

SCANDAL.

BY

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Plain

P R E F A C E .

THE author is obliged to confess that *one* object in publishing this book is to *circulate* "*Scandal*." But a higher, holier motive, paramount to all selfish ends, has prompted the work,—even a desire to embody "*Scandal*," and set it before the world as it is, the most hideous of all evils; also, to place in contrast its great conqueror, Truth, the most beautiful of all good.

To upraise the undeservedly fallen, and make the sitters upon stolen thrones to feel their false position, constitute a theme for inspiration. If the author has failed, the fault is not with the *theme*, but with her utter inability to compel *tame* language to express free thoughts.

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SCANDAL.

CHAPTER I.

WELLEN.

"ALL ABOARD!" bawled the captain of the Firefly, a small steamboat at the wharf in P——, waiting for passengers for Wellen. Perceiving a well-dressed gentleman hurrying towards them, he said blandly, "No hurry, sir! no hurry! plenty of time!" Then, in an under tone, "Who in the deuce is he? He's almighty good looking, any way! I reckon Jemima will have something else to do but storm me this afternoon. I shall keep close, though, and let her make her own discoveries — pay her up for what she said yesterday."

These were the captain's meditations, as the really distinguished looking stranger stepped on board, and sought a seat in a retired part of the deck, then taking a paper from his pocket, became seemingly absorbed in its contents.

Soon the little boat was scudding merrily through the waters, and the passengers began to leave the cabin for

the delicious breeze on the deck. The bay shore scenery could not have been surpassed for variety and luxuriousness, and the stranger's reading lost its charms when Nature began to show her engravings. He was so absorbed in the ever-varying views that were brought before him, that, for a while, the speculating glances of those around passed unnoticed; and when he did perceive them, and they became annoying to him, he simply folded his paper, and deliberately returned the stare, which had the effect of shaming the quizzers, for a while, at least.

One young man, who sat near him smoking, was so unlike the others, that to him he addressed the question, —

“Have you ever been in Wellen, sir?”

“Yes, sir, it is my native place.”

“Then to no better one could I apply for information of it.”

“For the location of the village, appearance, public buildings, or the character and pursuits of the inhabitants?”

“A bird's eye view of all, if it will not tax your patience too much.”

“Not at all, sir; I shall be happy to gratify you, if, indeed, after I have finished, you find that it has been a gratification.” And he threw the stump of his cigar overboard, and commenced: —

“New England can boast of no more romantic river than that whose banks Wellen helps to ornament. In-

deed, I think you will say that no pleasanter sight could greet your eye than Wellen, as we shall see it from this boat to-night, in sunset glories — the little white cottages along the shore, and the more pretending ones in the distance; the tall church spires, looking protectingly over the whole, softening and giving strength to the appearance of the village, as Religion ever softens and gives strength to her votaries.

“Every thing seems homelike and peaceful; but your ardor will be dampened a little upon perceiving the number of faces at every window as you pass, and an occasional glimpse of petticoats receding around the corners. You will begin to feel an uneasiness, and wish that the “fugitive slave bill” had never been passed. It is strange how suddenly one's views of a place may change; but certain it is that no stranger ever enters Wellen without feeling a decided change in the temperature of his imagination before he passes out.

“The society in Wellen is divided into cliques, each priding itself upon its own exclusiveness. There are the Bentlys, who own and occupy the large stone edifice — I say *the*, because there is but one, and you will readily find it. It attracts the attention of the passers by, not by its beauty and elegance of architecture, but by its exceeding prison-like appearance; and but for the name on the door — Dr. Kent Bently — one would readily mistake it for a public reform school.

"Next in order come the Russells, who live opposite the principal hotel, and who are a peg below the Bentlys in point of wealth—consequently are a peg above in point of good feeling.

"The little cottage, embowered in vines and roses, is the property of young widow Armstrong, who, the gossips say, is quieting her grief for her first husband by diligently searching for another; but be that as it may, I have seen the widow, and pronounce her charming, and it is my private opinion that number two, whoever or wherever he may be, is a fortunate individual."

The stranger smiled, and thought it a possibility that the narrator might be "number two" elect.

"So in order come the several cliques of Wellen, each striving and straining every nerve to outdo its neighbor, and hating and despising each other all the more for an attempt that can only bring dissension; for while they see the 'mote in their brother's eye,' they entirely disregard the beam in their own.

"Alas! sir, Wellen—that place so rich in beauty—is tainted with the foul air of scandal; every born and bred Wellener is imbued with the fatal poison, and the highest order of nobility there is that which can obtain the greatest amount of scandal in the smallest amount of time.

"Very little business is carried on there; the greater part of the inhabitants consist of old sea captains, who,

had they continued on the broad waters, might have expanded their souls; but because their bodies saw fit to retire, their souls were obliged to accommodate themselves to the smallest possible quarters."

"No more! no more!" said the stranger; "I have half a mind to charter the boat to carry me back now."

"Not with that scene before you," said the young man, pointing to a village in the distance.

They had just rounded a point, and come in full view of Wellen. It was indeed a beautiful scene, and the stranger arose from his seat, and walked forward, to obtain a better view of it. He stood there with folded arms, sketching the scene with the pencil of appreciation, and lost to all around him, until an unusually prolonged and shrill whistle sounded disagreeably in his ears, and aroused him from his revery.

"That will put every Wellener on the alert," laughingly remarked the young man, who was then passing by.

Now, there was a deal of meaning in the whistle of the "Firefly," for the captain was a born and bred Wellener, and his wife always sailed with him, partly because his morals were rather weak, and she was afraid to trust him out of sight; but more for the purpose of watching the passengers, and seeing that, if there were any strangers of importance on board, the villagers were made aware of it by the peculiarity of the whistle, thus giving

them ample time for all due preparation necessary to a well-adjusted watching.

The stranger had sat in so retired a spot that the captain's wife had not noticed him, until he had changed his position for one commanding a better view of the town. No wonder that when she did get a glimpse of him, she thought he was a "guvner or somethin," and she put on all sail, and made for the captain, almost upsetting him in her anxiety to impress him with an idea of the importance of their passenger.

"Now, Jemima," expostulated he —

"Shut up!" gasped the panting Jemima.

"Well, why couldn't you —"

"Shut up, Tom Hacker!"

"Well, I am shutting up!" said the obedient Tom; "but I should just think you might tell me what is the matter; we are almost at Wellen now."

"Then shut up your head, Tom Hacker, and to action! For Heaven's sake, ring that bell, and order the long whistle; we've got a guvner on board. O that I had known this before! I might have conversed with him — found out where he came from — how long he was going to stay — and all about it."

Jemima was disconsolate.

Now Tom, who had a high appreciation of political characters, was thoroughly aroused, and his ears stood out after the fashion of the Welleners, and his hair

rested on the tips of those useful appendages; but he followed Jemima's directions, and then sank back aghast, as the shrill whistle, at the top of its steam lungs, screamed "guvner."

Meanwhile our stranger stood, entirely unconscious of the excitement that he was creating. Looking smilingly upon the little village before him, he longed to throw himself into its peaceful arms, and rest.

Ah, what stranger ever rested in Wellen before he had run the gantlet of quizzing glances? But our traveller escaped in safety, and had reason to thank the shrill whistle that but a little while before grated so unpleasantly upon his ears, for "mine host" stood upon the veranda to welcome him, and spread before him a dainty repast, not forgetting now and then to ask a few questions, to satisfy his very natural curiosity.

"Travelled far, sir?"

"Yes."

"Fine weather, sir."

"Yes."

"Pleasant village this, sir."

"Yes."

"Perhaps you may have some acquaintances here, sir?"

"Perhaps."

"I may be of some service to you, sir, in finding them."

"Thank you."

Here the landlord had exhausted his little store of

questions, and had acquired nothing. Assuming an air of importance, he stepped into the hall, where some dozen of his friends were anxiously waiting the news. Looking very wise, he put his finger on his lip, and solemnly said, "Incog." They rushed out simultaneously, and we will be bound to say that no soul in Wellen, however small, — and it is inconceivable how small some of them were, — escaped that night the word "incog."

Meantime our guest had partaken of a most delicious repast, and taking a cigar, walked leisurely into the office, and wrote his name, "Ernest Alliston."

CHAPTER II.

THE SEWING CIRCLE.

WE will allow the morning sun to introduce us into Mrs. Dr. Kent Bently's aristocratic establishment — first to Mrs. Bently, because she is first, having usurped the entire authority of her household and husband.

Mrs. Bently is a tall, masculine-looking woman, and called in her "set" strong-minded; but to a refined and sensitive person she must appear very repulsive. Boastful and ignorant, authoritative and bigoted, is this Mrs. Dr. Kent Bently.

The doctor is a little, wizzen man, with no mind of his own. He has been entirely subdued and brought under Mrs. B.'s management. He lost himself many years ago; and Mrs. Bently having substituted an automaton, he has, since that eventful period, answered the wires in a very punctilious manner.

Next in order come the Misses Bently, two really beautiful girls; Kate, the oldest, possessing her mother's masculinity, softened by education and constant inter-

course with refined society. Haughty and proud by nature, yet thoroughly despising the would-be gentility of the Welleners, Kate Bently is truly a regal girl, formed to grace a higher sphere than Wellen.

Very different is Lizzie, yet no less beautiful. Soft and gentle as a summer morning, she seems the love light in the family, and when beside of Kate, reminds one of the halo around the moon. Sweet Lizzie Bently! the inharmony of the family sphere is wearing her young soul away; and all who look upon her feel that her days are few upon the earth. Lizzie loves her father with all her heart, and is his pride and solace always.

Last, but not least, is Mr. Kent Bently, Junior, the darling of his mother's heart and the fond pride of his sisters; full of wilfulness and mischief, yet withal full of noble impulses. One cannot look upon him without wishing to transplant him in a different soil.

'Tis thus that from the most unseemly seeds oftentimes spring up the most beautiful flowers.

On this morning of our introduction into the Bently mansion, there is an unusual commotion—a general disarrangement of every thing preparatory to a rearrangement of the same after a more approved manner. Mrs. Bently is in her element; business and bustle are, above all else, most congenial to her nature; and as her practice is not homœopathic, she does not spare the spice in her orders to the servants.

After it is all arranged to her satisfaction, she looks with an air of complacency upon the clumsy magnificence of her drawing rooms, and tosses her head with pride as she thinks that no one in Wellen can surpass it.

Not all of this display is for the weekly sewing circle, which meets this night at Mrs. Bently's. A secret invitation has been sent to the stranger guest at the hotel; and now in her hand she holds his note of acceptance. No wonder that Mrs. Bently feels proud; it is very rarely that she finds an opportunity like this to triumph over her neighbors.

Evening came at last; and Mrs. Bently's brilliantly-illuminated drawing rooms were fast filling with guests. The chairs were arranged in little circles around each table, so that the groups could be as exclusive as they pleased.

Now, Mrs. Bently had heard sewing circles reviled as "gossip parties," and so forth, and being president of this, had hitherto put her veto on every thing indicative of a tattling spirit, taking care not to lead the example herself. But this evening even Mrs. Bently could not withstand the Wellen nature; so, as soon as the society became regulated, she commenced,—

"Ahem! Mrs. Russell, I suppose you have heard of the arrival of——"

"Incog.," responded Mrs. Russell.

"Yes; are you aware that he is an invited guest here this evening?"

"Now, that's strange," replied Mrs. Russell, rather maliciously; "for I *happened* to be looking out of my window, about a half an hour ago, and I saw him driving down the Samsea road. That isn't the first time that I have seen him, either."

"Tell us all you know about him — do," cried several voices at once.

"Now, do try to keep quiet, ladies, while I collect my senses, and begin at the beginning. You see, the way of it was this: on the evening of the gentleman's arrival, I happened to be sitting at my window, and the blind happened to be partly open," (now, who that knew Mrs. Russell did not know that that blind always *happened* to be open, and her eye always *happened* to be looking out?) "and I saw Mr. Cromwell walking on the veranda of the hotel; and then I saw the stranger come up, and Mr. Cromwell welcome him so cordially that I knew he must be some important personage. And knowing that the circle met to-night, and that you, ladies, would be dependent in a measure upon me for the news, I made it a question of principle, and felt it my duty to sit up the remainder of the night. I'm glad now that I did." Here Mrs. Russell ceased, pursed up her mouth, and looked determined to communicate nothing further without being urged to do so.

"Why? why?" screamed all of the ladies.

"For several reasons," responded Mrs. Russell.

"Now, do tell us, dear Mrs. Russell; you are so clever. No one in Wellen could have ascertained half so much in so short a time as you."

Mrs. Russell's star of pride was in the ascendant, and she glanced maliciously at Mrs. Bently; but that lady looked not in the least disconcerted. She knew that Mrs. Russell's hour of glory would be soon over; for she was unloved by all, and only tolerated for the amount of scandal that she brought.

"Well, for one thing, I have ascertained that he is in love."

"In love? in love? Why, how could you have discovered that?"

"Well, in the first place I watched until I found out his room — 'tis a front room, up one flight, and directly opposite mine. Then I took my station at the window; and I assure you that I got very tired waiting. The old church clock had struck twelve — one; and I had begun to think that I should not find out any thing, after all, when the curtain of his window was drawn aside, and he looked out — so beautiful, and so sad, I began to think that he had lost some friend, and had come on here to attend a funeral; when he took a daguerreotype from his pocket, and after gazing at it a long time, pressed it affectionately to his lips. Of course he wouldn't have

done that if it had been the picture of a man. Then he took out some letters, and went to reading them; and — the next thing that I knew Mr. Russell was shaking me, and says he, 'Mahala! you are a-gettin' your death-a-cold a-settin' by that open window.' And I think that I must have fallen asleep, for it was broad daylight. But I didn't stop there. No — no. Mahala Russell never undertakes a thing without carrying it out. The next morning, as soon as the mails came, I was in the post office; and very soon the young stranger came in, and I stood beside him."

"How did he look?" eagerly inquired the younger ladies.

"O, the handsomest man that I ever saw — the smallest white hands, the most beautiful teeth, and dark, wavy hair; and when he spoke, with an accent slightly foreign, the picture was complete. I confess I was charmed."

"And did he really speak to you? What did he say? Did you find out for what purpose he is here?" were the questions that now assailed Mrs. Russell.

"Mercy! ladies, you storm me. How can I be supposed to talk while you are making such a noise? Well, you see, I was just going to put some questions to him in a quiet manner, so that he would not suspect me of quizzing, when the widow D'Eon's man drove up, and inquired if there were any letters for Mabel —"

"Excuse me, sir," said the stranger, stepping forward. "Did you say Mabel D'Eon?"

"Yes, sir; she lives in Samsea."

"It must be," whispered the stranger; "their names are alike, and their home is in New England. My good sir," said he, addressing the man, "how long have the D'Eons lived in Samsea?"

"About three years, sir, as near as I can tell. I have only been there one."

"Excuse me for these questions; but I knew and was interested in a lady of that name, some years ago. I hoped that this might have been the one."

"Now, here was something worth standing for. I could have told him all about Mabel D'Eon, and I was vexed with him because he did not ask me; but I forgave him when he turned and asked me pleasantly if I knew any thing of the young lady."

"And what did you tell him?" asked Lizzy Bently.

"O, I set her off, you may be sure; and if I added any embellishments, it was all in your favor, young lady."

"O, shame!" replied Lizzie. "You would not say any thing against sweet Mabel."

"I would not say any thing *for* the hussy; you may be sure of that, Miss Bently."

"More shame for you, then, Mrs. Russell; for a better girl never existed than Mabel D'Eon."

"I agree with you," said widow Armstrong.

"And I," said Kate.

"And I do not," said another and another.

It was evident that Mabel was no favorite with the members of the Wellen sewing circle. They forgot the stranger for a moment in their bitterness towards her; but their thoughts soon returned to the theme which had engrossed so much of their attention for the few preceding days.

"I suppose you are noways anxious to hear the rest of my story," said Mrs. Russell.

"Indeed, indeed we are," was the rejoinder of most present.

"Let's see, where did I leave off? O, we were conversing of Mabel, when presently Mr. Justin came to the window, and said that the mail was opened; and then the stranger bowed to me, and inquired if there were any letters for ——"

"Whom? whom?" cried the ladies, rising, in their eagerness to catch the name.

"Ernest Alliston."

"Ernest Alliston!" was echoed from tongue to tongue.

"Ernest Alliston!" repeated the widow Armstrong, her face as white as the cambric on which she was stitching.

"Shall I make you acquainted with Mr. Alliston, ladies?" said Mrs. Bently, walking majestically forward, leaning upon the arm of the stranger.

A panic seemed to have seized the assembly; and their frightened looks and mechanical acknowledgments augured ill for their first impressions on the stranger. Mrs. Russell dwindled into a remnant of nothingness at his appearance; and it was noticed by many that he did not even recognize her — a slight which was quite marked, considering their familiar conversation in the morning.

His eye ran listlessly over the little circle, until it rested upon Mrs. Armstrong, then lighted up with glad recognition. Hastening to greet her, he pressed her hand, whispering, "This is too much happiness." She motioned him to be silent; and he had heard enough, upon his entrance, to convince him of the prudence of such an admonition.

Soon the gentlemen began to assemble, and the ladies to relax from their frightened state. Ernest was all that could be desired. He won the hearts of the old ladies by threading their needles, or picking up the stitches in their knitting work; of the mammas, by praising their daughters and establishment; of the daughters, because his heart bounded out towards them in real, earnest sympathy for all their plans; of the young men, because he noticed them, and laughed at their little sallies of wit; and of the old men, because he praised up Wellen generally and the inhabitants particularly.

No one could be more perfect than Mr. Alliston; and

so general were his attentions, that even Mrs. Russell could find no cause for envy.

Kate Bently was an accomplished performer upon the piano; and as she played, Mr. Alliston and Lizzie blended their fine voices with the melody. Mrs. Bently's heart swelled with a deeper pride, as she saw them standing there together.

Withal, it was a happy evening. Every one was pleased with himself, herself, and every body else, especially Mr. Alliston. But it was already late; adieus must be spoken; and as Ernest took Kate's hand, and raised his deep, eloquent eyes to hers, the rich blood mantled her cheek, and the long lashes shaded the eyes that might have betrayed too much. But pride came to her relief; and quietly bidding him good evening, with a wish that some time he might honor them with another call, she withdrew.

He was leaving the room, when Lizzie stole up to him, and looking into his eyes, said,—

"Mr. Alliston, you make me think of a prayer."

"No! Do I? Why?"

"Because all feel happier for coming within your influence."

Ernest pressed the little hand, and said,—

"No, dear, I am not a prayer, but I have need of them. When you pray to-night, ask God to bless me. It will be more acceptable to him, coming from your pure lips."

Ladies were cloaked and bonneted, waiting for their respective escorts. Elbows were invitingly turned towards Ernest; but he disregarded them, giving a practical illustration of the old adage, "There are none so blind as those who won't see." At last he discovered Mrs. Armstrong coming down the stairs. Hastening to her, he said, "Annie, I claim the privilege of an old friend;" and drawing her arm through his, they smilingly bade good night to the annoyed damsels.

"Ah, Annie," said Ernest, "it is a long time since I have seen you, and the circumstances of our last meeting were very sad. Dear Clarence, my friend and college-mate! He was like a brother to me; and when he married you, I took you to my heart as a sister. It was a sad day to me when he died. But, Annie, where have you been all of these long years? I searched for you, after my return, in all of the old familiar places, but found you not. Now tell me what strange fatality brought you here."

"My husband's mother owned this cottage, with some little property; and after Clarence died, she was anxious that I should come here, and live with her. She has been dead six months; and I now remain here, undecided where to go."

"Which you shall not much longer, dear Annie; for I fear that the society must be very uncongenial."

"It is, indeed; and were it not that I have resources

of amusement within, I could not have endured it as long as I have. But, Ernest, you have not told me why you are here — more strange for you than me; and so sudden to me was the news of your arrival, that when I heard of it at Mrs. Bently's to-night, I came near fainting. But we are already at the gate; how short the walk has been! I will not invite you to come in to-night; you have seen enough of Wellen to know the reason why — it is but another name for scandal. I will bid you good night, and on the morrow shall be looking for you."

"Ernest."

"Well, Annie."

"You have not told me why you are here."

"'Tis to find Mabel D'Eon; can you tell me of her?"

"Yes, to-morrow."

As Ernest left the gate, two forms stole silently away, bearing the materials for scandal.

CHAPTER III.

DAISY DELL.

THE town of Samsea was a rich and fertile tract of country, extending over an area of about ten miles. It presented a very picturesque appearance, with its hills, valleys, and streams, existing in loving relation to each other. The scenery was enlivened here and there with farms, and now and then a costly mansion. There was a freshness about the air of Samsea peculiarly agreeable to strangers, and the healthful, honest looks of the inhabitants, together with their hospitable manners, made it a pleasant retreat from the noise and bustle of a crowded city.

Samsea boasted a river, and a beautiful one it was, winding through the valley. It was upon the banks of this river that the widow D'Eon's elegant villa was situated.

Hemmed in by high hills, it was secluded from the bustling scenes of life, and found its world of beauty within itself. Nature and art had vied with each other

in their efforts to enhance its loveliness. Labyrinthian paths seemed beckoning on to view new wonders at every step, until one was lost in their mazes, and found himself seated in a natural bower, covered with vines and richly clustering fruit. Marble fountains cast their waters up to catch them again, and so frolicked in the golden sunlight, until imagination could easily picture in each drop a sunny-eyed cherub. Amid such scenes would the visitor progress until he came again to the villa, the hospitable appearance of which insured a hearty welcome. The beauty of the exterior did not belie the interior. Taste and elegance were expressed in all its surroundings; rich paintings graced the walls, and choicest statuary filled the niches. Music was not wanting to complete the harmony of the whole, and a choice library showed that the intellectual wants were not neglected.

But the greatest charm, after all, was in the occupants. The cheerful and polished manners of Mrs. D'Eon and her daughter immediately surrounded their visitors with a sense of perfect ease. Rich in physical and intellectual beauty, natural and unaffected in her manners, Mabel D'Eon was well worthy of all of the love and praise that were lavished upon her, both at home and abroad.

Mrs. D'Eon was the only daughter of a wealthy banker in London. Beautiful, talented, and an heiress, at eighteen her hand was eagerly sought after by many, and the beautiful belle, Linda Eaton, was the wonder and admi-

ration of all London. Her mother having died when she was an infant, Linda was left entirely under the supervision of a French governess, who, while she taught her all the accomplishments befitting her station, did not fail to inspire her with the highest respect and admiration for her own beloved nation; and Linda would sit hours and hear Madame Theresa's tales of *la belle France*. No wonder, then, that when she met the captivating young French officer, Alphonse D'Eon, her heart was taken captive, and she felt that with him life would be all summer.

But not so did Linda's father think. He watched with a jealous eye the growing intimacy between Linda and Alphonse, and when it began to be noised abroad, his indignation knew no bounds. Should Linda Eaton, who had refused her hand to peers, give it now to an untitled Frenchman? Never! and he determined to talk with Linda forthwith. A circumstance soon occurred to hasten this interview.

Meanwhile the lovers were too happy with their own emotions to notice the storm that was gathering around them, and under the holy influence of love, the gay belle sobered into the more beautiful and thoughtful woman. Of course Linda confided all of her hopes and fears to Theresa, who was too thoroughly French not to like this promise of an adventure. One evening, as she was arranging Linda's hair for a fête, she noticed the tears slowly coursing down her cheeks.

"You are sad," said she.

"Yes, Theresa, I am sad, and hardly know why."

"Very wrong; you will spoil your eyes for the evening; and no one should eclipse Linda Eaton at this fête."

"You are right; and it is very wrong for me to give up to my feelings. But, Theresa, I have an *impression*."

"A what, ma'amselle?"

"An impression, Theresa, of something that is going to happen to me; and last night I had a vision."

"A what, ma'amselle?"

"A vision, Theresa; and I'll tell you about it."

Theresa looked frightened, but sat quietly at Linda's feet, and watched the varying expression of her countenance as she spoke.

"Last evening, as you know, I went to the opera, and there I met Alphonse; and while he and father were conversing, I watched them, and thought how father must admire him; but he did not seem to at all, and when he changed his seat to one beside me, father absolutely looked ferocious. But I soon forgot his unpleasing look in listening to Alphonse; and O! Theresa, he told me that he had loved me since the first evening we met."

"Charming, mademoiselle! but that was a reality, and you were speaking of visions."

"Ah! be quiet, Theresa; I have not come to that yet. Let's see, where did I leave off? O, he told me that he

loved me, and was about to say something more, when father drew my arm through his, and bidding Alphonse a very cold 'good evening,' made some trifling excuse to take me home."

