a very gentle, tender, and withal such a very manly confidant.

The story of her married life was soon known, for that which she did not tell he could readily conjecture for himself. The story was short, and as simple as the woman's own character. Filled with doubt and mistrust of all she had previously believed true and beautiful, she had feared to accept the professions of love which her husband had lavished upon her with tender caresses. Doubting him, she had repelled, and then, when the unhappy husband found that his efforts to win the heart of his young wife were unavailing, he had naturally ceased further striving, and had contented himself with courteous formalities. Kind and considerate he always was, and omitted no gentle attention which might soften her heart towards him. This change in her husband from the ardor of love to the mere tenderness of kindness did not please the jealous heart of the woman, who saw in the change but the realization of Mr. Maltby's dogma, that "the trammels of marriage destroy true love." And all this time this girlish, misguided wife had been learning to love the husband whose character she was forced to esteem, and whose love and gentleness to herself had finally roused the bewildering question, "if, perhaps, Mr. Maltby had not been wrong?"

Taking advantage of his former friendship, Mr. Maltby spared no efforts to reacquire all and more of his previous influence over her mind. He sought to tear away every particle of her noble and innocent faith in truth and purity;

and by the very trust in her woman's nature which he was destroying, she believed him.

And for what object did he so strive to accomplish all this? Not for love! There was no thought of unlawful love between them. It was to him simply the question of the ascendancy of one will over the other, the power of mind over mind, the submission of a weaker nature to a stronger. The woman was purity, and the man so evil that he found pleasure in the mere destruction of that which was created good.

One morning he had received a dainty, perfumed little note from the countess, begging him, as a friend, to come to her, for she was in great trouble, and wished his advice. He had hastened to her, to find her in tears.

"My dear countess, speak and tell me what is this great trouble? Do not hesitate to confide in me. I have come to help you, to serve you, and you can rely upon me as your firmest friend." His tones were earnest, but not so much so as to spoil the soft musical cadence of his voice. There was a peculiar charm in the man's voice, and he knew it, and never forgot it.

Slowly she dried her tears, and told her plaint. Her husband had informed her of a terrible change he was about to make. He said that he had noticed of late the increasing pallor of her cheek, the faded lustre of her eye, and her general appearance of ill health. He attributed the change to the irregularities of the life she led, and if possibly mental trouble shared the cause, he was well aware that their mutual relations were not of such a nature as to contribute to the happiness of either. Business of the government called him away into the interior, and he would be gone several weeks, perhaps months, and as he was not willing that his inexperienced young wife should remain unprotected, he intended taking her home to his mother's house, to remain there during his absence.

"And all this, Mr. Maltby, he told me without one regret for the separation he was making. This is but the commencement, I know, of a life to be spent apart. Now that he has taught me to love him better than life, now that I know the love a wife can give a husband, now his love is dead, and he leaves me to my misery alone. Oh, my heart will break; it will break!" The wretched woman sank back sobbing with her anguish.

Mr. Maltby was utterly at a loss to know what to reply. He saw clearly that there was but one path to consolation open to her, and that lay in approaching her husband with the truth. He knew perfectly well that her husband loved her as well or better than ever; and he could readily divine that this proposed separation was probably more for the purpose of easing his own misery of disappointed affection, than for any government affairs, and that a word from his wife would unite the two in happiness. But such a result was contrary to all his teachings, and such advice must be given only in the emergency of his eloquence failing to convince her of the folly of loving her husband. If his power over her were really gone, then he must yield, though still seeming to govern. Could no heart anguish for once make this man forget his wily, politic nature?

He spoke to her in soothing, compassionate tones, and then gently chided her for turning recreant to her faith.

"This sudden change surprises me the most, to find you forsaking those principles of stoicism with which I have hitherto sought to strengthen you in bearing the absence of your husband's love."

"Ah, Mr. Maltby," she sadly returned, "the instincts of my heart have taught me that you and I have both been wrong. It may be well for those who have never loved to doubt the power of love to bear the test of marriage, but believe me, that wedded love is the only love God



bleses. The love of man or woman which will not bear the relation of husband and wife, and enable them to endure together the trials of life, is not true love : it may be passion, but not love. Mr. Maltby, I do not wish to reproach you, but lately I could not help sometimes thinking, that if you had not opened my girlish eyes before I was married to what you thought the truth, I might have then loved my husband, and now been happy instead of miserable."

He started. Love, it would seem, was revealing to her more than one truth. He must not allow her to discover his errors.

"Would you reproach me for that which I did for your own happiness? I but pitied you in being led, a blinded sacrifice, to the marriage a mutual love had not blessed. I may not have been wise in unfolding to you such truths, but give me at least the credit of having done so for your peace and happiness." His voice was so melodious in its mild deprecation.

"My dear friend, do not think I reproach you; I know you meant well; it was only a mistake, that was all. You believed it to be the truth, and I believed it because you told it to me. But now that the error has been made, can you not tell me how to retrieve it? Can you not tell me how to win back my husband's love?"

"Yes! I know of one trial; if you think the prize worth the attempt." He spoke disdainfully, but she did not notice that.

"What is it?" she eagerly asked. "I would move the world for his love!"

"It may not require so much effort. It is simply to make of your husband the confidant by which you have honored me, and then see how he will receive the offer of your love. See if he is to the full as anxious for your love now as when he first sued so earnestly for it. Do

you think he would now welcome the gift? Recollect the husband is not always as grateful as the lover, and you might find your heart coldly and scornfully rejected. Better endure any agony in dignified silence, than risk the mortification of a scornful rejection." He poisoned his last words, and then rose to leave. He spoke a few more words of courteous farewell, which she did not seem to hear, and he was near the door when her voice arrested him.

"Mr. Maltby," and she rose now, and spoke in clear, unfaltering tones, "your last words have taught me a wholesome lesson. Why should I fear rejection by my husband? I remember, now, that when he offered me his love, I gave him the keen mortification of rejection, and in scorn and unkindness. Why should I fear such mortification to myself now? Is my heart purer and nobler than his, that I should shrink from enduring such pain as I have mercilessly inflicted upon him? If he will refuse my love he may, but he shall have at least the offer of it. My husband has given me a week in which to prepare for departure, and I have now determined that before that time has gone he shall know the love his wife bears him. And Mr. Maltby," she added, with a faint smile, "something whispers in my heart, even now, that he will not reject it. I know he will treat me kindly, and perhaps God will let me win back my husband, undeserving though I am."

Mr. Maltby gazed upon her, for a moment, with a feeling of adoration, for the hope of love had kindled an expression in that lovely face such as he had never had the power to summon there. Then, with a few false wishes of seeming kindness, he closed the door upon himself, and left her to her awakening hopes.



## CHAPTER XXXIII.

THERE were strange feelings at work within Mr. Maltby, as he left the presence of the woman whose life he had tried to pervert; a mental disturbance he had not known for years. He knew that he was baffled, and by the purity of a wife's love. He returned to his hotel a prey to that kind of dissatisfaction which is the hardest to bear, dissatisfaction with one's self.

In vain he tried to still tumult into peace. The excitement he had undergone had roused an agitation which would not be readily quelled. Rapidly his mind ran over the recent interview, and he ground his set teeth as he closed the review with "foiled." But what had foiled him? What power, what influence had been at work to resist him? Woman's purity? Bah! he did not believe in it. Then what power beyond his ken had so swayed this woman that in the very hour of victory she had slipped from his control? Searching for the answer led him into the past. He questioned the reason of the strong influence he had so long exercised over her. He was not prone to ask for the motives of a woman's submission to his sway, but unwonted disappointment made him curious, and he must know the reason of her yielding ere he could judge of her final resistance; if, indeed, that could be called resistance which was so gentle in act, so

ignorant of its own nature. It was a moment when, to realize the present, must be brought up the history of the past, and unthinking, unheeding of danger he began the retrospect, going backwards from the present, the hour of his defeat by a power he had always derided, the purity and strength of married love.

He considered how he had that hour gone to meet this woman with the joy of triumph in his heart, and had met defeat. He had gone to her trusting in his power to mould her to his will, to add to his list another victim to the irresistible force of mind, but had found the devotion of a wife the stronger. The hot blood mounted to his brow as he thought of how proudly he had faced her as conqueror, how entirely, yet by what simple means, he had been the conquered. And this power which had conquered him had done so in the guise of wifely love. Was there, then, truth in this married love? Could love not only bear the test of marriage, but under the bonds and trammels of wedded state bud and blossom into luxuriant growth? Were her words true that they had both been wrong, and that "wedded love was the only love God blesses?" But thought of God made him uneasy. Pshaw! the sickly flow of passion had made her sentimental! Were she right, he was wrong, and there was such a thing as strength in woman's virtue and wedded purity. But perhaps the cause was not wholly lost; there was yet time to convince her of her error, to withhold her from the husband she fancied she loved. She could not yet be quite insensible to his influence, she who had always listened in such gentle humility to his teachings. It could not be possible that now, after she had bent so weakly to his sway, had yielded so blindly to his will, had been led by his doctrines and guided her daily life by his principles, she should turn traitor to her allegiance, and forsake his rule for the love of a husband. He could not

forget, if she could, the many hours she had yielded a willing ear, even while he tortured her with the falsities his own evil life had taught him. 'Twas his own base experiences of the world and human nature, but sketched with most delicate touches for her mind, which had overclouded her womanly heart, and given misery where should have been joy. He had wielded this power once, he would wield it again. He would take again into his strong hand this weak little toy with which he had played, he would gently yet surely erase from her heart all prospect of future happiness, and then, if she would, she might sigh for the wedded bliss of which she had caught but a passing glimpse. Once more victory gleamed brightly before him, and he laughed in his low musical tones, but the melody was checked by sudden pain. Quickly he pressed his hand over his heart, a moment, and it was gone, and the color flowed back into his pallid face.

He had been warned by his physicians to guard against all undue emotion, and he was usually careful in preserving an even tenor of mind. He now endeavored to check the excitement of his thoughts by writing down a few leading notes for the speech he knew he would be called upon to make at a dinner to be given that evening, at the house of a brother statesman. But the paper remained blank, and the pen hung idly in his fingers, as his thoughts would revert to the woman he sought to break to mental subjugation.

He recalled the evening when, amidst the gayety of others' revelry, he had for hours whispered the falsities he had so beautifully glossed by delicate language; how her girlish mind, in its innocence, had shrunk from the scorching flame of his evil tongue, which yet enticed her by its melody; how she had listened, until forced to believe something of which she was ignorant: and well he could imagine the mad confusion which raged in her

pure mind when at last released from his hold. That was the last time he had seen her for years, for a few days afterwards he had sailed for America, there to meet again the family whose peace he had destroyed, the woman he had won and wronged. To her, too, he had gone in pride of triumph to meet defeat. She, too, had foiled him at the very moment he had been so certain of his prize. His pulse beat quick as he thought again of Clarine Livingston, of the girl who had been his victim, yet in her haughty dignity could trample upon his pride and crush it to the dust. But he had loved her, and so had almost pardoned her her victory. His hand wandered to his breast, and presently he drew forth a small jewelled case. He opened it, and Clarine's smiling face was before him. It was a picture he had persuaded her to have painted for him when he had first known her, and he had decked the image as he would herself, in choicest gems. Their brilliant sparkle flashed upon him as he gazed. It was a guileless, happy face, so very girlish and innocent. A bright smile hovered in the dimples about her rosy lips, a delicate blush tinted her cheeks, and the soft, lustrous eyes met his with such a clear, undaunted, roguish glance. She looked so bright, so happy, so very, very beautiful in her girlish loveliness. It was Clarine's face as he had first seen her, but not Clarine's face as he had parted from her. The face he had seen last was beautiful, but with a woman's matured beauty, and to him it had become pitifully cold and stern in its loveliness. He had seen that lovely countenance turned upon him with scorn and contempt stamped haughtily upon every delicate lineament. The face before him was bewitching in its joyous beauty; he had seen the same beauty with every line traced by misery. And he had wrought the change! A strange, painful sadness chilled him. This bright, guileless face seemed reproaching him for its lost happiness. Something this

morning had reminded him of Clarine; what was it? Oh, a tone in the countess' voice, as she so gently chided him for having misled her! There was a plaintive wail in her accents which recalled the sad, simple tones he had sometimes heard in Clarine's voice in her suffering. He had often noticed or fancied a resemblance between the two women. There was much of the same simplicity of mind, the same womanly gentleness in the one as in the other. In the soft, womanly speech, or lightsome laugh of the countess, he was vaguely reminded of the still sweeter toned voice he had loved so well to hear, the voice which had borne enchantment for him in its wondrous melody. How distinctly he recalled the first evening he had listened to her entrancing song. These same beautiful eyes had then been upraised to him glowing dark and lustrous with emotion, while the last words of impassioned love still hovered in the angelic harmony of her lips. 'Twas then he had offered her his hand in friendship, and she had accepted it. They had named their mothers in heaven, and the vow was plighted in their memory. And she had taunted him with having broken that vow drawn from heaven; with having polluted the name of his sainted mother by falsehood, by betrayal of trusting innocence! had dared to tell him that he had degraded his mother's memory to the baseness of low passion! She had taunted him with having done all this with the name of the mother he so idolized, so revered, whose memory was sacred to him!

The wild thoughts from the past were crowding upon his mind with torture unbearable. He started up and paced the room in passionate excitement. The crimson blood dyed cheek and brow, the veins of his forehead swelled into cords, and the drops of moisture stood from every pore. Anger rose at the recollections, and his hands clenched, and his teeth were set as he paced with firmer

step. Returning to his desk, he unlocked a small drawer, and took thence a little mother-of-pearl case. He opened it. His mother's portrait, set with pearls, emblems of purity; for he would that all connected with her memory should be pure. He gazed at it earnestly, lovingly: it was such a gentle, motherly face. He placed the two miniatures side by side, and it so happened that as he placed them the bend of the two heads was each towards the other. He looked long at the two pictures, the one radiant with youth and happiness, the other fading into old age, but with the flush of a beauty not yet gone softening every feature. The mother's face turned towards Clarine's, was very close to her, and—was it fancy?—her eyes turned upon him with a sorrowful, pleading look, with mild reproach in their depths. His gaze fastened upon his mother's eyes, and still that strange pleading to him, reproach for the past, pleading for Clarine. "Mother," he softly murmured, "I did love her! I would have made her my wife!" A strange, weird influence possessed him. Taking up Clarine's portrait he turned it out of the case, took up his pen, and wrote on the back,—"*Clarine Rivington. The woman I would have made my wife.*" Then reset it in the case. He might have said the *only* woman he would have made his wife.

Seeming satisfied, he rose and again paced the room, but with more quiet mien. More kindly feelings filled his heart towards Clarine. He thought of her as he had first known her, in all the fascination of her youthful innocence, in the charm of her girlish grace and gentleness, before she had learned the language of scorn, the bearing of haughty pride. He felt that he might forgive her now for her disdain and contempt, for had he not taught it all to her? Was it not true, as she had so fearlessly, so bitterly told him, that he had ruthlessly robbed her of all that is held dear in woman? had destroyed life in its budding?

had blighted the past and left the future a dreary waste ! had taken happiness and given misery ? And so, having done all this, he felt that he might forgive her for having treated him with scorn and contumely. He felt sorry for the girl whose young life he had ruined. A sadness of regret weighed upon him, and at this moment he wished it were possible to undo the past. At this moment he would have given treasures to have been able to restore to Clarine Rivington the innocent purity he had destroyed. But it was too late. Ah, those dirge-like words, too late ! Too late, to give back stolen virtue ! Too late, to undo the past and make of Clarine Rivington other than the proud, stern, utterly miserable woman into which he had moulded her. Too late ! The words kept mocking him. Too late ! He tried to shut out the haunting whisper, but the taunting echoes kept on their low mocking. A cold dampness came out upon his brow, and his hands clenched in an icy clasp. A mysterious fear held him in its grasp. He tried to shake it off, to force his thoughts away from the remembrance of the woman who was now teaching him the full meaning of that dread word—remorse. He tried to shake off her chilling memory. He thought again of the countess. But even here what foul purpose met his newly aroused fear ? Would he rob her, too, of her purity ? destroy forever her peace of mind ? dash from her the love about to bless her life ? Purity ! Love ! Ha ! ha ! had he not always laughed them to scorn ? All his life long he had been a sceptic in woman's virtue, in the purity of love. An infidel to truth and honor, his disbelief had been his creed ; he had never hesitated at the destruction of that which he held in derision ; and was he now to be deterred from bending another woman to his will, by this vague, foolish dread which had fastened its clammy hold upon him ? But the chilling, uneasy weight would not be shaken off. He returned to his desk.

The two pictures still lay before him. And now they both looked reproach ; the one by its gentle sadness, the other by its very joyous smiling. Those speaking eyes appealed to him for mercy, for pity. He thought of his mother, and knew that there was purity in woman ; of Clarine, and knew—that there was agony in woman, when that purity was defiled. With those two faces before him he would have struck out the bitter past ; would have undone his wrong : remorse was working repentance. Wild, tumultuous emotion swelled his heart. The two faces blended and dazzled him. That strange heaviness weighed with frightful oppression. Still that reproach, that appeal for another woman in those weird eyes. Suddenly, with a vehement gesture, he clasped the two pictures in his hands, he rose to his feet, and in a voice of appealing agony, he cried,—“Mother ! Clarine ! for your sakes I will spare her !”

Scarcely had the cry passed his lips, when the pictures fell from his loosened grasp, he sank into his chair, and a livid pallor spread over his face as his head fell forward upon his outstretched arm.

Remorse had seized another victim ; repentance had come too late, save to plead before the Throne of Mercy. Mr. Maltby was dead. With him all power for good or evil in this world had ceased.

The countess, true to her noble resolve, had sought her husband, and with a blushing smile lighting up her beautiful features, had said : “Valdemar, tell me truly. Is it government sending you away, or your wife ? Would my love make you happy enough to stay ?” He looked down into those beaming eyes : they told her story plainer than her lips could have spoken. And clasped in her husband's arms, his warm kisses pressing her lips, she knew her prophecy was right ; her love was not rejected.

When Mr. Maltby's heir took possession, he found

among the effects the miniature of a beautiful maiden lying open by the side of its richly jewelled case. As he would have reset it, he noticed the handwriting of the dead. "Clarine Rivington. The woman I would have made my wife." He gazed reverently upon its beauty; and then the portrait of Clarine Rivington found place among the gems of the Maltby family.

## CHAPTER XXXIV.

FIVE years had elapsed since Clarine and her father had commenced their housekeeping, started life anew together, and in this lapse of time few changes had occurred other than are made by the simple growth of events. The relative positions were not altered, simply modified. Between the two time had brought about a natural oblivion of the past, and there was no longer any evidence of mutual consciousness in their outward demeanor. All reflections upon the past were now buried in the secrecy of their own hearts.

But Clarine's state of mind, during these years, was pitiable beyond expression. The mental anguish which had so tortured and crazed her that she scarce knew which she dreaded more, life or death, had gradually worn itself out, and she had sunk into an apathy far more dangerous to her moral state than any active suffering. She had long since ceased to battle with her trouble, had given up the fight with the foes of the past which kept thronging upon the pathway to that future which had become darkened by the heavy cloud of sin; and then memory sullenly became hardened to its burden. Helplessly she resigned herself to the bitterness of a hopeless woe, crushed by the past, not a glimpse of hope for the future, only an abject acceptance of the miserable present.

Such a state is hard for any mind to endure, harder, perhaps, for a woman than a man, for a man is resigned to despair, a woman battles with it: a man suffers and easily gives up all as lost; a woman suffers, yet struggles with hopes for the better. But when a woman does cease to hope, to struggle for the better, then her despair sinks to depths which man dies before reaching. Clarine had ceased to hope, to struggle; turmoil had ended, but had been succeeded by a calm more fearful than any strife. And in the utter listlessness, the cold indifference with which she now moved through the routine of life, it was difficult to tell whether feeling were dead or but sleeping. From this mental torpidity she had been roused but once.

One day, among a package of letters delivered her by the European mail, was one with the direction in an unknown handwriting. The letter within was in the same hand as the address, but it enclosed another, in sealed envelope, in the well known writing of Mr. Maltby. The former proved to be from Mr. Maltby's solicitor, informing her first of the circumstances of Mr. Maltby's death. And then went on to state, in legal technicalities, that about a year previous to date Mr. Maltby had placed in his care the enclosed letter, together with government bonds to the amount of fifty thousand dollars, with sealed instructions for their disposal at his death. Upon opening these directions, he had found that these bonds were subject to the order of Miss Clarine Rivington, of New York, to whom he was to write accordingly and await her further instructions.

Slowly, like one dazed by a swoon, Clarine broke the seal of Mr. Maltby's letter, opened it, and read as follows:—

"Clarine, my darling, my only beloved one! For the last time I may address you from the deep affection of my heart, for when your eyes rest on

these words, I, Clarine, shall be dead and in my grave. I know you will not mourn for me, for in your heart there is no love to impart sorrow for my loss; indeed, you may, perhaps, be glad of my death, for it may lift a burden from your spirit: and possibly, in some moment of humility, I may be able to rejoice that thoughts of me, even as dead, can give you any happiness.