"And what did your father say to you, ma'amselle? Was he very severe?"

"Our ride home was a silent one. I was too much engrossed with happy thoughts to speak, and I am sure I do not know what father was thinking of."

Theresa looked wise, as though she half suspected; but she begged Linda to go on with her story.

"You will remember that when I came home last evening, I did not disturb you, but disrobed myself. I was so happy that I could not bear the sound of a voice to break the charm. I unbound my hair, laid aside my jewels, and throwing my dressing robe around me, extinguished the light, and sat by the window in the moonlight to think. Presently a most delicious influence stole over me, and, although cognizant of every thing around, still I seemed to be in another sphere. Then a cloud arose before me, like the pink, hazy clouds of midsummer, and slowly parting, my mother appeared."

"O mademoiselle!" cried Theresa, terrified; "do not tell such strange things. You are not well, and that was the fancy of a sick brain. Of course it could not have been your mother. Why, bless you, ma'amselle, she has been in her grave — let me see — sixteen years certainly."

"I assure you that I am perfectly well, Theresa; and because my dear mother was laid in her grave sixteen years ago, it is no reason, you know, *ma chère*, that she should stay there until now; but listen, while I tell you. It *was* my mother, looking very like her portrait in the library, only a thousand times more beautiful, and very holy and pure. She looked at me with a whole soul full of love beaming from her eyes, and then she held before me two garments; one was a beautiful white satin, brocaded with gold, and trimmed with the most costly lace, while the other was of woollen stuff, and positively ugly. I reached out my hands for the beautiful robe; but mother smiled, and said, 'Wait until you have examined them; then you shall choose between the two.' I felt sure that the brocade must be perfect, but upon examination found its lining to be composed of a harsh, prickly material, that would cause my flesh to smart and burn with pain, and I knew that it would be torturous to wear it; so I gave it back, and took the other, whose outer appearance was plain and unpretending, but the lining was of a soft, downy material, that gave me a delicious sense of repose; and I chose that, Theresa, without even a sigh for the more costly one; indeed, after I knew that it was mine, it seemed the more beautiful of the two. Then mother smiled, and said, 'My daughter, I approve.'"

"But, Linda, did this apparition — this vision — speak to you in real words?"

"Mother? O, yes. And yet, no! she did not seem to speak in our words; it seems to me that they would have been inappropriate; it was like the dying cadence of a sweet song, that leaves its echo in your heart, for you to appreciate after the weight of the sound is gone."

"Was that all that she said?"

"No; and the last is the strangest of all. She said, 'Remember this to-morrow, my daughter, when you will be called upon to decide which of the two garments you will wear.' Then the silvery cloud slowly gathered around her, and she disappeared from my view. The morrow is most gone now, and I have seen no garments. Say, Theresa, what did it mean?"

But Theresa was in tears. Her thoughts had wandered back into the far past, even back to a mother's caresses, and she wondered if it were not as easy for her poor mother to come back, as for the rich lady's. Surely a mother's love is the same every where; and God is impartial.

They were soon disturbed by a summons for Linda to meet her father in the library.

Theresa hastily arranged the neglected toilet, for Mr. Eaton would brook no delays. It was with a fearful heart that Linda tapped at the library door, for she dreaded the coming interview; and more fearful still when she met her father's grave features as he opened it, and sternly bade her be seated. Then, his countenance

softening as he looked upon her sad face, he said, "Linda, do you love me?"

"Yes, father," she replied, and longed to throw her arms around his neck, but his stern looks forbade her.

"Do you wish to make me happy?"

"It is my greatest desire, father."

"Then if you love me, and desire to contribute to my happiness, you will be willing to sacrifice for me."

"Any thing, dear father, I will do, of which my own conscience will approve."

"I have here before me two proposals for your hand. I do not wish to force your marriage with any one; therefore I will only name the conditions, and allow you to make your own choice. The first is from the young Earl of Clemment; handsome, talented, wealthy, and a peer, I need not say that to marry him, Linda, would insure both your happiness and mine. If you accept him, you shall have a dowry befitting your station, and my love and blessing always."

"The other, father — whom is that from?"

"Alphonse D'Eon."

"Alphonse! I was sure that it was from him; *dear* Alphonse! Father, you have given me my freedom of choice, and I choose Alphonse, a thousand times."

"Once is sufficient, ungrateful girl, for the misery that it will bring upon you. Hear me! if you marry him, you have my undying curse and your disinheritance. Think

well, nor hastily make a decision that can bring you nothing but evil."

"Father, you will not curse your only child! your motherless child! Father, it is not like you! you do not, cannot mean it!"

How beautiful she looked, kneeling there, clinging to his knees, with her pleading eyes looking into his own! His lip quivered as he said, "Linda, I will only take it back on one condition; and that is, that you give up Alphonse. You need not answer me now; wait until the morning, when you will be more calm."

Linda hurried back to her own room, where Theresa was anxiously awaiting the result of their interview. The poor girl threw herself into Theresa's arms, and, between her sobs, told her story. Poor Theresa was sorely puzzled. She really loved Linda, and desired her happiness, but felt really unable to advise a course of action in this emergency.

Suddenly Linda thought of her vision of the previous night. "Ah, Theresa," said she, "now it is all explained. To-day I was to choose between the two garments; do you remember the linings? and that when I chose the plainest, mother approved? Indeed, I have decided now, and I feel stronger. I will go down and tell father this moment." Linda's strength did not fail her when she stood again before her father; but with a firm voice she said, "Father, I have decided, and I can-

not change ; to-morrow and all my life it must be the same ; *I will marry Alphonse D'Eon*. Father, you may curse me, but God will bless me for not living a lie all of my life. You will feel sad, when your Linda leaves you, to think that your last words, that should have been blessings, were curses. But sadder, O father, should I consent to your wish now, would your spirit be when it leaves this world, and from the existence beyond looks down upon your Linda, living as the perjured wife of the Earl of Clemment, when her heart is Alphonse D'Eon's."

"Linda, is this your final decision?"

"Yes, father, it is."

"Then you are no longer a child of mine ! I disown you ! Hear my curse !"

"Never ! father, never ! you may curse me, but I will not hear it ! Never shall the remembrance of you be coupled in my mind with a curse ! I will think of you only as in your kindest moments I knew and loved you. Father, I spare your heart the pang that that curse would give it in after years ; curse me not !"

Mr. Eaton sprang forward to force upon Linda the unwelcome words ; but she eluded his grasp, and fled to her own apartment.

The next evening Linda and Alphonse were quietly married, and the faithful Theresa accompanied them to sunny France. The marriage proved an eminently happy

one, and the measure of their joy was complete when a tiny, sunny-haired cherub, whom they called Mabel, blessed them with her presence.

When the little one was about ten years old, Linda received a letter from her father, stating that he was willing to bear the expenses of Mabel's education. She wrote an affectionate answer, respectfully declining the offer, as they were quite able to support and educate their daughter, but earnestly suing for his love. Alas ! she little dreamed how soon she would need all of the love that could be bestowed upon her. The spring that ushered in Mabel's eleventh birthday on earth registered her father's birth in heaven ; and the widow and orphan were mourning for what the angels rejoiced at. Mrs. D'Eon felt that now life was all dark ; and even the caresses of little Mabel had no power to cheer her. She was aroused from this apathy by a summons to the death bed of her father. It was with mingled emotions of hope and fear that she prepared again to visit the home of her girlhood. How would her father receive her ? Would he at last give her the curse that she refused to hear ? or would he bless her ? O, how she craved the blessing !

She once more crossed the threshold of her father's mansion. Breathlessly she hurried on until she reached the door of his chamber. Ah, well she knew it ; she needed no servant to conduct her thither. Softly she

opened the door, and knelt beside the bed, sobbing, "Father!" The old man made an effort to raise himself up, to assure himself that it was really his Linda, then, clasping his thin hands, said, "My God, I thank thee," and wept like a child.

"Father," said Linda, "have you forgiven me?"

"My child, let us ask forgiveness of each other, and pray to God to forgive us both. Come here, my child, nearer, for death is blinding me, and I cannot see you; but I would press your soft cheek against mine, as in childhood I loved to do. Linda, with all my soul I bless you; and may ——" The sentence was finished in heaven, and Linda lay clasped in the arms of the clayey temple that she loved because it had been her father's abiding place.

Poor Linda was wrecked again; but a merciful Father pointed out to her the clear stream of religion, and guided her bark adown its peaceful waters.

Her father had left the bulk of his immense property to her, and she was once more installed mistress of her old home. But shadows dwelt there, and her heart was filled with the one great desire to leave those scenes where she had suffered so much, and build a new home in America. She determined to remain in London only until Mabel's education was completed; in the mean time arranging her business preparatory to her departure. Very hard it was for her to give up the house and furni-

ture that had belonged to her father; but the trial was at length over, and every thing prepared for their departure. She had decided before leaving Europe to make a tour of France and Italy, and renew in memory, as she looked upon the dear, familiar spots, the scenes through which she had passed with her husband.

At Naples they became acquainted with Ernest Alliston, a young American, whose captivating manners and fine intellect soon won their hearts. The gentle, modest manners of the beautiful Mabel enchanted him, and he saw in her the germ of a spirit formed for noble works. They journeyed together several weeks, appreciating each other's society, then parted with many regrets, and hopes for the continuance of an acquaintance so pleasantly begun. Ernest was to continue his journey over the continent, and Mabel and her mother to seek their new home in America.

Ernest had strongly recommended New England as a home for Mrs. D'Eon, and she herself felt favorably impressed towards it.

Their journey was unmarked by adventure, and fortune seemed to favor them in every thing, even to the purchasing of the beautiful villa in Samsea, which had just been vacated by a wealthy family, who had become tired of its quietude; but Mrs. D'Eon felt that it was the spot of all others most congenial to her nature.

It had been called "Wellemont Place," after the family

that had formerly occupied it; but Mrs. D'Eon did not like the name, and only waited for another more suitable to change it. Very happy was Mabel as she emerged from the restraint of fashionable life. She forgot her womanly dignity for the moment, as she almost flew over the new home, learning the names of the paths and grottos; her surprise and joy were unbounded when she espied a broad field filled with daisies and honeysuckle. Filling her hands and bonnet, she bounded back to her mother, and showered her treasures upon her, exclaiming, "O, this dell is full of daisies, mother; do name it 'Daisy Dell.'" Mrs. D'Eon, acting at once upon the suggestion, caused the marble slab with the Wellemont name to be removed, and replaced with an elegantly carved escutcheon, bearing the inscription, "DAISY DELL."

CHAPTER IV.

MABEL.

A BEAUTIFUL study was Mabel, as she stood before the fountain at early sunrise, catching the first, pure kisses of morning; and the sun seemed to gladden into a brighter light, as though conscious that those glorious orbs were watching him. Graceful as the lily, her complexion was no less clear and soft; eyes like the star flower, in their deep and wavy blue; and hair like the sunlight as it glistens on the dew drops in the buttercups. But her greatest charm was in the expression of purity and peace that rested on her every feature; one could never feel quite at ease while conversing with her, lest the angels might be wanting her.

But upon this particular morning Mabel had arisen very early, without disturbing any one, for the purpose of taking a stroll by herself.

An observer could scarcely have decided which was the more beautiful, the morning or the maiden — so radiant and sunny did they both appear. Mabel felt this. She

felt beautiful, because she was innocent and happy. She laughed with the sunbeams, made love to the grass and flowers, and praised God with all her heart in every thing, for in all of his works she recognized his image. Tripping along, now stopping to gather flowers, and now sitting on some mossy rock by the wayside to muse, she thought that there could not possibly exist another being so happy as herself. "But why should I not be?" mused she. "I have a delightful home, and the kindest mother in the world; yet sometimes it seems to me as though I might be a trifle happier if—" here she looked cautiously around to assure herself that no one was near to hear her think—"if I were sure that Ernest had not forgotten me. What did he mean when he clasped my hand so fervently, and said, 'Mabel, if we live, we *must* meet again'?" Yet it is nearly four years, and I have not heard from him. I have thought so much of him lately!" She blushed as she tried to recall the time since their first meeting that she had not thought of him. "It seems as though he must be near and searching for me." She was so much engrossed with her own thoughts that she did not perceive the approach of three equestrians, until they had nearly reached her, and proved to be the Bentlys—Lizzie and Kate, with their brother.

"Good morning, *ma belle*," greeted Lizzie. "I took you for a sunbeam, so radiant you look this morning."

"And I mistook you for the Goddess of the Dawn,"

said Kent, "and expected every moment to see you floating off in a mist wreath, or some other of Morning's fancies."

"And I for Miss Mabel D'Eon," said Kate; "so, while the others are addressing their flowery speeches to you, I will only say that I am very glad to meet you here."

Mabel smilingly welcomed and cordially invited them to return with her, and breakfast at the Dell.

"O, that will be delightful," cried Lizzie; "and I may have a run over those beautiful grounds."

"But, sister," replied Kate, "what would mother say? Remember that we are in no fit dress to dine with our neighbors."

"That need make no difference," said Mabel. "You will see no one but mother and me; and we are neither of us fastidious. So make no more excuses, but come with me; and I will send John immediately to Wellen, to inform your parents that you will not be at home until evening."

"We will not put you to that trouble," said Kent; "for I will ride home and inform them of the girls' decision, and will do myself the honor of taking tea with you, and riding home with them by moonlight."

"O, charming!" replied all.

"You are the dearest brother in the world," said Lizzie; "and I mean to be an old maid, and live with you always."

"Provided that I live an old bachelor, I suppose," answered Kent laughingly.

"You will breakfast with us — will you not, Mr. Bently?"

"No, thank you, Miss Mabel; I must be peacemaker at home." And gayly kissing his hand to the ladies, he rode away.

"Now, Mabel, how are you going to get home?" said Lizzie; "here are three ladies, and only two horses."

"O, I can easily walk. I really enjoy walking; and I am not at all fatigued."

"But we want your company; and you cannot walk so fast as our horses. Ah, I have it! We will go back to the primeval days of our grandparents, and both ride on one horse. We shall only make one good-sized person then."

Lizzie guided her pony alongside of the rock where Mabel was standing, and Mabel jumped on behind. A merrier trio never made the hills and vales of Samsea ring with laughter.

Mrs. D'Eon smiled as she espied them from her window, and hastened to welcome them in the hall.

"O mother, we have had such a nice time!" said Mabel, whirling her mother around, and kissing her on both cheeks.

"And we couldn't make any tolerable excuse," re-

joined Lizzie, "not to accept Mabel's invitation to spend the day with her; for we wanted to come so bad."

"Lizzie is wild," said Kate, by way of apology; "the spirit of the morning has intoxicated her."

"No excuse needed, dear Kate," said Mrs. D'Eon. "I love to see young people happy; and in a country place like this surely etiquette may be dispensed with."

"A grave charge truly my sober sister has laid to me," replied Lizzie. "Intoxicated, indeed! Dear Mabel, please show me my room, that I may endeavor to become sobered before breakfast."

Mabel skipped along, and led the way to her own boudoir, fitted up expressly for her, and after her own taste. It was almost a fairy scene that presented itself; and the young girls stood nearly bewildered for a moment by its rare beauty. The whole front, looking off upon the beautiful grounds and the river dancing and frolicking through the valley, was arranged with a sliding window, which left the room on one side entirely exposed to the fresh breezes and delightful odors from the garden. Curtains of the richest blue brocatelle and lace were festooned over the windows and alcove, where Mabel's little couch was entirely concealed, excepting one little pearl foot that peeped gracefully out from beneath the drapery. Mirrors with costly frames seemed beckoning them to observe themselves; and now and then an Eve or an Apollo greeted them from a draped niche.

"The Eve is very beautiful; but somehow I think it needs a Mabel to make it perfect," said Lizzie, now breaking the silence that followed their entrance.

Mabel laughed at their amazement, and singing, —

"Will you walk into my parlor?"

rang the bell for Lucille to prepare the baths. After arranging their toilets, they all descended to the breakfast room.

It was impossible not to feel at home in Mrs. D'Eon's mansion. Every thing was homelike there, even from her own genial countenance to every other, and every article in her household; and the secret of it was this — every thing was harmonious, even to her arrangement of colors and furniture. And this morning the breakfast was perfectly so to the hungry party, whose exercise had wonderfully improved their appetites. The savory chicken, spongy biscuit, and golden butter, together with rich strawberries and cream, and fragrant coffee, formed a most tempting repast, and one to which the girls did ample justice; after which they adjourned to the music room, where, in looking over and practising the fine collection of music, the moments happily sped.

"O Mabel!" said Lizzie; "have you heard the news?"

"I have heard no news of late, so cannot be supposed

to be acquainted with *the* news; but what particularly agitates Wellen at the present time?"

"O, an arrival of a great personage — nobody knows who."

"And nobody wants to, I suppose," replied Mabel indifferently.

"Don't they, though? Well, then, I will not be communicative, but will keep this precious bit to myself — although they *do say* that it concerns you very intimately."

"Me!" said Mabel, in astonishment.

"Even you are not safe when a handsome young man is flying all over town inquiring after you, leaving so many young ladies — Kate and myself among the number — to feelings of envy and vexation."

"A young man after me, Lizzie? What do you mean?"

"It is true; and he nearly shook the life out of your coachman, John, because he inquired after letters for you; and he was heard, only last evening, to tell the widow Armstrong that to meet you was his sole object in visiting Wellen at the present time."

"Nay, Lizzie, now I know that you are jesting."

"No, I am not, dear Mabel. Ask Kate if it is not so."

"As far as the remark is concerned, I have heard it; but I will not answer for the truth of it."

"But what is the name of this visitor who takes so much interest in my welfare? I suppose he is not nameless."

"O, no; he has a charming name. It is — what is it, Kate?"

"Ernest Alliston," said Kate, looking sharply at Mabel.

The color forsook Mabel's cheek, and her voice trembled as she said, —

"Ernest! Why did you not tell me before? He is an old friend of mine; we met in Italy; and ——"

Mabel had fainted.

The girls screamed for Mrs. D'Eon; and Lizzie passionately kissed her white lips, sobbing, "I have killed her — I have killed her!"

Mrs. D'Eon, calm as ever, saw at a glance that Mabel had only fainted, and applying restoratives, soon brought her to consciousness, and had her carried to her own room to obtain rest and quiet for a few hours. Meanwhile, satisfying her visitors that there was no danger, she bade them ramble over the grounds, and consider the library or any part of the house at their disposal. They each selected a book, and strolled down the shady paths, until they came to a vine-covered arbor, where they sat down to rest and read.

"Lizzie," said Kate, putting her arm around her sister's waist, "we must never mention this in Wellen."

"I have thought of it, Kate, and I will not mention it even to Kent. But, dear sister, does it not make you sad to contrast this home with ours? We have wealth, and our surroundings are as costly as these; but O, the difference! Our home is so inharmonious! and I never feel so happy and free as when here."

"Hush, darling, we must not repine; we may have homes of our own some time, that it will be our duty and pleasure to adorn. In the mean time, there are many things that we can do to enhance our happiness even now."

"Ah, Kate, I know where my home will be; and I feel that it will be beautiful and harmonious. All that I hope is, that God will be willing for my spirit to come down, and watch over and guard you."

"Dear little sis, do not talk so; you will live many, many years yet, and bless us all here upon the earth. My gentle sister!" said she, pressing her closer to her bosom at the thought of death; "why, what would your Katie do without you?"

"Katie, something tells me that I cannot stay here long; and indeed I have no desire, I have such beautiful visions of heaven. And sometimes, in the night season, I am awakened by the most delicious music; and I seem to see floating in the air around me bright angels, with smiling faces, always pointing above. O sister, I cannot doubt their reality."

"But why have you never spoken of this at home, little pet?"

"I should have received no sympathy, if I had. I have longed to tell you, but feared to; but now, dear sister, we understand each other as we never have before. What charm has this peaceful dell to make us throw aside our worldly mask, and disclose our true natures!"

"This seems to me like a holy, favored spot; and here let us consecrate our lives to purity of thought and action, and let us resolve to discountenance all scandal, and never by any intentional word or act cause unhappiness to another."

"And the blessing of Heaven will rest upon you, if you keep it," said a sweet voice near.

They started, and looked around them; but no trace of a human form was visible. Hurriedly they pursued their way back to the villa, and communicated the mystery to Mrs. D'Eon, who could not solve it. Mabel soon came in, looking very spiritual, and begged forgiveness for causing them so many lonely hours.

"They have been the happiest moments of my life to me," said Lizzie, looking fondly on her sister.

"We have found ourselves worthy of each other's confidence," said Kate, smiling.

Dinner was announced; and the guests found that an appetite at the Dell was unavoidable, so tempting were the repasts. The time passed swiftly with the happy

party, until Kent came to help the tea-table chat with his witty sallies.

"By the way," said he, after they were seated at the table, "I met our new acquaintance, Mr. Alliston, coming down the Samsea road."

Mabel's cheek paled again; and Kate, seeing that the subject pained her, changed it to another; for which kindness Mabel looked grateful, and soon regained her self-possession.

After tea they again adjourned to the music room, where the girls regaled Kent with their sweetest songs. He could not resist a fluttering of the heart as he looked upon the beautiful Mabel, nor a desire to possess such a treasure, if it were possible for him to win. Lizzie had always been his ideal of beauty; but this evening she was eclipsed by Mabel. Ah, little did he know that the flush on her cheek and the sparkle in her eye were caused by a heart-joy in which he had no share.

In the early evening Kate proposed returning, feeling—and truly—that Mabel would rather be alone with her thoughts—urging, as an excuse, the delicate health of Lizzie, and the impropriety of exposing her to the night air.

They both declared they had passed a delightful day, and gladly accepted an invitation to spend another in the ensuing week. Embracing Mabel, they gayly rode away.

Mabel stood on the balcony watching them; she was

weary, and unbound her hair, letting the soft breeze wave through it, and the moonbeams shine upon it, making it look like silvery threads. Almost an angel she appeared as she stood there in her ethereal beauty; but her soul was throbbing with an earthly sadness, and cried aloud, "Ernest — Ernest!"

"I am here, Mabel," said a manly voice, as a form bounded upon the balcony beside her. "I am here, love!"

He opened his arms — she was *there*. The young, frail dove was folded to the bosom of Ernest; and he smoothed the wings of her spirit, that fluttered for a moment, then were quite still; and he promised to love his angel always.

CHAPTER V.

ERNEST ALLISTON.

ERNEST ALLISTON was the son of a wealthy southern planter. Reared in luxury and surrounded by loving friends, his childhood had passed in unalloyed happiness. But the first grief must come to all, and Ernest had no power to ward it off from himself. His mother, whom he loved devotedly, was suddenly called to live among the angels, leaving him heart-stricken and almost hopeless. But grief is of short duration with the young, and Ernest's native elasticity of spirit soon overcame the shock. The sorrow had chastened him and brought out his soul to manliness; even as when Nature weeps, her tears fall upon the young flowers, and bring them to maturity.

His character was one of peculiar beauty; sensitive almost to a fault, yet strong in will, and those principles which tend to form a true nobleman. The strong resolution that had only been sleeping within him while walking the flowery paths of life, had unconsciously gathered

strength to brave the coming storms. The first severe trial swept away the dry leaves that had gathered on the mirror of his soul, and showed him what he was — gave him a glimpse of the inner man. Such was Ernest Alliston when he left his southern home to complete his education at the north; and old, time-honored Harvard never felt more honored than when her walls echoed the applause at his successful debut. Sorrowfully his classmates parted from him, for he was generally beloved; but to Ernest one had seemed nearer than the others, and upon him he had poured out the love of his brotherless heart, and now Guardie Malbourn was to accompany him home.

Guardie's childhood had been passed in a very different manner from Ernest's. His mother had cared for him with true maternal watchfulness, but while she was endeavoring to bring forth the sterner qualities of the *man*, forgot that the finer affectional influences were necessary to complete his natural education; and never could he remember, through all his childhood hours, of one caress from his mother. Often in after years, when troubles gathered around him, how gladly would he have sought relief in her loving sympathy! But she repulsed him.

Thus he grew to manhood, and the tenderness that he longed to pour out upon some object was constantly thrown back upon himself, chilling his heart into a barrier of pride and reserve; and he passed among his class-

mates unloving and unloved, for they could not pierce the icy barrier and see the deep current of pure thoughts below. But the warm heart of Ernest yearned towards the self-isolated one, and by quiet approaches he won himself a place in a heart that had seemed impenetrable.

"Well, Ernest," said Guardie, after their welcome in the southern home, "I do not wonder now at the smile that was ever beaming on your face. The reception that I have met with here will bring a permanent one out upon mine, if any thing will."

"Pshaw! Guardie, you were always smiling, only you didn't know it. Why, what you saw upon my face was only a faint reflection from yours; but this evening is too lovely to be mewed up in the house; let us take a walk over the plantation and see the '*poor slaves*,' whom you northerners excite so much sympathy about; you will judge while you are here how much they really need it."

"I do not fear to find cruelty upon your plantation; yet still I have no doubt that there are many who really need the sympathy of all who have it to spare. I confess, however, a curiosity to know how they live, and how far their intellect does really extend."

"O, I assure you some of them are quite learned. We have ministers, and lawyers, and ——— What's this?" said Ernest, as they stumbled over what appeared to be a huge snake, curled up in a circle. "Why, Jake, what are you doing here?"

"Only filosofing, massa."

"Philosophizing! and pray what are you philosophizing about, curled up there in a heap?"

"O, that's the secret of it, massa."

"Well, Jake, let us into the secret." And Ernest showed a piece of silver, that instantly "*opened sesame*" to all of Jake's philosophy.

"Well, you see, massa, I heerd a big thinking man, the other day, say that circles and curves were more harmonious than angles and sharp corners, and ——"

"Well, go on."

"Why — I'd just been havin' a muss with that darned black nigger, Jim, and so I laid down here to get some of the angles out of me, and try to be a leetle more harmonous, dat's all, massa."

"Well, Jake, and what is your opinion of 'circles' and 'curves,' now that you have tried the experiment?"

"O, dem's decidedly the bestest, massa. Now look a here, massa; jess you try it once, dat's all, and see how much rounder all of your ideas will be."

"Indeed, Jake, I have ever tried to make them come to the *point*. You will upset all of *my* philosophy."

"But, scuse me, massa; if you would only round 'em off at the point, 'pears like dey would be more harmonous."

"You seem to be in a very harmonious mood to-night, Jake: supposing you explain this philosophy of curves and circles to us."

"Do," said Guardie; "I am really interested."

Jake looked flattered, and his eyes shone brighter through the cloudy surroundings as he prepared to explain his philosophy.

"Well, gemmen, you see it is dis way. You jess go all ober de world, from here to de end of Georgia," — that being, in his idea, the extent of the world — "and see if you can find a single thing that Almighty God made, that is square. *No, sir!*" — and Jake laid his finger down by way of emphasis, — "you can't find it! 'Cause why? 'Cause der aint nuthun; I have zaminé myself, and I know. Ebery bird, beast, flower, blade of grass, and ebery livin' thing that Almighty God made is curved; dat's enuff without any more, 'cause God ought to know; hadn't he, massa?"

"Of course he had, Jake, and I like your philosophy very much; but he curved you beautifully without your rolling yourself round in that shape."

"I know it, massa. I'se sensible of it," said Jake, looking with pride upon his round figure; "but, massa, der's a secret in it. I found it out myself."

"You are full of mystery, Jake; pray explain yourself."

"Well, massa, you know de feet is generally called de understandin'."

"What has that to do with it?"

"Mucher, as you'll see. Now de feet aint properly

the place for the understandin'; so you see, if you form a circle of yourself and touch de feet to de head, de understandin' will naturally, in de course of things, so to speak,"—Jake was getting eloquent,—“pass into de cranium.”

“Well, Jake, that isn't bad philosophy. Now roll over, and make yourself as harmonious as possible; for I want you to put on your best behavior, and consider yourself this gentleman's special attendant while he honors us with his company.”

“Yes, massa, I feels mos' honored to obey.”

“There, Guardie, is a specimen of negro philosophy, and very good it is, too; and were it expressed in better language it might meet the approbation of many thinking minds. I have never thought of it before; but now it strikes me as a new and beautiful idea. What so harmonious as nature? And yet, as Jake says, every thing is beautifully curved; the sea and land are undulating; the sun, moon, and stars are round; while the human form—God's last, best work, and most perfect because made in his own image—is full of beautiful curves. And only in the mind, which man has himself perverted, do we see the angles and sharp corners; and out of his angular brain has he constructed the squareness of his surroundings.”

“I wonder that our architects have never thought of this,” said Guardie, “and in some harmonious construc-

tion set it before the world a *standing* argument in its favor.”

“Nature is too simple for man's almighty brain to copy from; so it retires into its own creations, and as it will not copy from Nature, those creations must be angular and full of sharp corners, until, finally, there is a perfect correspondence between the man and his works.”

“This subject opens to me a grand field of thought, and all from poor old Jake's philosophy. Verily, it makes no difference who turns the key so long as we enter the temple of wisdom.”

“But here is old Nan's hut. Let us peep in, and see what she is doing.”

The moonlight streamed in through the open door and lattice, and fell upon the silvery hair of old Nan.

“Cards, by Jove!” said Guardie.

“Hush!” said Ernest; “she has suffered with the loss of her children. She is old and useless; but we pity and humor her in her strange moods. Hear what she says. Listen!”

Counting her fingers,—“One, two, three, four, five, six,—take three away—how many does that leave?—leave three; still some sunshine, still Jesus smile. Nan put that on her heart like salve—heal up the great bleeding gap. Three left—take dem away—how much it leave? O, great Jesus! great Jesus frown on old Nan! send thunderbolts down upon her! O, God Al-

mighty, take Nan away. Only me leff — take poor old rickety Nan!"

But the moonbeams mocked her misery and laughingly frolicked in her silvery hair, and glimmered on the hard, dry cheeks, for the tear-fountain had long since dried up in poor, weary, old Nan's soul, and the mighty effort of Nature to live without it was heart-rending to witness.

The listeners felt that her grief was too sacred to be interrupted, and were about silently withdrawing, when her quick perceptions distinguished them; and beckoning them to come in, she assumed an air of wisdom, and asked if they would have their fortunes told. She did not recognize Ernest; it was one of her peculiarities; she never recognized any one. They assented; and Ernest first came forward and offered his hand. The old woman's face grew rigid, and her eyes glassy, then closed; then it seemed not herself that was speaking, but another, whose silvery voice warbled forth these words:—

"As e'er in childhood shone the sun
Upon thy pathway here,
So will it ever still shine on
O'er thee and one more dear.
One cloud shall all thy life sky dim,
And tears of anguish roll,
But thou shalt turn with faith to Him
Who purifies the soul.

Before that faith shall all things pass
As by a master hand,
For those who have it not, alas!
Before no strife can stand.
And thou shalt win a young, fair form,
As frail as violet, pure,
For thou canst shield her from the storm
And teach her to endure.
Then go ye on with faith as bright,
As dauntless, and as true
As He who fought the first great fight,
And shed his blood for you.
Then, ere the sun the dawn hath rayed,
And brought the morn to life,
I'll bring, in dreams, the lovely maid
Who is to be your wife."

Ernest stepped back filled with awe and wonder, and Guardie took his place; but not a muscle moved in old Nan's features, and no intimation was given that she noticed the change. The silvery voice again spoke:—

"As ever from a fair-haired boy
The stars ill-omened watched thy birth,
So shall it be, and every joy
Shall turn to bitterness, on earth.
And thou shalt win a dark-eyed maid,
To cheer thy home, thy heart to bless;
But when, too late, the plans deep laid
Shall prove her utter faithlessness,
And it shall be thy lot to love
Another maiden, pure and high
As orbs that gem the world above,

As stars that twinkle in the sky;
 And it shall be thy lot to fall
 In sin's despairing ways,
 And doubt hang round thee like a pall,
 Embittering all thy days;
 And hers shall be the hand to lead
 Thee slowly, surely on,
 Forgetting that her heart will bleed,
 So that thy goal is won;
 Forgetting all the world's demur,
 To her it doth suffice,
 That thou art worthier; this to her
 Repays the sacrifice.
 This mortal, that an angel seems,
 Shall come to thee to-night in dreams."

Guardie had stood horror-stricken while she spoke, and the words seemed to fall like curses upon him as he felt impressed that they would all prove true.

"Look at Nan," said Ernest; "see how strange she appears. She has not changed since she passed into this state; I have never seen her in this mood before. Nan! Nan, I say!"

But she rolled over upon the floor, a ghastly, rigid corpse! God Almighty had heard her prayer, and had taken the one left — poor, rickety old Nan.

The young men left the scene deeply impressed with its solemnity, and filled with wonder at what they had witnessed.

The next morning they each hastened to greet the other with, "What did you see last night?"

"I saw a beautiful countenance, like an angel's," said Ernest, "and I would roam the world over to find its counterpart."

"And I the same," said Guardie. "What does it mean? But you know that all of my joy is to be turned to bitterness; so, I suppose, I shall never be able to find her."

"Do not let that idea dwell in your mind, my dear friend; it was a mere whim; of course it cannot mean any thing."

But it was firmly planted there, and grew and thrived. Even Jake, who had proved himself eminently worthy of the philosopher's title, could not make him perfectly harmonious. Jake and Nan were intimately connected in his thoughts, and hearing or seeing him always brought vividly to his mind the latter.

The vacation days passed swiftly away, and the time soon came for the friends to separate; Guardie to resume his studies, and Ernest to visit the old world and become familiar with scenes through which his fancy had often led him.

It was in sunny Italy, the land of love and beauty, that Ernest first met and recognized sweet Mabel D'Eon as the angel of his dreams. And their love for each other, mutually elevated them to a higher trust in their Father, God.

CHAPTER VI.

THE OLD FARM HOUSE.

At the fork of the three roads, in Samsea, stood the old farm house of Captain Gray; and a quaint old house it was, with its old-fashioned, brown exterior, presenting a two-story front and a half-story back. The white and red roses clambered over the doors and windows, and seemed all the more beautiful for the contrast existing between them and the old brown habitation. The woodbine had crept over the roof and down the sides, as if to protect it in its old age; and the hollyhocks and sunflowers seemed bowing an old-fashioned welcome to the passers by. In front of the house was a flower garden, systematically laid out with "old maid's pinks" and "bachelor's buttons," bordered with prim rows of clam shells. The interior perfectly corresponded with the exterior. Chairs, whose straightness was painful to look upon, were set in rows against the wall; while in close proximity to a fire-board, with a Crucifixion picture on it, were two crucified crickets. The walls were decorated with cheap portraits

of Thomas W. Dorr and Martin Van Buren, with a map of Samsea. Yet things were not always in this way. The neighbors could tell you of a time when three daughters vied with the roses outside for beauty, and won the prize.

Captain Gray, their father, was possessed of a peculiar disposition, and disagreeable in the extreme. Profane and blustering, and, above all, adverse to young people's enjoyment, he was to them a great terror and annoyance. It was his delight to thwart them in all of their plans, and frighten them with threats. His tyranny extended no farther than his own household; and he was generally called a good neighbor, and respected by those around him.

May was called the "flower of the family," and was remarkable for her beauty and gentleness of disposition; Juliet for her talents and songfulness; and Effie as being the wildest little elf that ever breathed — she would not wince from her father's scowl, not she; she would like to see the old tyrant that she was afraid of! But for all of her wilfulness and daring of his authority, he loved her the best of all.

Now, it happened that these three young ladies were all in love at the same time; and as a matter of course, their inamoratos were very distasteful to the old captain, their father; indeed, he had positively forbidden it.

"Now, father," said Effie, "that's just what I like.

Storm and blow at me as much as you please; it's always cooler after a tempest. And, dear father, I do have so much sympathy for you! What a sacrifice it must be for you to keep so much thunder pent up! I should think you would burst sometimes, when the neighbors are in, and you are obliged to play off on a little harmless lightning."

"Effie, do not tempt me too far. Stop where you are, or, by G—, I'll find a way to make you stop."

"Now, don't call the name of any person, father, that you don't know any thing about—that's scandalous; but I must speak now, even in the face of your supreme authority." Here Effie bowed with mock deference. "I cannot let another moment pass without expressing my gratitude to you."

"Gratitude to me, vixen? What for, pray?"

"For forbidding Walter the house. I did not want him to come at all, and only encouraged him to tease you; but now I would not punish myself any longer, even to plague you, for I do despise the impudent fellow, and I would not marry him for —"

"By Heaven, you *shall* marry him, though! I'll force you to. I'll tame you—see if I don't."

"See if you do, father!" cried Effie, running off.

"I have it," said her father, who knew Walter Malie to be a worthy man, and every way a suitable match for his daughter; "I have it. She shall marry him to-night.

I'll see if I am to have my authority faced in my own house."

Acting upon his plan, he went in search of Walter, telling him that he might expect some resistance on Effie's part, but that it all arose from her wilfulness, and if he was a true lover, he would not heed it; then, after marriage, he could indulge in the delightful occupation of taming her.

Walter understood Effie's ruse, and consented to all of her father's plans.

Evening came. The old-fashioned parlor was lighted, and the pastor had arrived. Effie had not been weeping—that was very evident; but her father thought that that was owing to her stubbornness. After much pulling and persuading, Effie went down into the parlor, where she and Walter were made one, contrary to the usual custom, in the sight of God as well as man.

"Dear father," said she, after the ceremony was performed, "I thank you for this. I loved Walter all the time, and should have married him any way, even if I had been obliged to run away. But it is so much nicer to have your consent, and be married quietly in the old-fashioned way. I am sure we shall be very happy after this—shan't we, father?"

"Father, do forgive us," said Walter, stepping forward. "We did not wish to deceive you; but your own conduct led us to this course."

"'S death and h—, fellow! do not call me father. I am no longer father to either of you. Go! and now that your ends are gained, support the wife that you have wed. Go! I disown you both."

Effie knew that it was useless to remonstrate with her father; so kissing her mother and sisters again and again, and making them smile through their tears by her quaint remarks, she prepared to leave the spot that had always been her home, and seek a new one among strangers.

"Good by, father," said she, when she had kissed all the rest for the hundredth time. "Good by. Come and see us when we get settled; you shall always be welcome."

Effie would not have spoken thus lightly, if she could have seen the wrath kindling in the old man's heart; but she thought it was as it had ever been—a tempest for a moment.

And so Effie went, without God or faith in her heart, to battle with the great world.

The storm was fearful in the home that she had left—more fearful because it did not burst at once; but the clouds gathered black, and the atmosphere dense; and the family fearfully withdrew to their own apartments, to await with trembling the issue.

Poor Juliet! Constitutionally frail, these trials were telling in the unnaturally brilliant eye, and hectic flush on the cheek; and the disappointment bore heavier upon

her than upon the others, because she was less able to bear it. Her mother and sister noticed with anxiety her failing health, and at last ventured to remark it to her father. But he appeared to disregard it, calling it a "whim;" "women are full of them." However, he watched her more narrowly, and was even heard to speak gently sometimes, and at last, to the utter astonishment of all, consented to her marriage with the lover of her choice.

But Juliet was more used to sorrow than joy; and the pure leaves of her soul expanded beneath its genial rays for a while, then drooped, and withered, and died. Poor Juliet! who had but one joy—and, alas! that brought with it—death.

Now only May was left; and it seemed as though that sweet spring month was embodied in her form. O, would the same ruthless hand that had destroyed the peace of the others embitter her life?

For a while after Juliet's death, her father seemed more gentle and considerate to his family; but the old peevishness was too thoroughly imbued in his nature to remain long in a passive state; and so his unquiet was vented on May, who, feeling unable to bear it, one night, said her prayers, and in a moment of almost insanity, left her home forever, and was united to the lover of her choice.

But poor May had never been separated from her mother

before, and so she pined, and could not become used to the new home; and her husband was often unkind; and all this wore upon her till she knew herself that she was going to heaven. Then came a strong desire to see her old home, and hear her mother's voice, and, if it were possible, gain her father's forgiveness.

One night, the desire was so strong upon her, that she stole away while all were sleeping, and wandered, without shoes and in a thin night robe, to her father's dwelling. But to all of her prayers for forgiveness he answered with scorn, and shut the door rudely upon her.

The first glow of the morning sun fell upon her sweet uplifted face, cold as the stone on which she lay. The last breath had passed away where the first had been drawn—even at home. She was born in May; so they called her by that name. She was born again in heaven in May; and there her name will not be changed. And still the old stalk grew on, although its leaves were withered; and still the same bitter, unwholesome life coursed through its veins; and its nature was not changed—only bent a little.

"I have still Effie," said the old man, "and I can recall her at any time. I wonder where she is."

We wonder, too, reader; so let us look for her.

In a neat but plainly-furnished cottage in the suburbs of P—— dwelt Walter Malie—"Dr. Walter Malie" it says on the door. We will enter. There sits Effie—

the same little Effie we would say, but that a tinier Effie sits upon her knee. How happy she looks! and how cosy every thing within her home! The table is nicely laid for supper, and the tea sings cheerily on the hearth. Ah, here comes Walter, with a kiss for both wife and baby; and, what is almost as good, he has brought a letter.

"A letter for me!" said Effie; "and from father! What can it mean? You read it, Walter; I tremble so, that I cannot."

Walter smiled as he read the laconic epistle.

"It will not frighten you, Effie; so read it aloud to me. I would like to hear my new title from other lips."

"Effie, leave your worthless husband, and come home.

JAMES GRAY."

Effie laughed, and tossed the baby higher, and thanked God that she had an harmonious home of her own.

Poor Effie! life is full of changes, and you will not be forgotten. When little Effie was six years old, her father was taken to a better home, and her mother left, without means, to struggle with the world as best she might. This was very hard for the poor widow; but she had learned to trust in a higher than earthly power; and this, together with her native determination of spirit, sustained her through her many trials. She was yet too proud to send

to her father for assistance, and determined by her own exertions to support herself and child. In this she succeeded until her strength began to fail her; and then her heart was troubled, for she knew that she could not much longer stay to protect her darling. Yet in that little heart she had planted the seeds of true religion, and an unwavering trust in God.

"Mother," said little Effie, one day, "supposing you should die!"

"Well, my child, we all must die some day; but what put that thought into your brain now?"

"It is not the first time, mother; I have thought of it often, and wondered what I should do. Grandpa wouldn't take me — would he?"

Effie's heart trembled. "What if he would?" thought she. "Could I trust my little, sensitive child in such care? O God, spare me upon the earth but a little while, for my child's sake."

The large, dark eyes of the child slowly filled with tears. Then springing into her mother's arms, she sobbed, —

"O mother, is there any real danger? God wouldn't take you away from me — would he, mother?"

"God sees and knows what is best for all, dear Effie; and if he takes me, it will be all for the best, rest assured. Perhaps it will be better that he should, to try you, and bring you out a true woman. Trials chasten and refine us, and show us what we are."

Little Effie looked very calm, and her little hands were crossed tightly upon her breast, as if to still the too fearful throbbing that her mother's words had occasioned. It was then that the mother caught a glimpse of the strong woman in the helpless child.

"My body may pass away from your sight, love; but the spirit never dies, and it will hover around you always, even as your father is guarding us all of the time. And if you lead a pure and useful life, and are true to yourself, the angels will be true to you. But, O my beloved child, watch well your soul — the precious gift that God has bestowed upon you. It is worth more to you than all else on earth. Do nothing that your own heart can disapprove, and nothing that you would be ashamed for the angels to see. Remember that they witness every outward act and every inward emotion.

"My greatest desire and highest aim is, dear Effie, to have you grow up a true-hearted woman — one who can depend upon herself, and whom others can depend upon.

"Always act from principle and your own sense of right, unheeding the world's opinion. These seeds that I have planted in your soul will spring up and bear good fruits; and you shall scatter them abroad, and God will give the increase."

She spoke as in prophecy, and the child listened in awe, still with her little hands folded.

"Mother."

"Well, dear Effie."

"Will you be happier in heaven?"

"Yes, my child; if I am good, I shall be happier."

"Mother, I love you; and I will not weep for that which makes you happy. I will pray God for strength to be glad when you die; and, mother, I want you to promise that, when your body dies, your spirit will not be so happy as to forget poor little Effie on the earth."

"I do not think it would be heavenly for a mother to forget or neglect her child; so do not fear, but go to bed and dream that God will spare me a long while to bless you."

Mrs. Malie had been strangely oppressed while conversing with her child; and now she could not resist the impulse of writing to her father, and intrusting her to his care, although she trembled as she remembered his unhappy nature. She sealed and sent the letter to the office, feeling in her heart that there must be no delay. Then kneeling beside little Effie's bedside, she commended her child to the care of God — and this time with no fear or trembling, for she knew that he was strong to protect, and a Father to the orphan.

The morning came, and found the mother still kneeling. Effie crept softly out of bed, and knelt beside her; but the child's prayer rested in the angel mother's heart, and was carried by her to the throne of God, the fairest gem upon the shrine.

"Mother," said Effie softly; but no loving answer greeted her, as had been wont; and she gently moved the head aside, and revealed the cold, dead face of what had been her mother. The passionate tears and sobs for a while gained the mastery over every other feeling; then remembering that one of her mother's last wishes was that she should not mourn, tried by all of the philosophy in her nature to obey that request; and at last she conquered — the smiles glistened through the tear drops, and the sacrifice was blessed.

They buried Mrs. Malie's earth form beside that of her husband; and a kind neighbor cared for Effie, until her grandfather sent for her, which he did in a short time; and Effie, the sensitive, high-minded child, became a resident of the old brown farm house.

New leaves began to sprout upon the dry, old stem, and the sunbeams to enter as in years gone by.

CHAPTER VII.

EFFIE.

Poor little Effie! this was indeed a change for her, from the light of her mother's smile to the old grim farm house. But still she determined, for that dear mother's sake, to be as cheerful as possible. Now Effie was of a joyous disposition, and it was not very hard for her to be happy if she only had half of an opportunity. "If I could only run out in the woods and fields when I please," thought she, "or if I could have a flower garden, I could amuse myself. I will ask grandma if I may; she is kind, at least."

So she ran to her grandmother, and said, "Grandma, may I have a flower garden?"

"Ask your grandfather, dear; if he is willing, I am sure it is my desire to see my little girl happy."

"But do you think he would let me, grandma? I am sure that when I go to ask him, my heart will go bump, bump; and then I can't say any thing."

"Perhaps he will be very kind, Effie. He really loved

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your mother, and if you are kind and considerate to him, I am sure that he will grow to love you."

Effie's eyes sparkled with a new light as she thought of her angel mother, and she knew that she was watching every act, and would smile at this. The sun in her heart shone through her countenance as she ran to meet her grandfather, and, forgetting her garden request in the joy of the new hope, she cried, "O grandpa, grandpa, will you love me?"

How could he resist such an appeal from her sunny heart? He did not; but clasping her in his arms, kissed her again and again, and the fountain that had so long been dry welled up once more, and tears coursed down the wrinkled cheeks, as he replied, "Yes, dear little Effie, I will love you; be kind to your poor old grandfather, and you shall not regret it."

Effie looked up in the fulness of her joy, and imagined her mother's smile upon her. She forgot her flower garden; but the angels did not; they planted seeds for her, and the old man's heart was the garden, and even in that old, dry soil, flowers could spring up and thrive under the warmth of Effie's love and care.

Now all was fast changing in the old farm house. There was no end to Effie's ingenuity, and her busy fingers were ever employed in arranging some tasteful surprise for her grandparents. The chairs were covered with pretty chintz, and set more tastefully around the room.

The windows were draped with neat muslin curtains, instead of the green rush that had formerly adorned them; while upon the table and mantel were placed vases of flowers. The flower garden was not neglected under the spirit of improvement. Neat rows of box were set out, and choice roots and seeds, which Effie had coaxed her grandfather to buy, were planted with her own hands. The old clam shells were excommunicated, to the great horror of her grandmother. Last of all, Effie ventured into the parlor, — a sanctuary that she had not dared profane before with her presence, — and ventured to open it every day, so that at last it became a matter of course that it should be open, and the marks of the fairy were clearly discernible in the harmony of the surroundings. It was her busy fingers that prepared the morning meal, while her old grandmother was nicely dressed and seated in her easy chair.

And thus she came to be the presiding genius of the house, and to be consulted on all home matters. Her merry voice rang unchecked, and the old man loved to linger in the sunshine of her presence. Still the tiger was only sleeping; the warm rays of so much love had made him torpid for a while; yet they thought him dead, and in their blissful ignorance lived happily on, until Effie was sixteen.

Her education had been gathered from Nature, and no better teacher, or more apt scholar, could be found the

wide world over. And many a city belle might have envied the rich gems of thought with which her mind was stored.

She had been so much engrossed until now with her grandparents and her household duties, that she had not thought of a companion; and if the wish ever did cross her mind, she shut it out as something that must not be. But now she was yearning for some congenial soul to confide in. She had heard of Mabel D'Eon, and longed to know her; but her grandfather had said that they were haughty and proud; so three years had passed away, and, although they were comparatively near neighbors, they had never met, until, one bright morning, Effie started, as was her custom, to gather watercresses for her grandfather's breakfast.