"My dear child, have you never yet had a regret for having coldly cast my love and devotion away from you forever? Have you, my darling, never wished to recall me to your feet, and again bestow the love you so pettishly withdrew? I know, my child, that you do regret me in your secret heart, and when I think of your loving me still, I can forgive the foolish, the worse than perverse obstinacy which led you in your pride and scorn to drive me away from you. But I will no longer reproach you, my child. In a hasty moment, when your mind was weakened by physical debility, with the usual impetuosity of woman's caprice, you allowed yourself rashly to sacrifice all the advantages of wealth and position which my hand and love could have given you; and also by the manner of your refusal prevented me from offering the services of a friend, should the time ever come when you would need them. But when you did this, you did all that you could do in reference to your own loss; you reached the utmost limit of what you could forbid my effecting in your own behalf: but one thing you could not prevent; you could not deprive me of the right to befriend my child, our child, Clarine. And this right, the right of caring for the future of my child, I shall now exercise.

"I have this day deposited in the hands of my solicitor, Mr. Liljegren, certificates of government bonds to the amount of fifty thousand dollars, with full and explicit sealed instructions, to be opened at my death, to hold them to your order; and this letter will also be deposited with him, together with full directions for your address. This money you will take in charge for your child, that it may not, in addition to its curse of birth, know also the curse of poverty.

"I scarcely expect you to credit my present act to a sense of justice, so I will own that it proceeds more from an impulse. Your memory haunts me and racks me day and night, and perhaps my present act will appease and silence that which moralists call conscience and remorse. I have for some time intended, when my child was old enough to need it, to remit to you the present sum, in order that her education and future needs of life should be well cared for. But the other day an uneasy pain about my heart reminded me more vividly of the never absent knowledge, that I bear within the secrets of my heart that which may terminate my life at any moment; and then I resolved to make timely provision, that death may not find my wishes undone. The principal part of my property depends upon the estates, which of course are entailed and go to my heir, my cousin Frederic. To allay any natural apprehension on your part, I assure you that every precaution has been taken to prevent any questions arising as to the



disposal which I have made of the present sum. It will remain a professional secret with my solicitor. I would advise you to send for the money, and then deposit it in English or American securities.

"Finally, Clarine, what farewell message is fitting for one lying in the silent grave to one still living? For I do not forget that when your mind dwells upon these, my last words to you, my senses will be closed in their last sleep; the dumb grave will cover me and all my burden of sins. Clarine, my darling,—for you are mine,—the love which once filled your gentle spirit for me, gave me a claim upon your heart and memory which even death cannot sever, for no woman can ever entirely erase from her inner consciousness the image of the man towards whom her heart first turned in its tenderness,—my Clarine, then; let my last words, the breathings of my unfettered spirit, be the assurances of my undying love; undying, for my love for you, my own, will soar with my soul to the life beyond the grave. And would that in dying it were in my power to take that all-absorbing love from my soul, and implant it in your own, that it might thus be quickened into a life of beauty, and permeate your being with the thrill of an unknown joy. But love is not a thing which we can give and take; it is not something which we can handle in substance as other bodily forms: love is a celestial, divine, primitive essence, which only the mind can give, and which consequently cannot be offered as a material matter. There is left me but one wish, one request. I would ask you, my dear child, to forgive me. Forgive me the blight I have cast upon your young life; forgive me all the suffering, the misery I have caused you. In life, I know I have only your scorn, your hatred, your contempt: but when you know that death has removed the ever bitter consciousness of my presence in the world, then let gentler feelings soften the resentment of your heart, and think of me in kindness. When I am dead, then my Clarine, my darling, say in your heart—'I forgive him.'

Faithfully yours, only yours,

In life and in death,

SEGISMUND MALTBY."

Clarine read the letter through like one in a dream, through it all conscious of but one idea—*Mr. Maltby was dead*. And it was certainly not sorrow which sent that first faint thrill through her heart.

It was certainly a very curious letter: one calculated to rouse in Clarine all the worst feelings which had ever agitated her heart towards the writer. Every word, every turn and change of sentiment was so thoroughly characteristic of the man. None knew so well as he so to blend

love and reproach with the sarcasm of his own bitterness, that every word of love should fall a drop of gall into the cup he was filling to its overflow. All the old hatred rose fiercely to the surface as she noted every word of that mocking yet truthful tenderness. For his gift she had then no gratitude; she thought it but just and right. With a judgment warped by suffering, she overlooked the fact that the gift was doubtless dictated as much by kindness to herself as from duty towards his child; and that he had availed himself of this delicate mode of imposing upon her indirectly that which he well knew she would never have accepted simply for herself. But it was not then, in the hour of vivid, racking memories, that she could credit him with any goodness in his acts, ascribe any purity to his motives. Yet in her hard censure, her unrelenting severity, she did him injustice, for the man was not all bad. There are, indeed, few so base as not to possess some redeeming qualities, for in this world of humanity nature is distributive, not concentrative. In no one person does she confine the entirety of good or evil. She distributes her labors and her laborers, and among her workmen there are few so good as not to bear an alloy of evil, none so evil as not to have a redeeming good. Did only goodness exist, charity would be idle, and it was Sin which gave Mercy to the world. As for his plea for pardon! Her lips closed tight with a drawn look of inflexible determination, and her features paled and hardened into a stern, pitiful rigidity, as her eyes flashed over that prayer from the dead: there was no pardon there; only pain and scorn.

There had been one source of uneasiness in Clarine's mind which Mr. Maltby's gift had entirely set at rest. It had always worried her to reflect that in rearing her child as her brother's child she made it co-heiress to his property. She could not content herself with allowing this



fraud upon her brother's child, this cheat upon his property, this taking a base advantage of his death. It was a consideration which each and all had most unaccountably overlooked in the first place; it not occurring to any one until too late. The oftener she turned the difficulty over in her mind, the more insuperable it appeared, but now Mr. Maltby's legacy solved the long perplexed question. Her child would now have an equal portion with her brother's child, and no fraud committed. Soon the excitement into which she had been roused passed away, and Clarine's thoughts settled back again into the old, dull routine, and feeling subsided into its monotone.

For the first year of her changed life Clarine had been inclined to avoid society, but now she no longer either sought or shunned it. In former days she had been the goddess to whom had been offered all the incense of fashionable adoration, and now she was still the favorite queen, though more youthful aspirants struggled to usurp her dominion. But Clarine's beauty, unlike some women's whose loveliness grief and secret trouble roughen into harsh lines, was softened and beautified by her sorrow, and her perturbed heart hid itself behind a mist of subdued lustre,—as the rose is more delicately lovely beneath its veil of half-concealing moss,—and in the gentler tone imparted to her somewhat too haughty features she was far more winning and attractive than all the blossoms which had but just budded into beauty. And to a more refined loveliness, she also added the greater attractions of maturer accomplishments, more studied wit, more elegant fascinations, and a more womanly grace, which, above all, was her most potent charm. Other competitors entered the lists and struggled hard for the prizes which society accorded her without effort of her own. Others strove by art to appear to be what she simply was by nature, and while they fought and were de-

feated, she remained upon the throne she had never exerted herself to obtain. Clarine Rivington was ruler over hearts only by the gifts of nature, for whatever burden of sin she might lay upon her shoulders, it was impossible for her ever to be otherwise than beautiful, graceful, and womanly.

Is there, perhaps, wonder that the transgressor could be so beautiful, with a soul so blackened by guilt? Is there wonder that all the graces, all the loveliness of a perfect womanhood could bud and blossom over a heart withering beneath the decaying mould of sin? So should there be wonder that the stately oak rears its proud head in dignity, and spreads in beauty its green and flourishing branches, though its centre is riven by the storm, its heart charred by the fiery tongue of destroying lightning.

Clarine well knew her power, and wielded it with unsparing hand. She nervously clutched at the homage rendered her, for it helped her to wear with easier art the mask over her inner self. She was willing to laugh with others' laugh, to jest with others' jest, was willing to be gay with the gayest, to appear all that she seemed, for it helped to advance the drag of existence. But under all the outer brightness of her life, and beneath the delusive glitter of her sparkling veil of animation, her heart knew its own dulness.

There was one custom which Clarine had by degrees forced herself to resume. It was her old habit of going to church. Since that morning when her father had levelled at her with such deadly force the sermon which had trampled down every holy aspiration in her humbled soul, she had studiously remained at home while others betook themselves to the temple of divine worship, unheeding the displeasure at her conduct, which her father took no pains to conceal. It was not until finally roused by the censorious comments of numbers of the parishioners into real-

izing the necessity of preserving appearances before the world that she yielded to the dread of slanderous, gossiping tongues, an outward conformity to the rules and regulations of her church. Once more, as in happier girlhood, she regularly occupied her place in church, and mechanically moved her lips in praise to her Creator, or bowed her head in prayer to her God, with the same cold apathy which characterized all her acts. But the world expected religion in a clergyman's daughter, and she was willing to satisfy the world with the outward seeming.

Mr. Rivington watched his daughter's course during these years with painful uneasiness. He saw that her outward course of life was as simple as though no blot of sin obscured the beauty of her nature; that in all visible things her actions were as even as though no shadow from the past obscured her footsteps; that her demeanor was as tranquil as though no pain-racked memories disturbed the composure of her thoughts; that her deportment was as cheerful as though her heart had never been taught that joy could not live where sorrow reigned. And seeing this he marvelled, and marvelling, thus he reasoned:—"How cold, and hard, and dead must be her heart!"

## CHAPTER XXXV.

MISS RIVINGTON was giving her second and final grand reunion of the season. It was a very gay and fashionable affair, but being at Mr. Rivington's house, a clergyman's dwelling, it was spoken of as merely a social gathering of parishioners; though wherein it differed from any of the fashionable private assemblages it would have been difficult to determine. But there is a great deal to be effected by sugar-coating a name; and thus the clergyman's daughter, under the meekly-sounding titles of "social gatherings," could give gay reunions which were acknowledged to be the most elegant of the season. True, Miss Rivington, with great moderation, limited herself to just two of these very grand affairs, the one shortly after the commencement, the other towards the close of the season, the interim being filled with 'quiet evenings at home;' and the invitations to these "quiet evenings" being sparingly distributed, were always eagerly sought after, and were consequently at a premium in the fashionable business world; society kindly overlooking the fact of such things being done in their clergyman's house.

As to Mr. Rivington's permission being sought or given, he had not only come to be content that Clarine should rule his household, but when it came to his own affairs he

was as easily deceived by a name as many a less righteous person. And while his congregation continued to be the largest and wealthiest in the city he was content, and willingly attributed the cause to his own eloquence in the pulpit; for did not each and all of the parishioners assure him over and over again of the immense amount of good effected by his sermons? Such praise he received from the rich; and from the poor he knew he had their blessings, for, to his credit be it said, not a day passed without his visiting them in their homes; and with his own eyes he saw that their comforts were provided, and with his own hands he distributed the charities of the rich. And thus knowing that the poor were well cared for, he may not have been so very wrong, if, with some indifference, he left the rich to take care of themselves.

Clarine was preparing to descend to the drawing-room to await her guests, when a servant brought her a message from her father, that he wished to see her in the library. Returning word that she would wait upon him in a few moments, she hastened her toilet, and was soon ready. Gathering up her gloves, her fan, and one of those delicate cobweb simulations which accompany the flirting fan, she descended the stairs and approached the library, her face gradually assuming, as she neared the door, the cold, impassive expression now habitual to it when in her father's presence. Her father was not alone, for a strange gentleman rose to receive her. A pleasant smile parted her lips as she bowed in recognition of his presence.

"Clarine, my dear," said her father, taking her hand and drawing her nearer to his side—and the action, though slight, sent a faint thrill through her, for it was a familiarity of affection which for long years he had not bestowed upon her—"this is my old friend, Dr. Purdon."

"Dr. Purdon!" she exclaimed, with sudden animation. And there must have been magic in the name, for

only some weird charm could have so completely exorcised the severe stateliness of her dignity, and wrought in its stead the exquisite grace of manner, as, with the prettiest, most womanly little movement, she put out both her hands to meet his. "My father's friend-physician! This is indeed a pleasure, and doubly welcome from being so long delayed."

Her rich musical tones gave sweeter emphasis to her warmth of greeting, while the quick blush shaded to a deeper rose the delicately tinted cheek, darkening the glow of her lustrous eyes, and the soft smile chased the dimples about her curving lips, until, as Dr. Purdon respectfully raised her hand to his lips, and responded, he scarcely knew how, to her greeting, he thought bewilderingly that he had never until now known beauty in woman. This, then, this lovely being, this brilliant woman, was the "little girl" Mr. Rivington had talked so much about, and whom he had always figured in his own thoughts as a plain, simple little maiden, whose beauty was only seen by the idolatrous eyes of a doting father. But this woman, he felt, could claim other idolatry than a parent's. And as his heart glowed beneath the gleaming of her melting eyes, as his nerves thrilled to the cadence of her sweet-toned voice, he felt that he, too, could be the slave to bend in adoration before this exquisite life-image of beautiful womanhood.

A few minutes Clarine remained, and then excused herself to receive her guests.

Entering the drawing-room she found she had to apologize with as much grace as could be for her delay, for guests had already gathered. With the ease of the accomplished hostess, she soon started the pleasant hum of conversation, and as the rooms rapidly filled, mirth and gayety prevailed. Wit and beauty, fashion and intellect, had each its votaries and leaders; and as Clarine stood

surrounded by women whose beauty and culture graced the circles in which they moved, by men whose intellects guided the genius of the day, by fashion, art and science; as she felt that hers was the power which had summoned these varied elements to blend into one harmonious whole, she was proud of the sceptre she wielded so well, proud of the success the scene before her proved to be hers. And every now and then, she quietly left her guests and visited the library to see her father's guest; each time to be greeted with a smile and some kind word from her father, as he would turn from his friend to her with a kindly inquiry of her evening's entertainment. And once her father had brought Dr. Purdon into the drawing-room to gaze for a few minutes upon the pleasant scene before them.

Clarine was happy this evening, or more nearly happy than she had been in years. Happy, not only because her social effort was crowned by brilliant success, for such cause of happiness she frequently had; but a deeper cause was at work, giving that tremulous fluttering at her heart, the deepened glow in her eyes, the rosier hue to her cheek. She carried within the consciousness of the loving clasp of her father's hand, as he had that evening drawn her to his side, of kind words spoken in the old, affectionate tones. "My child," "my love," were pleasant sounds to haunt her ears; their music made sweet chiming in her heart. This was the happiness which glowed in the unwonted animation of her features, which intoned the melody of her laughter.

When, somewhat later in the evening, Clarine received the congratulatory adieus of her departing guests, her heart throbbed with exultation at the social triumph she felt she had achieved. She knew she had eclipsed all past efforts, and added the crowning glory to her many brilliant successes. That night had added to her list of

conquered many a heart enchained, captive to her charms it had also added to another list many a heart rancorous with envy of her triumph. The woman whom many men admire, many women will hate; and only the graceful suavity with which Clarine bore her honors saved her from the annihilating warfare of maligners. That night, as admirers and enviers alike beheld the brilliant edifice so skilfully reared, none could peer within to view the hideous inner structure of misery. As they gazed upon the pinnacle of happiness, they saw not the covered base of sin.

In the few years which had elapsed since the Rashleighs returned from Europe, Mrs. Rashleigh's character, I fear, had not improved one whit, but she had been obliged, or deemed it prudent, to submit for a time to her husband's newly exercised authority, and thus their life had gone on rather more smoothly. Upon their return from Europe Mr. Rashleigh had insisted upon going to house-keeping, instead of continuing their wandering, homeless life of travel, trusting that the quiet routine of a strictly domestic life might restore their somewhat shattered happiness. And for awhile, Isabel, with a really charming obedience, assented to the new state of affairs. To increase the measure of established harmony, and to unite more fondly husband and wife in renewed bonds of love, a child came to bless their peace. At first Isabel was very happy over her baby, and found pleasure in decking its infantile form in delicate garments, in exhibiting her boy to admiring friends, and in listening to the praises of his loveliness which were certain to greet her ear; for who would be so hard-hearted as to withhold praises from a mother's baby? And Edward Rashleigh, in the new-born pleasures of a father's pride, was again the adoring husband, and abjuring the past, again crowned his wife with the flowers of loving confidence. This renewed confidence Isabel en-

couraged by every art within her power, and by degrees her husband became once more a happy man.

As for herself, there was not sufficient womanly depth and virtue in her character to enable her to enjoy in all their purity the pleasures of motherhood; and scarcely had the little fellow learned to toddle along by himself, and to busy his baby fingers in mischief, than the charm and novelty of motherhood was dispelled, and the old wilfulness returning, Isabel sought other excitement than the sweet monotony of domestic concord.

Affairs in their domestic circle glided on smoothly enough for a year or more, until some of his wife's old-fashioned flirtations roused the patient and forbearing Mr. Rashleigh again to interfere; and when his remonstrances began to be troublesome,—and really these constant interferences from an old foggy husband were not to be endured,—Isabel undertook to carry into execution a new manœuvre to check his rising wrath.

She commenced suffering from nervous attacks, low spirits, somewhat hysterical, combined with torturing headaches. The symptoms bore enough of the genuine stamp to deceive a credulous husband, for low spirits, with tears and hysterics, can easily be assumed by most women; and as for the flushed face usually accompanying a violent headache, why, the free use of a very hot foot-bath, and a little rubbing of the face with a brush, will produce feverish enough symptoms to suit most cases.

The attacks at first were, of course, but slight, gradually, however, increasing in severity until medical advice became necessary. And it was on this latter point that Mrs. Rashleigh displayed her diplomatic talents in full force.

Mr. Rashleigh was, naturally enough, very averse to calling in any other than their old family physician, but his wife insisted upon having Dr. Tillman, urging in his favor that so many of her friends, who had been afflicted

with attacks similar to her own, had been relieved and cured by him, she evidently had such implicit confidence in his skill above all others, and finally refused so point blank to see Dr. Warren again, that her husband yielded, as the best of husbands will sometimes do, and Dr. Tillman was meekly sent for. He came, prescribed, and Mrs. Rashleigh became magically better, to the intense relief and delight of her docile and tractable husband.

After Mrs. Rashleigh had suffered under several returns of these nervous attacks, and Dr. Tillman attending her upon each occasion had invariably relieved her, Mr. Rashleigh's confidence in his skill very much increased, and he began to think, and soon concluded, that certainly Dr. Warren could not have understood his wife's case. At this desirable juncture in the husband's mind, Dr. Tillman, in a confidential communication, informed Mr. Rashleigh, as his matured and deliberate opinion, that, "Sufficient opportunity having now been afforded him to study and examine Mrs. Rashleigh's case, he was prepared to say that, in his judgment, it was one requiring considerable care; that she was of a peculiarly sensitive and susceptible temperament, her nerves, in particular, being very delicate, and requiring gentle management; that there was a general lack of tone to the system, owing to the existing nervous derangement; but that there was no need of being alarmed, for the present, for *the circulation of her blood was perfect*; indeed, he had never had a patient in whom the circulation of blood was so perfectly established. He advised, as general remedies, gentle but regular excitement; to avoid, as much as possible, opposing any special wishes she might chance to express; occasional travel, that her mind might have the benefit of change of scene, in summer, to some of the different mineral springs suited to her case; but, above all, to keep her mind pleasantly occupied."

Truly a diagnosis worthy of a medical attendant upon fashionable women.

After this very solemn expression of medical opinion, emanating from a physician of such rare and extraordinary attainments as his diagnosis proved, could Mr. Rashleigh, or any man with a particle of humanity in his breast, do otherwise than submit to conjugal mandates? Certainly not.

Perhaps in the practice of these wifely wiles, at which I have barely hinted, Isabel was advised by her very sagacious friend, Mrs. Bell. I do not know positively that this was the case, or that the decorous Mrs. Bell aided and abetted the renewed rebellion, but I do know that the two women were at this time very close friends, united, possibly, by a certain unity of pursuits. There was, in fact, a friendly alliance between them, both offensive and defensive, their full forces being actively opposed to marital tyranny. Mrs. Bell may have been inclined, at first, to give Mrs. Rashleigh the benefit of her own wisdom garnered from the experiences of years, and would willingly have instructed her upon many nice points of matrimonial economy important for wives of an independent turn of mind to know. But if she had any such vague ideas floating loosely through her mind, they were soon scattered, not only from vivid recollections of their former Parisian life, but also from a clearer knowledge of her colleague's character, derived from prolonged intimacy. She abstained from any endeavors to impart information, simply from a certain innate conviction that it would prove but a modern case of Herod-out-Heroded, but another instance of the teacher taught. Now this closely linked friendship was doubtless very delightful and satisfactory to the immediate participators therein, but whether equally delightful and satisfactory to the respective husbands not participating, is a totally irrelevant question.

## CHAPTER XXXVI.

ONE bright, sunny morning Mrs. Bell had called for Mrs. Wilson in her carriage, and the two had been driving for some time, when Mrs. Bell suddenly proposed that they should drive to Clarine's, and surprise them for luncheon. Mrs. Wilson willingly acceded, expressing some curiosity to see their guest, Dr. Purdon, whom she had heard was at Mr. Rivington's.