Her simple calico dress set off her finely developed form to advantage, showing how unnecessary are all adornments to true beauty, which is ever caused by the inflowing of pure thoughts into the soul, and their reflection in the outer life. Her dark hair was neatly braided, and wound around her finely formed head, and now and then from beneath the braids peeped a white bud and green leaf. The dark, expressive eyes, beneath the deeply fringed lids, spoke her thoughts before the lips had need, and the wild roses blushed as they met the superior glow of her cheek.

No wonder that Mabel was startled as she met the fair

vision on her walk; and no wonder that Effie thought she had seen a spirit, — for two more beautiful spirits never walked in mortal guise.

"Miss D'Eon?" said Effie, inquiringly.

"You are acquainted with my name, it seems; but what are you, pray, a fairy or a mortal?"

"O, a mortal, decidedly," laughed Effie; "I wouldn't be a fairy for any thing, unless, indeed, it were to gain a friend."

"Well, I am a fairy," said Mabel.

"I can easily believe that, after looking upon you; I only hope that you won't turn into a flower or bird."

"No danger of that; I shall only raise my wand, and grant your desire for a friend; please take me."

"Ah, Miss Mabel, you are raising hopes to crush them again. I could love you very dearly, but the difference in station will separate us; the world will not be willing that we should be friends."

"And what has the great world to do with us, little wild flower? How can it separate us?"

"You have wealth, and many friends, while I am poor and uncultured, and have only my old grandparents to love me. Say, are we well mated?"

"Yes, little wild flower, — I shall call you that, unless your name sounds like you. What is it, dear?"

"Effie Malie."

"That is charming; now, Effie Malie, sit upon this

mossy bank with me, and let us see if we cannot remove this great obstacle that would separate us so widely. Do you not know that we are sisters, dear Effie, and the great God, to whom none on earth can compare, is our one Father? and because he has given me more worldly wealth than you, is it any reason why I should cast you out of my heart, and say, 'I am better than you'?"

"I have thought of that, dear Mabel. I have never felt that difference in station ought to throw a chill upon love, but I know that it does. My opinions and thoughts have all been gathered from Nature, and I know that although her great book is ever open to all, yet mortals seldom look therein to study. I know that the beautiful roses and ugly weeds grow side by side, and know no difference in the love of the Creator; then why should we?"

"The little flowers teach us a lesson of love to each other, Effie dear, and this bright morning we will learn it. But come with me to the villa; I do want my mother to see what a rare flower I have found in Samsea woods."

"Not this morning, Mabel, although the name of 'mother' sounds refreshing to my soul." And the tears slowly coursed down Effie's cheeks, as memory reverted to her own beloved parent.

"Nay, do not weep, darling, or I shall have to say that my flower was wet with dew. But tell me, Effie, have you no mother?"

"O, yes, indeed, and a gentle one she is."

"And a father?"

"Yes, a dear, kind father."

"Then why do you weep when you speak their names? And where do they live, that you stay here alone with your grandparents?"

"They live in heaven, Mabel, and God left me here to care for and love my poor, helpless old grandparents. I weep because I am selfish. The dear name of 'mother,' with the many recollections clustered around it, for a moment saddened me as I looked into the past; but see, I smile, and from my soul I thank God that he took her thus early away from this life of heart sufferings, to revel in the blessings of eternity."

"Ah, Effie, you speak of difference in station, yet the wealth weighs heavy on your side. You have laid up the riches in heaven that shall endure forever, while I am basking in luxury and worldly fortune. Of how much more worth are yours than mine! How strong you are! and I, how weak! O, teach me, child of nature, teach me to be strong!"

"Am I strong, Mabel? O, tell me that again; it gives me a strange joy to be called thus by you. Why, Mabel, it was my mother's greatest desire that I might grow to be a woman strong in spirit! O, how I have cherished that hope in my heart! and every night and morning have prayed God to grant my mother's prayer; and now you

say it, and you are truthful. O, God makes me weak in my strength, for my thoughts are all too tame to express my gratitude to him."

Mabel twined her arms more closely around her orphaned sister, and with her soothing quieted the wild throbbing of her heart, while Effie laid her head against the soft, golden curls of Mabel, and felt as though she was under the sunny wing of an angel.

And thus they sat until the morning wore away, Effie, for the first time, forgetting her duties at home in her new-found joy, until she espied her grandfather in search of her; and his troubled looks filled her heart with compunction for her neglect. She hastened to meet him, and begged forgiveness for having caused him any uneasiness; then, half fearingly, presented Mabel.

The old man looked suspiciously upon her, but soon melted under her genial conversation, and warm, cordial manners, so free from affectation, and, to Effie's extreme satisfaction, invited Mabel to dine at the farm house, which she declined doing, as her mother would be alarmed at her long absence, but promised to call in the afternoon, with her mother. Her grandfather was evidently pleased with their new acquaintance, and Effie's heart being too full to speak, their homeward walk was a silent one.

Now indeed was new interest added to her life. A friend so congenial as Mabel she had not anticipated;

and she thanked God again and again for the blessing he had bestowed upon her.

Effie exerted all her skill to make the old house presentable; but after all it was an "old house," and would not look aristocratic, do what she might; so she only looped up the curtains with flowers, and filled all the lonely niches with bouquets, and blamed herself all the while for encouraging a false pride for outward show.

How her heart throbbed, as she saw the carriage at last approaching! and tears filled her eyes when Mrs. D'Eon caressed her with so motherly an air. Poor child! although she had received kindness, yet caresses had been few, and these were treasured in the casket of memory, and never faded from her sight. Mabel was delighted with the old farm, and every thing that she saw; and Effie did not tire of showing her all of their rustic wonders — the dairy, with its rows of milk and cheese, and bright yellow butter, that her own hands had made; and the pantry, where another exhibition of her skill in the form of rich loaves appeared; and night came, long before they were willing to meet it. The old people were mutually pleased with the D'Eons, and freely consented to Mrs. D'Eon's request for the frequent interchange of visits between the young people, as often as convenient.

"Good by, grandpa," said Mabel; "I am going to call you so because Effie does; and we are sisters, you know, so you must not be partial."

As the carriage of the D'Eons rolled away, another drove up to the door, which was quite an unusual occurrence, for the grass had even grown green in their carriage ruts, so few had been their visitors.

A fine-looking gentleman stepped out, and inquired if Captain Gray was in.

Effie replied in the affirmative, and ushering him into her grandfather's presence, withdrew, leaving them to their *tête-à-tête*, and stole away into the garden, to think upon the many joys of the day.

Ah, Effie, lay them away: treasure them; for by and by, when your heart grows sad with trials, you may bring them up — pressed flowers of past happiness.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE COQUETTE.

"Come here, Effie," said her grandfather the morning after the visit. "You remember the gentleman who was here last evening? Colonel Sanborn. He was an old friend of mine. He has but one child — a daughter, and quite a belle, I believe, and her health has been declining for a year past; he wishes her to spend a few months in the country. Now the question is for you to decide, for he wishes her to come here."

"Here, grandpa! A city belle come here?"

"Yes, child; why not? City people do not expect the show and pomp in the country that they find at home."

"I don't believe they could show us a sight like that, dear grandpa," said Effie, "Look out of the window."

The sunlight was glistening through the dewy-leaved trees, and upon the slope of tall, waving grass, that led down to the mad little brook; and a hundred birds war-

bled their sweetest notes in the midst of this gorgeous panorama.

"Beautiful, indeed, Effie; and I hope Miss Sanborn's soul has not been so warped by city life that she cannot appreciate it. But say, dear Effie, shall we take her? I told Colonel Sanborn I would give him an answer to-day."

"Indeed, on my own account, I am perfectly willing, dear grandpa, but I am afraid it will disturb you. We have lived so quietly, and a city belle, with all her fine notions and host of beaux, will greatly discommode you."

"Never mind me, child. I feel anxious to oblige my old friend, if possible."

"And it shall be possible, if I am the only obstacle. I do not mind a little extra labor, for I am strong and healthy, and can easily do more."

Nevertheless a strange foreboding filled her heart; and she felt as though they would have been happier if Miss Sanborn had never been heard of. Besides, this would confine her more at home, and she should see less of Mabel. But she remembered her mother's words, "Always act from principle," and she checked the rising sigh, and put on smiles instead.

"What rooms shall I prepare for her, grandpa?"

"Give her the large front room, with the dressing room

adjoining; and I will ride into town to-morrow, and procure some necessaries for it."

In the afternoon Colonel Sanborn and daughter alighted at the door of the old farm house. Captain Gray hastened to greet them and present Effie, who looked with doubting upon the young lady.

Miss Sanborn was a delicate, languid beauty, and her only peculiar features were her eyes and mouth. The former were deep and lustrous, and capable of much expression; and though her heart was steeped in hate, her eyes could speak love. Her mouth was rather large, but possessed two perfect rows of dazzling teeth, and the same puzzling expression lurked around the mouth as the eyes. Withal it was a countenance that a physiognomist would have shrunk from; and Effie intuitively avoided her, and stood nearer her grandfather, as if to shield him from the influence of those strange eyes.

Miss Sanborn seemed pleased with every thing around the farm; declared it was a perfect paradise, and that she should be perfectly happy with such a sweet companion as Effie. Soon the arrangements were completed, and she was to come upon the ensuing week.

Effie breathed more freely when she had gone, but rebuked herself for feeling so, and prayed for more strength; for she felt that trials were gathering in the distance, like clouds in a summer day, and she must brace herself before the tempest burst upon her.

A happy day was it for her, when Mabel sent her carriage for her to spend a day at Daisy Dell; and she was perfectly bewildered with the beauty and elegance of all that she saw, and the harmonious influence of her friends lulled her soul to quietness. She was delighted with the piano; she had never heard any musical instrument before, excepting the birds, God's instruments of music, and her own sweet voice as it warbled forth its happiness, and her gratefulness was unbounded when Mabel promised to teach her to play. Books, too; she had never seen so many, and Mabel could only coax her away by promising to loan her as many as she pleased. Now the paintings and sculpture attracted her eye, and her soul filled with lofty inspiration as she looked upon these brain creations, born through toil and much suffering.

Thus the day of delights quickly passed, and Effie had confided to her friend her fears of the new boarder; but Mabel laughed them all away, promising that nothing should destroy their intimacy.

The next week came all too soon for Effie, for it brought the dreaded guest. She had tried with all her skill to make the old-fashioned rooms look inviting; yet it was with a feeling of apprehension that she ushered her guest thither. But Miss Sanborn did not appear to notice any of these deficiencies, and begged Effie not to trouble herself for her. In a week she had made herself quite at home, and the Samsea air had really put new

bloom upon her cheeks. But Effie had noticed a restlessness in her eye, although her other features were calm and placid.

One day Miss Sanborn called to her, saying, "Pray do not work so steadily all day, child, but come and talk with me; I am growing lonely. Tell me, is there no village near this?"

"O, yes — Wellen. And then there is the city of P——, only ten miles distant. I was born there, and mother died there."

"And how far is Wellen?"

"But three miles. It is a small village, I believe."

"Were you ever there?"

"O, no. I have never been any where but to Daisy Dell."

"And how far is that?"

"Only two miles from here; in an opposite direction from Wellen."

"Are there many houses there?"

"Why, no," said Effie, opening her eyes in astonishment. "There is one house, owned by Mrs. D'Eon. Is it possible that you have never heard of them? They are very wealthy, and have fitted up the villa and dell grounds at a great expense."

"Have they any children?"

"There is only Mrs. D'Eon and her daughter, sweet Mabel."

"Married?"

"No."

"Engaged?"

"Yes, to a wealthy southern gentleman. There is no time set for their marriage. I suppose Mabel would not like to leave her mother yet."

"You say you have been there. I suppose you go to carry butter or vegetables, — do you not?"

"No, indeed!" replied Effie, rather indignantly, "I am dear Mabel's sister."

A sinister smile shot over Miss Sanborn's face, as she replied, "Indeed! I was not aware of that; had you one mother?"

"No."

"Father?"

"Yes!"

"Ha! half sisters, then."

"No! God is our Father, and our hearts are united as one."

"Very pretty; but that relationship would not be recognized by the world, you know."

"We do not care for the world, so long as our hearts recognize each other as sisters."

"Then, I suppose, according to that rule, that I am your sister. Am I not?"

"I suppose so," replied Effie, doubtingly. She felt that it was a good rule; but it was very hard to apply it in all cases.

"Well, don't look so rueful about it," said Miss Sanborn, haughtily, "for I am not so fond of claiming relationship with all mankind. Think of those horrible, ignorant boors who dwell around you. Would you like to be a sister to them?"

Effie had never heard their neighbors thus spoken of before, and this surprised and shocked her very much; but she simply answered, "The wild flowers are very beautiful to me. They may be cultivated to multiply their petals and deepen their hues, but the perfume of the wild flower is the best, and I love to see them growing in their own native soil, free and unrestrained as God made them to be."

"You are really very eloquent, Miss Effie; but this is nonsense, and I did not call you to receive a lesson upon nature or religion. God knows, — if there is any God, and I very much doubt it, — that I have had to hear enough of that at home, mewed up in a church twice every Sunday, just for fashion's sake. I assure you, that my own inclinations never would have led me there. But, then, if one lives in the world they must do as the world's people do, and it's very fashionable to attend church. I wish I was the leader of fashion; I'd have every church turned into a theatre, and — why, how you look, Effie! Are you ill?"

"Yes, — no, — your words frighten me so. You were jesting, Miss Sanborn. You could not mean what you have said."

"Indeed, I was in earnest, Miss Effie; and I am in earnest now, when I request that this subject may never be broached again. Come, smile! I want to make a proposal to you. Did my pony chaise come down last night?"

"It did."

"Then let us take a ride to Wellen."

"I would like to," said Effie, "if grandfather would be willing."

"O, I will settle that with him. I have some few purchases to make, and I do not wish to go alone. Then let us prepare."

Effie looked rueful when Miss Sanborn spoke of preparation; for what had she to prepare with? Her dresses were all very plain, and her bonnet corresponded. This had all been very well at home; but now, beside Miss Sanborn's elegant attire, they looked almost shabby. However, that lady was too much engrossed with her own thoughts to notice her.

It was a delightful day, and the ride invigorated and made happy Effie's heart. Whatever emotions it might have created in Miss Sanborn's, Effie was none the wiser for, for her face expressed nothing.

The dashing pony chaise created no little excitement in Wellen, and the inmates were not less scrupulously regarded, much to the annoyance of Effie and to the extreme satisfaction of Miss Sanborn. After completing

her purchases, and driving leisurely through the village, they once more found themselves upon the road home.

"Let us go to Daisy Dell," said Effie; "we have yet an hour before I shall be needed at home."

Miss Sanborn nodded an indifferent acquiescence; but in her heart, she was secretly pleased with the proposal.

They arrived at Daisy Dell, and were ushered into the drawing rooms, where they found Mrs. D'Eon and Mabel, and two young gentlemen, who were introduced as Mr. Alliston and Mr. Malbourn. Mabel affectionately kissed Effie, and presented her as her sister — her wood exotic.

Miss Sanborn was very agreeable, and her wondrous eyes carried fascination in them to the heart of at least one of the gentlemen. Yet her words were guarded, though seemingly free and natural.

"You are only a temporary resident of the country, I believe," said Mr. Malbourn.

"Only for a few months," replied Miss Sanborn, blandly. "Yet I am already so much attached to this quiet spot, even after a week's residence, that I fear I shall be quite unwilling to leave it. I shall sadly miss the delightful morning walks, and quiet evenings at home."

"Have you overcome custom enough to take the first dews of the morning?"

"Indeed, I am becoming quite a country lass in that, and every morning early take a ramble in these delightful woods. I assure you that I entice a famous appetite, and Effie's light cakes and nice butter are exquisite."

Effie's eyes opened; but a look from Miss Sanborn silenced her, and she determined not to notice her guest's conversation. The hour soon passed in pleasant company; but before they took their leave, Miss Sanborn found time to whisper to Effie to invite them all there to spend an evening. "Mind now, *all* of them."

Effie did not like to do so without her grandfather's permission; but she knew that it was his desire to please his guest in every thing; so she complied.

They all promised to come; and Mabel kissed Effie, and gave her a bunch of hothouse grapes for grandma.

Effie's heart was very much troubled with thoughts of her guest's deception, and she wished to ask her why she did so. Miss Sanborn divined her thoughts, and said, "You are a simple child, Effie, and know very little of the world's ways. Now I dare say that you were shocked at what I said to Mr. Malbourn, about my very early morning walks, when, to your certain knowledge, I have not arisen any morning before ten."

"I was, indeed, Miss Sanborn, and cannot conceive why you should tell such a falsehood."

"Well, child, I will initiate you into the secret, because you may hear many more, and I do not want to see

any more of your astonished looks ; it places me in a very bad light."

"But think, Miss Sanborn, in what a light God and the angels will view you."

"Let God and the angels alone for one half hour, while I tell you my reasons for saying what I did. I like the appearance of Mr. Malbourn ; I would win him for a lover. You did not hear his previous conversation upon morning walks, in which he told me that he rode out every morning, and that nothing pleased him so much in a person's character, as a disposition to arise early and enjoy Nature while the first glow of morning adorned her. Now do you understand, little Simplicity?"

"No, I do not, because you do not love to arise early, neither do you appear to enjoy Nature."

"Neither do I enjoy Nature ; but if I wish to win Mr. Malbourn, it is very necessary for me to possess a trait that he so much admires, especially when I can do it with so little trouble to myself. Now do you understand?"

"O, dear, yes, I suppose so. But you are making yourself very wicked for a very little pleasure."

"Don't prate to me with your religious tongue ; save your own soul, and I will risk mine."

"Would you marry Mr. Malbourn, Miss Sanborn?"

"Perhaps so, innocent, if he had money enough."

"But you would not win his love unless you could return it, would you?"

Miss Sanborn laughed a low, unmusical laugh, and replied, "I see that these matters are too deep for you ; so pray do not interfere, and keep this conversation to yourself. I will play my own cards. But beware ! if you attempt to thwart me !"

Effie started back from the glare of those threatening eyes, and did not dare even to reply ; but her heart was lighter when they reached home. A smile of contentment and serenity played upon Miss Sanborn's features as Captain Gray greeted them at the door.

Effie felt that the serpent's tongue was poison ; but she knew that God could send an antidote to cure, and she prayed that he might.

CHAPTER IX.

SCANDAL.

Now Wellen was again agitated by a sea of scandal; and the waves rolled up against dry hearts panting for the poisonous waters. The petals of the fair flower of Daisy Dell had been plucked off and trodden in the dust, and a new blossom was given them to blight with their subtle poison, more deadly and damnable than ever possessed by the Borgias. But now Satan had stationed another at the wheel, the work seemed to go on more regularly and complete; for the cloven foot was concealed beneath an angel's wing, and love and innocence shone out through a background of horrible iniquity. The name of this fiend in human guise was Eugenia Sanborn.

By degrees she had wormed herself into the confidence of the Welleners, and now became a regular attendant at their soirees. And slowly, but surely, she gained power over them, by the wondrous fascination of her eye and the power of her mighty will; and they came to look upon her as a kind of leader, and worshipped her as a god.

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Ah, tremble, ye who read her character, and think of sweet Effie Malie within its power. But Effie's antidote did not fail her, and Eugenia for once mistook her victim. She had dealt with hearts all steeped in crime; she had ruined young innocence; but never had she tried her art upon a heart that faith in Christ supported before; and it puzzled and vexed her to see how perfectly indifferent Effie was to the world's opinion, and made her all the more determined to bend her to it. She hated religion; she hated God and pure things; and thus she hated Effie because she was the child of purity.

Mr. Malbourn had, in the mean time, become a constant visitor at the old farm, and more than one heart beat quicker at his approach. Even little Effie learned to long for his coming, for he ever had a kind word and smile for her; but the most of his time was devoted to Miss Sanborn, and it was fearful to Effie to see how strongly her venomous chain was being wound about him.

"I will save him," thought she; "I will read to him the pages of her character that have been opened to me; and he, at least, shall not fall her victim. But the fearful eyes of Eugenia haunted her determination away, and still he lived on only in her smile.

Eugenia rather favored than otherwise an intimacy between Guardie and Effie. It answered better for her own plans, and she had studied well her victim. She knew that the simple truthfulness of Effie might win him for a

moment; but her knowledge of the world was more in his eyes than all the self-acquired gifts of Nature's child; so she favored them, and often left them alone together; and the seeds of love were planted, to grow up, alas! when he might not gather them.

Effie could not account for her admiration of Mr. Malbourn. He did not at all compare with her ideal of what *her* love should be — unless, indeed, in physical beauty, for in that he was perfect; but she had never discovered in him any trace of trustfulness in the Almighty; and he was often profane — she had heard him use profane language to his servant. Now, this had shocked Effie very much; and she determined to speak with him about it at the first opportunity.

One day, he called at the farm; and Miss Sanborn being indisposed, he proposed a walk to Effie. She gladly consented; and they strolled through the old woods together, plucking flowers, and gayly crowning each other with wreaths of oak leaves; at last, wearied, they sat upon an old, moss-covered log to rest.

"This is delightful," said Effie, fanning herself and him with her sun bonnet. "I think, if I had no home, and no one to take care of me, I should live in the woods always."

"And I would board with you," laughed Guardie.

"O, I shouldn't take you, Mr. Impudence — be sure of that. I should be too proud here, with the birds and

flowers for the neighbors, to associate at all with you worldly people."

"You would soon get tired of that, Miss Effie, and long for some one to speak to; and then your ideas would grow stale, and ——"

"Stop there, sir — do. How could my ideas grow stale, with Nature constantly pouring into my soul her beauties. She does not grow stale. Look around you; each glance shows some new beauty, some holier revelation. O, no, I should never tire of this; 'tis only a world-warped soul that can tire of Nature and her companions. Why, the flowers, and birds, and little rippling streams possess a language far more eloquent than ours. I claim that silence is the highest order of eloquence; when the soul is so filled with beauties that it cannot express itself in words, and only by the emittance of its holy influence around, then its eloquence is indeed all-powerful. You do not speak — you do not like this conversation."

Guardie had hardly noticed her words, so entranced was he with her looks; her bright eyes were sparkling with a light that he had never seen in them before, and a holy radiance stole over her countenance that made her look more like a saint than mortal. He looked with a kind of awe upon her as he said, —

"God pity and take care of you, dear innocent little Effie, when you go out into the great world, where Nature and her beautiful laws are unheeded."

"And he will take care of me, Mr. Malbourn, never fear, if I am only true to him and myself. O, I trust him so much; and I mean to try with all my might to be good, so that he will take me early to live with him and the angels."

"O Effie, don't talk so; it is a fearful thing to die — to be laid away and forgotten."

"It is, indeed, a fearful thing to those who do not trust God and have faith in the immortality of the soul; and it is beautiful to know that, if we are forgotten on the earth, we shall be remembered in heaven."

"You are an inspirer, Effie. While I am with you, I feel full of hopefulness; but, alas! without you, I am all doubt. I was brought up so, Effie; my childhood was all chilled, and my manhood is the bitter result of that education."

Effie raised her eyes, so full of sympathy, to him, and said, —

"It is sad to be always misunderstood; but perhaps it was better for your spiritual education that these many trials should be thrown upon you here. Mother teaches me to love the trials, for they are stepping stones to great good."

"Excuse me, Miss Effie. You say, 'Mother says;' perhaps I misunderstood Miss Sanborn, but I thought she told me you had no mother."

"I have a mother living in heaven."

"But how can she talk to you? You speak as though you often communed with her."

"And so I do. The words that I know she would say flow into my soul, and I feel that it is my mother's influence. It comes to me like the perfume of flowers. I do not ask from whence it comes; the fragrance is offered, and my soul gratefully accepts."

"Effie."

"Mr. Malbourn."

"Call me Guardie; it will rest me to be called 'Guardie' by your natural lips."

"Well, Guardie, what will you?"

"Look into my eyes, and see if they look truthful."

"They look as if your soul might be speaking through them."

"And what does it say?"

"Nay, I would rather not tell," said Effie, blushing.

"Then I will, dearest; my soul says that it loves you."

"Does it love my soul or my person?"

"Both, even as I love the rose and its leaves — one would not be perfect without the other. May I hope that some time I may win a place in your heart, Effie, — an abiding place, — where I may rest forever?"

"I need not deny what is true, Guardie — that I love you. But do not speak of resting upon an earthly heart. We will both rest upon the love and wisdom of God, and there abide together forever."

"And you will love me, Effie, with all my faults, and some time you will be my gentle, loving wife; and in the light of your smile I cannot fail to be good and truthful."

"Pray God that all this may be, but we will not speak more of it now. It would not be just to you; you have been led into this by the enthusiasm of the moment; and I shall consider this no avowal, for you may not always love the simple wild flower, Effie Malie, as you do now."

"O, do not say so, dearest; you pain me by these words. No cultivated flower was ever half so fair; but you shall see how constant I will prove to this wild bud that I love."

"I know you are worldly, Guardie; and if you find a garden flower that is sweeter to you, pluck it, and no chains shall bind you to me. But my blessing shall follow you, whatever path you may choose; and if I may, I will always be your inspirer. But let us now return to the house; Eugenia will wonder at our long absence. And now, dear Guardie, tell me truly, have you not loved her?"

"Not as I love you, Effie — with the sacred love that one congenial soul feels for another. I acknowledge that I am drawn as if by magic, even against my will, under the wondrous fascination of her eye; and sometimes I feel as though it were the evil eye."

"And I —" But suddenly her lips grew rigid and

her cheeks paled; for peering upon her through the leaves she beheld the fearful, angry eyes of Eugenia.

"What is it, love?" said Guardie, frightened at her appearance.

"Look — look there."

"Miss Malie was probably disturbed by my approach," said the musical voice of Eugenia, and the fatal smile sat serenely upon her face. "You were gone so long that I thought to come in pursuit of you."

"The time has not seemed long to us," said Guardie; "but I beg your forgiveness for withholding from you for so long a time the presence of sweet Effie."

"'Tis granted ere asked, Mr. Malbourn. But I fear that I am an intruder here; Effie's face looks very rueful." And in sooth it did; for her heart was full of fear — not for herself, but for him who had come to be dearer than herself. She dreaded Eugenia's influence; and well she might, for her smile fell only to blight, and woe be to the heart that opened its doors to her presence.

As they reached the road side, they saw the carriage of Mrs. Russell approaching. Effie turned to remark it to Eugenia; but she was nowhere to be seen, having left as silently as she came upon them. Mrs. Russell coldly bowed to them as her carriage rolled by; her smiles were reserved for Eugenia.

We cannot leave Effie in a pleasanter spot than on the stile, with Guardie, while we follow Mrs. Russell's car-

riage and tongue. She certainly met in Eugenia a responsive tongue, if not heart. Nothing reliable can be said of the latter article, as scandal mongers generally dispense with it, or have it in very small quantities.

"It was very improper in Effie, I must allow," said Eugenia blandly; "but we must consider that she is very young."

"You are too considerate," said Mrs. Russell. "I feel that she needs a severe reproof. She is ruining herself. After what I have witnessed this afternoon, no respectable person in Wellen would associate with her. I hope you will warn Mr. Malbourn in season. I shall not fail to speak with him upon the subject at the first opportunity."

"Leave Mr. Malbourn to me," said Eugenia. "I think I understand him better, perhaps, than many; and my words may have more effect upon him."

"But how progress Mabel and Mr. Alliston? I met him the other day, and he treated me very coldly, as though he thought that I might have circulated some of those reports about Mabel. He is evidently annoyed by them. I am sure I am a friend to Mabel. I cannot approve of her conduct towards Mr. Alliston; but I am the last person who would say any thing against her, however much I may feel."

"No one that knows you would ever accuse you of such a thing; and Mr. Alliston has known you too long

to do so. He evidently realizes the truth of the reports, and that is what annoys him. I confess I do think Mabel acts very imprudently; but we must be charitable; she is very young and an only child, in whom her mother can see no faults. I am disposed to think that she is very amiable at heart. Wilfulness is more the consequence of the indulgent education she has received than her nature. We must be charitable, Mrs. Russell."

"Indeed I am, Miss Sanborn; but may not our charity carry us too far, and our seeming inattention to their conduct appear like approbation?"

"We can only make them wise by our own example; for wilful natures like theirs will not heed admonition."

Mrs. Russell seemed awed by Eugenia's remarks, and said, —

"I cannot understand how Effie can be so much in your society, and not profit by your example."

Eugenia sighed a very expressive sigh, as though she had been sorely tried in that respect, but forbore to say any thing.

"They have visitors at the Dell," said Mrs. Russell; "I saw Mabel walking in the garden with a gentleman who was not Mr. Alliston; and she was laughing and chatting very familiarly, as to an acquaintance of long standing."

"Indeed!" said Eugenia, with an expression of deep concern. "I am sorry for Ernest; but if Mabel is indeed

so coquettish, it is better to know it before than after marriage."

"So I think, Miss Sanborn; but however much I may feel for him, I am not one to interfere with other people's business. I would not have any thing come to him from me. But I know that what I say to you is as though it were said to myself."

Eugenia nodded acquiescence.

"Ernest is very attentive now to Lizzie Bently; and I have not seen him go out of town for three days. That convinces me that something is amiss between him and Mabel."

"Mabel was here last evening, and did not seem low spirited at all. She and Effie are like sisters; and I am sure, if any thing troubled the one, she would confide in the other. I will question Effie to-night."

"Surely Miss Malie is not so simple as to suppose that Mr. Malbourn's attentions will result in any serious proposal to her. She should be warned."

"The simple fact of their differences of station should be warning enough to a girl of sense, Mrs. Russell, without my interference. Pray, what can he want of her but to wile away a passing moment? Mrs. Effie Malbourn! We may imagine it; but it will never be realized in our day — that's sure."

Their conversation was checked by the entrance of Effie and Mr. Malbourn. Mrs. Russell soon took her

leave; and Effie retired to her own room, to bathe her soul in a remembrance of the day's blessedness. She fears no coming clouds; for the hand of the God in whom she trusts sweeps them all away. Blessed child of a blessed Father! We may all be such.

CHAPTER X.

THE SPECTRE TRAVELLER.

EFFIE's happiness was too much for her lonely little heart to claim exclusively; so she determined to share it with Mabel. Accordingly, after tea she prepared for a walk to Daisy Dell. Her heart seemed to be reflected in every thing that she saw; the sunshine never seemed so warm and delicious, the foliage never so green and laughing, the flowers never so songful with their perfume, before. And all this because Effie's heart was so light and joyous. Ah, how soon grief might change all this to dreariness! How changeable are our hearts! One moment we clothe Nature in the bridal robes of hope and trust; the next, we deck her in sable for the funeral of a dead faith and a trust betrayed.

It would have been a long walk to one with a mind less pleasantly occupied; but Effie's thoughts were such agreeable companions that she had already reached the gates of the Dell grounds before she had imagined herself half way there. She hesitated, almost preferring her own

company now to any other, though that other was her dear Mabel.

It was too late for her to retrace her steps, for Mabel had espied her from the balcony, and hastened to greet her. All radiant with love, the golden beauty came to meet her dark-eyed sister, reminding one of sunset kissing evening. Harmoniously their souls interblended, yet the outward aspect how different!

The sunset maiden could not conceal beneath her smiling welcome traces of the day's showers; and Effie, feeling that Mabel's heart was troubled, forgot her own great joy in the desire to shed happiness upon her friend's pathway. After the first salutations and inquiring glances, they wandered, as if by agreement, to an old tree on the banks of the river, and there, away from all material influence, Mabel hid her head in Effie's bosom, and wept tears from the deepest springs of her sensitive heart, every one of which counted an agony.

Effie spoke no word of sympathy, made no inquiries; she felt that it was good to weep; it was better to wash away the trouble in tears than to keep it pent up in her heart, as a smouldering fire to burn forever. So she sat and pressed Mabel's head closer to her bosom, and soothed her silently from her heart's depths, till at last she grew very still, and the sobs came less and less frequent, and the beautiful face peeped up half shyly, like the moon through the clouds of night, not now "the

golden beauty," for the silvery crown of peace befitted more the hour and her feelings.

"And, now, dear wild flower, I will tell you the cause of this strange conduct."

"Do not, unless it will make you happier. If it will lighten your load of trial, tell me; if it will bring up afresh the causes of your weeping, I would rather never know."

"Dear Effie, I shall be happier to tell you. I need some of your strength now. I almost envy you the wealth of your soul. I never felt before how utterly dependent I was upon others. First of all, dear mother is ill, growing pale and thin every day, and has a cough continually. O Effie, my sister, what shall I do if mother dies? I cannot, cannot give her up."

"Neither shall you, dear Mabel; I have never given my mother up; she is nearer to me now than when upon the earth. Because, while I look to her as in spiritual knowledge far above me, but in love so near, I cannot but be elevated in soul more than if she were on earth by my side, and I looked upon her more as an equal."

"O that I had your faith; for while you are speaking, I feel that it must be true. But alas! when I am alone, my soul is filled with dread——"

"Dread of what, Mabel?"

"God, and the unknown future—life, death."

"God is our Father. We love our earthly parents. Is he less than they—less loving, less just?"

"O, no; but death is so mysterious, and he is the cause. He holds our lives in his hands, and it is fearful to think that we may any moment be separated from those we love—that even upon ourselves we have no claim."

"It is joyful, Mabel, to feel that, loving our Father as we ought, we may place implicit confidence in his superior love and wisdom. Our lives are, as it were, in our own hands; and although we are dependent upon him, through Nature, for our sustenance, our life, yet it remains with us whether, by obedience to those laws, we shall continue our life to its natural length, or whether we shall pass away young, through our disobedience."

"O Effie, every thing is so bright to you! Even death is disrobed of its terrors when spoken of through your lips."

"Death is terrible to me, Mabel, but not the death that you speak of. The perishing of the body is not death. But the crushed and bleeding soul of one whose every breath is torture, who gasps away the hours in an uncongenial atmosphere,—this is indeed death—the perishing of hope and love, and all that makes life desirable. It is natural for the body to perish. It is a glad day to the spirit when it begins its real life in the better land——"

"Effie, I am dying."

"What do you mean, Mabel? Are you ill? Let me carry you to the house; you are only nervous, darling; let us go home, and you will feel better."

"Yes, Effie, I am very ill, if there is any sickness precedes this death. I am dying the death that you described. Alas! I feel it. All, the truth, the reality of that death! To encase a dead soul within a living form, is indeed more horrible than to lay the body away in the tomb, while the spirit lives on, and luxuriates in the warm atmosphere of God's undying love."

"You surprise me, Mabel! You dying in spirit, when you have this delightful home, your mother and Ernest to love you? O darling sister, will not the thought of his love cheer you — bring new life to the dying soul?"

"Ah, Effie," sobbed Mabel, "he no longer loves me; he told me only yesterday that he could not love or respect a person that had conducted as I had; that if I was pleased to make my name a byword for the neighboring towns, I might; he had no desire to be dragged about with it."

"What have you done to cause this?"

"Nothing, that I know of. He accuses me of coquetry. Nothing could be farther from my thoughts than that. We have many visitors at the Dell, and their entertainment devolves mostly upon me. I am naturally social and lively. Surely, because I am engaged to be married, I should not grow morose to all but my lover. It has been a great cause of joy to me, and I have exhibited it in my actions towards other people, pitying their loneliness. I may have exerted myself even more than usual

to entertain them, but from no thought of coquetry, I assure you. O, if Ernest would only give me his love and confidence again, I would be willing to immure myself within prison walls with no one save him, and then feel as though I had a world. What shall I do, Effie, to win him back?"

"Be a woman."

"And what have I done unwomanly, that I am not worthy of that title now?"

"You have acknowledged yourself willing to bind your soul down to another's opinions against your own sense of right. You are willing to forget your own individuality, and walk through life leaning upon another's judgment, not questioning the truthfulness of that. O Mabel, be yourself, and if Ernest Alliston will not love you as you are, then is his love not worth the winning."

"Show him that you are not dependent upon him; that you have strength enough within yourself to support you; that you will not turn from the path of right that your own judgment has marked out for you. If his path is in harmony with yours, and they at last happily blend, very well; if not, it is better that they be always apart. You lose your womanhood when you stoop to win a soul by giving up your own as a slave."

"Effie, Effie, don't look at me so sternly while you are speaking. Indeed, I will try and be more womanly. I will try to raise this great weight that is crushing down

my soul, and gather up the strength within me against the hour of need. Have charity, darling, and remember that while I have been reared as an exotic in a hothouse, you have been a wild flower, and used to the storms; and from each in turn you have gathered strength for those that are to come."

"I do have charity, sister mine; but I feel so much what I say that I may have the appearance of severity, when in fact I mean none. But we have talked too long already, for it is now dark, and I have a long walk home to take. Ah! what is that?"

They both looked, and on the opposite side of the river, seemingly formed of the mist, a figure strode back and forth, as though in troubled thought; for ever and anon it wrung its hands, and then would stop and clasp them in a pitiful manner, looking imploringly to heaven. Mabel clung affrighted to Effie, and would fain have run home; but Effie seemed fascinated by what she beheld, and could not be persuaded to go.

She noticed that when it seemed to be walking in despair, the atmosphere grew more dense around it, and little black particles, as of sand, gathered the moisture of the air, making it heavy and oppressive. But when it stopped, and raised its eyes to heaven, it seemed to call down rays of light, and a soft breeze, that brushed the sand away. The figure, whoever or whatever it might be, seemed to be aware of this, for the pauses came

oftener; till at last it knelt down upon the river's bank, as in earnest prayer, and the rays of light came surely and steadily down, centralizing upon that object, until, as it had before seemed to be made of mist, it now bore the appearance of a form of golden light, rising steadily from its misty casement until it was entirely free, fluttering over the water for a moment, then disappearing in the upper air, while the mist went back again to brood over the river.

"What was it?" said Mabel fearfully.

"A leaf from the great library of God. A lesson, Mabel, for you, and me, and all — a reflection of your own spirit, perhaps. Your soul, when we came and sat down here, was like that figure, walking in its desolation, vainly supposing by wringing its hands to bring consolation; but you saw how dense the atmosphere grew around him, how little troubles, like sand, so trifling they seemed, soon accumulated to weigh heavily upon him. Yet when he looked in the right direction for the light and consolation, lo! it came, and freed his spirit from the mist of doubt, as my sweet Mabel will be freed when she comes to place implicit faith in Him who seeks no half confidence, but the whole undivided trust of the soul. Do you see the resemblance, dear?"

"Yes, but were you not afraid? You stood looking on so calm, while I was shivering with fear."

"No, I was not afraid; I can scarcely tell why, but it

has been a very beautiful lesson to me. I do not believe in the supernatural; all things are real to me, and this was to me as real as the reflection of yourself would be in your mirror. This was only the reflection of your soul in the great mirror of nature."

"But reflections are not realities, Effie."

"Yes, indeed they are; there could be no reflection without some reality to back it, and that reflection is in fact as real as the substance."

"I shall have to have another mist picture to bring me out, if I get into another argument with you," said Mabel, now smiling; "so let us go home and cheer mother with a description of it."

"I will leave you at the door, Mabel, for I shall have to hurry home. Kiss mother for me, and all come to the farm house as soon as you can."

"Indeed, dear Effie, you shall not walk so long as we have horses idle in the stable; John shall carry you directly, and mother wishes to see you, I know."

"And indeed, I shall not allow John to do so. I enjoyed the walk here so much, that I would not be cheated out of the same pleasure going home for any thing. I will go in and kiss mother, and then I must go and walk too; so no objections."

Effie was surprised at the change in Mrs. D'Eon's countenance, and her heart for a moment sank as she thought of her own mother; but she endeavored to look

cheerful on Mabel's account, who watched her narrowly to ascertain if any thing in her countenance confirmed her own opinion of her mother's illness. But this once she was baffled. Her countenance was not at that time a faithful index of her soul. Mrs. D'Eon murmured at Effie's decision to walk home, but Effie was firm.

So she went as she came, with the same great joy in her heart all untold, with the sorrows of her friend as the dark background, causing the beautiful figures to be brought out more clearly. Was it a bad omen, that shadow on her joy? She had scarcely thought that shadows could come through so much sunshine. But we oftentimes feel that the sunny days are sure precursors of the storms. Effie's thoughts were as many and varied as the flowers, and her steps were quick and slow, according as her thoughts were happy and sad. She was so much occupied with herself that she did not for some time perceive footsteps behind her. At last she became conscious of them. The steps were responsive to hers—rapid or slow, keeping time with her own. There was something fearful in this. Effie was brave, but she was alone and unprotected, and the hour was late. She felt all this, and quickened her steps still the more. Alas! the spectre steps also quickened. At last she stood still, determined to let whatever it was pass her. Horror! the steps ceased with hers. And now she ventured, for the first time, to turn around and see who or what it was. Noth-

ing was visible save the trees that stood out lonely and sleepy in the moonlight. Again she passed on, the steps still pursuing, but nearer her side than before, till at last they came to walk beside her, and the fear died out from her heart, and she imagined that God had sent some one to take care of her in the lonely walk. Then the steps seemed like companions; she was sorry to miss them when she got home. So when she got to the door, she turned to say good by to the steps, and found herself face to face with a muffled figure, whose clear, broad brow and dark eyes were all she could see of the face that she knew must be beautiful. She was not frightened, but from out her soul an electric chord of love flowed to his. She could not account for it. But her other joy was only the shadow of this. She closed her eyes from excess of happiness, and could not speak, and when she again opened them, there was nothing to speak to. The clear moonlight, the lawn, and brook she beheld; but he in whose eyes she had seen moonlight, lake, and lawn, was gone, she knew not whither. She looked where the mist figure had looked, — to heaven, — and received the assurance in her soul that he was indeed there.

Effie sat long in the moonlight that night, thinking over the day's experience, and gathering from it lessons with which to enrich her soul. And what had she learned from the spectre traveller? First, that she could not walk home alone, as had been her determination, for

some one was always watching over her. The thought was delightful. Then she had been all absorbed in the delightful certainty of Guardie's love, and this had proved to her that earth love was all uncertain; for had not her heart, that she thought was entirely in Guardie's keeping, bounded out from its hiding place, and gone to meet the stranger? And might not his do the same?

O little Effie, where is the philosophy that you teach? Better practise it at home.

So thought Effie, as she sat by the window looking out upon the beautiful night; and so thought Morpheus as he caught her there, and held her lovingly in his arms until morning.

CHAPTER XI.

MORNING.

THE picture gallery of the Morning — who would not love to look into it? But the Morning, for all he looks so rosy and genial, is a crabbed old fellow in some respects. He discloses to our anxious gaze but one picture a day, and says, So much, and no more, shall you see. Therefore, it is policy for us not to want to see any more. But on the morning of which we write, we arose before him, and were all duly prepared to go around to look at his pictures. First, to Wellen. Kind old fellow, how he smiled as we entered the village! so like a mother over a wicked, unruly son! as though she thought that smiling upon him would hide his sins from the world. Where is old Morning going to carry us now?

Into Mrs. Dr. Kent Bently's.

A pleasant breakfast party it appeared to be; and there was a particularly pleasant influence around it, for Ernest Alliston was their guest, and it must necessarily be pleasant where he is. Mrs. Dr. Kent had a bland smile upon

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her countenance, portending pleasant weather for the day. Mrs. Dr. Kent smiled; so of course the doctor did — a little, forced laugh, but more becoming to him than the little, forced authority she sometimes caused him to assume, and indeed more comfortable to him — for if his nature dared to come out, it *would* be cheerful, never authoritative.

Kate sat like a queen, as she was in spirit, with an anxious expression upon her countenance, gazing upon her sister, but a mighty mastering of all other feelings excepting love. Noble Kate Bently! Wellen may well be proud of you. Among so many rough and rude stones, one true gem should be appreciated.

Lizzie, the frail little fairy, was cosily located between her brother and Ernest, as though the little bud thought that she might gather strength enough from them to grow into a flower like Kate.

A gay breakfast party it was; and we felt glad that old Morning had brought us there, and determined to stay, Wellen fashion, and hear what they had to say.

Soon they adjourned to the parlor; and Kate and Lizzie sang, till Mrs. Bently bustled in, and requested Kate's assistance in another room, leaving Ernest and Lizzie alone."

"Will you sing for me, dear one?" said he.

His voice was inexpressibly musical; and Lizzie felt its sweet tones thrill through her heart. With trembling

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voice and unsteady fingers, she complied. Half coquettishly she sang, which with her real native diffidence made her bewitching.

He compared her then with Mabel, who always sang with perfect *sang froid*, and found himself calling her a bold and heartless coquette in his heart, forgetting that he was winning for himself the same reputation. But Lizzie's song soon obliterated from his mind all thought of every one except herself:

"He did not say he loved me;
But every look and word
Breathed a sweeter melody
Than ever I had heard.

"He did not say he loved me;
But yet I knew as well
As though he had used language
His deepest thought to tell.

"He did not say he loved me;
Yet felt I from his soul
A love tide of emotion
That he could not control.

"He did not say he loved me;
I'm glad he did not say;
For were it breathed like other loves,
I fear 'twould pass away.

"Words would not make it stronger;
When this life's cord is riven,
I'll pray that it may go with me,
And be my love in heaven."

"Who wrote those beautiful words, Lizzie? and why did you sing them now?"

The blushes betrayed the authoress; and Ernest read a response to the latter inquiry in the shy little countenance, as, half afraid, it cautiously looked up into his face.

"Dear Lizzie, is it possible that you can love me? My little flower, my precious bud, tell me that it may be my care to watch and guard it always; and that all the songs it sings, the perfume it breathes, shall be for me. What, weeping? — dew upon my flower? Nay, it does not love me, then. Was it for another the song was composed? O Lizzie, my heart will indeed be lonely if it is so."

She only nestled her head closer in his bosom, and wept as though her heart would break, declaring that it was for very joy. But suddenly, looking up through the tears, she said, —

"Mabel! dear Mabel! I am wronging her."

"Do not mourn for her, darling. She loves me no longer."

"And you — is it possible that you do not love her?"

"Only as a wilful sister, whom I pity because she will not listen to reason."

"What has she done? I am sure Mabel is not wilful. Dear Ernest, I hope you have not been influenced by any scandal that may have been circulated here."

He would not say it had not influenced him; and we, who are supposed to be looking into his heart, with old Morning, will not speak of the pang we saw there as he thought of the golden curls and sunny heart of Mabel, now before his vision, laid out with a pall over her. We will not tell of that; but we will tell of the rainbow of promise that came upon Lizzie's face from the sunshine of her heart, peeping through her tears; for the promise found a home within her soul that some time she would become Mrs. Ernest Alliston.

Morning led us out of the drawing room through a little, dark entry, where we were surprised to see the dignified Mrs. Dr. Kent Bently in the very undignified act of peeping through the keyhole; and very pleasant employment it was, too, judging, as we must, from her countenance. We must suppose she does not notice us, however; for she continues to run telegraphic messages to the doctor, who is seated in his office at the other extremity of the entry.

We next passed into a white-robed upper room, where upon the couch another beauty reclined, bathed in tears, but indeed not from joy. We looked into her heart, and beheld the ashes of a dead hope; and we left the living coffin, feeling that we could do nothing better than leave silence to comfort her.

Now out of the Bently mansion we glided, and suddenly found ourselves among a group of girls, whom we

were shocked to see old Morning kiss at such a rate. Being in Wellen, we felt privileged to listen to their conversation, which we should not have ventured to have done in any other place.

"Have you ever seen her?" said one.

"No; and I don't want to," said another. "I saw Kate Barnes; and she has a cousin who knows her real well; and she says she isn't any thing at all — she is a girl of no principle."

"They've got money, any how," said No. 1; "and that makes the man nowadays, you know."

"Yes, it does," responded No. 2, "if you come by it respectably. Nobody knows any thing about Mabel's father; but they do say that he got his money by —"

"What?" exclaimed all voices at once.

"Won't you tell, any of you? Because pa would half kill me, if I told."

"No, we won't," was the unanimous rejoinder.

"Well, then, he got his money by gambling; and they do say that they were not respected where they lived; so they came here, and tried with their wealth to gain good society. You see how well they have succeeded."

"Mabel D'Eon, indeed! I wonder if she thinks she is handsome, with that yellow hair."

"Well, she *ith*," said a little girl, peeping up from beneath a blue sun bonnet; "she *ith* handthomer than any of you be, *tho*."

"Ha! ha! ha! Like enough, your mother will let you associate with her, Minna; you had better ask her."

"When I get to be a woman, I won't *athk* any body who I thall athothiate with. I thall do ath I pleathe."

And the little blue sun bonnet went bobbing independently down the street, and our heart with it, until we came to the widow Armstrong's little cottage. Morning seemed to love the vines and roses outside, for he did not hurry at all to go in. But we did; and it was a beautiful picture that we saw there — the widow, in her pleasant sitting room, breakfasting alone; and not alone either, for upon one part of the tray stood the daguerreotype of the dead Clarence. We looked in her eyes to see the tears, and began to feel sad for her, but were surprised to see smiles instead of tears; and now and then she chatted with the picture, telling all of her plans, and making the daguerreotype nod; if it had been any thing else but a common daguerreotype, it must have spoken to her, she looked so bewitching, with her little lace cap and white muslin wrap.