Arriving at Mr. Rivington's they found the family just going to luncheon, and with a merry jest at being just in time, and laughing at the humorous rebuke their friendly audacity received, they all proceeded together to the dining-room, where the next half hour was spent in doing ample justice to the tempting repast which Mrs. Mordaunt's housewifely skill had spread before them.

The luncheon over, they all retired to the drawing-room, the ladies not even excusing Mr. Rivington and Dr. Purdon, though they had been ungallant enough to plead permission to return to the consideration of certain abstruse scientific questions, which, they stoutly maintained, had been the staple of their dialogue before interrupted by the unwelcome summons to commonplace eating. Upon being urged to give a brief synopsis of their discussion, Mr. Rivington meekly referred to Dr. Purdon, but he modestly declined, humbly begging to be excused, upon the plea that he feared he was not sufficiently conver-



sant with the subject to be able to explain it with the requisite lucidity ; which diffident excuse Mr. Rivington unhesitatingly interpreted as meaning simply that he thought they could not understand anything half so intellectual. For which barbarous sentiment, and as punishment for their scepticism, both gentlemen were condemned to devote the succeeding hours to their unintellectual society.

Mrs. Bell was easily persuaded by Clarine to dismiss her carriage, and order its return later, and then they all gathered around the blazing fire, which cast a cheerful glow and genial warmth over the room, both glow and warmth made doubly attractive by the chilling, darkening gloom which had overcast the morning's sunshine, and with the rising wind premonished a storm.

The children were sent for, and with them had to come their inseparable companion, a large dog, of the Newfoundland and St. Bernard breed, which Mr. Rivington had bought for them when it was yet a pup, and which had thrived and grown to a goodly size under their worrying love and tormenting tutelage. Dog and children came bounding in high romping glee into the room, and, their noise being gently checked by Clarine, immediately took up what seemed to be, from the readiness with which they assumed it, their customary position upon the broad thick rug before the fire. Tiger lazily extended his full length, blinking philosophically at the blaze, while the two children squeezed him, pinched him, pulled him, choked him, and generally rolled over him. All of which proceedings were evidently according to Tiger's intense satisfaction as well as their own delight.

The group around the fire formed a most pleasing domestic picture. On the one side of the hearth, against the relief of the pure white marble mantel, sat Mr. Rivington, his hale and hearty countenance

beaming with affable good nature, his hair well silvered with the gray hue of years, for he had nearly numbered his three score ; but the ruddy glow had not yet left his cheek, nor the brilliancy of animation ceased to flash from his sparkling eye. Opposite sat his guest and friend, Dr. Purdon ; in the early prime of life, an easy, well formed figure, a well balanced, intellectual head and face, and an eye reflecting grave thought from its depths, and a bearing of the most affable suavity, heightened in effect by the certain professional dignity which seems to be in the very nature of medical men. Next her father sat Clarine, half inclined towards the children, in the full gleam of the bright red firelight which played wooingly in the light and shade of her waving hair, flickered upon the pure white brow softly indented by the impress of thought, touched with a warmer blush the soft hued cheek, danced amid the dimples of rounded chin and curved lips, then sparkled in the jewels of the gently folded hands, until it sank imbedded in the crimsoned folds of her flowing robe. Further back, where the fire's red glare had to seek her quiet figure, sat the dark eyed, raven haired Mrs. Wilson. She had up Clarine's basket of worsted work, which the children had got hold of that morning and tossed into a pile of beautiful confusion, and was sorting and arranging the varied materials ; while every now and then she sent a flashing glance from her bright black eyes upon Mrs. Bell, who had seated herself next Dr. Purdon, and while engrossing the main part of the conversation, had carefully arranged the relative juxtaposition of herself and the fire to such nicety that though its beauty-enhancing light played to advantage upon the dimpled hand uplifted to hold the silken fringed screen, and touched with softening warmth the well rounded arm from which the open sleeve fell gracefully back, it yet could not rest with too heated ca-



ress upon the delicate bloom of her tender complexion. While in the centre, loveliest of the group, were the children and their shaggy friend. Serious, dignified, quiet Jeannette; gay, romping Madge—Margaret, as Clarine had named her, but Margaret seemed such an absurdly sedate name for such a merry little sprite, that everybody soon changed it to the more characteristic Madge. Beautiful Madge, with the golden, clustering curls and roguish blue eyes, teasing with naughty persistence the calm and well behaved Jeannette, who liked to play quietly and properly, and would bear with her little playmate until she found that patience had ceased to be a virtue, and then would give vent to such a sudden burst of reproof as would effectually intimidate and silence for awhile the readily frightened Baby Madge. And big, black Tiger, with his handsome marks of orange upon forehead, breast and paws, so lazily submitting to the pullings and mauulings of his spoiled mistresses, and wagging and knocking his tail upon the warm rug as he now and then received a playful touch from Clarine's daintily slippered foot, and after raising an appreciative glance, again fell to winking at the comfortable fire.

It certainly cannot be doubted that Dr. Purdon thoroughly enjoyed the highly intellectual and pleasing conversation of his neighbor, Mrs. Bell, yet he urgently seconded Mrs. Wilson's request to Clarine to favor them with a song, although he must have known that music would put an immediate stop to the amusement and enlightenment he was receiving. But such are the inconsistencies of intellect.

Clarine, ever willing to contribute her meed to the pleasure of others, rose and seated herself before the piano. At first her notes were soft and sweet, like the low warblings of a bird ere it raises its notes to higher, clearer efforts, until, rising and swelling in the fullness of

its rich, deep tones, her voice gradually swept into the full measure of its magnificent harmony. Enchanting in its flow of song, her voice rose and fell upon its waves of wondrous melody, gliding still majestically amid the revelry of its magical power.

Song after song rung forth from her musical lips, yet, still unsatiated came the hungry cry for more, until, with a merry laugh, melodious echo of her song, she gayly left the piano, declaring it impossible for human powers to satisfy such exorbitant demands. Then, turning to Dr. Purdon, she gracefully insisted upon his assuming the post she had resigned; for he, too, was a musician, and of very enviable merits, though with him it was the masterly touch of magnetic fingers which became the medium of the inspired theme. Most willingly he contributed his share to the pleasure of the passing hour, and gave them several artistic renderings of the compositions of those greater artists whose harmonious inspirations have made themselves immortal.

With Dr. Purdon ended the musical entertainment, for neither Mrs. Bell nor Mrs. Wilson possessed any skill in the art. Mrs. Bell really could not waste her precious time in such frivolous accomplishments, fully occupied as she was by the weightier cares of a somewhat over-busy life. While Mrs. Wilson frankly acknowledged that with the coercive practice of her schooldays had ended all exhibition of her less than dubious talents in that line.

## CHAPTER XXXVII.

THOUGH Dr. Purdon had now been an inmate of Mr. Rivington's household for several weeks, he showed even less inclination to depart than after the first few days of his visit. Indeed, he felt too well confident of the snug, warm place he held in his friend's heart, to fear readily tiring his hospitality, and he was enjoying himself too thoroughly to wish unduly to shorten his visit. He was now in the centre of that domestic circle upon the outer ripples of which he had once been placidly happy. In those friendly confidences exchanged between himself and Mr. Rivington, when the latter was under his professional care, he had listened with a sad envy in his heart while his friend dwelt in affectionate strains upon his home and the daughter who gladdened that home; and he had then been happy in merely sympathizing in those fond anticipations of domestic happiness to which the one was so anxious to hasten, which he himself had never known. Now he was a sharer in the privileges of that home which he had then heard so eagerly planned, was constantly in the presence of that daughter to whose praises he had so often been the friendly listener; but with this difference betwixt then and now: then he had envied his friend the possession of his home, now he envied him the possession of his daughter.

Still, he had not yet dared to sue for the latter possession; he was content for the time being with the happiness already accorded him. Daily enjoying the intellectual intercourse with his old friend, Mr. Rivington, whose naturally refined mind had been thoroughly cultured by the studious habits of a life of gentlemanly leisure, he had but to turn, when weary or sated with purely intellectual food, to the more fascinating contemplation of the manifold charms of beautiful womanhood. Nor did he strive to resist the pleasing wiles of such sweeter influence; indeed, in all ages, have not wise men been known to be enticed from the shrine of intellect by the fair beckoning hand of beauty? To add, therefore, that Dr. Purdon was now thoroughly happy seems quite unnecessary, for the man would indeed have been recreant to human nature itself, not to have been supremely happy in daily contact with intellect on the one side, and beauty on the other.

Clarine herself was nearer happiness than she had been since the bright days of her unsullied girlhood. The dull heaviness which had long oppressed her spirits was fast disappearing, being removed by some unseen influence. She became sensible of a certain quiet enjoyment of life which reminded her of old healthy feelings forgotten in the sickly obscurity of trouble. At times there was even an elation, a buoyancy of spirit to which she had long been a total stranger, and which now startled her in the sudden surprise of recognition. Indeed, she was feeling more like her old self; something out of the past of her once joyous youth was coming back to her, and its greeting thrilled her through every nerve. Some of this change was doubtless attributable to certain modifications and changes in her father's manner towards her. The potent charm which had wrought such subtle changes in Clarine had also made visible its workings in him. The coldness and reserve which had chilled all their inter-

course had melted into a congenial warmth; the inward severity of comment, which had set its stern stamp upon every feature, had yielded to kindlier feelings and gentler glances; and the reticence of all expression of affection was now broken by many of the old terms of fond endearment.

Wherein lay the cause of these changes in both father and daughter? Whence the power which could quicken into new-born life, natures which had so long been dead? Solely Dr. Purdon.

He had brought to bear peculiar influences. He had come to them from a distance far beyond their great trouble; he was a stranger in all and everything connected with their burden of sorrow, and his presence brought with it no associations of evil hours. He bridged over the past, and carried both father and daughter back to those joyous days ere sin and its attendant, grief, had come between to sever the bonds of affection. Moreover, his was a mind and character bearing a natural power to exercise a healthy influence over those with whom he came in contact. With an intellect active with the lore of books, and purified by the sage and wholesome teachings of an earnest, practical life; with a heart endowed with nature's gentlest gifts, and still more ennobled in the faithful service of a profession which daily and hourly enacts the apostle's creed of faith, hope, and charity—giving faith to the doubting, hope to the despondent, and charity to all—and with a soul humbly athirst at the Fountain of Life, he united the graces of a cultured intellect to the beauties of the Christian virtues.

Often now, encouraged by Dr. Purdon to the theme ever welcome to his ears, would Mr. Rivington give utterance to praises from which his lips had long refrained, and "My daughter, Clarine," became the key-note to a song of womanly virtues. At first, such condoning words

found vent only in the privacy of confidential converse, but as their taste grew sweeter to his mouth, and their music more pleasant to his ears, he indulged in the fond privilege accorded to a loving parent, and in the daughter's very presence, with kindly mien syllabled her praise.

Clarine was slowly becoming accustomed to this gradual renewal of the old terms of endearment, to the milder glance and gentler word which thrilled her with such exquisite pleasure; but when to these was added the sudden sound of praise, the thrill of pleasure gave way to the quiver of pain. In the days that had been, the old days of her guileless, happy youth, she had accepted all praise as her rightful tribute, and from her father she had always fondly exacted and caressingly received the idolatrous flattery of a doting parent. But, then and now! Keenly she felt that she had forfeited all right to her father's praise, and her heart became turgid with the rise of bitter feelings. There was the sinking pain of infinite sadness that she was so utterly unworthy of her father's kindly praise; of tender pity for the sorrowful fall she had caused to his fond esteem; there was the swell of mortified pride that she had so recklessly forfeited all claim to the homage of respect; and remorse—ah well! remorse is so akin to broken pride, why separate the two? Day after day she had to listen to fond language which once, when she could fancy it her due, had brought the bright flush of pleasure, but now, that it seemed but the vain mockery of departed virtue, added only a new scourge to her many pangs of misery; for, to one of refined feelings, the severest scourge is undeserved praise. Had her father but known it, his kindness was inflicting a heavier punishment than any his harshest severity could have suggested.

One evening as they sat over their dessert at dinner, the doctor and Mr. Rivington very seriously discussing the

merits of the pastry set before them, Dr. Purdon looked up at Clarine with one of his most pleasant smiles, and remarked: "I presume, Miss Rivington, that by this time you have become an adept in the compounding of those famous pies and puddings concerning which, if my memory is faithful, you were wont to prophesy such wondrous successes, in some of those letters we used to receive in England!"

Clarine blushed and laughed right merrily as she replied:—"Indeed, Dr. Purdon, I am afraid I shall have to plead entire ignorance of every branch of the culinary art, even to the famous pies and puddings."

"Is it possible!" he exclaimed, with admirably affected surprise. "Why, do you know, Miss Rivington, that all the way over in the steamer, knowing well my deliberate intentions to make immediate warfare upon Mr. Rivington's hospitality, my mouth watered in fond anticipation of some of those pies and puddings, the promises for which I so well remembered. And now I suppose I am to take it for granted, that not one of these delicate pastries with which I have lately been regaling myself, are the result of your fair labors?"

"I am very sorry to confess that they are not," returned Clarine, in tones full as serious as his own, "but I assure you of my deepest sympathy in your disappointment, Dr. Purdon."

"Thanks, Miss Rivington, for my disappointment is very keen, but your sympathy, and, if you will allow me, another pastry, console me."

"If I really thought that any attempt on my part to mend my broken promises would afford you special consolation, Dr. Purdon, I would actually make you a pudding myself."

This declaration, made with comical gravity and a roguish glance of the eye, was met by a merry, mocking

laugh from Mrs. Mordaunt; and even Mr. Rivington looked amused.

"My dear Clarine!" exclaimed Mrs. Mordaunt. "If you have the first idea of making a pudding, you must have acquired it very lately. As well attempt to make a balloon and fly in it at once, my dear, as to make a pudding."

"Thanks, for your endorsement of my ignorance," replied Clarine, gayly. "But what do you say, Dr. Purdon? Shall I try to make it?"

"I should certainly advise it, by all means. And I will promise, on my own part, Miss Rivington, that if you will try to make it, I will try to eat it."

"With that assurance I am indeed encouraged, and tomorrow you shall have a pudding made by my own hands."

And true to her word, the next morning Clarine left her father and the doctor in the library, deep in some recondite discussion entirely too puzzling for her unphilosophical brain, and tripping down into the strange territory of the kitchen, expressed to the cook her intention of making a pudding.

The immediate effect of this tremendous proposition was to throw the poor cook into a pitiable state of abject amazement, and for a full minute and a half she was utterly speechless; a condition of affairs infinitely amusing to the young lady causing it.

"Well, Mary, did you hear me?" said Clarine, smiling. "I wish to make a pudding. So if you will get me the flour and the eggs, and—and whatever else is needed, I will commence at once."

"A puddin', m'am?" at last exclaimed Mary, recovering speech. "Yes, m'am," and beginning to comprehend what was wanted of her, began to obey orders by bringing forth from pantry depths the materials demanded.

"I wish to make the pudding myself, Mary," said Clarine, as she tied on the large white apron she had borrowed for the occasion from the nurse, "but as I don't know anything at all about it, I should like you to stand by me and direct me what to do; and you must let it be just the very nicest pudding you know how to make, Mary," she continued, as, firmly impressed with the idea that bare arms were a necessary auxiliary to correct kitchen operations, she rolled up her sleeves, thus displaying the exquisitely moulded arm from tapering wrist to the dimpling, rounded elbow.

Mary, now fully alive to the great importance of the occasion, bustled about and set the different ingredients before Clarine, who curiously inspected with quite the air of a culinary connoisseur every article put upon the table; the bucket of flour, the basket of eggs, the boxes of fruit, the crock of sugar, the rolls of butter, with the various spices and all the et-ceteras needed for the mysterious compound called pudding; cook busily wondering all the while, as she trotted back and forth, "what on this blessed earth had sent her fine young lady mistress down to such an unheard of piece of work as this!" Ah, cook! it is very evident that you were not aware of the simple yet important fact, that up above stairs a certain gentleman, endowed with peculiar fascinations for one person, had expressed a desire to eat a pudding made by those very fair hands; and that by all the laws of love, such wish immediately became a fixed and immutable statute, to be instantly obeyed.

"You are quite sure, Mary, that it will be a very nice pudding?" inquired Clarine, really beginning to be very much perturbed in spirit lest the result of her labors should not redound to her credit.

"Indade, Miss, an' it'll be jist the very han'som'st pud-din' that's iver gone on the table sin' I cum to live wid

ver riv'rend father an' most blessed mother, God kape her soul, an' that's jist four an' twenty year ago this comin' summer, jist afore you was quite born, Miss."

"Yes, Mary, you have been with us a great many years, I know, and a good faithful servant you have always been," replied Clarine, in gentle, praising tones. "I fear our house-keeping would not go on very smoothly without you. But what am I to do first, Mary? beat up the eggs? I know that eggs have to be beaten before they are used in cooking." Which point of knowledge was perhaps truly astonishing. "How many shall I break up? And shall I separate the yolks from the whites?" really beginning to exult in the amount of erudition she was displaying.

"Hadn't you better let me beat 'em up for yer, Miss Clarine? An' if you'll jist put three cups of sugar an' two of butter inter that bowl there, m'am, I'll jist be ready to mix 'em together for yer."

"But, Mary," exclaimed Clarine, quite aggrieved at the proposal, "I don't wish you to mix them! I want to make it all myself. All that you need to do is to stand by me, and see that I do it right."

Poor, puzzled Mary could not comprehend the necessity of standing idle while her young mistress worked, but submitted discreetly to evident necessity, wondering all the while, "why the dear, swate child couldn't jist as well let her do the hard mixin', an' thin put it together herself, an' jist say she'd done it all." And then she had to laugh all over her honest old face, as she watched the vigorously awkward attempts the little soft hands made at the "mix-in'."

Just as affairs were at this highly interesting stage, Mrs. Mordaunt entered the kitchen, and stopped short in the utmost astonishment at the proceeding before her.

"Why, my dear child! what is all this about? What are you doing?"

"I am keeping my promise. I said I would make a pudding, and I am making it," declared Clarine, stirring all the while, and making very serious efforts over the strange toil.

Mrs. Mordaunt sat down in the nearest chair, and burst into a hearty laugh. "Well, I declare, Clarine, it is better than going to the play to see you in the kitchen hard at work. What kind of a pudding is this wonderful mixture to be?" she inquired, going up to the table and scanning operations.

"Indeed, I don't know; and I care very little what it is named, provided it is good, and Mary guarantees that."

"Indeed, Mrs. Mordaunt, m'am," replied Mary, quite proudly, "an' ye'll see it'll be jist the very best puddin' you've iver ate."

Mrs. Mordaunt laughed and turned away. A moment she seemed to deliberate some question on her mind, then another glance at Clarine hard at work seemed to determine her, and with a mischievous look, she quietly left the kitchen and slipped unnoticed up the stairs. Opening the door of the library where the two gentlemen sat in comfortable conclave, each lounging in an easy-chair, the doctor lazily enjoying his cigar, she addressed them, "Mr. Rivington, if you and Dr. Purdon would like to see the prettiest sight in the world, come down into the kitchen. Clarine is making that pudding for the doctor."

The doctor was instantly on the alert, his cigar laid down, and both gentlemen, with countenances expressive of expectant amusement, followed Mrs. Mordaunt from the room.

Busily intent upon her occupation, Clarine did not observe a sudden start which Mary gave at something occurring at the other side of the kitchen. But Mary had received a silent warning, and said nothing.

"Now, Mary, how much flour shall I put in?"

"About three han'fuls m'am."

"Three handfuls!" echoed Clarine. "That is queer kind of measurement! Suppose that hands differ in size?" and she gave a comical glance from her own pink mite of a hand to the great red one near her.

"Thru for yer, Miss," replied Mary, who could not help laughing as she, too, gave the comparing glance from her own fat, coarse paw, to the little dimpled white hand of her young lady mistress. "If you'd jist put in mebbe six han'fuls fust, m'am, p'rhaps I can tell thin if it's right."

So six successive times the rosy little fist closed tight over about as much flour as ordinary fingers would take up in a good sized pinch, and carefully deposited the infinitesimal contents into the waiting mixture. But Mary was not satisfied with the quantity, and finally suggested that perhaps Miss Clarine had better take a bowl to measure the flour with. This sensible suggestion being acted upon, the batter soon acquired the requisite consistency, and in a few minutes the pudding was poured into the prepared mould, and Clarine, taking it up in her hands, said, "There, Mary, just open the oven door for me, and I will set it in," and with cheeks flushed with the unusual exercise, and eyes flashing with animation, she turned—and beheld the select audience of three!

The peal of laughter that burst from all, Clarine included, very nearly upset the pan of pudding. Seeing its danger, Dr. Purdon started forward in great affright. "Pray be more careful, Miss Rivington! I would not have any mishap befall that pudding for any consideration! I have been watching its progress, and I assure you it really looks quite eatable. Allow me to relieve you of it, and set it in the oven."

"No indeed," cried Clarine, retreating, pudding and all, from the outstretched hands. "You shall not profane this



precious pudding with your sceptical touch. And I am not at all certain that I shall give you any of it, after this shameful exhibition of curiosity on your part, sir. You deserve punishment, not reward."

"It was not curiosity at all," replied Dr. Purdon, in hearty refutation of the charge; "it was simply a most laudable thirst for knowledge. And besides, Mrs. Mordaunt is the guilty party, if guilt there be, for she it was who offered us a reward for coming."

"A reward!" cried Clarine. "Pray, what was it?"

But the doctor, with a comical smile, and a glance at her blushing face which sent her eyes roving elsewhere than at him, refused a direct answer, merely saying, "Allow me to remind you that the oven door is open all this while, and the oven consequently getting cold; and as I am deeply interested in the fate of that pudding, I really must beg of you not to let it be spoiled in the baking."

"You may spare your anxiety on that score," returned Clarine very gravely, as, steadfastly refusing his proffered assistance, she stooped, set the pudding in the oven, closed the door, and rising, again faced the doctor, "for I have not yet decided to pardon your misdemeanor, and so you may not, after all, have any of my pudding."

"O, pray don't be so severe, Miss Rivington! for I assure you that the loss of your favor,—and the pudding too—would be more than human nature could endure and live." The tone of utter misery in which these words were so beseechingly uttered made them all laugh.

"Come, Clarine," interposed her father, "don't be too severe in your sentence."

Emboldened by this support, Dr. Purdon hastened to add: "And pray, why am I to be punished more severely than Mrs. Mordaunt or Mr. Rivington. They are still greater culprits than I, for if they had not led me to these

forbidden precincts, I should not have dared venture alone. So if you condemn me to go without my pudding, they shall go without theirs."

"Well, I will reflect upon the case," replied Clarine, mollified by the argument, "and if I find that your grievous offence has extenuating claims, I may relent sufficiently to let you have a small, just a very small piece of the pudding;—and it will be a delicious pudding I know," she added, maliciously.

Dr. Purdon had evidently been considering his position, for he now spoke more boldly. "I think you had better relent altogether and grant me full pardon, for, if you do not, I have a punishment in store for you."

"What is it?" of course Clarine asked, instantly.

"Nay; to tell would be but offering you a bribe to keep the peace."

Completely checked, Clarine had not a word further to say, and merrily joined in the laugh at her defeat.

"Come, come, children!" said Mr. Rivington pleasantly, "I see I must exert my authority to stop your quarrelling, and order you both up stairs," and sending them all before him, the merry party left the kitchen.

Clarine passed on to ascend to her room to make her toilet, and as Dr. Purdon, having admitted Mrs. Mordaunt into the drawing-room, was putting on his overcoat for his customary walk before dinner, she turned, and with a half blush and smile, said, "What was to have been my punishment, Dr. Purdon?"

"I will tell you after I have had my pudding."

Clarine turned quickly from him, and catching a glimpse of her blushing face, as she hastened up the stairs, he passed out into the street smiling at the pretty curiosity he had aroused, and feeling pleasantly confident that he would be allowed a goodly share of the pudding.

Nor were his expectations fated to disappointment.



for punctual to the hour, after dinner, curiosity at its height, entered the famous pudding, its tempting appearance giving fair promise of its merits.

Clarine insisted upon serving it herself, that her hands might complete their round of labors, and as she was about serving Dr. Purdon his portion, she looked up very demurely, as though debating within herself whether or no to allot him his share. But he had so well assumed an air of the most reckless indifference, as to warn her that any failure of duty on her part would be met by the certain execution of that terrible threat. Dr. Purdon received his pudding, and received it, too, as being emphatically *his* pudding. And in the encomiums unsparingly accorded the result of Clarine's first culinary effort, she felt fully rewarded for her extraordinary labor.

During the early part of the evening, as Clarine sat looking over some sketches, Mrs. Mordaunt made the customary request for some music. In complying with her wish Clarine, feeling in particularly pleasant mood, had selected some of her finest cavatinas, intending them, possibly, for the benefit of a certain person who had not made the request. Scarcely had she begun ere she heard Dr. Purdon rise and leave the room, and afterwards there was perhaps a shade less sweetness in her notes; but before she had quite finished her song she heard him return, and the next moment she was quite sure she breathed the delightful odor of fresh flowers. Hurriedly finishing the final cadenza, she turned and beheld the fragrant cause. Before her stood Dr. Purdon holding in his hand a curious little basket exquisitely arranged with the choicest flowers.

"Oh, Dr. Purdon, how very lovely! They are for me, I know!" exclaimed Clarine, with a bewitching eagerness; and approaching him she buried her blushing face amid their rival beauties.

"Indeed, I think you might have waited, and allowed

me at least the merit of offering them," returned Dr. Purdon, with severe gravity; "and, besides, I have not yet said for whom I intended them. You are allowing me no free will upon the question."

Clarine, trusting to her woman's instinct, looked up with a merry, fearless laugh, that said very plainly—"Would you dare offer them to any one else, sir?" and, encountering a gaze of most delighted amusement, she was emboldened to put out her hand in impatient demand for her "woman's right," a love offering.

"As you allow me no option, Miss Rivington," he answered to the mute yet eloquent demand, "I will acknowledge that I did intend to present this little offering to our new cook. So that if you will prove your identity," he added with a mischievous smile, "you may have them," and very courteously he placed the floral tribute in her hand.

With features in a happy glow of delight, Clarine carried her delicate offering of thanks to be admired by her father and Mrs. Mordaunt, who had been smilingly watching all this very pretty little proceeding. Her beautiful flowers received their full meed of praise, and again she bent over them in admiration, when suddenly raising her head she exclaimed: "But, Dr. Purdon, these lovely flowers are a reward! What was to have been my punishment?"

She had evidently quite forgotten the checks her previous questionings had received, but she was reminded of them by the very hearty laugh which came from Dr. Purdon, in high amusement at the curiosity he had so adroitly elicited.

Looking at her with an air of calm and provoking triumph, he replied: "If my memory is correct, Miss Rivington, I recollect being, a short time ago, one of three culprits condemned to a short but interesting lecture on curiosity."

Taunted into a pretty boldness by the laughter now raised at her repulse, she looked undauntedly at her tormentor, and though blushing and laughing, said firmly: "Nevertheless, I insist upon an answer. For, in order to fully appreciate my reward, I must know what fearful punishment was awaiting me."

"Really, Miss Clarine, I had such implicit confidence in your goodness of heart, that I deemed it but a waste of time to devise a punishment."

And with this answer Clarine was obliged to be satisfied.

#### CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE unusually protracted season was drawing to a close, and Clarine availed herself of the very natural plea of fatigue and worn-out spirits to refuse as many as possible of the numerous invitations which would still have kept her in the rounds of dissipation. The excuse was accepted as valid, for society well knew how extortionate were the demands made upon this leading belle. Yet who, before, had ever heard of Clarine Rivington, the goddess who ever lent such willing ear to their petitions, herself turning pleader against their prayers, and with gentle excuses begging for absence from their coteries of worship? She, who, from morning until night, day after day, for weeks, months and years had ever been the most unremitting seeker after pleasure, had now turned recreant to the cause, and abandoned the pursuit. Denying herself, whenever possible, to society, Clarine employed the leisure thus hardly won in increased devotion to home and to—I may as well acknowledge it—Dr. Purdon.

In the hours of playful companionship which she now found leisure and pleasure in giving to the children, thoughts of the past would come crowding upon her, and

for once she did not care to reject them. As she watched the children before her in their playful gambols, she would reflect upon their life and her own, as it was, and as it might have been. Daily, with her matured experience of the world, she realized more forcibly how indispensable had been her wealth in producing her present position. Often would she try to imagine what would have been the lot of herself and child had that succession of circumstances commencing with the death of her brother's wife not arisen. But such thoughts and conjectures ended wildly of themselves in a sad chaos. Well she remembered how, in the recklessness of passionate hate, she had cast off the only hand which could have set her and her child in honor before the world, and saved her family from the haunting fears of disgrace; had refused to give a father's name to her innocent and unprotected child. Bravely had she then declared that with her one great gift of voice she would enter the arena of toil and struggle, and with her own unaided strength defend her child from the evils of the world. Now she smiled and shuddered at her puerile boldness. The stern, practical lessons in life's harsh realities had since taught her, that the struggles of a mother and a child of shame would have brought them, not to the peaks of triumph, but to their graves in the valley of defeat.

One bright, sunny morning early in the pleasant month of June, when doors and windows were opened wide to admit the first balmy air of summer, as Dr. Purdon and Mr. Rivington ascended the steps on returning from their morning ramble, they heard through the windows Clarine's birdlike warbling. Mr. Rivington turned aside into his library, but of course Dr. Purdon followed the enticing sounds, and was led by them to the little morning room, which opened by broad windows upon a large flower garden. Clarine was seated by the window, busily engaged

over her embroidery frame. Opposite her stood a large easy-chair, so inviting in the lazy comfort offered by its broad open arms, that Dr. Purdon took unhesitating and immediate possession.

"How can you endure the idea of occupation, this warm sunny morning? It is too bright and pleasant for anything but idleness and play," said Dr. Purdon, as he leaned back in his comfortable chair, enjoying the warm puffs of air which came in with short flirting breezes.

"This is such mere play that it scarcely deserves a better name. It but saves the fingers from absolute idleness," returned Clarine, as she drew the bright-hued chenille back and forth through the silken canvas.

There was a short pause, during which Dr. Purdon smilingly watched Clarine with her pretty occupation. Then he leisurely remarked, as though not knowing what else to speak of: "Your father and I, Miss Clarine, have just been engaged in an interesting discussion upon the relative bearings of wealth and happiness: the argument being suggested by a conversation we overheard between two young ladies walking ahead of us. From their remarks they evidently deemed riches and happiness to be synonymous terms."

"And are they not?" Clarine asked, but without raising her head.

He looked surprised at the question, and responded more gravely: "I fancied you held differently."

She blushed, but replied in tones as grave as his own; "In your sense of the words, Dr. Purdon, I do hold differently. But I also believe that there are many, very many instances where riches and happiness are so mutually dependent, each upon the other, so closely allied, that they become virtually one and the same."

"As for example!" cried Dr. Purdon, in his former tone, well pleased at the answer he had received. "Come, Miss

Rivington," he continued, in a coaxing voice, and settling himself still more comfortably in his easy-chair, "I am just in the humor, and it is the very kind of a morning for an idle discussion, with a dash of philosophy to enliven it. So please indulge me, and give me an instance of that close dependence which makes riches and happiness but synonyms of each other."

A short time ago, had any one, even Dr. Purdon, asked this question, Clarine would probably have been unable to give any but the most trivial answer. But lately she had been studying, the scroll of study herself, and from the knowledge thence derived she now answered him, her low, serious tones adding force to her words:

"When poverty enforces death-dealing slavery, and riches purchase life-giving freedom, then riches and happiness are one and the same."

Dr. Purdon was surprised at this answer; for not only the words themselves, but the bowed head, the flushed cheek, the deepened voice, the entire manner of the reply proved a deeper meaning than appeared upon the smooth surface of the sentiment. He not only wished to fathom this meaning, but he was also curious to know how a woman would follow up such a leading point of argument as Clarine had, wittingly or unwittingly, started. So, after a moment's pause, he replied lightly, "I admit the general force of your remark, but the assertion of itself is too abstract to allow of full concurrence. Will you please explain yourself more thoroughly?"

With a woman's natural dislike to being called to a strict account for her speech, (which she evidently considers to be a special privilege of her sex to pass unchallenged) Clarine would have avoided a direct reply. But she knew to a positive certainty that Dr. Purdon would not allow her to pass her words idly by, without at least an attempt at the explanation he demanded; and so, with great diffi-

culty collecting her thoughts for a suitable reply, she finally said:

"Of course, Dr. Purdon, you understand that I do not wish to assert that the possession of riches and the realization of happiness are actually one and the same; that would be mere nonsense. What I mean is, that though riches are simply a means towards the accomplishment of an end, yet, that the means and the result, the cause and effect, are oftentimes so blended and united as to become virtually one and the same."

"I concede that point," responded Dr. Purdon, smiling in wicked amusement at the trouble and hesitation so plainly expressed in Clarine's perturbed face. "Pray go on."

It was easy for Dr. Purdon to urge, but not so easy for Clarine to comply. She sought for a response, but could trace one only through the troubled course of her own life. Hastily she cast a backward glance upon herself. Fearfully she recalled that first dread present, ere yet she had dared to face the still more dreadful future; her recoil from the terrible sentence of marriage, the verdict of saving to others, punishment to herself, and the wild refusal which had been tortured from her by her fear and loathing of the fate to which the world would have condemned her for her sin; and then the wealth which alone had saved herself and all from those consequences which her own reckless hand would have evolved from her still more reckless deeds. All this, and this alone, could be her response. With trembling pulse and throbbing brain she sought to frame her thoughts, but from such a tumult of emotion she scarcely dared to speak. She gave a quick, nervous glance at her relentless questioner, who had again besought her to continue, but he was so composed and smilingly expectant, his calm air told her so plainly that her emotion was unrecognized, that, reassured and quiet-

ed, she began in low, even tones, while her needle idly pricked the flowered tapestry before her :

"May not occasions arise in life when objects which possess but little or no inherent value in themselves, yet borrow an intrinsic worth from the circumstances they may control? Riches might indeed be paltry, were they not the golden cloud which bedews the entire world."

Clarine was looking steadily at Dr. Purdon as she said this, but a sudden light which sprang into his eyes at these last words turned her gaze away. She resumed in tones which faltered a little at first, but grew more steady as she proceeded :

"Place a culprit before his prison house ; hold up to his view the poisoned manacles which are to eat into his quivering flesh ; turn his gaze into the midnight cell which is to enclose him, denying all nature ; let him behold the deadly, loathsome vermin which is to crawl upon him, and feed upon him daily, hourly ; show him all this, and then tell him that the world, his judge, deems it his duty to enter there : but then turn his shrinking eyes back into the great sunshine ; show him children wrangling over a few bright pebble stones ; tell him that with such stones he can buy off the censure of the world, that with such paltry pebbles in his open palm the world will forget his sin, and place him highest among the high : tell him this, and then ask him which is happiness, that prison, or those paltry pebbles ?"

"What strange power is this I have so unwarily touched upon?" thought Dr. Purdon, astonished at this burst of simple, yet thrilling eloquence. He had long since discovered that Clarine was a very enthusiast in feeling, but not until now had he suspected the spirit of eloquence which, it seemed, had but awaited the touch upon the spring to leap forth in vivid beauty from its casket of repose. With interest now fully aroused, he determined to tempt this

spirit he had so unexpectedly evoked to still further efforts.

"There is little or no doubt, in the instance you have drawn, Miss Rivington, as to which would constitute happiness. But, unfortunately, there are few cases where the consequences of crime, or sin, are confined to the individual perpetrators. I have known the sin of one to blast the lives of many," Clarine chilled at his words, "and may not the duty of this culprit you imagine, still compel him to enter this ideal prison for the sake of others ?"

"Others ! what others ? Not the world at large, for they do not know his sin, and, with wealth in his possession, would never question."

"True, the world may be ignorant of his sin, but it must be known to some, else he need fear no judgment or sentence, at all, of this world. And for the sake of that few, perhaps family, or friends, who, unless he accepts punishment as, we will say, a means of concealment, for such I understand your ideal prison to be, would be disgraced through the knowledge given to the world of his sin. Would you sacrifice them, the innocent, to him, the guilty ?"

Clarine lowered her head, as she answered with a bitter smile : "You forget that his golden veil is large enough to cover all. Neither he nor they need prison houses for concealment." She hesitated a moment, then raising her head, but still looking away from Dr. Purdon, she continued in more serious, elevated tones—"Besides, he has a duty higher than his duty towards his neighbor, higher than all others, his duty towards God. Can that culprit clasp his hands in prayer, when they are dropping from the poisoned bands ? Can he raise his eyes to heaven, when the rotting lids are pressed down by the vermin he

cannot brush away? Can he sing God's praises, when the deadly air corrodes the breath he draws? Can he feel God's mercy, when the heavy, polluted atmosphere has crushed all feeling, save a dull consciousness of pain? No, no! Give him freedom for his hands, light for his eyes, air for his lungs, freshness and sunshine over all, and then he may bless God for his blessings, and not curse Him for his curses!"

Dr. Purdon's keen mind had been too well trained by his profession in the knowledge of human nature, not to know that this extraordinary burst of impulsive eloquence in such a mere girl, must be attributable to some deeper cause than the fanciful and exaggerated feelings of a luxuriant imagination. Too many suffering human hearts had been revealed to him, not to know that such a heart had now been speaking from the depths of its own bitterness. The language was simple, passionate, intense, and such language, he well knew, was no mere overwrought enthusiasm. It was too thrilling in its intensity, too irresistible in its passion, too awe-inspiring in its grand simplicity, not to have been taught by that stern teacher, the heart. As he gazed now at Clarine with her cheeks in a flame of changing crimson, at the cold looking hands, from which the rose-tint had faded, clenched together upon her lap in a close, nervous clasp,—and, though her head was half aside, he knew her eyes must be glowing with a burning light,—he wondered what earthly suffering had wrought such inspiration of language. But he could not stay to analyze, for this full tide of eloquence had borne him beyond the depth of argument, and he could but follow the direction of the flowing waves.

Breaking the silence, he gravely asked: "But is there to be no punishment for his sin?"

She replied as gravely, without turning her head, or

moving those clasping hands: "Yes, leave him alone with his remorse."

"But what atonement is he to make? There is surely some expiation necessary for his sin."

"Dr. Purdon," and now Clarine turned her head, and though her eyes met his with a full, steady gaze, he could see no shadow of trouble in their clear and luminous depths—"there is in this world but one atonement, one expiation—repentance."

"And in the world to come?"

"Our Saviour."

Dr. Purdon was silent. To such a creed he could find no answer. He was again busily thinking, but with the entire current of his thoughts changed by the exquisite, exalted purity of Clarine's concluding sentiments. He knew, indeed, that his had been the power which had summoned this pure spirit of thrilling eloquence to appear, but he found that in so doing he had evoked a power greater than his own, and he bowed in silent awe before its simple majesty.

With nerves relaxed from their painful tension, Clarine sank back in her chair, and taking up her idle needles, began threading them with the several colored flosses.

"And do you really believe in the redeeming power of repentance?" Dr. Purdon presently asked.

"Yes, I"—she suddenly stopped; her fingers twisted and entwined amid the soft heap of bright-hued silks, and then lay still. If she believed, why did her actions not conform to such belief?

"Do you believe that repentance will truly save?" again asked Dr. Purdon, calmly persisting, as he noted these signs of hesitation.

What could she say? If her father had been question-

ing her, she would recklessly have answered, "No." But to this man she could give only the truth.

"I did believe it once—but—I do not dare—I am afraid to believe it again."

There were tears in her voice, and a pitiful plaint which filled Dr. Purdon with ineffable compassion. Very gently he replied: "Then you do believe it still, and"—it was he who now hesitated, then he added in tones of exquisitely tender pleading—"Clarine, if you believed this once, why not again? Why are you afraid of your Saviour?"

"Afraid of my Saviour!" repeated Clarine, strangely startled. "I am not afraid, I"—she stopped in full denial. One moment of fearful doubt, then suddenly a soft smile, angelic in its beauty, broke in bright radiance over every feature. Turning towards her pleader in the full effulgence of this smile, she added—"Dr. Purdon, never again will I be afraid of my Saviour."

At last Clarine had repented.

## CHAPTER XXXIX.

AFTER the most serious and mature deliberation, Dr. Purdon firmly resolved to take his departure, as he averred, upon his long-threatened tour of travel. His decision met with heartiest denunciations from his warm-hearted host and charming hostess, but their murmuring and rebelling had to succumb to his firmness.

In fact, Dr. Purdon had long known that he loved Clarine Rivington, had surrendered heart and soul to her keeping, had yielded the happiness of his life to her power, and now he must know if she would accept the allegiance he would offer. He had held his love in patience that he might woo the shy heart for his own, and now he dared hope that the sweet recompense was his. Since the morning he had elicited that strangely passionate burst of eloquence, had won that exquisite confession of repentance, he had not for a moment wavered in the course which love directed. Those first vague surmises which suspicious reason had aroused, had been completely subdued by the pure humility of her simple faith, and from that moment he was no longer master of himself. From that day their intercourse had borne the charm of a sweeter intimacy, the closer communion of thought; their friendship been more beautifully shaded by the delicate tracings of conscious love. To the harp-strings of love



their natures vibrated in harmonious response, drawing from each the notes of passion, thought and sentiment. In Dr. Purdon had been kindled all the fervor of a man's first passion, in Clarine, all the poetry of a woman's first love. By that magnetic power which love gives to man over woman, he had called forth from the sepulchre of her soul the spirit of her nature which had been but sleeping. All the fervid sentiment, the glowing enthusiasm, all the very life and vivacity of her being now sprang forth with joyful freshness, and to the tender strength of her master's nature the woman responded with the beauties and graces of her own.