"Ah," thought she, "I wonder how dear Ernest and Mabel are getting along. I am sure they have my good wishes, and yours — haven't they, Clarence?"

The miniature, with a little help from her dainty fingers, nodded assent.

"But we're glad we are married, Clarence. No more lovers' quarrels and separations."

Here the picture dropped from her hand, and the tears began to flow. It was no use *playing* Clarence; he was not there, and there was a long, long separation. It made our hearts sad to stay; and yet it was a beautiful picture, and we laid it away in our soul's gallery, to bring out at leisure and show to you, reader.

Now Morning thought we had staid long enough in Wellen, and we would go out into the country. We confess we were of his mind, and hoped in our heart he would go to Daisy Dell. We had no sooner cherished the thought than he announced his determination to do so. So away we went, passing by the group of girls, who were now tying Effie Malie in a bow knot of scandal with Mabel D'Eon; and as the inmate of the blue sun bonnet was not there to pick it out, it held together very well, and they displayed it to the admiration of all present.

We were disgusted with the scene, and gladly trudged alongside of Morning until we came to Daisy Dell; and then he put on his brightest smiles, and introduced us, first to Mrs. D'Eon, who sat in her easy chair by the table, looking very pale, but calm and happy. The Bible lay open before her, from which she had evidently been reading.

Mabel sat opposite, looking very earnestly at her mother, and striving to catch from the words some strength and comfort to sustain and console her in the trial hour which she felt was so near. We could not

learn what we wished from her countenance; so we went into her soul.

Ernest Alliston was not there, although his portrait was hung upon the wall, and the door was left open, so that he might come in if he chose. There was no wild yearning, no holding out of the arms. She was there, and he knew it; he knew she loved him, and would be glad to have him come. He was free to do as he pleased; but, above him and all else, her heart went out to her mother, and then the soul was troubled, wept selfish tears, as all souls do when the loved ones are going away from them even to a pleasanter home. They had spoken of death; her mother knew that she must die — had heard her Father call, and joyfully prepared to answer. She should not leave Mabel; she felt that only the material presence would be taken away. If she could but impress this upon Mabel! She would be lonely; but then Mrs. D'Eon had faith that Ernest would come back. And he did come back in spirit; Mabel felt him kneeling in her soul, but the bodily presence came not.

"Mabel," said her mother, "do you feel towards Effie Malie as though she were your sister?"

"Yes, mother; than you, no one is so dear to me as Effie; she will seem to me like mother, guardian, and sister, when you have gone home." She said that with a faint smile, as though she thought the words would make it seem more like "home."

Mrs. D'Eon smiled too; it made her heart glad to have Mabel speak in this way of her departure.

"When I go, Mabel, I shall leave this Dell and all of my property to be equally divided between you and Effie. I do this, not doubting your generosity towards her, should I leave it all to you, but that the weight of dependence may not rest upon her."

"Mother, I am so glad!" said Mabel, throwing her arms around her parent's neck. "I do feel all faith and trust in the future when Effie is with me; and I shall almost feel as though you were here the same."

We were surprised to see Morning smiling so at this picture, but thought it must be at the idea of a change; for it had always been so sunny within the villa, there was no need of ordinary sunshine to cheer them. It may be he felt that every ray would be appreciated.

There was an importance in his *air* that we had not noticed before as he strode along towards the farm house, taking but one step to a dozen of ours. A little musical voice attracted us to the dairy, where Effie was busy making butter, which looked as though her soul must be in it, it was so golden. She looked beautiful there, with her calico dress pinned around behind, and grandma's check apron on. Her dark hair, fastened neatly back, appeared to be pinned there with rose buds, that seemed about bursting with indignation at the turn her thoughts

had taken from love to butter; and she seemed quite as earnest about the butter as the love.

But the rose buds were mistaken. It was only the hands that were busy upon the butter; the thoughts were wandering far away into dream land, even to a picture that hung upon the walls of the future—a misty, imperfect picture, but she could discern two forms walking side by side, seeming bound together by an unwilling cord, one leading the other among thorns and brambles, and both unhappy. Then she saw another figure, going on before, and with bleeding fingers tearing away those thorns. She started back; and it became apparent to her that the two bound figures were Eugenia and Guardie, and that the figure that had removed the thorns away was herself.

“O, dear,” said Effie, her heart sinking at the thought; but then her soul rallied, and knelt down within itself, and prayed that if that trial did come, strength might come with it to her.

The dairy work done, Effie returned to the house through the front garden, thinking to gather some flowers for the parlor. When she had gathered her apron full, she sat in the doorway to arrange them, playing all the while that she was the roses, and Guardie was the green leaves to protect them. But what makes her start and blush so? It is—no, it cannot be; and yet it is Guardie’s voice she hears, with Eugenia’s. She will

not listen—no, that would be beneath her; yet she cannot help hearing Eugenia say,—

“I would not say this to you,—indeed I would not,—if I did not feel it to be an act of duty, and from kindness certainly I speak it. I have studied Effie’s character closely; and I know her to be deceitful and unprincipled.”

“Go on,” said Effie; “my spirit will be present at its own funeral. Go on; bury the character, if you can; but beware lest it rise up in judgment against you.”

It was Eugenia’s turn now to tremble; she would have left the room, but Effie was determined she should not until she had been heard.

“Listen, now. You have been a curse to this house since you came here—a blight upon the flowers of truthfulness that would have blossomed. You have wound around the hearts of my grandparents with your serpent’s coil, and cast me out. You would wind around the heart of him whom you know I love better than my own life with the poison of your tongue—you would embitter his soul against me forever. I have borne this uncomplainingly. I have gone sadly to rest, each night, with the thought of your sinfulness weighing upon me. I have awakened in the morning with sadness at the thought of the day’s trials that, on your account, I should have to pass through. I will do it no longer. This roof is no longer wide enough to cover us both. I could

not breathe again freely in the same house. One or the other of us must needs leave this house forever. I do not ask you to go. I leave it to your generosity which it shall be. I speak from no sudden, angry impulse. It is a cloud that has long been gathering; now it has burst."

Eugenia had collected herself again, and smiled that old diabolical smile.

"Why will you, Effie dear, give way to these fearful passions? I am sure you might control them, if you would. This is not the first one. Nearly every day you assail me with something of the kind. I assure you it is very disagreeable."

Effie smiled a sort of miniature smile of Eugenia's, and simply saying, "It shall be the last," left the room.

Morning and ourself expressed a disapprobation of such scenes, and went away moralizing on the fallacy of human hopes. Fate turns her wheel so fast, we cannot count the spokes. We can only cultivate our inner life, so that we shall be ready to meet it wherever it stops.

CHAPTER XII.

THE REMOVAL.

EFFIE did not go directly to her grandfather, but stole around behind her grandmother's chair, and drew the withered old head lovingly up to her fresh, fair bosom.

"How rough you are, Effie!" said the old lady, fretfully. "Eugenia is much more gentle. I do wish you would try to be more like her. And another thing, she tells me that your improper flirtation with Mr. Malbourn has caused your name to be spoken lightly of in the circle in which she moves, in Wellen. She says you are too independent in your notions; and, indeed, I think you are. It is very improper to be independent; indeed it is, my child."

"Miss Sanborn does not suffer from that impropriety in the circle in which she moves, I presume," said Effie, bitterly. "There is one thing that I thank Heaven for, dear grandmother, and that is, that I am not dependent upon the circle in which Miss Sanborn moves for sym-

thy. I hope I shall always have independence enough to evade it."

"Effie, you speak bitterly of Wellen and Miss Sanborn; pray, what has she done to you? She tells me that you have been very unkind to her of late, and she cannot conceive of the cause."

"And because she told you this, is it any reason that you should believe it?"

"She has never told me an untruth; why should I not believe her? She could have no motive in speaking falsely to me; her conduct proves her sincerity. I assure you I saw tears in her eyes while she was speaking of you."

"Very likely. Miss Sanborn has tears and smiles alike at her command, and puts them on to suit the occasion. But, grandmother, if you believe and have confidence in her, you cannot in me, for we tell different stories. You have known her but a few months; you have known me always. Have I, then, been so deceitful, so unfaithful to my trust, that you have no longer confidence in me? O grandmother, I do love you, but it is very hard to love without return; it is very hard to see the faith and love of years trampled upon and supplanted by a stranger."

"Effie, don't make a scene here. You have not been supplanted; try and do better for the future, and you shall always find a place in our hearts and home; though, as Eugenia says, a girl of your age and capabilities ought to be doing something for her own support, and not be

content to eat the bread of dependence all of her life."

Effie's cheeks flushed and her heart beat faster as she listened to this taunt. She thought of the years of hard toil, of the nights that she had retired to rest too weary of her day's labor to sleep. She thought of the patient waiting upon her old and childish grandparents, and wondered if it had been the bread of dependence that had fed her. Her heart answered a thousand times, no! But it was enough that they thought so. So she simply said, in no anger, "Grandmother, I am going. I will stay no longer to be a dependent upon your charity; but will go forth and lean upon myself for my own support."

"Effie!" said a stern voice behind her. It was her grandfather, upon whose countenance anger was strongly depicted.

"Why, grandfather," said the poor girl, who now began to imagine that all the world was against her, "what can have happened? What have I done that should cause you to look upon me thus?"

"Don't prate to me! Don't grandfather me! read that, minx," said he, throwing a newspaper towards her.

It was the "Wellen Chronicle," and amongst the *personals*, marked all round with black ink, was the following: "Did Miss E—e M——e enjoy her walk through Samsea woods the other night? Better look out; more than one pair of eyes are upon you, and may expose you further."

"What say you to that, hussy? That ever an insult like that should come upon me! Verily, I have nursed a viper in my bosom — but from such parents what could I expect different?"

Was it Effie that stood there like a wounded roe at bay? From her great brown eyes shot forth the deep expression of an aroused spirit, as though in a last struggle she would crush those who had so wantonly wounded her. The passionate old man almost cowed before the gaze, as though fearful of the spring; but she only turned slowly away, and walked from the room.

Once in her own room, in the chamber that she had called her "own," and loved, because God had blessed her there, morning and night, as she prayed, should she give way to weeping — to lamentation and repining? No, she only knelt down and prayed God to make her see that all this had been good for her spiritual progress, and to bless her new home and new labors wherever they should be. Then she gathered the few things that had belonged to her mother, in a little bundle, and saying "good by" to the others, put on her bonnet and went down stairs. She met Guardie in the hall; but he only looked coldly at her, and finished the wreck of her hopes in the farm house.

She would not go without saying good by to Mabel; so she directed her steps towards the Dell. The birds sang as though sorrow had never existed; the flowers smiled

in sympathy upon her as she passed, and unconsciously she found herself singing and smiling with them, feeling that —

"Spite of trouble, spite of care,
God was with her every where;"

and the golden future was gemmed with brilliant hopes that sparkled through the clouds of uncertainty. She could not tell what made her step so softly as she drew near the Dell. She thought, afterwards, that the angels might have been spreading a carpet for Death to walk upon to the house. It seemed more silent than usual there. The blinds were all closed, but the door was left partly open; so she passed in without ringing, and went directly to Mrs. D'Eon's room, when a sight greeted her that she had expected, yet hardly felt able to bear. She would have withdrawn, but Mabel saw her and motioned her to come in.

"I am going, Effie," said Mrs. D'Eon, smiling, "I am going home. I am glad that you have come. I have a request to make of you."

Effie's eyes lightened at the idea of granting it, then saddened again as she thought of her utter poverty and inability to grant any thing.

"I know," said the sick woman, as if divining her thoughts, "I know why you are here. You are homeless and a wanderer, but you shall here find rest."

Effie looked surprised. How could she know what she herself had not known until that morning?

"I have seen your mother," as if answering the question. "She told me."

"And what did she say of me?"

"She said that mortals could indeed bless angels; and that you had crowned her with happiness by your conduct."

"O mother, mother," sobbed Effie, "some one saw my struggle then and blessed me. I had almost thought that I was alone, unloved and forgotten by all. O, dear madam, you will see my mother where you are going. Tell her I will try to make her happy."

"Effie, do you consider a promise to the dying sacred?"

"I never make a promise, madam, against my own conscience; and whatever promise I make is held sacred by me, whether it be made to the living or dying."

The sick woman begged to be raised, and then taking one of Mabel's hands and joining it with Effie's, she said, "Promise to watch over, protect, and be a sister to my child as far as you are able, and as long as you live."

"God helping me, I will," said Effie, in a firm voice.

An expression of intense love flooded her countenance as the passing spirit turned her gaze upon Mabel, and said, "Mabel, I am dying; and I do believe and know that this will bring no separation to us, but a closer union

if you will let your soul go forth and meet mine in perfect confidence." Then kissing both, she said, "I would speak now of my funeral."

"I would have no vulgar, curious gaze to intrude upon your grief. I would have no minister to preach a stereotyped sermon over my remains. But Effie shall pray and you shall say amen; and together you shall sing those blessed Sabbath evening hymns that I love so well; and God will let the birds sing and the trees wave in honor of my entrance into the new life. Let John bury me in the garden. Place no monument above me — an emblem of the religion of the present day — a clog to keep the spirit down until the great day of judgment afar in the distance. Let the flowers creep over the grave, and the birds build their nests in the vines. In your hearts there will be a monument of memory, and when that fades away I do not want an imitation in a marble slab. And, Effie, when I am gone you will live here with Mabel; not a dependent, as you will see, but as one holding an equal right with her to all that I possess." Here her strength failed her; and with her calm eyes turned to heaven, she went that way.

"The saddest of it has passed," said Mabel. "It was harder for me a month ago than now. But, O, I shall be so lonely! every thing speaks of her; it was her love that made all this beautiful."

"And has her love ceased, Mabel? Be assured the

chain that binds your life to hers is not broken. Though you cannot see the links, yet we know that they are there."

They called in no rude hands to robe the body for its burial, but were happy in doing for the body what they would have gladly done, if the spirit had inhabited it.

Many of the neighbors called to render their aid, but their services were respectfully declined; and they, poor souls, were very much shocked, in a few days, to learn that there had been no formal funeral, and no sermon, or prayer, excepting what wicked Effie Malie breathed.

Each day Effie cheered her drooping friend, until at last she grew as gay and buoyant in spirits as ever; but Effie sighed as she saw no natural independence in her character, no strength within herself; and she feared, that some day the great world would sway her from her own moral standard, and crush her then beneath her own ruins.

They lived very happily together; Effie learning readily all of the accomplishments with which Mabel was gifted; and she in turn gathering strength from Effie's character.

But the serenity within the Dell only made the storm without all the more fierce. Scandal was never busier than now; and in every dwelling was echoed the report that "Effie's conduct had caused her to be driven from her grandfather's home, and that she had taken refuge

with the D'Eons — the shock causing Mrs. D'Eon's death — since which the girls had lived there together, and every body knew that Mabel was no better than she ought to be."

Flowing around them as was this sea of scandal, it is no wonder that now and then a spray was wafted in, disturbing the serenity of at least one of the inhabitants. Rumors of Ernest Alliston's marriage came buzzing about her ears; and at such times she would retire to her own room to spend the hours in weeping, refusing all consolation. Mabel was very impulsive, and Effie's calmness at such times seemed almost like coldness to her. But could she have seen that full heart welling up in sympathy and love towards her, she would never again have judged hastily of one who expressed herself in acts rather than words. A year had passed in this way, when they were aroused from their every-day course of life by a note from Mrs. Armstrong, announcing her determination to spend a week with them. Mabel was delighted, and Effie tried to crush down a presentiment of coming evil; thinking, perhaps, that it arose from selfishness at the idea of a stranger's monopolizing the attention of Mabel.

But Mrs. Armstrong came, and her gentle, unobtrusive way soon won Effie's heart, as it had long since won Mabel's; and it did really seem a delightful change from the monotony of their former life.

Now the widow was not a malicious person by any

means. Her greatest desire was to see all around her happy; she was never so happy herself as while contributing to make them so. But she had unconsciously adopted the habit of her towns-people in communicating the *news*, and so Mabel's ears were filled with the life outside. Her heart longed to ask for one whom her lips refused to mention; but the widow had no idea of keeping silent upon that subject, for the great object of her visit had been to ascertain the cause of the quarrel between them. "Mabel," said she, one morning as they were promenading in the garden, "when did you see Ernest last?"

Mabel blushed as she said, "Not since some time before mother went away."

"Ah!" said the widow, "shall I be inquisitive if I inquire what was the cause of your separation? You know that you are both dear friends of mine, and I have longed to know the cause of a separation between two seemingly so congenial."

"My coquetry, he said, Anna; and I suppose it was, although I was not conscious of it myself. The love, however, could not have been very deep that could be separated by so slight a thing."

"Do not say so, Mabel. I have known Ernest very long, and I know him to be incapable of trifling. His feelings have been wounded by something that he has heard in Wellen, and perhaps your pride at his supposed

slight has wounded him, and he will not acknowledge."

"But — but — is he not going to marry Lizzie Bentley?"

"That is the report; but I do not give credence to it. You know that I have been away the past year, and have not seen the Bentlys."

Thus they conversed until hope again beat high in Mabel's breast, and sweet visions of Ernest flitted across her soul; and the kind widow Armstrong felt that she had done a good act, and determined to carry it still farther by effecting a complete reconciliation between the two. She promised to explain the matter to Ernest, and, also, to acquaint him of the deep love that Mabel still felt for him. For the accomplishment of her purpose she begged the use of Mabel's carriage, that she might see him that very afternoon.

But where was Effie all this time, that she had not forbidden so degrading a step?

Alas! the first barrier had been put up between the confidence of the two friends, and it made the builder, at least, very, very miserable.

Mrs. Armstrong had gone, and Mabel dared not look in Effie's clear eyes; so she waited nervously in her own room for her return.

CHAPTER XIII.

MABEL LOST.

SOFTLY Effie tapped at Mabel's door, but no answer came, and she supposed that she was sleeping; so with loving thoughts and hopes for pleasant dreams, she went away fearful of disturbing her. She had observed with sorrow Mabel's restlessness of late, and had secretly thought that the widow's visit did her no good. She knew that they were much alone together, and that Mabel's expressions of love towards herself had not been so warm and heartfelt as before. But she thought of all the mental sufferings of her darling charge, and wondered at nothing that she saw in the present, but hoped for all things in the future.

In an upper room looking off upon the Samsea hills, and where the north light came in with a steady stare, was the artist sanctum of the girls. There Mabel painted and Effie modelled in clay. She had finished two or three smaller pieces, and now had commenced upon the bust of Mabel; and her whole soul being in the work,

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she could hardly fail of success. How many joyous moments had she spent there, with Mabel perched up on a high stool and invariably laughing, when she was particularly anxious for a pensive expression. She had commenced it when Mabel looked so like a spirit wandering sadly about the house that Effie thought that an angel's bust might be proud to wear the resemblance of Mabel's face, and how, as she proceeded on her task, Mabel grew cheerful and even happy, — excepting when thoughts of Ernest disturbed her, — and when the playful lips so sweetly pouted for *expression*, how could Effie resist kissing them? So between laughing and kissing, very little work was done.

To-day, however, Effie could not work from a different cause. Her heart was filled with gloom and foreboding. The responsibility of her trust seemed like a mountain upon her, and she leaned her head on her hands and wept, not regretting her promise, but her want of strength to do her duty. In this way she passed the time here alone and lonely, while Mabel was anxiously watching for the return of Mrs. Armstrong. At last the suspense of Mabel became unbearable, and she took her bonnet and thought to walk and meet her.

The soft breeze kisses came refreshingly to her feverish brow, and made her think of Effie, so ready always to soothe and caress her into harmony, and she longed to go back and throw herself into her arms and be forgiven.

But she saw the carriage coming, and hastened to meet it. Mrs. Armstrong alighted as soon as she saw Mabel, and sent the servant to the house, that they might have a better opportunity of conversing before Effie should join them.

Anna could not conceal, beneath her forced smiles, the real sadness of her heart at the unpleasant news that she should have to communicate, and the tears gushed to her eyes as she saw Mabel's pleading, upturned face.

"Tell me all, Anna; I know that it is bad."

"But you don't know how bad, Mabel."

"The worst can be more easily borne than this suspense. Tell me all, and spare nothing. Did you see him?"

"Mabel, they were married this noon, and they have just started upon their bridal tour."

"O, my God! Anna, *can* this be true? They told me that this would be; but O! I could not, would not believe it. Why, his vows of undying love, of enduring constancy through all trials, are ringing in my ears even now, as though they were but just uttered. Married! Married! did you say, Anna? Why had you not said *dead*! I could have borne that; but now what can I do? How can I live, now all hope has been murdered and crushed out, till there is not even a corpse left to bury? Why don't you speak? Why do you sit there sobbing? O that I could weep! But my tears are frozen, frozen, I

say, and my soul is a cake of ice. Poor Anna, don't weep; you couldn't say any thing; there is nothing left to say. An attempt at consolation would be a mockery that I could not endure."

Thus the poor girl raved, each word being an arrow in the heart of her kind but unwise friend. At last she screamed, "Where is Effie, my best, best friend? Does she not know that I am suffering and cannot die? O, tell her to come; I cannot go to her."

The widow's face grew stern as she wound her arms around the form of the suffering girl, and said, "Mabel, go not to her for sympathy. In her heart there is no real disinterested love. She would only sneer in secret over your troubles, and smile over the success of her plans, alas! too adroitly laid."

"What do you mean, Anna? to insinuate any thing against Effie, the soul of purity, of all honor? Never will I believe it. Where shall I look for friendship, if not in her who has proven it by every sacrifice?"

"Come to me, Mabel; I am your friend, and I love you."

"*You!* and what have you done, messenger bird of evil? What have I to love *you* for? Go! I hate you! Were not your lips the first to tell me the hateful news of Ernest's perfidy? And now would you not poison my love for Effie? What have you done, indeed, but evil?"

The widow's heart writhed under these accusations. She felt that they were unkind and unjust. Her object had been good, and she really believed that what she said about Effie was strictly true.

Mabel might have been painted for a queen, so proudly erect and defiant she stood there. For a moment her own wrongs were forgotten, in her eagerness to defend Effie.

"Pray," said she, her lip curling with scorn, "who communicated to you this precious bit of scandal, that, after the fashion of your town's people, you must bring to me like a poison to embitter my life forever? 'Tis a lie! and whoever communicated it to you is a liar; and if you repeat it again, you are no better!"

The widow's face flushed at this taunt, but mingled with her indignation and sorrow was pity for the poor, forsaken girl. And when Mabel again demanded the author of the scandal, she said, "What if I should say, Ernest Alliston?"

"But he did not say so. It is not like him to say so."

"But he did, dear Mabel; and when I tell you *whom* he told, you will believe it."

"And who was it? If I cannot believe Effie, whom then can I believe?"

"It was Kate Bently. She remonstrated with Ernest upon so hastily breaking his faith with you, and in return he told her of the wrongs that you had heaped upon him

through your brief engagement, and all had come to him directly through Effie Malie, your bosom friend."

"And Ernest and Kate said all this," said Mabel, sinking, sobbing, at Anna's feet. "O Effie, how have I loved and trusted you! and now, when I need so much your gentle counsel, my heart must be shut out from you! But what could have been her motive, dear Anna, in making me miserable?"

"I cannot tell, indeed, unless in being miserable herself she wanted a companion."

"Effie miserable! I thought her always happy."

"You knew that she loved and was engaged to Gardie Malbourn."

"No, indeed, I did not; and what broke the engagement, pray?"

"I do not know. He broke the engagement, and I heard that she suspected it was through Ernest Alliston's means. Perhaps she wished to revenge herself upon him, and took you as the instrument with which she could the more effectually accomplish her purpose."

"Strange that she did not tell me. And I have been all this time kissing the hand that stabbed me! Yet I loved her so, and I *do* love her so, even now! I am sure, however much she may have injured me, she must be sorry when she sees how my heart is torn. Why, Anna, I have aroused from sleep many a night and found her sitting by my bed, watching me with unutterable love.

O, Effie! Effie! I shall part from you more in sorrow than anger."

The widow's heart smote her. "What if it should not be true," thought she. She had herself liked Effie until she heard from Kate the story of her perfidy, and Kate had always loved and respected her, until, by Ernest's own avowal, she had proved treacherous.

It was even so. While God had made Effie almost an angel, man made her even a devil — as near as we come generally in our imitation of our Father's holiest works. Mabel and Anna walked slowly to the house, where the former pleaded headache to Effie's anxious inquiries as to the appearance of her face, and begged to be left in quiet in her own room.

Effie felt that there was something more, but disdained to ask the widow what Mabel would not tell her herself. But when the evening meal was over, and the lamps were lighted, and Mabel did not appear, she stole quietly up stairs, and round the balcony, till she came to Mabel's window, which being open and low, she stepped in.