Ah! happy days of conscious yet unconscious love! Yet, from the midst of such revelry of joy, one would break away! Yes, but only that for the happiness of hope he might exchange the greater bliss of certainty. Dr. Purdon hoped, doubted, yet believed, that the love he was wooing was already won. He felt, he knew that only to the man her soul adores can a woman reveal such depths of her nature as Clarine had revealed to him. Daily and hourly he had delighted to bestow fresh charms upon this woman he was calling to his heart, and daily and hourly to their lustre she had added the radiance of more brilliant gems brought from recesses unsuspected. And he knew that for him alone was this hidden wealth displayed; yet, with love's unsatisfied demands, he would be their acknowledged keeper. To him, then, belonged the ecstasy of hope; and to Clarine, alas! with her the ecstatic thrill of hope oft ended in the thrill of fear. She loved, yet dared not love.

Clarine had taken counsel with her heart, and knew that she loved; she had likewise taken counsel with her judgment, and knew that she was beloved. Heart, soul and brain bounded and throbbed with the joy and bliss unutterable. Yet for every bound of joy there came a tremor

of fear; for every throb of bliss there came a quiver of pain. Ah! Clarine, Clarine! that dread spectre from out your past was now stalking before your future! With phantom hand it bade you be abashed before the man you loved.

It was an unequal strife waged between the love of the present and the fear of the past; for so often fresh young love was the victor; and scarce was the one triumphant ere the contention of battle was renewed by the other. When in the presence of the man she loved, her being thrilling with the bliss of its new-born rapture, she forgot the past in the happiness of the present; but that spell broken, in the freedom of solitude, her heart sank in abject dread, for a haunting voice kept whispering, "Beware!" Beware of the deception she would impose upon the man who trusted her! For the love of a man whose every thought was pure and noble, she was offering the love of a woman whom he would scorn and despise did he but know her sin. And she wept in very bitterness of shame, that she was not more worthy of the man she loved. In vain the tempter, Love, whispered that in ignorance of the past he would never question his bliss; that for a false notion of honor she would crush two human lives beneath the fallen ruins of happiness; with her secret, which would never be known, why not defy fate, and be happy in the love she had won! But though Clarine had sinned, she could not stoop to the pettiness of deceit. She scorned to deceive the man who trusted her. Once, only once, the burning thought flashed upon her distracted mind to confess, to tell him all! But she shrank aghast at the loathing and contempt with which she saw him shrink from the woman he contemned. No, no; better to suffer and be silent. Slowly, slowly the harsh resolve was forming; it grated painfully as it drew nearer and nearer. She would deny her love! She

would be false to her own heart, but true to the man she loved. She would not impose upon his confidence a wife of whom he might one day be ashamed. With a despairing burst of agony Clarine resolved to cast from her all that could have made life precious. And firm would be this resolve, unyielding this determination, until the potent magic of the loved one's voice dissolved all fear, and in the delicious confusion of happiness, memory forgot its griefs.

In the midst of these wavering doubts, these trembling hopes and fears, Clarine was almost glad at Dr. Purdon's announcement of departure. In his absence she would learn to forget him, would have time to strengthen her resolves: and if, upon his return, months hence, he asked her to be his wife, bravely she could utter "No," the falsehood of her heart. Brave woman! Brave Clarine! brave in your ignorance of the power you had evoked.

When the appointed hour came, Dr. Purdon bade farewell with the most pleasant calmness. Once it occurred to Clarine that her father had said very little about the loss of his friend, and that, considering their friendship, the two were parting with very little show of feeling. And just once, Clarine, did there not come a slight shade of disappointment over your own spirit that, after all, Dr. Purdon was betraying too little regret in parting from you? Ah well, Clarine! you were not to know that in a certain private interview, Dr. Purdon had confided to your father certain secret intentions. And had you not bravely resolved to forget him, to deny his love? So what mattered it to you that he was already indifferent?

And then the lonely days came and went, and Clarine, ignorant of the happiness in store for her, beguiled the weary hours with the indulgence of her sorrow. True, she had vowed again and again to forget the man she loved, to cast from her prostrate heart the image of the man she

worshipped. But she had months and years before her in which to forget, and surely she might allow herself a few hours and days in which to remember. And so she indulged in the poignant bliss of a love which might have been hers, and dreamt of the joys she had sworn to renounce.

One morning, about a week after Dr. Purdon's departure, Clarine had been rambling idly about, first in the nursery, then out into the garden inspecting her flowers, and again back into the house, and had gone into the drawing-room for a book she had left there the previous evening. She entered the room gayly carolling a song, when it occurred to her, that as it was an unusually bright, pleasant morning, she would order the carriage and drive out to make some calls; for her conscience reproached her for her late neglect of her friends. Thinking that her father might have some little commission for her to execute, she turned towards the library to ask him. As she neared the door a voice came from within which startled her, and the next instant the door opened, and Dr. Purdon stood smiling before her.

Ah, Dr. Purdon, in that quick blushing of cheek and brow, that sparkling radiance illumining every feature, you well knew you were already answered.

"I really beg pardon, Miss Rivington, for giving you such a fearful shock of surprise. I see that my return was unexpected." And his own brow flushed happily, as he courteously bowed over the little hand instinctively held out to him.

"Why, Dr. Purdon!" exclaimed Clarine, finding the use of her tongue, "I thought you had left us for months."

It was certainly barbarous for Dr. Purdon to feel such a thrill of delight at the plaintive touch in those gently accusing accents; but still more inexcusable was the deceit

with which he replied—"Is it possible that your father did not communicate to you my intention of returning? I told Mr. Rivington, when I left, that I should be back again in a few days."

As your memory was so faithful on this point, Dr. Purdon, it was strange that you forgot having made the special request to Mr. Rivington that he would *not* mention to his daughter your intention of returning so soon. Ah! well you know that you had been promising yourself, and would not for worlds have missed, that first blush of joyful surprise, when the bashful heart was so completely thrown off its guard. No, Dr. Purdon, from that roguish, happy light beaming in your eyes, I do not think your memory was at fault.

But Clarine was too happy in his return to care for explanations of absence, and when Dr. Purdon offered his arm to lead her into the pleasant little morning-room where they had spent so many happy hours, observing, as he did so, that he would claim her kind attention, for awhile, to listen to some of his adventures of travel, she took the seat in which he placed her by the half-closed window, with an air which plainly said, that all sorrow and fear were blissfully ignored in the exquisite delight of the loved one's presence.

"In the first place, Miss Clarine," said Dr. Purdon, as he drew a chair for himself and placed it not opposite, as in previous interviews, but nearer, by her side, "please tell me in what way you have been enjoying yourself since I have been gone."

"Idling, I think," she answered lightly. It would never do to tell him that she had been enjoying herself mainly by thinking of him. But possibly her guilty blush helped Dr. Purdon to some of the truth of this evasive statement.

"And, pray, if idling has been your amusement, what has been your occupation, may I ask?"

"Idling again. At least, I cannot recall any more serious labor."

And she looked so idly happy as she gave him the smiling reply, that he was immediately convinced that said idling must be the fairest pastime of Love: and he wondered how many of the roving thoughts of such idling had rested upon him.

"And you, Dr. Purdon, have you been enjoying yourself?" Clarine asked, looking up rather shyly. "Did you have a pleasant trip? Of course you did not go far in so short a time. But, pray, what did bring you back so soon? Have you given up the idea of your long trip?"

And the last question was asked so joyfully that he was sorely tempted to answer "yes." But the fact was, he could not, for the moment, answer anything at all. With woman's pretty precipitancy Clarine had jumbled several questions together without waiting for an answer to any; and her last question or two had completely scattered his previously well arranged thoughts. To ask him why he had come back so soon was to touch at once upon the very pith and substance of his past and present acts, to sound the very key-note of his present intentions. And it was a most provoking set of questions, too, for as he had led Clarine into the room he had hastily arranged a very neat little programme of all that he was about to say to her,—with her answers! He had generously intended to afford her ample time to compose herself, by prefacing his more interesting remarks with a graphic and amusing summary of his travels; and thus would gradually have come down to the point of his return, and by degrees would gently have suggested the idea that she herself was the magnet, etc., etc., according to all the so-forths of a lover's catalogue. But this giving a jump, and so unexpectedly leaping over all the intermediate ground—

"What is the matter, Dr. Purdon? Are you lost in

reverie? Why don't you answer my questions?" Clarine asked in playful tones. "Where have your thoughts flown?"

Which was just exactly what he was trying to discover, for, to his great perplexity, all the fine and really brilliant ideas which he had ranged in the choicest order, had disappeared in the most sudden and mysterious confusion.

"I was thinking, Miss Clarine,—but are you not very warm here? The sun is streaming in through that open shutter! Had I not better close it?"

"Certainly, if you wish," said Clarine, glancing at his flushed face, and wondering why he should be so warm, for the room was certainly very cool and comfortable.

Dr. Purdon rose to close the shutter, and turning back to resume his seat, his eyes naturally rested upon Clarine. A ray of the warm sunshine had penetrated through the crevice left by the half-closed shades, and lay shimmering upon her soft, clustering waves of hair, while the gentle breeze lightly tossed and played with the loose ringlets the summer heat had coaxed to fall her upon forehead; and as she raised her face to him, the sunlight crept caressingly from her golden-tinged head, and shone so purely down into the clear depths of her beautiful eyes, that, instantly, the extreme loveliness of the woman before him calmed the confusion of his thoughts, and thinking only of her beauty and his own all-absorbing love, he became more composed, and at the same time more anxious to know his fate at once.

"If I am merciful to your pardonable curiosity upon the reasons of my sudden return, Miss Clarine, will you extend a like mercy to my curiosity, and answer some questions I should like to ask?"

"I will be most happy to answer any questions it may please you to ask, Dr. Purdon, but pray do not make any sacrifice to my inexcusable curiosity; for I should be

most unwilling to intrude upon motives for an act which causes both my father and myself so much pleasure."

He could have laughed aloud at her delightful vexation. Her tones and words of distant courtesy betrayed so clearly her intense annoyance at having subjected herself to the charge of idle curiosity. She well recollected that it was not by any means the first time Dr. Purdon had taken a malicious satisfaction in tantalizing her upon this same spirit of curiosity. She was not to know that said curiosity always found ready pardon from him, inasmuch as it usually flattered his vanity by relating to his own acts and words.

Trying to prevent his amusement from betraying itself in his voice, Dr. Purdon replied in accents of courtesy as grave as her own:

"I feel most deeply honored by your very kind assurance, Miss Rivington; and to know that, in consulting my own selfish happiness I have been able to contribute, however slightly, to the pleasure of my friends, is indeed a most welcome knowledge." And here he paused, utterly at a loss what to add.

The conversation was certainly not progressing at all rapidly to the point he was so anxious to reach; on the contrary, it had become completely twisted around, and was fast receding further and further from his object. Strategy having so far failed him, there was nothing left but to make a bold and decisive movement. One glance at the state of affairs convinced him that there was no help for it but to attack the main question at once. And so, with an invocation to the god of love to assist his wavering courage, he began in tones which he endeavored to make light and careless, but into which the all-absorbing tenderness of love gradually stole:

"It is but fair that I should explain the reasons of my

coming back, Miss Clarine, for those reasons may concern you."

"Concern me!" she exclaimed, glancing up with a rosy smile of innocent coquetry, but something made her glance immediately sink again. Then, for the sake of something to say, she added: "You said that business affairs had recalled you, and so I supposed"——

"And what more important business can a man have in life than the negotiations of Cupid's treaties?"

"Of Cupid's treaties!" echoed Clarine, and losing all comprehension in astonishment, she incautiously raised her startled eyes to his, but met there such a dazzling, blinding gaze, that they sank again in a cloud of roseate blushes, and her fluttering heart stood still in its exquisite turmoil.

One moment Dr. Purdon allowed himself the enjoyment of the beautiful confusion he had caused, the next, he was bending over her, and in low, pleading tones was murmuring:

"Clarine, you, and you alone, have brought me back! I love you, Clarine, and am begging for your love to make me happy! Will you love me, Clarine? Will you be my wife, my own, my darling wife?"

Her head was turned away and bowed low, and the deep crimson flush dyeing neck, cheek and brow came not from joy, but from a painful, choking sensation, and a wild, tumultuous throbbing of her heart.

"Speak to me, Clarine! Tell me that you love me; that you will not reject my love, my worship, my own, my darling! You do, you will love me, Clarine?"

But her face was buried in her hands, and she uttered no sound in answer to his pleading. Gently he rested one hand upon the soft mass of waving hair, and with the other would have drawn her tightly clasped hands from her face.

"Just one word, darling, to tell me that you love me," he urged in passionate whisper, "or else silence shall be my sweetest answer, and I shall claim you as my own. You will be my own, my idolized wife, my Clarine?"

In low, choking voice he caught the one smothered word, "No."

"No, Clarine!" He was speechless in agonized surprise. Impulsively throwing his arms around her, he drew her hands away from her face, and they made little resistance now. "You surely do not mean that! Spare me, Clarine! For God's sake, do not jest with me now! Tell me that you love me, that you are mine, my own darling. But one sweet word, one look of love! Clarine!"

His arms were clasping her so close; she felt the hard beating of his heart; the breath of his passionate pleading swept her cheek. Could she deny this love for which her soul was yearning? Had she the courage to stay the very breath of life?

Further away she turned the head he would have brought towards himself, and in low, faltering voice she answered his burning prayer: "Dr. Purdon, do not ask me; I cannot, indeed I cannot be your wife!" and again her tearful face sank into her relinquished hands.

"And is this your only answer?" he coldly asked, as he raised himself. "Is this your only response to the love you have encouraged, the passion you have inspired? Clarine," he continued, more vehemently, "you well know that from the first hour that I saw you, I loved you. You know that daily, hourly, every thought, every wish has centred in you. You have been the one bright, enticing hope of all my future life, and now you tell me that my thoughts were idle, my hopes were vain. Clarine, think for one moment of the torture you are inflicting, and retract your cruel words."

Only her sobs replied to his appeal.

"It was heartless, it was cruel of you to allow me to nourish a love you did not intend to return." He was growing bitter in his suffering.

Clarine checked her tearless sobs, and with a lifeless, despairing gesture dropped her hands upon her lap, as she replied: "Do not reproach me. I did not intend to be cruel. But please ask me no further, for I can never, indeed I can never, never be yours."

But the plaintive accents of misery, instead of checking his reproaches, sounded a sweet note of victory to his ears, and he pursued his triumph, though in more gentle pleading:

"Clarine, when you saw that day after day drew me closer to your side, that every other pleasure, every occupation was given up for the greater pleasure of being near you; when you must have known that the travels which would have taken me from you were abandoned, only that I might linger in your presence; did you not think of the heart you were crushing, of the happiness you were ruining? I proved to you by every token a man can give to a woman that I loved you with all the devotion of my soul; and, in return, Clarine, you well know that you allured me by allowing me to see that for my sake your pleasures were likewise sacrificed to mine; that daily you were content to prolong the hours you granted to my happiness; that for my sake, and mine alone, were disclosed all the riches of your nature, your charms of mind and soul. You lured my hopes by all the sweetest flattery a woman's graces can offer."

Impatient with the taunting recollections he had roused, he rose and paced the floor. His appeals and reproaches won no answer from Clarine save her tears, for she was now weeping bitterly. Presently he paused before her.

"Why have you done this, Clarine? Why have you

led me to the summit of hope, only to cast me down to the depths of despair? Surely not for the satisfaction of winning one more heart to your list of captives! That were a motive unworthy of you. I know that your heart is pure and noble, Clarine, whatever suffering you may unwittingly inflict upon me. But tell me one thing, answer me one question, Clarine. Did you not know all this while that I loved you?"

From the midst of choking sobs, Clarine softly answered, "Yes."

Whether it was the honesty of the timid confession, or the distress which was convulsing Clarine, or by whatever subtle cause, but a bright gleam of hope lightened the burden of his heart. It suddenly struck him, that for a woman who was rejecting a man she did not love, Clarine was betraying an unaccountable agitation. This excess of emotion certainly could not proceed from the pain of an unloved suitor's reproaches, however severe. What was the meaning of this evident misery? The posture of despair, her unbroken silence, the convulsive sobs of bitter weeping she was vainly endeavoring to check, the air of utter helplessness of woe? With the instinct of a lover he knew he was beloved, and instantly his heart smote him for his harshness.

Again he was bending over her, speaking in a voice of gentlest persuasion. "Forgive me, Clarine! I was unjust, unkind. But why do you torture me, darling? Why do you tell me that you do not love me?"

Clarine started and raised her head. "I have not said that I do not love you!"

She certainly had not said so, as he now recollected to his joy.

"What did you say, then, Clarine?" he asked, laying his hand caressingly upon her head.

"I said that—that I could not be your wife," and again her head bowed, but her tears and sobs had ceased.

Dr. Purdon was completely puzzled to understand her. What did she mean?

"If you love me, Clarine, what is there to prevent you from being my wife?"

"All! everything! Oh, Dr. Purdon, if you knew all, you would not love me!" She rose from her seat, and with hands clasped before her, stood leaning against the casement.

"I would love you in spite of the world, Clarine. Consent to be mine, give yourself to me, and nothing you could tell me would mar my happiness!" What had this pure, innocent child to tell, that could change his passionate love?

Sweet assurance! A gleam of hope! Dared she accept it? That dread spectre again swept its shadow athwart her heart.

"No, no, Dr. Purdon; indeed it can never, never be!" Then she suddenly turned towards him, and, for the first time, he saw those lovely features pallid and distorted with anguish, and set in hard lines of misery. With an impulsive yearning he opened his arms to her, to soothe her in their embrace, but she put up her hands to prevent him. He took her cold hands in his, and she looked up at him with a great suffering in her eyes, as she continued: "There is that in my past life which comes between me and love. I tell you it is impossible for me to be your wife. I cannot tell you why, I cannot explain all to you. But do not plead to me any more; it pains me. And"—she lowered her head and tried to withdraw her hands, but they were held too close; "I know I deserve your reproaches, I know I should not have encouraged your love, when I knew that you did love me, but oh, indeed, I could not help it!"

Tenderly Dr. Purdon raised her hands to his lips at this sweet admission. "Only assure me of your love, Clarine, and whatever obstacle your sensitive fancy has raised from the past shall be swept away. Tell me that you love me, and no power on earth can keep you from me. Do you love me, Clarine?"

Was it in loving woman's nature to resist such tender persuasion? She had so little to give him in return for the happiness she was destroying, surely she need not deny him the satisfaction of knowing that he was beloved? Love called to love, and the spirit of love, rising from the overflowing fountain of her soul, opened her lips to answer, and the voice that was sweetest music to his soul poured forth its plaintive melody of mingled love and woe.

"Dr. Purdon, will it please you to know how much I love you? Will it help assuage the grief I am causing, to know that in sending you from me I am casting away every vestige of hope for the future? that without you, life will be a burden greater than I can bear? Do I love you? Ah, question the flowers in the garden, if the sunshine which has warmed them into life is not their very life itself! You have taught my soul its love. You have taught me the meaning of happiness, and you have re-taught me that which I had long since forgotten, the mocking pleasures of hope; and you have also taught me what I once thought I knew in all their bitterness, the throes, the agonies of unutterable despair. Would you know if I love you? Ask every beat of my heart, ask every throb of my pulse, every thought of my brain! You have been my waking thoughts, my happy dreams, and life without you will be more dreary than ever, so very, very dreary! Oh, Dr. Purdon you have changed the weariest woe to most exquisite bliss, the saddest despair to most joyful hope; and you have taught a heart



trained for long years in the strife of agony, a fierceness of anguish it had never dreamed. All the power, all the intensity of my nature, whether for joy or for sorrow, has yielded to you in one wild cry for love. This, all this is my love for you."

"No power under God's heaven can keep you from me now, Clarine!"

And he took her to his heart, he enfolded her within his arms, he pressed warm kisses upon her cheeks, her eyes, her lips, he breathed the delicious murmurs of love, and her own anguished words had made her powerless to resist. The master power claimed her for his own; she yielded to the bliss ineffable; and his heart was glad within him.

## CHAPTER XL.

CLARINE was roused from her dream of happiness to watch by the bedside of sickness. The physician had pronounced that dread word which has sounded the death-knell in many a happy household—Scarlet fever!

Carefully the doctor had tried to break the sad announcement to Clarine, but the truth was now a duty. "There is no longer any doubt that the children have scarlet fever."

"Both, Doctor?" cried Clarine, in startled voice.

"Both," he answered, in surprise at the partiality his quick sense detected in the tones of alarm. He did not suspect it was a mother's heart which spoke.

From that hour Clarine devoted herself to the children night and day, her only change being from one bedside to the other. Dr. Purdon came to her every day, and their hours were spent together in mutual cares of the sick-room, for only to his skilful and tender care would she relinquish the slightest duty of her post. He insisted upon her daily taking sufficient rest to prevent her strength being overtaxed, and having greater confidence in his nursing than in her own, she consented to obey the command he gently yet firmly enforced. Indeed she could not well resist; for every morning, after he had fairly established himself at his post, he would quietly say to

her, "Come," and well she knew what the smiling command meant. He would lead her to the door, open it, put her outside, and bidding her a laughing "good bye," would close the door and lock it, and the key once turned, all her whispered coaxing and soft continuous knocking were of no avail to reopen it. Then, with a well pleased smile at the loving care so tenderly bestowed, she would seek the needed repose: and though sleep did not always come at her bidding, yet the happy thoughts flitting peacefully across her mind, despite its anxieties, would refresh the weariness of her body.

But this playing with care soon ceased, for the days came when not even Dr. Purdon's hand could remove Clarine from her station of watchful love. Days of painful, heart-rending anxiety, when the Angel of Death hovered near, and they could only pray that he might pass them by.

One afternoon Clarine sat alone with the children, Dr. Purdon having yielded to her entreaties that he should go and refresh himself by a walk. He had refused to leave her, until he finally concluded that he would please her best by acceding to her generous request; for well he knew that in sending him away from her side, but for a moment, she was denying herself a pleasure growing hourly dearer.

Clarine sat alone by the bedside of little Madge, listening to the fevered breathing, watching a single sunbeam which had strayed across the dusky floor, and welcoming the cool breeze which blew in through the open but darkened windows. Presently the little thing began to moan and toss restlessly, and in a few moments awoke. Clarine gave her a cooling drink, replaced afresh the cold cloths upon her head, and the child brightened up and began to talk feverishly in its old, prattling tones, and Clarine was pleased at what she thought a favorable sign. As she

brushed the short, clustering curls from the child's burning forehead, she noticed that it was looking at her with a strangely earnest, yearning gaze.

"What is it, my pet? Do you want anything?"

"Yes, I do want for something," the child replied, in its baby accents, without taking its glowing eyes from Clarine.

"Tell me what it is, darling. You shall have it," and tenderly she kissed the parched and crimsoned lips.

"May I say it?" persisted the child, as though still fearing to utter its wish.

"Certainly, little pet. What is it?"

"Mamma! May I say mamma?"

"Hush, Madge, hush!" Clarine looked up in affright. But there was none to hear, for the nurse had been despatched on an errand, and the other child lay sleeping.

"Please let me call you mamma, Aunt Clarine! You did once," urged the child.

Well Clarine recollected that once she had indeed taught it to utter the name. It was one day as she sat alone with her child, listening to its busy tongue prattling its first baby lisplings, when, not suddenly, for the natural longing had often filled her aching heart, but with greater force, the yearning to hear her child give her her mother's name, came over her with irresistible desire. Taking her baby in her arms, she had taught it to syllable "mamma." But only a few times had she allowed herself the exquisitely painful joy; and then the child was gently forbidden to speak the sweet word again. With the mysterious understanding of childhood, the baby had obeyed, avoiding, as it now seemed by a strange instinct, the forbidden word. To herself the remembrance had often brought a thrill of fond delight, but she had always supposed that the child had long forgotten its baby teachings. By what strange caprice, or instinct of memory, had that once pleas-

ant, now fearful word been again brought to her child's lips?

"Please, mamma!" pleaded the fretful voice.

"Hush, Madge, darling!" whispered Clarine, bending over the child. "You must not say that word, my own pet."

"Just once, please; only just once!" The burning eyes were fixed so earnestly upon her, and the panting breath came so short and quick. "Only just once!"

Could the mother refuse this plea from her own self? "Only once, then, my little Madge! Mamma's dear baby!" murmured Clarine, very softly.

"Mamma! mamma! dear mamma!" repeated the child, in low tones of delight, and she raised her little arms around her mother's neck, and put up her lips to meet the burning, passionate kisses Clarine was now pressing upon her baby's lips and eyes and brow. Smiling and murmuring, "Mamma! dear mamma!" Baby Madge gradually sank again into the same heavy, feverish sleep, while Clarine clasped her darling closer within her arms, and wept scalding tears of bitterness.

When Dr. Purdon returned and found Clarine still sobbing, and her eyes heavy with her weeping, he blamed himself for having left her alone to be a prey to nervous apprehensions. He took her in his arms, he kissed away the traces of tears, and gently soothed and calmed her agitation. "Do not yield to such unnecessary fears, Clarine, my darling. There is still hope for the children." She could not tell him why she wept; and as he murmured fond soothing she trembled, but not with joy, as she thought of her promise to be his wife.

Through the long anxious hours the fever raged its frightful course, and Clarine, unwearied, watched with the yearning tenderness of loving fear. The mother's name, always sacred, had given birth to a new love in the

mother's heart, and Clarine now bent over her child with a quickened agony of dread. But what availeth even a mother's watch? The fiat of Death had gone forth: One was to be left, the other taken. For the one, health and life were now advancing; for the other, the tomb was already open. Neither medical skill nor medical nursing could save Baby Madge, for the taint of hereditary frailty had worked its corruption, and ever-waiting Death found an easy prey. The little Jeannette was carried into another apartment, the living removed from the dying, and then the grieving watch was kept for Death, fast coming to take Baby Madge.

Clarine had known all night what none had the courage to tell her. She felt that the last great change was coming, the last hours of life fading away with her child. Her father and Mrs. Mordaunt had remained with her the earlier part of the night, but had finally retired, not thinking death was so very near. Dr. Purdon had remained, giving the aid and assistance to the dying child which Clarine had become incapable of rendering. And now he staid after the others had gone, for it was his right to remain by her side, to give her at least the consolation of his presence; and he was not willing that she should be alone when the fearful end, which he knew was nearer than they supposed, should come to the child he saw she loved so well.

The deep silence of midnight in the death-chamber was unbroken save by the heavy, long-drawn breathing of the dying, and the dreary sobs which Clarine gasped convulsively forth. She knelt and half reclined upon the bed, her head down upon the pillow by her child, her arm thrown across its little body, as though still to keep it with her. She only moved to give place to Dr. Purdon as he administered the medicines which, fighting against hope, he continued to give until the very last; and then

again the deep silence listened to the sounds of death, while the watch softly ticked each passing step to the grave.

The child moved and moaned. Clarine roused herself. Pressing her hand to her aching brow, she looked down upon her child, and started with a cry of horror at the fearful change already made. The hollow, sharpened features had been rapidly marked by the quick fingers of Death.

"Oh, Dr. Purdon! she is dying! Oh, no, no! it cannot be! Madge, my darling! my precious one! come back to me, baby darling! I cannot part with you! Oh, no, no! it is too hard, too hard to bear." She buried her face upon her child, and her agonized sobs and moans were heart-rending.

Gently Dr. Purdon passed his arm around her, as he knelt down by her side, and softly laid his soothing hand upon her bowed head. "'Their angels do always behold the face of the Father which is in heaven!' Clarine, can you not give the little one to her Saviour's arms?"

Presently the child struggled and gave a short, gasping cry. Dr. Purdon rose and stood watching Clarine with inexpressible compassion, for a glance had shown him that the last moment of life had come. Clarine raised her head, and gazed with eyes strained by their painful tears upon her dying child.

The little one opened her eyes, and fixed them earnestly upon Clarine. One short look; she put up her arms, and half raised herself towards Clarine; a bright, angelic smile lit up her baby features: "Mamma!"

"Oh, God! My child! My baby!" With a wild, convulsive grasp she caught her child to her breast. "No, no, no, not yet, O God! not yet!"

"Your child! Clarine! My God!" and the stricken man staggered and grasped for support.

Clarine heard that great cry; it penetrated past her dying child to her very soul: the agony of the man she loved conquered the agony of the mother. One moment of suspense, of hesitation, and the honor of truth triumphed. She gathered up her child in her arms; she arose and stood before him; steadily she met his gaze, and clearly and firmly she spoke:

"Yes, Dr. Purdon; before God, *my* child!" She paused, then, without lowering her eyes so strangely fixed upon him, she added in deepened tones: "And now you know why I can never,—*never* be your wife."

She could say no more; her strength was failing her. Dr. Purdon looked from her to the child in her arms. With a start, he put out his hands and took it from her, and she made no effort to keep it. Gently he laid the little body, from which the spirit of life had fled, upon the couch of death; still more gently he closed the parted eyes, composed the little limbs: Baby Madge was dead.

Then he turned to the woman who, with one fell stroke, had cleaved death into his heart. She stood watching him in helpless wretchedness. She knew, she saw that her child was dead, but she was powerless to move or speak. He could not turn from her; from his very soul he pitied her.

"Come, Clarine." And he led her, unresisting, into the adjoining room; he placed her upon the couch; and then he left her, and called up Mr. Rivington, and told him to go to Clarine, for the child was dead; and then,—he passed on, and out into the night, and turned not back. And the early dawn broke coldly upon mortal death and desolation.

On, on, on, he walked, through the early morning mists, walking away from the torment in his soul; but it sped on as fast as he, and but clenched and grasped the closer. He walked until the streets were filled and throng-

ing with people, and then with heavy step he returned to his hotel, to his rooms now doubly cold and dreary. Torture made him restless; he could not remain here, he must fly from his misery! Before night Dr. Purdon was speeding as fast as steam and rail could carry him away from the woman who had brought destruction to his heart; away from the spot where his happiness was born and buried. Through weary weeks and months he tried to flee from the evil spirit pursuing him. Never twice in the same scene, never a resting place, always on and on, until, weary and exhausted with his useless flight, he turned and retraced his steps homeward, to the country where the stern duties of life still awaited him.

Dr. Purdon had satisfied every scruple of conscience towards Clarine by offering still to maintain their relation unbroken and make her his wife. A few hours before he left the city, on that dreary flight, he had written to her as calm and dispassionate a letter as his feelings would allow. He uttered no reproaches, no idle recriminations:

"Clarine, I cannot come to you and claim you now as my own, as though the dread revelation had not been unsealed by the lips of Death; but if my name can shield you from any trouble of the future, my name, my hand are still yours: I still ask you to be my wife. I have appeared before your family as your promised husband, and I would save you from every breath of evil reproach, protect you from every touch of harm. The years may come when merciful Time can forget the past, and happiness may again be granted to us. But, would to God, Clarine, that I had known this earlier in our love! for then I might not have loved you less, and the knowledge of the present hour would have been shorn of its bitterness.

"I cannot appear again before Mr. Rivington. For the present, no apology is necessary for my departure, other than important business which could no longer be delayed; that is, if you deem this sufficient excuse for my absence under the existing sad circumstances. But say anything, everything you wish to your father, only do not blame yourself. All the burden of reproach must rest alone on me, for I shall not allow even your own lips to accuse you, Clarine, my—yes my darling! God knows, you are still my darling, my loved one!

"Again I ask you, Clarine, to be my wife. If you recall me, I will return in a few days, or as soon as possible. May God forever bless you!"

Few men would have said as much, some men might have done more.

Clarine's answer soon followed his speeding journey; and as he took it into his hands, he paused in trembling hesitation ere he broke the seal. A blind confusion swept over heart and brain, and, for a moment, the consciousness of thought was lost. Tearing it open, he read the few simple words:

"Spare me, spare yourself! It is impossible; it cannot be; I can never be your wife! Have I not sinned enough, that you ask me to cast a further blight upon your happiness? I tried to save you some of this pain. I would have borne all the suffering from your keenest reproaches, but still have kept the right to carry the secret of my past within the recesses of my own heart; but love sealed my lips in deceit; and when a pure spirit from my own sinful being revealed the secret, my guilt was but justly punished.

"For the present I have fully excused your absence, and so soon as I have strength and courage I shall explain all that is further necessary regarding our altered relations. Farewell, forever! Forget me: ah, yes! I would have you entirely forget the wretched woman who has crushed every hope of joy for you and for herself. God, in his mercy, will yet grant you happiness in the future, and every breath of my life will ascend in aspirations to heaven, to return in showers of blessings upon you."

But one more duty now remained, a letter of apology and explanation to Mr. Rivington, in which not a shadow of reproach rested upon Clarine; and then Dr. Purdon, with a sad heaviness weighing down and oppressing every feeling within him, recrossed the ocean, and stood again in his old home.

Sadly he returned to a life which had lost its engrossing charm of welcome duties, for those duties had become merely burdensome tasks to be dragged through by miserable, monotonous routine. The animus of life had fled; robbed of its just ambition and never-failing energy which had imparted the untiring activity to thought and action. Sternly he faced the cold, bleak prospect of the future

which now lay stretched before him, one unbroken waste of weary drudgery. Labor and toil were now his unrewarding tasks, and one, the hardest task of life,—training memory to forget. With such a future to look forward to, life was cheerless indeed. What wonder, then, that he sought to steep his senses in forgetfulness, and chose for the Lethean act that which many and many a desperate man and reckless woman has likewise chosen, to their infinitely greater sorrow,—marriage! But now he sought merely an alleviation of misery in that to which he had once looked forward as the very acme of bliss. Then his hopes had rested upon a marriage of love,—the germ of every earth-born joy; now they lay in a marriage of oblivion—the grave of dead hopes.

One day, his sister, who took that affectionate solicitude in his matrimonial prospects which married sisters are apt to take in bachelor brothers, said to him rather abruptly, "Richard, why don't you marry?"

"My ambition is too humble to aspire to such realms," he answered, with his quiet smile.

"Nonsense! You would be much happier married, with a wife and family to make your home cheerful and pleasant, than you are now, in your miserable bachelor establishment."

"Perhaps it is too much trouble to decide upon a choice," he returned carelessly. "Among so many fair and lovely prizes as your sex offers, how can a helpless man decide? Suppose you choose one for me, Kate."

"Willingly. Why don't you take Nettie Gray? I am sure she is very much attached to you, and would make you a good wife. And, indeed, you would be much happier with a loving wife in your home."

The seed once planted took firm root, and grew. That night when Dr. Purdon returned to his home, it seemed more cold and desolate than ever. He compared its cheer-

less, lonely aspect to happier households he knew. He peopled his home with the fancies which had arisen in his mind. With a wife and children to give him a happy household, such as other men had, life might be made more endurable.

And so this was the way that Dr. Purdon, in less than six months after parting with Clarine Rivington, came to be married to Nettie Gray.

Everybody lifted up their eyes in astonishment at the marriage. Everybody declared that Dr. Purdon must have been insane when he chose such a woman, such a nonentity as Nettie Gray for his wife. Everybody said that there was no sense nor reason in such a marriage. And everybody was about right. For the only motive deserving the name of reason, why Dr. Purdon should have selected Nettie Gray for his wife, was simply this: Nettie Gray was the very antipodal contrast to Clarine Rivington.

For Clarine Rivington's surpassing beauty, Nettie Gray had merely prettiness; for Clarine Rivington's elegant grace, Nettie Gray had merely affectation; for Clarine Rivington's elevated sentiments, Nettie Gray had merely mawkish romance; for Clarine Rivington's varied and accomplished culture, Nettie Gray had—nothing!

Dr. Purdon had for years led a life of solitary habits, of sedentary seclusion, varied only by the more active duties of his profession. Having no family household, and from his studious pursuits avoiding general society, he had, perhaps unconsciously, suffered from a dearth of woman's companionship. It was therefore not strange, that in his hours of solitude he should have dreamed a dream of love, and should have moulded and created for himself an ideal woman, exalted as are all mere ideals. In Clarine Rivington his dream had become an inspiration; into his ideal had been breathed the breath of soul. She was the rev-

elation of his life. And he had bowed in spirit, and worshipped before this exquisite shrine of purity; when lo! the portals of truth flew open and disclosed the serpent enthroned within! Then had he turned away from this false altar, leaving thereon the consuming incense of hope.

Had Dr. Purdon's ideal been less exalted, he might have forgiven Clarine Rivington her past sin, for the sake of her present virtues. Or even, as he had himself said, "had he known it earlier," before his love had become so embodied in her honor and purity, that the least blight upon either was death to his love, "he might not have loved her less," he might still have adored the new purity which truth and contrition had moulded in the fiery furnace. But this knowledge had come too late. His love had become too sensitive to allow him to take to his arms a wife who had been false to the cherished honor of woman.

When men are thus disappointed in the purest and holiest affection of their nature, the usual custom of men has enjoined but two methods of consolation. For the cure of a broken heart, men rush to dissipation or to marriage. Dr. Purdon chose the latter.

For years the daily prayer for resignation ascended to his God; but it was not until children clambered upon his knees, and sons and daughters clustered around him, that Dr. Purdon became reconciled to life.

## CHAPTER XLI.

'A N humble and a contrite heart.'

Such was now the heart of Clarine Rivington. There had been one long night of obscurity, in which the spirits of solitude and darkness held undisturbed sway until from the depths of her anguished soul arose the one great cry, "God help me!" Then had the dawn come. The refulgence of a new morn dispelled the clouds of the troubled night, and the rays of divine love shed upon her soul the light of a new day.

For years Clarine's religious state had been that of a sceptic. Not the scepticism of unbelief, not the scepticism of denial, but the scepticism the most difficult to shake from its foundation; the scepticism of apathy. She believed, it is true, in God; she believed in the Saviour; but it was the cold, passive belief of the mind, which, inasmuch as it was not with her Saviour, was against Him. We have seen how this pitiable condition was mainly produced by that one sermon which her father had allowed himself to preach; when, entering the temple of holy worship in a spirit of weeping contrition to prostrate herself in utter self-abnegation before the Footstool of Mercy, her bowed head had encountered only the stern anathemas of the church hurled against her weakness. And we have seen how, in that first passionate frenzy of disappoint-



ment, in the rage of ardor balked, of fervor rebuked, she had madly, yet none the less deliberately, torn one by one from her heart every vestige of respect for her father, every vestige of penitence towards God. Then had followed the long, tedious process of battering down thought, the dreary task of hardening every genuine feeling of her nature, and in the mad whirl of reckless dissipation completing the ruin begun by the vindictive severity of one who was ordained to preach the gospel of peace, of one who claimed his commission from on High; but if from on High, then must the commission have been to save souls, not to curse them.

That Mr. Rivington had afterwards learned to moderate his wrath, had been taught so to assuage his bitterness as almost to forgive, did not extenuate in one iota the great wrong committed in the first instance, that of setting his child in passive defiance, worse than open warfare, to her God. He did it in ignorance of the real state of her heart? through an error of judgment? His ignorance was no justification; and he had no right to judge. There is but One Judge, God.

When will these self appointed preachers learn that the erring human heart is more easily persuaded than coerced? When will these so-called ministers of Christ, who sent his chosen ones, whose followers they profess to be, "forth into the world to preach the gospel unto all men," when will these apostates learn that that gospel is a gospel of peace, not war; of mercy, not judgment; of redemption, not damnation? God our Judge; Christ our Saviour; the Holy Ghost our Comforter: this is the gospel of "peace and good will towards men."

From such a state of moral torpitude as that into which Clarine Rivington had sunk, only some powerful counter-shock could arouse. This counter-shock was fortunately found in the healthy influence exerted upon her enervated

senses by Dr. Purdon's more healthy and vigorous mind; in the love which had mollified the harshness embittering every thought, and softened the asperities gathered in extraneous growths about the gentler sentiments of her nature; and, finally, in that one startling question which had shaken from its already tottering base the entire structure of her scepticism.

"Why are you *afraid* of your Saviour?"

The well aimed blow fell with resistless force. The keen stroke cut to the quick, and with scarce a struggle of expiring agony every doubt and fear lay dead at her feet.

"Never again will I be afraid of my Saviour."

One vivid flash revealed the appalling truth to her soul, and her submission was instantaneous and complete. From that moment her repentance was a certainty, however distant in fulfilment. The hand of human love had pointed out to her the path to redemption by divine mercy, and though infinite wisdom had acted through finite agency, the means of redemption were none the less divine, the human will none the less free for refusal or acceptance of the proffered gift of salvation. But Clarine had made the happy choice, and whatever trials and afflictions this world had yet in store, the transgressor, though unforgiven here, had won immortality in the brighter sphere of the infinite hereafter.

The mother's sorrow became soothed, the agitation of grief tranquillized; though with the injustice of grief she had rebelled against the mandate which had taken her one, but left the other. But Time, the great healer of all soreness of spirit, had poured the soothing balm of consolation upon her wounds, and her weeping voice was no longer heard in the murmurings of mournful complaint. But for the other, the greater loss, the lost love; that affliction even Time itself, all powerful, could

not allay. To loss through death nature reconciles; but for that loss of earthly joys inflicted by the sundering of lives, the parting which but separates, not destroys, there may be resignation, but, on this earth, never consolation.

Yet Clarine never once, in all her after-life, regretted the act which had parted her and Dr. Purdon; never once regretted that she had not recalled him when she might. She meekly bowed to that equity which revealed sin through its fruits; she humbly submitted, without murmuring, to the punishment she acknowledged just for her transgression; and she bore, without complaint, the pain which only divine grace could mitigate.

Clarine was not allowed long to indulge her griefs, for the summer was advancing, and the heated city was fast emptying itself into the cooler country. The physician had ordered sea bathing for the little Jeannette, and Clarine had decided upon Newport, influenced in going there not only from its being her favorite summer resort, but because this summer her aunt Julia and her family were there, Mr. Seymour having purchased a cottage near the shore; and Mr. Rivington was fortunate enough to secure a rented one near them.

One morning as Clarine was superintending some packing, she was surprised by the servant presenting her Mr. Edward Rashleigh's card. Wondering what strange event had led to a call from him at this unusual hour, she hastily descended to the drawing-room to receive him.