The sweet girl was sleeping, but the wet cheeks and feverish head told of mental suffering, making Effie very sad. She quietly bathed her head, and wetting a napkin, laid it upon it, that she might sleep more peacefully. Then throwing a shawl over her, she left the room, for Mabel had asked for privacy, and she would not wilfully disturb her. But as the evening wore away she felt more

anxious, and again visited Mabel's room. This time she found her less feverish, and quietly sleeping; so she left her, feeling more happy, and retired to her own room.

Soon after Effie's visit Mabel awoke; she felt the napkin upon her head and the shawl over her, and she knew what loving hands had placed them there, and her heart for a moment shamed that she should ever have doubted the sincerity of that love; but the proofs stood out before her strong and clear, and unwillingly she was forced to acknowledge them. She thought of her wrongs on each side, until she wrought herself again into a high state of excitement. And she thought, "I am no longer loved by either Ernest or Effie; but O, how wildly I love them! And they say he is married to Lizzie Bently. Who says so? God never said it! Ah, Ernest! Ernest! when I am in the grave you will look in your soul and find to whom you are married, and that you have lived an adulterous life." While Mabel was talking thus to herself, she had been gathering together a few things in a little bundle, and slipping a purse in her bosom, she knelt and prayed for help from her mother in heaven. She looked with no regret at her beautiful room, without love it might have been a hovel for all that she knew; while with love a hovel might have seemed to her like a palace. She could not go without saying good by to Effie; so she stole softly to her door, which was partly open, and there lay Effie, so angelic in her beauty that no person less ex-

cited than Mabel could have doubted her purity. Softly the desolate girl kissed her cheek, and as she did so, she heard her whisper, "Dear Guardie."

"Then that was indeed true," sighed Mabel, as she thought how much she wished she could refute it.

Yet Effie's lips were telltale, for again she whispered, "Ernest, Mabel," till Mabel's soul was sick, for she could no longer doubt. So she left the room as she came, but more than ever convinced of Effie's guilt.

The moonbeams fell that night upon the golden locks of a lonely, anguished spirit, wandering out into the far night, not knowing nor caring whither. Lost to Ernest; lost to Effie; hoping to be lost to herself, and gathered up by God.

CHAPTER XIV.

MINNA.

A MERRY bridal party stopped at the Congress House, at Saratoga, yet as various the hearts as the flowers of a bouquet that a child might pluck from the smiling fields.

There were Ernest and Lizzie, looking as radiant and happy as two doves just fledged in paradise.

There were Guardie Malbourn and Eugenia Sanborn, the latter wreathed in that all-bewitching smile so fatal to the one on whom it fell, and most of all to Guardie, who dreaded and yet could not resist its fascination. Two other couples made up the party — Kent and little Loula Monmouth, Willie Dayton and Minna Smith.

"How I miss Kate!" said Lizzie softly. "With her presence, it seems that I should need nothing more to make me perfectly happy."

"Is not my little birdie happy, now that she is caged?" said Ernest fondly.

"O, yes — so happy! But I have often thought lately that Kate might not be quite happy. I have heard her

sob in her sleep, and say, 'Dear Lizzie.' I suppose she must have been sad at the thought of our separation."

"Perhaps so; but in a little while she will forget it, and be as happy as ever. And then she will spend the winter with us, and we shall all ——"

"Be so happy," chimed in Lizzie, her little face lighting up with smiles.

"O, dear me, how nice it must be to be married, and say soft things in whispers!" said Minna Smith, looking at the married pair, but addressing Willie Dayton.

"Do you think so, Miss Minna? Then why don't you try it, and be as happy as you can?"

"You know that it takes two to make a bargain; and I can find never a one of my mind."

Willie looked as though it wouldn't take much persuasion to make him of her mind.

The conversation now became general, and jokes and jests went round, each heart seeming to express the overflow of its happiness, till the deepening night warned them to seek their pillows.

The last voice might have been supposed to have hushed itself to sleep; yet still there was one lingerer in the elegant private parlors. In a deep recess behind the draped curtains sat Willie Dayton, with the curtains dropped over his material sight, that he might the better look into and read his own soul.

Now, Willie was to have been Kate's escort there; but

she had felt unable to play a false part in the presence of the wedded couple, and had pleaded indisposition, and substituted Minna, who had been a school friend of Lizzie's. And as Willie was the neighbor and college friend of Ernest, she felt no little anxiety in her position, and had expressed more than once to him the same. Ah, little Minna, if Love dreamed but once, then sad indeed might be your fate; but he is an inveterate dreamer, and the last dreams of real love must be as beautiful as the first.

Although Willie had met Kate but a week before the wedding, yet he had been deeply impressed with her noble, queenlike manner and beauty. Wealthy and proud himself, he thought that no one could so well grace his establishment as Kate; and he determined that, if she was as capable of loving as ruling, he would spare no effort that might win her for himself. But while his mind was filled with happy expectancy of the long walks and pleasant *tête-à-têtes* with her while on their journey, how was he disappointed by her substitution of Minna! But the bewitching graces of the latter soon won him to a liking for her; and to-night, while his more passionate nature was aroused, he had been half betrayed into an avowal of love, which his better judgment told him would cause unhappiness to both.

And now, as he sat there looking into his own soul, he saw that Kate alone reigned there supreme, and Minna

had been only a visitor — almost an intruder, he felt, as he tried to brush her away entirely.

He was aroused from his revery by the opening of the door; and he felt, rather than heard, the little footsteps over the velveted floors, and bare feet they were, just peeping from beneath a carelessly-arranged dressing robe, while from out an abundance of curls peeped the beautiful face of Minna Smith.

All this Willie saw by the dying light of the moonbeams; and he forgot Kate, and his holier love, in the wild desire to grasp this bewitching creature. He scarcely dared to breathe, lest he should dispel the vision; so with a wildly-beating heart he watched her movements. Slowly she came towards him. The very deliberation which marked her movements fascinated him the more. At last the little white hand drew aside the curtain, and she was — in Willie's arms. No longer able to resist the temptation, he had caught her there, and now held her so closely to his bosom; and now their eyes met, so fascinating, wild, and wicked they were; and he drew her nearer and nearer, till their lips burned together in a libertine kiss. Ah, this was not the meeting of pure, innocent loves, but the embrace of the hot-blooded, passionate youth with the voluptuous, unprincipled girl. No wonder the moon died out. Every moment was fatal to them. He shut his eyes from very excess of emotion, and before his vision floated the pure and queenly form

of Kate. With an almost shriek he thrust Minna from him, and rushed to his own room. Saved at last were both Minna and himself.

Another form might have been seen in the opposite recess, that followed in Willie's footsteps; and that was Eugenia Sanborn.

Soon after they had first retired to their apartments, Minna was disturbed by a rap at the door; and the low, musical voice of Eugenia begged for admittance.

She hastened to admit her; and Eugenia said, —

"I knew you would be glad to have me come, Minna; and my room was so horribly dull that I could not endure to sleep there. I knew that I should be visited by all sorts of hobgoblins, besides, not feeling at all inclined to sleep at present."

"You are always welcome, Miss Sanborn — particularly now, as I also am in a wakeful mood, and would rather chat than dream. Pray, how have you enjoyed the evening? And how do you like Willie? Am I not fortunate in securing such a delightful beau?"

"Yes, if you do secure him, Minna. Remember, 'There's many a slip 'twixt the cup and the lip.'"

"Are you doubtful of my success, Eugenia? Surely none could be more devoted than he, this evening."

"Politeness requires that he should be. You being almost a stranger to him, perhaps he exerts himself more

to entertain you than he would an older acquaintance, in order that you may feel at ease in your position."

"O, but if you could have heard him talking with me alone!"

"And what did he say, beauty?" said Eugenia, amused at the simplicity of her friend.

"Why — why —" said Minna, hesitating, and trying to recall some pointed remark that he did make, "he almost said that he wished this was *our* bridal, instead of Ernest's."

"And you believed him, little Simplicity. Remember that he is a southerner, and their customs are altogether different from ours; and what would seem perfectly proper to him might appear very immoral to us, cold-blooded northerners. I do not want to discourage you, beauty; but I do think that he cares more for one braid of Kate Bently's hair than the whole of your soul and body."

"Kate Bently, indeed! He hasn't mentioned her name."

"'Still waters run deep,' you know," said Eugenia, provokingly; "and while he is saying over set love phrases to you, his soul may be in Wellen proposing to Kate Bently."

"You are only saying that to hector me. I am sure I am as good looking as Kate Bently, and not half so odd or proud."

"'Tis that very pride that pleases him. But I tell you what, Miss Minna, if I were in your place, I would not lose such a lover."

"And how shall I win him, if, as you say, his heart is with another?"

"There is only one way that I see."

"And what is that?"

"'Tis a bold stroke, but sure to win. However, it is nothing that you would dare attempt, so I may as well keep it to myself."

"No, no — you shall not," said Minna, now fairly aroused and excited. "You cannot tell me what I dare not do."

"Mind, I do not advise you to do this; indeed, I should censure you severely did you do such a thing; but I do know that such a course would secure him to you."

"Tell me quickly," said the infatuated girl, her eyes flashing with the determination to do and dare any thing to win such a prize.

Minna did not see the diabolical smile that rested on Eugenia's face as she said, —

"Willie is passionate and impulsive; you the same. Choose the hours for your *tête-à-têtes* that you can best influence his passionate nature. Fascinate and lead him on, then obstinately refuse his nearer approach, until he shall be almost maddened into a declaration and proposal — which, once made, he will be too honorable to retract."

Minna listened with nervous eagerness to this fiendish advice; then, weeping, said, "I could not do that, Eugenia."

"Well, I did not expect that you could, baby," said Eugenia, yawning. "Come, this conversation is exceedingly dull to me; let's go to sleep."

Poor Minna was never so wide awake as now; and she grew more anxious and nervous, as Eugenia's regular breathing announced that she, at least, was fast forgetting the outer life. Suddenly rousing up, she said, —

"O Minna, did you know that Willie was in the parlor? He lingered after we all went out. I wanted a book, and returned after it; and I saw him in the recess of the west window, almost lost in the drapery. But I suppose he has retired by this time — ought to, certainly," said she, fitfully; and this time she sank away to a sleep, from which it seemed as though it might be very hard to wake her.

Minna listened to her breathing, each moment feeling more wild and restless, till at last she could bear it no longer; and springing up, she threw a dressing robe around her, and stood before her mirror. No arranging of the hair, no other article was needed to complete the picture of a perfect voluptuous woman. "I will make the trial," said she, "and either win or die." So, as we have seen, she stole down into the parlor; and beyond even her wildest hopes were her plans about to meet with

success, when suddenly had his own hand dashed the fatal cup from them.

She lay where Willie had left her, overwhelmed with mortification and surprise, but feeling thankful that the secret lay between Willie and herself; while he supposed the meeting accidental, and himself more to blame than she.

Minna had no sooner left the chamber than Eugenia awoke from the deep sleep in which she seemed to have been lost, and said, "Ha! ha! I thought it would be so. Did you think that I could sleep, little fly, while I knew that you were going to be caught in the spider's web? Verily, the fish in this river need no bait — they will bite the bare hook."

Following Minna, she had seen the whole occurrence, and was as much astonished as Minna; but smiled as she thought, "Never mind; if there is no more, I can make the most of that." Quickly she sped back to her room; and when, a few moments after, poor frightened little Minna stole in, Eugenia seemed as calmly sleeping as though she had not stirred since she went out.

The next morning, Minna pleaded a severe headache as an excuse for not joining the breakfast party. Willie looked morose and disconcerted, and but ill concealed his chagrin when rallied upon pining for his lady love. Retiring soon to his room, he penned an apology to Minna, begging forgiveness, and promising no recurrence

of the offence, if she would again receive him into confidence.

It is needless to say that she did again receive him into confidence; but many and severe were his trials to withstand the wiles of the beautiful temptress.

Meanwhile Ernest and Lizzie were too much absorbed in their own joy to notice the others. So long as they furnished amusements for them, they cared very little how they passed their time. Lizzie was so ethereal, so angelic, Ernest trembled for her, and kept her close to him all the time. She seemed so like a stray sunbeam that he had caught, that he dared not open his hands lest it might escape; and she looked up to him with such heart-full trusting, feeling that he was all-perfect — almost God.

Would that Love's wedded wings were not so prone to grow gray with time. Young Love's wings are very beautiful; but, alas! he is blind; while old Love turneth gray, but his vision is opened, that in his old age he may see the path wherein he may walk.

Meanwhile Kent and Loula Monmouth had not been idle. He had become deeply enamoured of her; and she had promised, like a dutiful child, to "ask mamma" as soon as she returned. The consequence was, that they too were secretly anxious to return home.

At Niagara the party separated — Ernest and Lizzie for their southern home, and the rest to return to Wellen,

where Willie was longing to meet Kate, and Eugenia to preside over the sewing circle.

The event was now over — Ernest and Lizzie were wedded; and the bridal knot was tied with the ribbons of a hope betrayed.

CHAPTER XV.

GUARDIE.

"HAVE you heard," said a number of voices a few moments after Eugenia had been welcomed into the sewing circle — "have you heard about Mabel D'Eon?"

"And what outrage has she committed now?" said Eugenia; "I thought we had voted to say nothing more about her."

"Knowing your aversion to gossip," said Mrs. Russell, "we should not have ventured upon the subject, but that we feel it will be as interesting to you as any of us."

"No necessity for a prelude, Mrs. Russell; tell me at once what it is that Miss Mabel has done."

"The last and best thing that she could do, Miss Eugenia — she has run away."

"Run away!" exclaimed Eugenia; "when? where? This *is* interesting; tell me all you know about it."

Mrs. Russell looked flattered at this unusual request from Eugenia, who always had a way of obtaining all of the news without asking for it.

"Why, you see the way of it was this. I happened to be sitting at my window on the morning after the wedding, and my blind happened to be opened; so I looked into the street and saw John, Miss Mabel's coachman, looking so wild and frightened that I thought there was no harm in asking him what was the matter; and he said Miss Mabel was lost. Then I questioned him about it, and he said that Miss Mabel had not appeared very well the night before, and Miss Effie went to her door very early in the morning to inquire after her health. Not receiving any answer to her raps, she went around on the balcony to the window, and stepped into the room, when what was her surprise to find Mabel gone!

"However, she supposed that she might have arisen early and gone to walk in the garden; but breakfast came, and no Mabel. At last Miss Effie became thoroughly alarmed, and had the Dell grounds and Samsea roads and woods searched. She had sent John to Wellen in hopes of gaining some clew to her. I asked him who was there the day before. He said no one but Miss Effie's music teacher. Many days have passed, and no clew to her has been obtained, and Miss Effie is most crazy, to all appearance, though, in my opinion, she knows more than she pretends."

"And what do you think has become of her?" asked Eugenia.

"I'm sure I don't know; but it's my private opinion

that she wouldn't steal off in that manner *alone*. Perhaps that music teacher may know something about it; I shouldn't wonder. Mabel's conduct has pretty effectually weaned her friends from her, and for all that I know, she may be glad now of a music teacher."

"Rather hard, Mrs. Russell, upon poor Mabel," said Eugenia; "and besides, your suppositions are not exactly plausible. Remember that Mabel is her own mistress, and, even were she pleased to degrade herself so much as to marry a music teacher, she has perfect liberty to do so, with no one to dictate to her, and no necessity for an elopement."

Mrs. Russell looked confused for a moment, and then said, —

"It might have been for the romance of the thing; but where could she have gone? and why, as you say, if she has liberty to go where she pleases, should she thus steal away in the night time? and from Effie, too, her warmest friend?"

"I cannot say, Mrs. Russell; but time will bring all things to light, so let us wait patiently the unravelling of this mystery, and in the mean time quit our surmising, lest we unconsciously wrong some one."

Eugenia said this with mock humility, for Guardie had just entered, and his gratified smile repaid her for the display of words.

"How we do miss Ernest," said fat Mrs. Giles, to

whom Ernest had always been particularly attentive in the circles.

"Cannot I be his successor?" said Guardie; "here I can thread needles, and wind yarn, and pick up stitches."

"Take care," said Eugenia, "how you enumerate your talents, lest you be called upon to perform all this."

And it proved to be true; for, "Thread my needle," "Hold this yarn," greeted him from every side; and he found himself fairly installed in business.

"One thing you cannot do," said Minna Smith, softly.

"And what is it, pray? Can't I learn?"

"No, it isn't to be learned; it comes naturally."

"Then I am sure that it must be natural to me —"

"To talk scandal?"

"Far from it; but you do not mean to say that that is an accomplishment that is indispensable to secure my acceptance as a member?"

"You must, in order to belong to the society, either practise the art, or become its victim."

"God forbid," said Guardie, earnestly.

"And I wish that God would forbid a great many things that he does not."

"Supposing that he were to give you the privilege of choosing; what would you ask him first to forbid?"

"Your marriage with Eugenia Sanborn."

"I see," said Guardie, coldly, "that I have already become a victim."

"Not a victim of scandal, but the victim of a scandal monger."

"What did you say, Minna?" said Eugenia, now standing by her side.

"I said that I despised scandal mongers," said Minna, frightened.

"So does Mr. Malbourn, I presume; therefore, with his permission, I shall occupy him in another part of the room, where he will not be likely to be troubled with them."

Minna quivered indignantly, but Eugenia's word was law here; so she was obliged to be content with a silent wrath in reserve, determined, at some future day, to pour it out upon her.

"O, tell us all about the wedding trip," cried several voices; "that will be so delightful."

"Ask Miss Minna to describe her first night's experience in Saratoga," said Eugenia, sarcastically, attracting by her peculiar gaze all other countenances towards the poor, trembling girl, till poor Minna could bear it no longer, but bursting into tears, rushed wildly from the room. An expressive silence followed her departure. Knowing winks were exchanged, and speaking ahems.

At last, old lady Giles rolled up her eyes, and said, "Well, I declare! One can't be too careful of their gals nowadays! Now, who would ever have thought of Minna Smith's doing any thing that she should be afraid

of our knowing? — a well brought up gal as she's been, too, and having the advantage of our 'ciety."

"Mrs. Giles," said Eugenia, sternly, "remember there are to be no comments upon this. Whatever Minna has done, she has received her punishment; and I beg that nothing further may be said here in relation to it."

Guardie was not insensible to the influence that Eugenia exerted upon all around her, and he felt proud that to him she had given a preference over all others. He felt confident now that Minna's remarks had been caused by some ill will that she bore towards Eugenia, and he wondered how he could ever have allowed such a little petty thing to influence him in the least. Had she not twice that evening forbidden scandal to be circulated in the circle? He felt that he had wronged her in thought, and determined to make all the reparation in his power.

Eugenia read in his countenance the thoughts that were passing through his brain, and she determined that that very night should seal her fate with Guardie Malbourn. She smiled as she thought how much better it was to play boldly, even though she risked losing some small cards.

The circle at last broke up, and Guardie had ordered his horse, to carry Eugenia home, for she still boarded at the farm house, for particular reasons of her own.

That night Guardie Malbourn's fate was sealed; for

Eugenia had accepted him. It was late when he left the farm house, and the chains of his bondage seemed to clank at every turn of the wheels. What made it seem to him that the night birds, the trees, and rocks, and every thing he passed, were, in a potent language of their own, saying, "Curse Eugenia Sanborn." Yet it did seem so, and the sickening fear came to him that she might be unworthy. As he neared the Dell grounds, upon a mossy rock, where he and Effie, and Mabel and Ernest, had so often sat, — even before he loved her, — he saw a white figure lying prostrate. Fearing that some one might be ill, and secretly hoping that it might be Mabel, he alighted from the carriage, and hastened towards it. The low, moaning voice pierced his heart, as he recognized the once joyous Effie. She did not raise her head, but sobbed, "Have you no news, John?"

"It is I, Effie," said Guardie, softly; "your old Guardie. You are dying here, darling, so thinly clad, and no shawl, this cold, damp night. Let me support you while we go to the house."

"No, no; I cannot go there, it is so desolate. I am not cold, for O! Mabel may be more chilly than I, and dying. O, where is she?" and again the wailing stole out upon the night air, and then died away in the stillness.

Guardie listened; no breathing; he put his hand on the heart; no fluttering there; was she dead? His Effie dead? His memory went back to the old vows in the

woods. It was the same now; the intervening days were dashed away; he only remembered this one precious, truthful love.

"O Effie, Effie, it is just," cried he. "How have I wronged thee, mine own! I now see that I have not, could not, have loved another. O God, how have I been punished!"

Again and again he kissed the cold lips, as though Effie in death were better than all the world in life to him.

But now her lips were moistened by the returning breath, and faintly the heart began again to perform its office. O joy! to feel the life coming back again in his arms, as though he had given it to her himself. She opened her eyes, and faintly said, "Take me home." And he lifted her light form in his arms, and bore her to the villa.

The servants were all frightened, and huddled together, weeping and crying, "We have lost one mistress, and now the other is going, too." Guardie quieted them as well as he was able; told them their mistress was very sick, and needed quiet and careful nursing. He was wondering where the last could be found, when Mrs. Armstrong came in, and questioned with her looks the meaning of all the uproar that had aroused her from her slumbers.

Guardie hastened to explain, and the widow wept with self-condemnation as she listened; for she felt that

through her all this suffering had been brought about. He was glad to leave her in such sympathizing care, but returned to his lonely home with a heart filled with conflicting emotions.

That he loved Effie Malie he knew. That he despised Eugenia Sanborn at that moment was equally a truth, and yet that very night he had vowed his life-long devotion to the latter. Weary and faint with excitement and painful emotions, he opened the window and leaned out, trying from the stillness of the night to gather calmness unto himself.

"Curious doings!" thought Mrs. Russell, as her blind *happened* to be open, and she *happened* to look out upon her opposite neighbor, just at that moment. "Something more than common there. I wonder if Eugenia Sanborn has refused him. No great loss to him, if he only knew it, for it's my mind that whoever gets her will get a 'Tartar.'" This last, in her earnestness, Mrs. Russell ejaculated aloud, which partially aroused Mr. Russell, who responded, "Yes, Mahala is a Tartar."

"Keep still, you old tiger," exclaimed the indignant Mahala.

"Yes, she is an old tiger," said Mr. Russell, apparently not understanding the remark of his beloved spouse.

"You old fool, you are not worth noticing; if you was I would thrash you."

He seemed to relish the idea which this last observation

of Mrs. Russell imparted, for he turned over with a grunt, and said, "The old hussy isn't worth thrashing; if she was, I'd give it to her."

Human nature such as Mahala Russell was proprietress of, could stand this no longer; so, shutting the window, she took the yardstick from the bureau, and belabored him until he begged hard for quarters.

Mrs. Russell had shut her front window, but had forgotten, in her anger, that at the end of her room, opening upon neighbor Giles's house; and it was only when she sat herself pantingly down to rest, that she saw the night-capped head of old lady Giles looking at her. The noise having reached the alert ears of the old lady, she had immediately gone to the window, and thus had seen the whole.

Now, Mrs. Russell, as far as publicity was concerned, might as safely have done this shameful thing in the street, at broad noonday, as before the inquisitive eyes of Mrs. Giles. She was in a dilemma, and questioned whether to take Mr. Russell's revolver, and shoot her, or to run away. But a plan occurred to her that would be better than either; so she went to bed, and waited impatiently for day to come, that she might act upon it.

It was evident that Mrs. Russell had the advantage of Mrs. Giles in one respect; she — Mahala — having a housekeeper, while Mrs. Giles was obliged to spend her mornings in giving directions to her servants.

Poor Mr. Russell, lame and sore as he was, was obliged to limp down to an early breakfast; after which Mrs. Russell arranged her toilet with care, and prepared for her gossiping visits. She felt more determined in her purpose, as she heard her neighbor's low, malicious laugh as she passed the door. However, she had the advantage of her opponent, as Mrs. Giles found to her sorrow when she prepared to go out upon the same mission that afternoon, and was met with cold receptions, and sneers about "the last night's proceedings." And when, upon closer inquiry, she found that she had been accused of beating her husband, her indignation knew no bounds. No explanations would be listened to. "First come, first served," was the motto in Wellen, without regard to any requirement of justice; and the discomfited old lady was forced to go home, exclaiming, sorrowfully, "I beat poor, dear, innocent Mr. Giles!" a passer-by only hearing the words, as they were jounced out of the fat old lady, when she set her feet indignantly down upon the sidewalk.

CHAPTER XVI.

SICKNESS.