He advanced to meet her with his usual manner, and, as though reading her thoughts, exclaimed, "Of course, Clarine, you are surprised at seeing me here at this unusual hour of the day, are you not? It is rather early, I believe, for gentlemen's morning calls."

"Friends are privileged in irregular hours, Mr. Rashleigh," she replied, graciously. "I only trust that it is to some happy cause I owe this unexpected pleasure."

"Scarcely, Clarine, scarcely," and as he turned away and walked towards the window, she saw that there was some trouble with him. "The fact is," he said, returning to her, "I have come to ask a favor of you, a very great favor, Clarine; so great, indeed, that I am tempted to bind you to grant it before knowing what it is."

"Please consider it granted beforehand, then," she replied courteously.

He paused, as in hesitation how to frame his thoughts, and then said: "In the first place, Clarine, I am obliged to start for Europe next week."

"For Europe! How sudden! Does Isabel accompany you?"

"No; and—in fact, Clarine, that is why I am here: I want to leave my wife with you this summer. I have just received letters that my partner in Paris, Mr. Dunbar, is very ill, and as he has been engaged in some very important business transactions, which, failing in being successfully carried through, would entail heavy losses upon our house, the necessity for my going over is imperative."

"But why not take Isabel with you? She would enjoy another trip to Paris very much."

"I brought my wife away from Paris once, and I shall not take her back there again," he returned in cold, decided tones. "The truth is, Clarine, I do not dare either to take my wife with me, or to leave her here alone. In fact, I cannot trust her." Here he rose and began pacing the floor. "It is a hard confession to wring from a man, that he dares not trust his wife; is it not? But it is forced from me, it is extorted from me by her own conduct. Isabel has always been utterly regardless of my wishes, and she grows more reckless every day. She has never properly observed the duties of wife and mother, and she has only chafed under the restraint, slight though it was, which my authority imposed upon her. Lately she defies

me more openly than ever, and she never bestows a care upon our child. I dare not leave her alone, without the least check upon her career, even for the few weeks I shall be away. And this is why I have come to you, Clarine, to ask you to take her under your care. Will you do it, Clarine? Will you take my wife and boy under your protection?"

Clarine was in dismay at the proposal, for a quick glance showed her its difficulties. Timidly she suggested that Mr. and Mrs. Bell, having been her guardians before her marriage, were her more suitable protectors now.

"Yes; and thanks to Mrs. Bell's training before marriage, and happy tutelage since, for helping to make Isabel the wife that she is. Mrs. Bell and my wife are truly fit companions for one another." Mr. Rashleigh spoke with savage acrimony.

Clarine could make no reply to this, not even to the aspersion upon her aunt; for she well knew, what, indeed, everybody else was well aware of, that Mrs. Rashleigh and Mrs. Bell ranged side by side at the head of the long list of fashionable women who, recklessly disregarding every consideration of home duties, heartlessly casting loose every tie of affection for husband or children, seek only the pursuits of selfish vanity, and with never satiated eagerness find the intoxication of depraved pleasure in displaying their soulless charms to the vitiating flattery of a dancing crowd of men and women as selfish, as frivolous, as heartless, soulless and brainless as themselves.

From these forgers of human nature, from this false clique in society, Clarine had always held herself aloof, never mingling with them except in the entertainments at Mrs. Bell's or Mrs. Rashleigh's houses, which she felt herself obliged occasionally to attend.

Clarine waited for Mr. Rashleigh to continue, but finding he remained silent, she at last remarked: "If you

object to Mrs. Bell, why not ask Mrs. Seymour, or Mrs. Wilson to invite her to their houses? I know it would give Aunt Julia pleasure to have Mrs. Rashleigh for her guest."

"Isabel would not go to either of them. She is afraid of both Mrs. Seymour and Mrs. Wilson, for she knows that they never countenance her conduct. And as for Mrs. Bell," he added, "you know that she intends going to Europe again herself, next month, before I shall be able to return. I know that Isabel would rather visit you than any one else, Clarine, for you are the only woman for whom she pretends to have the least affection or esteem; she really has a sincere regard for you. And you will invite her," he pursued earnestly, "you will grant my request? I see consent already in your smile."

"Of course, Mr. Rashleigh, as you so anxiously wish it, my friendly regard for yourself and Isabel will not allow me to refuse. And I scarcely need assure you that it will afford me the greatest pleasure to have Isabel and little Eddie with me this summer. At the same time, I cannot but regret that Isabel could not have had the advantage of a married lady's household. Mrs. Mordaunt's position with us is sufficient for me, but with Isabel it is different. It is not to be supposed that Mrs. Mordaunt should be any protection to Mrs. Rashleigh."

"I want no better safeguard for my wife than your father's household, Clarine," responded Mr. Rashleigh, earnestly; "and as for the better protection offered by the name of a married lady, the name of Clarine Rivington is the best guarantee to protect any woman from the pollution of scandal and gossip."

Clarine thrilled at this praise, praise of a good name welcome to any woman, doubly welcome to her; and the next moment the flush of shame rose to her cheek as she thought of her unworthiness to listen to such sweet sounds.

Mr. Rashleigh was too engrossed with his own sad thoughts to notice the effect of his words upon Clarine. Presently he remarked quietly, but with a touch of bitterness to his tone: "Clarine, do you recollect that letter which you wrote to me on Isabel's behalf, entreating me to return to her? That letter, as you may remember, reached me in Cairo, just as I was on the eve of starting up the Nile. Well, do you know, I have often thought since, that perhaps it would have been better for my after-happiness if—well, if I had gone on up the Nile."

"Hush, Mr. Rashleigh! do not express such regrets!" cried Clarine, pained to hear him speak so despondingly. "Is your boy no comfort to you?"

"He is my sole comfort: God bless him! If I did not have him to love me, I should be miserable and hopeless, indeed. Ah, Clarine, very wretched is the husband loving a wife who does not love him in return!"

"But, Mr. Rashleigh, Isabel does love you, I know, truly and fondly. She is only a little thoughtless now and then," returned Clarine, making a feeble attempt at consolation.

"Isabel's levity effectually cancels whatever love she may have either for me or for her child. When my little boy is with you, Clarine, I know he will have loving words and caresses to his heart's content: poor little fellow! he has none but his father to love him now," he added with a sigh. "Ah, Clarine, if you could only realize what a burden you have lifted from my heart, you would appreciate your own goodness, and know how heartfelt are my thanks," and tears of emotion glistened in his eyes as he respectfully raised her hand to his lips. "Good-bye, Clarine. God bless you!"

Clarine sat alone and pondered long upon this strange interview. To what extremes must Isabel's levity have led her, to have extorted such language from

a loving husband, as Mr. Rashleigh had this morning used? He had also reflected upon her aunt, Mrs. Bell. She did not wonder at his being aware of the unhappy influence exercised by her over Isabel, or that his just indignation should have been aroused against the woman who was the chief abettor of his wife in all her frivolity, to give it no severer name.

Clarine was saddened as she reflected upon the long course of open, braving defiance which Isabel must have practised, before her husband could have been brought to the humiliating confession that "he dared not trust her." How entirely she must have cast off all further concealment, and exposed her falsity in all its glaring hideousness, to have taught such language to a husband's lips. And this wife whom he could no longer trust, but still loved, he had asked to leave in her charge! had made humble petition to leave under her protection! Could more delicate proof have been given of the honor and respect in which she was held? He had said that her name, the name of Clarine Rivington, was a guarantee of protection to any woman. The most subtle flattery could have devised no sweeter praise. Had she indeed won for herself the priceless treasure of a good name? Had she indeed reared above the ruin of the past a fame so fair, so unsullied that pollution recoiled from its purity? Again and again she thrilled beneath the tremor of delight, as she lingered over the soft strains which had wafted to her ear such ravishing music. But were her purest pleasures never to be without alloy? The next instant her heart gave a terrible leap of pain, and she crouched together in abject self-abasement, as her never long silent monitor relentlessly recalled the bitter thought, that the appalling truth resting beneath this glittering fabric of unsullied fame, had lost her the love she valued above all other treasures.

## CHAPTER XLII.

ONCE established in their summer home, the quiet routine of country life, in which they were allowed to indulge during the few weeks preceding the commencement of the fashionable gayeties, afforded them a grateful rest from the fatigues of an unusually gay and prolonged winter season. To Clarine the change was especially welcome. It was not only that the quiet of country life and scenes offered a grateful relief from the noisy tumult of the city, or that she could enjoy the physical rest her over-taxed system required; but she liked the idle basking in the warm sunshine, unbroken, save by some fleecy cloud, or the inviting shadow of umbrageous trees; the warbling song of many birds, and lowing of distant cattle was music to her ears; and every breath of the pure fresh air, and every fragrant odor from the blooming flowers brought constantly renewed delight: and more than this was the tranquillity such influences bestowed upon her mind. In the society of her aunt, Mrs. Seymour, and her husband, Clarine now found a genuine pleasure such as general society, so eagerly sought by her for years, had never been able to afford. In her aunt Julia she found not only a companion with whom intercourse was pleasing, but a friend, whose sympathy and advice were kind and instructive. There was a certain mildness and gentleness in Mrs. Sey-

mour's character, an habitual composure of demeanor, an attractive serenity which won upon Clarine's affections as well as her esteem and admiration.

In Mr. Seymour Clarine also found a warm-hearted friend and genial companion. From the rollicking bachelor Mr. Seymour had settled down into the steady family man; a happy husband, a fond father, and a good friend to all who stood in need of his services. As he looked now at Clarine's pale cheeks and languid eyes, he made up his mind that "the girl wanted rousing up with plenty of fresh air and wholesome exercise," and with friendly intentions to effect this "rousing up," he insisted upon her accompanying him in his favorite tramps on foot and excursions on horseback. Thus the hours she did not devote to her aunt or her home, she now spent with him clambering over all the rocks girding the sea-shore, or riding and driving all over the country. This kind of life of necessity brought the roses back to her cheeks, the brightness into her eyes again, and imparted a thoroughly healthy tone to both mental and physical systems, each acting and reacting upon the other.

Clarine would have been content with this kind of a life all the summer long, and was sorry when the first sounds of the whir and buzz of fashion's uproar brought her aunt Helen and Mr. Bell, who had come down to Newport, under the Seymours' invitation, to pass the four or six weeks during which fashion holds high carnival.

One morning, as Clarine was entertaining some visitors in the drawing-room, Isabel entered, returning from a drive, and presently startled her by the sudden announcement that she had concluded to go to Europe the ensuing week with Mr. and Mrs. Bell. In the presence of her guests, Clarine, completely taken by surprise, could only utter a feeble

remonstrance, and having company entailed upon her for the day, and a dinner in the evening, she had no opportunity of questioning her upon this rash determination until just before retiring for the night, when she sought Isabel in her own room, and by her remonstrances attempted to dissuade her from her decision. But whatever hopes she had entertained of being able to persuade Isabel from her project, vanished entirely ere the subject had been discussed many minutes.

"I tell you, Clarine, it is no use trying to change my decision," replied Isabel, in answer to Clarine's several appeals. "I have made up my mind to go to Europe, and I am going. Your arguments are very true, and I know they are meant in friendship, and I thank you heartily for your kind interest; nevertheless, I am going. I have no doubt that, as you say, Edward will be very much displeased, but when I am once over there he can't send me back, and so he can"——

"He can find as much fault as he pleases," suggested Clarine, ironically, as Isabel paused.

"Exactly. When Edward left, I resolved then, that if he remained longer than a few weeks I would follow him. His last letter tells me that by Mr. Dunbar's death he will be detained two or three months longer, and those months I am determined to spend in Paris. Mrs. Bell suggested my accompanying her, and I am very glad of the opportunity of pleasant company all the way."

"I might have known that you and Aunt Helen have had your heads together lately only for mischief," rejoined Clarine, exasperated to a full expression of her opinion.

"You appear to understand us very well," retorted Isabel, sneeringly.

"Oh, Isabel! can nothing induce you to relinquish this trip?" urged Clarine, unnoticing Isabel's taunt. "You are

only bringing down trouble and misery upon your head. Believe me, Bella, you will regret the day you go to Europe against your husband's wishes."

"Nonsense, Clarine! You were always partial to dismal forebodings. I often think of the warning prophecies you used to try to frighten me with before I was married. Do you recollect predicting that Edward Rashleigh would forsake me, and leave me to weep agonizing tears of bitter penitence?"

Never before had Clarine recalled to memory a gift of kindness bestowed; but the heartless mockery in Isabel's tones taunted her to ask the meaning question, "And do you recollect whose hand it was which prevented that prediction from being fulfilled?"

"No, Clarine, I have never forgotten that but for your self-sacrificing friendship, I should never have had Edward Rashleigh for my husband," Isabel replied with considerable show of feeling. "Had you not written that letter, though so much against your will, I suppose he would never have returned from the Nile to me. But, if I remember right, you predicted still more," she continued in lighter tones. "You prophesied that my haughty pride would be so broken by all-conquering love, that I would become the meekest of slaves, and find my sweetest pleasure in serving, not ruling. You see my memory is very faithful. Has your prophecy come true, Clarine?"

"No!" retorted Clarine, indignant at the covert sneer in Isabel's words; "but it has not come true, Isabel, simply because then I supposed I was prophesying to a woman with soul enough to love, with heart enough to be a wife and mother."

"Clarine!" Isabel's eyes flashed fire, and the deep crimson dyed neck and brow, as she turned upon Clarine, ready with angry retort; but some strange impulse

checked her reply, as she met Clarine's calmness. She bit her lips until they purpled, and then she asked, with curbed passion and inexpressible disdain: "And pray, to whom do you suppose you are prophesying now?"

Clarine was nettled to the quick by Isabel's manner. She answered fearlessly: "To a woman who is ready and willing to sacrifice the happiness of herself, her husband and her child, all that should be dear to her, for the sake of displaying a petty vanity, and of gratifying a heartless, passionate obstinacy. How much truth do you think will be found in my prophecy now, Isabel?"

Isabel gave a scornful, derisive laugh. "You dare to ask the question, Clarine? then I dare to answer it. I do not care how much truth there may be in your prophecy. Let ruin come upon my head, if it will! You are indeed talking to a woman who is ready to sacrifice everything to that which you, I suppose, would call wicked temper. Do you know why my husband brought me away from Paris, Clarine? Because he dared not trust me! And yet, I swear before God, I have never wronged my husband's honor! I vowed then to be revenged, and now my revenge is coming. Before Edward left I begged and beseeched him to take me with him, not to leave me here alone. He urged and entreated me to remain; and, finally, when I insisted upon my right to accompany him, he commanded me to stay. Edward Rashleigh shall now find that the wife he dared to leave, has dared to follow him, and that the wife he dared not trust is ready to prove his doubts false or true, according as he himself wills the future; but that now, as ever, I despise his prayers, and defy his commands!"

Clarine was horror-stricken. She would not attempt a reply, but with a cold, distant "Good night," turned and left the room. After that evening she ventured no fur-

ther remonstrance, and, except for Mr. Rashleigh's sake, she could not regret her departure when, on the appointed day, she bade her farewell, together with Mr. and Mrs. Bell.

The summer had had its trials for Clarine, but in their very struggles they had won their own reward, and in the calm, still days of autumn she at last found repose for her weariness, and established her soul in peace. The influences of the summer had been both mentally and physically beneficial. Instead of, as hitherto, seeking to drown trouble in the wild torrent of revelry, she had learned to be content in being surrounded by the more natural relationships of family and friends. She had found cheerful occupation for her mind within the restricted limits of the once shunned home circle; she had found healthy activity for her body in invigorating out-door exercise; and she had learned not to fear thought, but rather to encourage salutary self-examination. Not that she had altogether ceased to combat memory. Grief and sorrow such as hers were not to be cast off by a day nor an hour of mourning. Many and many a lone, dark hour she sank beneath the crush of joys forever lost, moaned at the mocking echoes of hopes forever fled; and in the bitterness of an inexpressible agony she was maddened by human fate on earth, and rebelled against the decrees of heaven. But such murmurs were only the tainted spots of sin. She had already drunk of the Fountain of Life, and the pure waters coursed through her soul, cleansing from all iniquity. On her bended knees, with humble, contrite heart, Clarine wailed forth her appeal for help, her prayer for strength, her cry for peace; and the God of the transgressor answered the prayer, giving her strength to combat, and peace for her reward.

Clarine had already, in the early part of the summer, placed the large sum of money left to little Madge by Mr.



Maltby, in the hands of her solicitor, to be distributed in anonymous gifts to certain charitable institutions. This she considered the only and the best use to which she could apply the sum, for she would not retain it herself, and its rightful owner had passed from earth beyond its need.

Thus another link was severed from the past, but ere she could make her full peace with heaven, still another duty must be fulfilled. Whenever she attempted to repeat her Saviour's prayer, aroused conscience hushed her voice. "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us." There was one whom she had hated with a bitter hate, and whom even the condoning grave could not teach her to forgive; the author of her wrongs. But the day had at last come when she could humble herself to her enemies, when, to win full reconciliation to her God, she could cast out the last trace of the woman's pride in her heart, and could meekly and sincerely forgive him who had cursed her life from youth to old age. It was not without a sharp struggle that she thus bowed her over haughty spirit to this great sacrifice; but penitence humbleth to all things.

The Sabbath was approaching, and it was the Sunday for the usual communion service. Clarine had long wished once more to present herself before the table of her Lord, but hitherto a sense of her unworthiness had withheld her. But now, weak and weary, laden with her burden of repentance, she felt the need of the strength to be derived from the nourishing sacrament; and she also felt that by thus giving evidence by deed of her new-born faith in her Saviour, by this open confession of her God before the world, she would be doing that which was pleasing and acceptable in His sight: for "whosoever confesseth me before the world, him will I also confess before my Father in heaven."

But first she must forgive. She took from her desk his letter, the only one she had ever received from him, and opening it, once more read those words from the voice within the grave. For the first time her heart was saddened by his love. Her soul melted in strange compassion, and tears of purifying pity filled her eyes as she read:—"When you know that death has removed the ever bitter consciousness of my existence in the world, then let gentler feelings soften the resentment in your heart, and think of me in kindness. When I am dead, then say in your heart, 'I forgive him.'"

"God hear me, that I do forgive him!" she lowly murmured.

Then, from within its secret receptacle she drew forth a small medallion case, and, touching the spring, his features were before her as his very self. This miniature was the only memento she had preserved, and as often as she had been determined to destroy it, a vague, indefinable feeling had withheld her hand, a faint voice had whispered, "another time." Was it, as he had said, that "a woman can never entirely erase from her inner consciousness the image of the man towards whom her heart first turned in its tenderness?" She gazed now at the portrait long and fixedly, then a tear from her pitying eye dimmed its brightness, and as she closed it she sighed, and from her very soul arose the pardoning prayer:—"May God forgive me, even as I now forgive you."

She enclosed the miniature within the letter, then placed them on the cold summer hearth, and set fire to them. With an unspeakable sadness she watched the sole remaining visible tokens of the past slowly consuming to ashes. "Ashes to ashes, dust to dust." Crumbling in the grave lay all her old life, and from the ashes of corruption must rise the purified life, that her soul might be raised in incorruption.

On the Sabbath morn Clarine arose with a calm and peaceful heart, from which she had, as she thought, erased every trace of sinful pride; and meekly she prayed for peace to accept with proper spirit the Holy Sacrament for which she would that day present herself.

During breakfast, Mr. Rivington observed: "Clarine, I received a message from our clergyman, Mr. Blount, a few minutes ago, stating that he was suddenly taken quite ill during the night, and requesting me to officiate in his stead. So that I shall leave you and Mrs. Mordaunt at the church door."

A chill crept over Clarine. She had indeed meditated taking the communion, but from a stranger's hand, not her father's. Could her humility bend so low as to acknowledge to her father her repentance, the change which had been working so secretly within her heart? Confess by such decisive act to him whose judgment had been harshest, whose condemnation had been most unqualified? To him, who, from his pulpit, had well nigh cursed her for her sin? Truly, was she learning her last lesson, that it is easier to confess to God than man.

When Clarine entered the portals of the temple of worship, it was with a heart in which confusion again waged turmoil, instead of being filled only with the peace befitting the Lord's day. Vainly had she tried to come to a decision, but the struggle of human pride was still there, urging her to withhold this last and severest proof of the sincerity of her humble repentance. But not in vain had been her penitential tears, her prayers and prostrations of spirit before the Lord. Fervently did she now lift up her soul in petition to her God for strength to overcome this trial, and her prayer was answered. Among the very last communicants gravely approaching the chancel was Clarine Rivington, to lay her sacrifice of mortal's weakness, of human pride upon the altar of the Most High.

Mr. Rivington had observed, with astonishment, when the congregation dispersed during the interval allowed for that purpose between the sermon and the communion service, that Clarine had remained in her place. "Had she at last repented? Had his child, the erring one whom he had mourned over as one forever lost, come back to the fold? Had the transgressor won for herself in the sight of God the right to partake of His most blessed sacrament?" And, perhaps involuntarily, arose before him the solemn warning,—"*Whosoever eateth and drinketh of the same unworthily, partaketh to his own damnation.*" Even at this sacred moment, had he only the threat of judgment? As his daughter drew near and reverently bowed her head upon the chancel rail, contending emotions were rife within him. But he, too, had prayed. As his petitions for his people had ascended to the throne of the Almighty, he had breathed for himself the prayer, "that God would give him a mind to judge his child aright; that his human heart might be softened, and that he might mete such mercy unto her as he trusted to have meted unto him." Why had that prayer not ascended long years before?

The father's hand trembled as he placed in his daughter's palm the consecrated bread, and his voice was broken with emotion as he uttered the solemn exhortation:—"Take, and eat this in remembrance that Christ died for thee." Not until that moment had the minister realized that his erring child was one of those very sinners for whom had been the agony upon the Cross.

As Clarine Rivington raised the sacred chalice to her lips the spirit of peace rested upon her, and the blood of her Redeemer washed away from her soul every taint of its earthly pollution.

### CHAPTER XLIII.

ISABEL RASHLEIGH never returned from Europe. Mr. Rashleigh came back without his wife, bringing his little son. He looked years older than when he left; the few months had dimmed the light in his eye, had stamped furrows of care upon his brow, and threaded his dark hair with the silver of time. He replied to the inquiries of friends, "that his wife had wished to remain with her friends a while longer," and instinctively they avoided further questioning. The years sped on, and his son now stood by his side a young man, a son of whom a father might well be proud: and now that father leaned upon him for support, for he was an old, a broken down old man before his years. And at last the sorrowful heart could bear up no longer. Edward Rashleigh sickened and died, and his last words were of pardon and blessing to his lost wife; pardon and blessing which she received not in this world; for on the same day and in the same hour that Edward Rashleigh breathed his last sigh upon earth, Isabel Rashleigh's eyes were closed in the sleep which knows no waking in this life. The two letters of death crossed each other in mid-ocean. Husband and wife who had been separated for twenty years had winged together their departing souls. Mourning friends wondered at the strange mystery, and prayed that

the severed hearts might meet in the happier sphere beyond the grave.

For many years Mr. and Mrs. Bell had fluctuated between Europe and America, but had finally settled down in their old home in their native land, with an appearance of having made up their minds to remain which promised permanency. Mrs. Bell's alleged object in all this vacillating travel was mainly the pursuit of health, "for my own and my husband's health," as she had learned to neatly phrase it, doubtless under the timely consideration that a regard merely for her own physical state, too often repeated, savored of selfishness. Hence, as the years went by, owing to the affectionate researches of his wife, ably assisted by Dr. Tillman's occult skill, Mr. Bell gradually made the interesting pathological discovery that he was a confirmed invalid, his health being in that very delicate and precarious condition which requires constant change of air and scene.

Dr. Tillman had also fallen into fashion's caravan, having discovered that it was wonderfully beneficial to his practice to make a trip to Europe every few years. "Dr. Tillman, having just returned from Europe," lent miraculous prestige to his fame, and as his asserted object, in these European trips, was invariably "that he might enjoy the greater advantage of study which Europe afforded," the amount of professional erudition his admiring patients kept fondly heaping upon him was something enormous, and the talismanic report passing from mouth to mouth famously increased his reputation. He finally amassed a fortune large enough to content his humble ambition, and retired from practice. Assuring his wailing patients, "that the duties of his profession were so many and so arduous, the unceasing demands of his constantly increasing practice allowing him no rest, that he felt the unavoidable necessity of recruiting his shattered energies:" and

accordingly, the shattered energies started off on a protracted tour of European travel for an indefinite period of time; for he did not give his patients and friends the satisfaction of stating just exactly how many months or years he would be gone; thereby leaving them inconsolable.

Strange to say, it was just about this same indefinite period of time for which Dr. Tillman had started traveling, that Mrs. Bell succeeded in persuading her dear husband that they were both tired of journeying around, and would be much happier to resume their old quiet housekeeping; an alluring argument, to which the devoted husband in a precarious state of health willingly listened.

As for Mrs. Bell's own health, it had continued for many years very variable, being a constant source of alarm to herself and loving husband. But since the commencement of that indefinite period of time referred to above, a marked improvement had taken place in Mrs. Bell's health, an improvement plainly perceptible to her many dear friends. There are, indeed, some of these self-same dear friends of Mrs. Bell's who do not hesitate to surmise, among themselves, that her health will steadily continue to improve in direct ratio to the duration of Dr. Tillman's absence. But such surmises, in Mrs. Bell's own judgment, are but the suspicions of evil-minded persons, suspicions in which no just, reasonable and high-toned nature would indulge; in which judgment, I, aspiring to the latter category, of course concur.

Mr. Bell finally retired from active membership in the several charitable societies in which he had held so many honorable positions, and whose varied and multiform duties he had ever continued faithfully to discharge. Upon his retirement, the respective societies passed unanimous resolutions of regret, in which, "while thanking him in the name of all the vast throng of those scattered ones who had been blessed by his exertions in their behalf, and also

for the many benefits his skilful management had conferred upon the societies themselves, they ventured to express the hope, that, as honorary member, he would still continue to give them the advantage in their emergencies of his wise counsels."

Will Curtiss, after being indolently satisfied with his easy, careless bachelor life for many years, had ultimately been seized with the mania for travel, and after visiting every known habitable part of the world, the last that had been heard of him was from China, where he was about joining a party of missionaries to the wilds of Tartary; "not," as he took care to add, with wise precaution, "as I am sorry to own, from any laudable desire to disseminate Christian knowledge among benighted heathen, but simply in hopes of stirring adventures among strange civilizations and nomadic people." Upon which his friends did not hesitate to utter the solemn prophecy, that should he be so fortunate as to escape the walls of China with a live head upon his shoulders, the next mad thing he would be doing would be to get married; a prediction mainly uttered by married men.

The Seymours and the Wilsons were the only ones of the old circle of friends who had been content to keep within the secluded paths of quiet domestic life.

\* \* \* \* \*

"Aunt Carrie, when do you intend taking me to see that beautiful friend of yours? You have told me so much about her that my curiosity is aroused, and I am very anxious for the promised visit."

The speaker was a young girl, Ida Trenholm, a niece of Mrs. Wilson's, then visiting her. As she spoke, she left the piano, where she had been idly strumming a few simple tunes, and came and leaned over her aunt's chair.

"The first day you can find a lull in your numerous en-

gements, Ida," replied Mrs. Wilson, looking up with an affectionate smile from her sewing.

"Then say to-morrow, please; I have only a few unimportant engagements on my list, and I will postpone them, for I am really quite curious to see this beautiful woman."

"Whom are you two talking about?" asked Mr. Wilson, raising his eyes from his evening paper, as he sat reading it by the softly shaded light of the astral lamp.

"Of Clarine Rivington," said his wife. "I have promised Ida to take her out to Mr. Rivington's, some fine day, and it seems that my description of Clarine has roused her curiosity."

"And your curiosity never sleeps so soundly as to require much rousing; does it, my dear?" said Mr. Wilson playfully to his niece.

"I don't know that I have any more of that commodity than falls to my rightful share, being a woman," returned Ida, with a merry pout. "But tell me, Uncle Henry, is this Miss Rivington really as beautiful as she is represented to be? Aunt Caroline says that she is not only the most beautiful woman she has ever known, but that she is the only really and perfectly beautiful woman she ever saw, and that among many very lovely women she has met in her day. That is very high praise. Is it true?"

"In the first place, my dear," said Mr. Wilson, as he took his reading glasses from his eyes, "as my wife has made such an assertion, I am in duty bound to agree to it; for that aunt of yours, Ida, is a woful little tyrant, and I would not dare, for the life of me, to contradict her word," and here the two busily pretended not to see the look of playful warning which the said woful little tyrant raised towards them. "And in the second place, my dear, if one woman voluntarily says that another woman is beautiful, you are quite safe in believing her."

"Nonsense! What a tease you are, Uncle Henry! But how old is this lovely friend of yours, Aunt Carrie? Is she older than I am?"

"Older than you, Ida!" exclaimed Mrs. Wilson, with a hearty laugh. "Why, my love, Clarine Rivington is not a young girl; she is over twice your age; Clarine must be over forty now, I think."

"Over forty!" echoed young Miss Ida, with the horror of age that befits budding eighteen. "Then she is an old maid!" and an unmistakable cloud of disappointment shaded the pretty features of the young lady.

"Yes, love, an old maid. And more than that, Ida, to increase your astonishment, her hair is quite gray, grayer than mine."

At these words Mr. Wilson laid his hand caressingly upon his wife's head; and he had not far to reach, for she sat close by him, the one lamp serving both; and he gently patted her, as he said very tenderly: "Our gray hairs remind us that we are indeed growing old, my darling. It is only love that never turns gray, or withers with old age."

Fondly the wife turned her eyes upon her husband, as she laid her hand within his. "Happy are they, my pet, who can grow old in their love together."

"An old maid, gray hair, and beautiful!" repeated Ida, still lost in amazement. "It cannot be possible! I don't like to doubt your word, Aunt Carrie, but you know the old saying, that 'seeing is believing.'"

"Yes; and to-morrow you shall both see and believe," said Mrs. Willson. "And I will guarantee, Ida, that notwithstanding the forty odd years and the gray hair, you will be the first to praise the surpassing loveliness of Clarine Rivington."

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As old age came on apace, Mr. Rivington had year by year been forced to devolve more of his parish work upon

his assistant, until finally his increasing infirmities compelled him to relinquish his pulpit altogether. Clarine had then induced him to leave the city, and make their residence in some place away from its noise and bustle, yet within convenient access. He had accordingly purchased their present cottage, with its few acres tastefully laid out attached, pleasantly situated on the banks of the Hudson, about two hours by railroad from the city. Here they resided for the greater part of the year, merely going to the city for the few severe winter months.

Between Mr. Rivington and Clarine all strife and contention of angry feeling had long since died out, and been replaced by the old affection, chastened and meliorated by the trials and afflictions of life. The minister of God had learned to condone the transgressor, to regard with compassion the errors of human frailty; had learned to believe that "there is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just men that need no repentance." And the weak, the erring, the sinful one! Subdued by penitence, consoled by trust in a Redeemer's clemency, elevated by faith in a Saviour's love, she drank healing draughts of pure and deep delight from the Fountain of Divine Grace. In the unutterable bliss of reconciliation to an offended but merciful God, she had learned that "Earth has a joy unknown in Heaven,—the new-born peace of sin forgiven."

For awhile Clarine had succumbed to the shock of hearing of Dr. Purdon's marriage, news of which had been sent her by letter from her aunt, Mrs. Bell, who had seen the marriage notice in the London papers, when on her European tour that same autumn. There was a struggle of bitter upbraiding in her heart that he should so soon have found consolation for her loss in a

new love. But honestly cultivating a spirit of resignation in all things, she tried to be thankful that the consciousness of his life-long misery was not added to her punishment. With a heart trained to sorrow, but with a soul attuned to hope of a reward immortal, she meekly and cheerfully, for the Lord loveth a cheerful doer, turned to a faithful observance of the duties life called upon her to perform. The succeeding years she devoted to the careful rearing of her niece, the well loved brother's child so solemnly committed to her charge; and, as the feebleness of old age advanced upon her father, her youthful energies became his faithful servants. As, in her happier girlhood, she had been the joy and pride of her father's younger days, so now, in her renewed tenderness, she became the solace and support of his declining years.

Jeannette Rivington was now married, and, with her husband and children, spent a portion of every summer with her grandfather and aunt. And Mr. Rivington's proudest moments were those when his sunny-haired great-grand children toddled and clambered about his knees.

It was a balmy morning in the latter part of the smiling month of May, when the air, redolent with luscious honeysuckles and sweet lilacs, and laden with the heavier perfume of the blossoming locust, wafted fragrant breezes through the wide open portals and casements shaded by odorous vines. By one of the low windows opening upon the broad veranda, Clarine sat with her embroidery frame before her, her head slightly bent over her work, though the intoxicating charms of the many sweet scents, and the enticing warblings of feathered songsters in their melodious rivalry, coaxed to idleness; while every now and then the wanton perfumed breeze swept across her cheek, dallied with the silvered locks clustered upon her brow, and made sad havoc with the

brilliant-hued pile of flosses by her side, amidst which the courted rays of the sunshine played in random beauty.

In the opposite window, through which the morning sunbeams streamed unbroken, sat Mr. Rivington, to whom the chill of old age made welcome the genial warmth of the spring sun. He was comfortably ensconced in his easy-chair, and had been reading, but the book had slipped from his hands, and now he dozed.

Presently Clarine heard the low rumbling of a distant carriage, and soon the crushing of the gravel, as it turned into their gateway and swept around the lawn. Stepping out upon the veranda she found that her visitors were Mrs. Wilson and her niece, and she joyfully gave both a cordial welcome. The sound of their arrival aroused Mr. Rivington, and taking up his cane, he left his easy-chair to join his greetings to his daughter's, as she conducted their guests into the house.

"Aunt Carrie, you were right; she is very lovely," Ida Trenholm found opportunity to whisper, as they followed Clarine into the room where she had been sitting.

Mrs. Wilson answered only by a smile of quiet triumph.

"You must have had rather a hot and dusty ride, at this hour of the morning," Clarine remarked, as she took their wrappings, and rolled comfortable chairs towards them. "You would have found it more pleasant to have come by the earlier train, while the morning air was fresh and cool."

"I tried to get off earlier," returned Mrs. Wilson, "but this young lady," motioning to her niece, "had her head full of a large party for to-night, and must needs have some shopping to do before we started."

"A perfectly valid excuse," replied Clarine, with a bright smile, as the young lady in question looked up with a blush at her aunt's playful reproach. "At your age, my dear, it is quite right and proper that balls and

gayeties should be paramount in your mind, and all lesser pleasures give way to the innocent frivolities of youth. The time will come soon enough, when they in turn must be sacrificed to the graver cares of life. But I know you must both be fatigued, and stand in need of refreshments, so I will order an early luncheon," she continued, as immediately intent upon hospitable thoughts, she rang the bell, and gave the necessary orders to the servant who answered its summons.

To Ida Trenholm the day was one of pleasure amounting to rapture. Fresh from the restraints of boarding-school, where the charms of domestic life and the beauties of home are unknown, she eagerly appreciated the elegant surroundings and many evidences of refined taste in Clarine's home. She could scarce remove her fascinated gaze from Clarine herself, so lovely and graceful, every lineament traced in such refined beauty, every movement of elegant ease, every intonation of her melodious voice revealing the impress of high culture. Upon every feature was shed from within the soft, peculiar radiance of a soul chastened and purified, at peace with itself, beaming mildly in the lustre of her beautiful eyes, and speaking with its own eloquence in every winning smile.

Clarine could not help observing that her young visitor's eyes were seldom removed from her face. As they sat pleasantly chatting together after luncheon, of which they had all partaken with hearty zest, Clarine noticed that whenever she turned her eyes towards Ida, she either met the girl's gaze fixed steadily upon her, or else her glance was turned hastily and furtively aside. And Clarine smiled and blushed, though this mute flattery came but from a young girl.

Mrs. Wilson noticed the exchange of looks, and with a merry laugh, said: "I think I had better explain to you, Clarine, your conquest over this young admirer, for such



I see Ida has become;" and regardless of poor Ida's appealing glance, she continued: "You must know, that this young lady here, with her mad-cap brain full of youth's vanity, could not believe me that you were a very beautiful woman—you do not mind my compliments, do you, pet?—because I told her that you were forty and had gray hair. But, judging from her ardent gaze, I fancy she is already more than a convert to my opinion."

Clarine laughed her rippling, musical laugh, and by the graceful ease with which she received the wonderful announcement, completely dispelled Ida's confusion.

"Never mind, my dear," she said, kindly, "the dread of old age is the happy egotism of youth, and at joyous eighteen you have a right to regard forty as old age, and gray hairs a deformity. But, Miss Ida, would it shock you too much to know that I am over forty? I am forty-five."

"Oh, Miss Rivington, it is not possible! You look so young!" was Ida's involuntary rejoinder.

"My dear, I am forty-five, hastening on towards fifty; hastening, for once on the down-hill of life's waning years we hurry towards the grave; it is only youth's loitering step that drags unwilling time up the hill of fleeting years. And as for my gray hairs, I suppose that even you, Miss Ida, will allow that thirty is still quite young, yet at thirty my hair was as gray as it is now."

"True, Clarine; and none of us realized that you were more than a mere girl until your hair turned gray so suddenly," remarked Mrs. Wilson, her voice inflecting with sadness, as her thoughts wandered back to the past.

"My hair turned within a year," replied Clarine. "But it did not worry me, for I knew that with me it was not the progress of years." Then turning to Ida, with her very gentle smile, she added: "Perhaps the experiences of life will yet teach you, my dear child, that

gray hairs are not always a proof of numbered years; they are not always an evidence of the inroads of time; they are sometimes the outgrowths of the heart."

"Miss Rivington," said Ida, looking at Clarine with wide-opened searching eyes, "will you allow me the liberty of asking one strange question?—an idea which your remarks have suggested to me?"

"Certainly, my dear. Pray speak freely."

"Do you ever *feel old*?"

Instantly, Clarine detected the thrill of youthful fear in the wondering tones of the questioner. And in lowered tones, that her words might not reach her father's ears, she replied pleasantly, but seriously:

"My dear, one must needs be at the very limit of the allotted span of life before they can ever feel the consciousness of age. It is not the added years that make old age. At twenty, the youth looks forward and says, 'at forty, when I am old;' the man of sixty looks back, and says, 'at forty, when I was young.' So long as one has health and energy earnestly to work out life's duties, they can laugh at Time's scorings. It is only when the physical faculties are worn out and energies broken down, that the hands are idly folded, and the quavering voice says, 'at last, I believe I am growing old.'"

The girl was deeply affected by Clarine's answer. The grave thoughts so graciously spoken but added to the many indelible impressions which Clarine's presence, diffusing an atmosphere of harmonious grace, had stamped upon her mind. Through all Ida Trenholm's after-life, the remembrance was ever vivid of the day she had passed with Clarine Rivington, the woman who, at forty-five, with silvered locks, had yet realized, even while creating, her ideal of beautiful womanhood.

"Clarine, dear, won't you sing for us?" asked Mrs. Wilson, changing the conversation, which she feared was

becoming too serious. "I have not heard your voice for a long time, and Ida, I know, is anxious to hear you."

"I will, with pleasure," responded Clarine, always ready to gratify her friends. "But first, before we go into the music-room, I must settle father comfortably for his afternoon nap. I see he is getting quite drowsy;" and she placed the footstool under her father's feet, and arranged the cushion for his head. "I will close the door, father, so that the sound of my singing shall not disturb you."

"No, my child; leave the door open. The music of your voice never disturbs me; it will only soothe me to sleep."

So the door was left open, that the song of the well-loved daughter might reach the father's ears, if it were only in his dreams.

What Clarine's voice had lost in light brilliancy, as the years had passed by, it had gained in sympathetic sweetness and thrilling pathos. She selected for her song one of the many beautiful airs from the oratorios, which she was in the habit of singing for her own and her father's pleasure. From the first low, sweet notes, as they rose pure and clear from the warbling throat, to the last faint sound dying in its own soft echo, the exquisite melody of her voice entranced the listening silence in waiting for the harmonious sounds.

"Her singing carries the soul to heaven!" whispered Ida, in bated breath. "It is surely an angel's voice! Oh, I could worship her!"

Mrs. Wilson smiled fondly upon the young enthusiast. "Clarine, dear," she said, as Clarine turned towards them, her features aglow with the emotion of her singing, "your wonderful gift of voice must be a great treasure to you."

"It has been a great comfort to me," returned Clarine,

"for it has been the companion of many a happy hour, and the solace of many a sorrowful one."

"Do you have many sorrowful hours, Clarine," Mrs. Wilson asked, with her old charm of kindly sympathy.

"Not now," Clarine replied, with a grave smile, as she came near, and seating herself upon a low ottoman by the window, she leaned her head against the open casement to catch the cool breeze. "Sorrowful hours are for those who have hopes wherewith to tempt disappointment, yet keep in store no consolation to heal the pain when those hopes are crushed and broken."

"You speak as one without hope in life," said Mrs. Wilson, with a shade of gentle reproach in her accents.

"In life, yes!" returned Clarine, turning her lustrous eyes, in which gleamed a strange sadness, upon her friend, "for I have lived long enough to know that it is folly to build hopes upon any less sure foundation than absolute certainty; and by the time we reach a certainty, hope lies in the past." And as she spoke the last words her voice sank in deep tones of intense feeling.

"But without hope, Clarine, one is wretched," replied Mrs. Wilson, scarcely comprehending Clarine's strange words. "In casting away hope, you destroy all happiness."

"It is true, dear friend," answered Clarine, with her most winning smile, "that mortal hope and happiness die together; the one never outlives the other. But there is one happiness, my dear friend, one ineffable joy which outlives hope; it is the bliss of the sphere above, where hopes and miseries are alike unknown. Ah! in that joyful certainty, in that blessed fruition, how gladly will we leave all hope behind."

THE END.