"WOULD that my lips had been dumb, ere they had spoken words that cause such suffering as this!" said Anna Armstrong, as she sat by the couch of Effie, while now and then the piercing shrieks of the sick girl made her soul shrink in terror. Many days and nights had she been thus, and her weary mind was ever wandering after Mabel. Sometimes she would imagine that she had found her, and her glad laugh would ring out as naturally as in bygone days. Then she would sleep, and wake again, moaning, and shrieking for Mabel.

Each night a manly form had knelt beside her bed, and prayed — as only stricken hearts can pray — that health might be restored — that she might live for him to cherish. O, how fondly! But the days and nights passed on, and still no change for the better, until one night, as Guardie and Anna sat watching her, she suddenly raised herself in the bed, and looking around vacantly, said, "Listen, while I sing you the song that the wood nymphs

sang me, while I was looking among their haunts for Mabel." Then she burst out into a wild, strange song, like the moaning of the tempest through forest trees. They would have hushed her, but the physician, coming in at that moment, motioned them not to. So she sang; the import of her words being the answer of the wood-nymphs to her wild call for Mabel. The close of it was touchingly sad and beautiful, where they brought her offerings of flowers, and birds, and fragrant wood, but shook their heads as they said no Mabel had been seen.

Then Effie threw up her arms, and uttering another of those piercing shrieks that chilled the listeners' blood with horror, fell, all exhausted, into Guardie's arms. Fainter and fainter she became, while in intense agony he listened lest her breathing should cease.

"She is evidently going," said the physician, "but will sink away without any further struggle or convulsion."

The good old man could not keep back the tears, for Effie was a favorite. He had known her mother before her, and had watched all the struggles of the child-woman. But now she was going to be at rest, and he tried hard to think it was best.

"Have you sent for her grandparents?" said he, addressing Mrs. Armstrong.

"Three times I have sent the carriage, with the mes-

sage that she would not probably survive the day, and each time has the servant been indignantly sent back with the message, that they had no grandchild — that they did not know any such person as Effie Malie."

How low her breathing, and how still she was! yet one little thin hand was raised to Guardie's face, and kept picking the flesh away, till the delicate nails were stained with blood.

"Shall I remove her?" said the doctor. "That must be painful to you."

"She is tearing my heart out in the same way, sir; and that is more painful. O, I wish that she could take that with her," said he, striving in vain to still his quivering frame lest it should disturb her.

Softly the white hand stole away from his face and rested upon his heart; and the great, brown eyes slowly opened, and then closed again, as though the effort was wearisome. This glance of recognition gave a thrill of joy to Guardie, and the hope brightened in his soul that she might yet recover; but the doctor shook his head mournfully; he thought the glance of recognition betokened the near approach of death.

She seemed to be whispering, and Guardie listened to catch the precious words; but "Mother, Mabel," was all that he could gather.

Suddenly, she opened her eyes, and said, while an expression of joy passed over her features, "I shall find

Mabel, and she will know that I have never been unfaithful to my trust."

Poor Anna had all this time struggled to conceal her emotion; but now she knelt, sobbing, by the bed, and begged Effie to forgive her. She smiled sweetly, and put up her lips to kiss.

A puzzled expression upon the physician's face again awakened hope in Guardie's bosom.

"How much longer could you hold her so?" whispered he.

"Forever, if she could live. O, say, is there *any* hope?"

"I do not know. The symptoms now have changed, and not for the worse. If you can hold her as she is, and perfectly still, I may be able to do something. The least motion might be fatal."

The physician administered a few drops from a vial in his hand, and watched most eagerly the result. She was perfectly motionless, and her breathing could only be detected by a glass held to her mouth.

Guardie's position was very painful, yet he would not move, but sat there, looking out upon the stars, through the half opened blind, as a relief from his anxious watching of the deathly face before him.

But suddenly his gaze seemed rivetted upon the window, for, pressed against the glass, was a human face. A fierce and angry face! a threatening, diabolical face!

such as no one could wear so well as Eugenia Sanborn. He tried to avert his gaze, but, in spite of his efforts, his eyes would wander there. His agony was now intense; the cold perspiration stood upon his forehead.

"What would she do? Would she dare to enter? Would she speak?" He felt that if she should do either he could no longer control himself.

Ha! a motion of the form in his arms, and the little hand fluttered to his heart again, and — the window blind rattled!

"Very still," said the doctor, solemnly. "All rests upon your keeping your position."

Here the blind rattled again. "O God!" thought Guardie, "will she make me kill her?"

And now the eyes seemed like balls of fire, and the face more hideous than that of any fiend, that still kept pressed against the glass; and whenever he turned his gaze upon Effie the blind would rattle.

At length Anna said, "Shall I close that blind?"

"Do," said Guardie. The horrid sight was shut from him, yet upon his soul was impressed a picture that memory would never look upon but with terror. Midnight passed; and each morning hour brought a stronger breath to the sick girl, and a stronger pulse of hope to the anxious hearts that waited there the issue. But not until day came in would Guardie lay the dear head upon the pillow; and then the look of grateful recognition re-

paid him for all his pain and weariness. Never was more hearty, yet silent, rejoicing than in the Dell. Hearts o'erwearied with watching found repose in low, harmonious prayers of thanksgiving. All were rejoicing except the weary one who had been kept back from the beautiful shores of Eternity, on which her fond look had rested, and made to breathe again that she might yet taste the bitterness of the real death upon the earth.

Effie's recovery was very slow, but each day some little token of her lover's remembrance came to cheer her; and she loved to twine the flowers in her hair, and lay them upon her bosom. But during all her convalescence she did not mention Mabel; she seemed to have forgotten her existence. And the good physician would not allow the subject to be mentioned within her hearing, until she should grow stronger, lest she should live over again in another sickness the agonies that preceded that from which she was now recovering. One day, after she had been walking in the garden, she astonished Anna by saying, —

"I am almost well enough now to go, am I not?"

"Go where, Effie?"

"Why, for Mabel; I was to go as soon as I got well enough."

"Who said so?"

"Why, did I not say so, long, long ago? and have I not said so every day since?"

"We have not heard you speak of her. We feared that you might have forgotten —"

"Why, Anna!" said Effie, turning her eyes reproachfully upon her; "could you think it possible? I assure you I have thought of nothing else since —"

"Since when, Effie?"

Effie had wandered away into dreamland, as if there were a delightful recollection with the "*since*," but rousing up, said, "Since Guardie held me in his arms, and I thought that I was dying away so happy, and had got almost to heaven, and mother peeped out, and said that I must come back, find Mabel, and fulfil my trust. So all the time since, I have been waiting patiently for strength enough to start upon my journey."

"O," said Anna, frightened at her resolution, "you must not go. Look at yourself in this mirror! See what a little lily you are! O, you must not think of such a thing. It would kill you; and besides, you do not know where to go."

"I will wander the wide earth over until I find her. Poor, weary dove, she will be glad to nestle in my bosom when she sees me."

"But what will the doctor — what will Guardie say?"

"The doctor knows me well enough not to thwart me in my wishes; and as for Guardie, — what am I to him?"

"All the world," said he, entering the room — "all

the world, Effie. And if you will give me your love, you shall be all of heaven to me."

"Fie! Mr. Malbourn," said Anna. "I was just calling Effie a lily, and here you have made her a blush rose."

"The roses become her the best; and I shall be glad when they feel at home and stay there always."

"I am glad you have come," said Anna, "for now you will persuade Effie not to leave us and go out upon a wild search."

"Does Effie say this for herself," said Guardie, sorrowfully. But Anna had left the room, and Effie's looks answered that she had spoken truly.

"And has home no charms for you now, Effie?" said he. "Have my smiles grown so tame that you seek others? O Effie! Effie! are the old times all gone? Has the old love departed? Tell me, if all in vain have been the wakeful, anxious hours, the horror while watching my darling, lest the death angel steal her away, while she lay so still and beautiful in my arms ——"

"And the deadly fear," said Effie, taking up the conversation, "lest the fiend-face, pressed against the glass, should make you move while my life hung on a thread."

"And you know — who told you? Pooh! you could not see! Nobody could see. Why, I do not think it was a face at all — merely an imagination of evil, caused by an intense anxiety of mind."

"How did I know? I felt it in your soul, and I shut my eyes, and I saw Eugenia Sanborn, with her face pressed against the window glass; and I also saw myself searching for Mabel, and I found her."

Guardie sank back with a groan, as the vision of that face arose before him; and no chains ever seemed half so galling as those that bound him to her.

But he told all to Effie, not concealing his fickleness, nor his vows to Eugenia, but thanked God that it was not now too late to release himself, and for Effie again to be all in all to him.

But she shook her head mournfully. The sweet confidence of former days had been betrayed, and now distrust crept in, and soiled all the flowers; and very determined was the negative answer that came from her lips when he asked her to be his bride. She felt that a little thing had turned him from her, when she was a poor, ignorant girl; and now that she was wealthy and accomplished, should she accept and trust again the supine and traitor lover? She dared not ask her heart how much she loved him, lest against her own better judgment she should repent of a decision that seemed harsh, yet was in reality the better for both.

This was a sad blow to Guardie. In vain he solicited and pleaded his case. Effie was firm, and he went away almost wishing that the spirit had passed away in his arms still loving him, and only to be clasped again by

God and the blessed in the spirit realm. And Effie was sad too. This was no idly spoken word, but one that she had studied all the weeks since he held her in his arms to die. Marriage, with her, was not the highest aspiration of life — the girl-dream whose realization was to bring her to the goal of her ambition — but a high and holy union of souls, a true marriage legalized by God, the fruits of which should glorify and elevate his kingdom. This was her dream, the dream of the thoughtful woman-mind; and rather than degrade herself by a false union, she could bear now to chill a heart that she loved.

But time was fleeting; and she buried her own trials, and coaxed the smiles and roses to her cheek, that she might be prepared to meet Mabel joyously, and cheer her if she needed it.

"Anna," said she, as Mrs. Armstrong entered the room, "do you like the Dell?"

"I liked it before I brought sorrow to it," replied the widow sadly; "and now I love it, because of the lonely flower here before me; but I sadly miss the other."

"But don't you love the Dell for itself? Would you not be willing to live here a little while without me? I do so want you to, Anna — I *must* go for Mabel. I could not stay here if I wished to, for something is constantly impelling me to go. I shall find her, I know, and bring her back, although it may be a long time first, perhaps months, perhaps years. Anna, will you stay? I do not

want to dismiss the old, faithful servants that Mrs. D'Eon loved, and shut up the house. It would look so gloomy when we came back, — for we shall come back, you know."

"I do not love to stay here alone, there are so many sad remembrances connected with it. But I have wronged both you and Mabel. I will stay and make reparation. God speed you in your search. My heart is inexpressibly sad at the thought of your departure."

It was late that night before they sought their pillows, and angel fingers caught this prayer from Effie's lips, and registered it in heaven.

"O God, thy blessings send, and aid me in my search! May I not rest in life or death until I find my lost sister, and fulfil the dying mother's trust to me! May earthly joys be never mine to share, while I am unconscious of Mabel's fate! O, if it be thy wisdom to send trials to me, send me faith to endure them! O, could I ask a boon, I would say, send the trials all to me, O God, but shield my Mabel from temptation and from error's ways."

Thus closed her supplication; and the curtain of sleep fell upon one pure soul that could forget itself and live for others.

CHAPTER XVII.

CRAZY KATE.

IN the western part of Samsea woods was an old dilapidated house, that had been occupied by a weird, strange woman, called by the children "Crazy Kate," and feared and shunned by them. And, indeed, the older inhabitants, although they reproved their children for their timidity, always shrank from her, and avoided her as much as possible.

And no more did Kate love them; for sometimes, when, hungry and tired, she called to rest and get a drink of water, their doors were shut against her. This, however, had never been done at Daisy Dell; and, although Mabel shrank with instinctive terror from the woman, yet she never went away from her door empty handed.

It was late on a summer night that Kate sat in her doorway looking out and admiring the beauties of Nature, of which she was a great lover, mumbling, now and then, to herself, "She will be here soon — a victim, like my-

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self, of Scandal. Curse it! and ten thousand curses on those who deal it out."

Thus Kate muttered while the dark stole around her thick and fast. At last she leaned forward in a listening attitude, and said, "Coming," and smiled as the sound of light and cautious footsteps greeted her ear. Nearer and nearer they came, and a slight form flitted fearfully across the path.

"Ha, ha," laughed the old crone, "so you're come, have you? I was expecting you; see, I have got the guest chamber all lighted and prepared. I thought the moon would be softer to your eyes than gas; and see, I have plucked the grass and daisies with my own hand, that your bed might be fresh and fragrant. Come in; it is seldom that old Kate is honored with a guest, and when she is, it shall not be said that she was lacking in hospitality."

At the sound of Kate's voice, Mabel — for it was she — had sunk terrified and overpowered by the intensity of her feelings, and at the first touch of old Kate's hand fainted entirely.

No voice could have been more tender than that which greeted her, upon her regaining her senses; and she shut her eyes to the visage, and listened only to the tones that inquired anxiously if she was better.

"O, yes," said Mabel, "but I am so ——" Here she hesitated, as though she had better not finish the sentence.

But the old woman waited inquiringly, and Mabel whispered, "Afraid."

"Of what?" said the old woman; "the bugs in the grass? God? the moon? stars? What is there to be afraid of?"

Mabel turned to look at the old woman to assure herself that the voice really belonged to her, and said, timidly, —

"I *was* afraid of you, ma'am. I'm not afraid of any thing now, unless indeed, it be myself."

"Poor thing," murmured old Kate, compassionately, "go to sleep and forget even yourself. Have one more sleep of innocence and peace at any rate. God only knows what is in store for you. See! what a royal bed I have made! I piled the clover all at the top for a pillow, and the grass is soft and springy; and look you at the covering I have been all the day making; I knew that the queen would sleep here to-night, — the queen of charity I call her."

This covering was, indeed, a curious specimen of workmanship, being composed of oak leaves woven together by piercing the double leaves with the stems.

Mabel smiled feebly at the old woman's eagerness, but thanked her, and that night "slept in clover;" often opening her eyes and wondering when Kate could sleep, as she always seemed muttering.

Morning came, and Mabel would have left for her

journey, but old Kate, seeming to understand her designs, said, "Better stay a few days; they will be searching for you; and if you really wish to escape from them you will be safer here at present, and in a short time you can reach the cars in safety."

Mabel no longer feared the old woman, but rather felt an interest and a curiosity to know her history. But to all her inquiries the old woman would only answer, "Scandal, — curse it!"

One day she looked into Mabel's face mournfully, and said, "I was once as fair as you. My brow was white, and my hair waved in golden curls over my shoulders. My lips were as red as yours, and many a pouting kiss my lover stole from them, declaring that never were ripe cherries half so sweet."

"And what became of him? Where is he now?" questioned Mabel, earnestly; but immediately regretting it, for Kate's face grew almost black with anger and fierce hate as she screamed, "Not a hundred miles from here. And *he* rolls in his wealth, while *I* starve! And his wife decks herself in silks and jewels, while *I* am even begrudged the rags I wear! And his children are taught to hoot at old 'Crazy Kate,' and he knocks me off the sidewalk as I pass. And last summer, when I was dizzy with hunger and weariness, and fell beneath his carriage wheels, he told his coachman to drive on; that it was only that 'old drunken fool, Kate.' And yet he was a gen-

erous lover, a noble-hearted youth, until his heart was embittered against me by one that stole him away at last; and now he has become cruel and cold, like her,—like the world that poisoned him with false tales of me. Curse the world! Curse him! Curse all but God. May I never get so low as that;” and she sank down upon her knees, saying, “O, God shall be my coroner when my old bones are bleaching here, and ringing, shrieking through the ears of those that wronged me, shall come the mighty verdict, *Scandal*.”

Rushing past Mabel, into the deep forest fled Kate, as if to fly away from her own wrath. This made Mabel very uneasy, for she feared that the old woman would commit some injury upon herself; and she grew more frightened as night approached, and fearing that she should have to stay there alone. The company of the weird old woman was better than none. Besides, she was very hungry, and not a crust nor a crumb could she find in the old house. Soon, however, the old woman came in, and in her apron held a few broken crackers.

“I begged them for you,” said she, sorrowfully; “now eat.”

“And you,” said Mabel.

“I have not eaten since yesterday morning; but I do not need it. I am used to it.”

“We will share it then,” said Mabel, dividing and giving old Kate the larger portion.

The old woman showed no signs of the morning's tempest, unless, indeed, a perfect calmness might be considered as such. And Mabel felt as secure with her as though she had never witnessed her fearful outburst of passion. After their meagre meal, Kate asked Mabel whither she purposed going first.

“To the depot, in P——,” said Mabel.

“Then we must prepare for a long walk to-night, for the first train starts early; and it will be better for you to go in that.”

Mabel smiled as she said, “I have no preparation to make, but to wake early. But you say, ‘we.’ Are *you* going, Kate?”

“Only to accompany you there, so that no evil befall you on the way. Then I shall return to my old hovel to live on, neglected and despised,—but I had almost forgotten that I had a present for you. Here, do not despise it, though it be from old crazy Kate.”

Mabel took the little roll of brown paper, wondering what a person so destitute as Kate could have to give away. To her great surprise, upon unrolling it, she found a number of bank bills, amounting in all to fifty dollars, and all in good money.

“I know,” said Kate, answering Mabel's inquiring look, “you wonder where I got it.”

“I wonder more how you have kept it, suffering as you have from almost starvation.”

"And I tell you, Miss Mabel, that my flesh would have dropped from my bones if I had used that money for my own wants. I only took it because there were sufferers in the world that would need it; and so I buried it, waiting for a time to dig it up and give it to some needy one. You may not require it now, but you will some time, and *you* can use it. It will not burn you as it has me. Hush! *he* sent it to me, to keep me still; lest, in my ravings, I should disclose some diabolical truths. I can starve, but I cannot stoop so low as to use *that* money."

Mabel looked a moment upon the poor, sorrowing woman, who had given to her her last mite — the last thing that, in her extremity, she could cling to as a hope of relief. Her heart overflowed with sympathy for her, and throwing her arms around her neck, she said, "Dear old Kate, there is one that will love and think of you, that will cast off the old ragged garments in her memory, and clothe you in the beautiful habiliments of your native, noble soul. I will accept your gift, Kate, only on one condition; and that is, that you shall accept a gift from me of the same amount in my own coin. I have money enough, and I shall not suffer; so I shall insist upon it."

Very long had she to plead before Kate would consent to accept her offering, and Mabel begged her not to use it sparingly, for, when that was gone, she would find an opportunity to send her more.

And so they talked until Mabel's answers became

vague and she fell asleep, still with her head upon old Kate's bosom, who took her softly in her arms and held her there, while the tears, that had not flowed for years, rolled down upon the sleeping face; the few love-words had opened the fountain, and the waters gushed up and nourished the old soul into girlhood again; that girlhood when she was just such a young, fair thing, and had gone forth like Mabel, with a weight of sorrow upon her that had every year grown heavier, until now another bearer of heart burdens had come and eased her of her load.

A little after midnight Kate wakened her, and they started upon their journey. Very wearisome and painful was it to Mabel's thinly shod feet, though in many rough places Kate carried her in her arms like a child.

As the morning came in they reached the city, where Kate left her with many blessings, fearing to go farther, lest she should attract attention by her strange appearance.

Mabel felt very lonely without her companion. She had not formed any decided plan as to her future course; her only thought and wish had been to fly from the presence of those who loved her no longer. And now a dreariness came over her as she thought that she was going, recklessly, without experience, into the wide, unloving world; and she almost determined to retrace her steps. But her pride would not allow her to do that; so she determined to keep on, and bear up with strength

as Effie had ever taught her, and prepare to meet fate as it came.

She had left home with a plain travelling dress, and bonnet with a thick veil; and, although her dress was somewhat dusty from her foot travelling, still it was presentable, when she, among the crowd, would probably never be noticed.

Many passed her, but none that she recognized; and none stopped to take a second look at the demure little form that seemed sinking within itself, as if to avoid observation. She scarcely knew for what station to buy her ticket, but finally concluded that a city would be better for her present purpose, as she wished to purchase suitable attire for a continuance of her journey if necessary.

Left alone to her reflections, she now began to realize the difficulties of her position, and feel the need of a stronger mind to aid her. She was not without worldly experience, and her education had fitted her to appear with ease in the best society. But her internal strength, that reliance upon self, which would have fitted her for her present position, had been neglected, and she now felt an awakening from this sleep of dependence to the dawn of reliance upon self.

She could scarcely analyze her own feelings as she sat there surrounded by others, yet herself alone, — the cars whirling her body along to the city of its transient destination, while her spirit, not recognizing the earthly

flight, wandered away into a field of its own, — a field all uncultivated, yet promising for the laborer a rich fruitage. "And I will work in it," said Mabel, half aloud, and attracting the attention of two gentlemen conversing in the next seat. They, however, soon resumed their conversation, and a part of it reached her ear.

"Seems to me you are a little out of your sphere, Mr. B——, so far away from home. Pray, what may have attracted you within our dingy city atmosphere?"

"To tell you the truth, J——, I am in search of a woman."

"A woman! ha, ha! Well, you have come to a good market. What will you have, old or young, long or short, rich or poor? We shall be happy to accommodate you, sir."

"No joking. I am earnestly in search of a woman; and, so that she have a good education, I care not whether she be long or short, old or young. The fact is, J——, I am so unfortunate as to be elected 'school committee' in a town where they have more ambition than means; and I am expected, for a small sum, to secure a first class mind. Realizing the impossibility of securing such a person there, and having business in Boston, I determined to search here."

"And how have you succeeded?"

"I have met with no success. I have applied to but few, and those have rejected the situation, with sneers, as to the terms."

Here their arrival at Boston put an end to all further conversation, and all seemed absorbed in the bustling scene before them. Mabel stood bewildered in the crowd, undetermined what course to pursue, when a pleasant voice beside her inquired, "Can I be of service to you, madam? Shall I get you a carriage?"

Turning, Mabel recognized Mr. B——, her car neighbor. A new thought flashed across her brain, and the kind face of the gentleman seemed inviting her to speak it.

"Excuse me, sir," said she, hesitatingly, "but I, unavoidably, heard your conversation in the cars, and learn that you are in search of a teacher. If you please, sir, I would like the situation. That I am qualified, so far as *education* goes, I know, and I will try to overcome any other obstacle there may be."

Mr. B—— was favorably impressed with her beauty and dignity, for her attire could not conceal the real elegance and manner of a highly-bred lady. He would have questioned her farther, but her manner forbade it; so, without further comment, Mabel was engaged school-teacher in Glenville. — "Terms, \$2,00 per week, and board around."

Poor Mabel, this was, indeed, a change for her; but her heart was lighter for it, and she thanked Mr. B——, and promised in one week to be ready to accompany him home; meanwhile improving her time in selecting a new and plain wardrobe.

CHAPTER XVIII.

GLENVILLE.

THE week of preparation passed rapidly away; and, one sunny morning, Mabel found herself seated in the cars, beside Mr. Babson, bound for Glenville, N. H. She would have given much to have heard Effie's joyous laugh at her efforts to appear prim, as became Miss Sarah Green, the country schoolmarm — the name and vocation she had assumed. Mr. Babson must have been in his best humor, or at least Mabel thought that he could not possibly be in better. He evidently felt flattered with having the beautiful Miss Green beside him; or, it may be, the thought of the home surprise, when he should introduce her there, caused the smile to light up his countenance.

"What a very plain-looking man he is!" thought Mabel, as his occupancy with his own thoughts gave her ample opportunity to scrutinize his appearance. "I wonder if he is a good specimen of the Glenville inhabitants. But then, he is so kind; if they are all as kind,

perhaps I shall never regret the course that I am pursuing."

"Did you speak, miss?" said Mr. Babson, abruptly breaking in upon her reverie.

Mabel blushed, as though she feared that he might have overheard her thoughts, or divined that he was the subject of them.

"I did not," said she; "but I would like to ask you of Glenville. It is natural that I should feel curious about a place so soon to be my home."

"With pleasure I will do my best to satisfy that curiosity; but remember that you are engaged for one term, at least, and may not be deterred by any thing I may say."

"I consider my engagement binding," said Mabel, laughing; "so, pray, proceed; and please leave out as much of the disagreeable as will be consistent with truth."

"Glenville, aside from its inhabitants, is really a beautiful little village, situated in a quiet valley at the foot of Mount Peek. God never fashioned a lovelier spot than that; and the sun never seems so happy as when it rolls down Mount Peek in the morning, and bathes the vale in its smiling light. But, aside from God and nature, are the inhabitants ——"

"Very far aside?" said Mabel roguishly.

"I fear some of them are very ungodlike, and, of course, unnatural ——"

"Excuse me, Mr. Babson, but I think nothing can be unnatural here. We may not be like mother Nature in her happiest moods; still we are fashioned after her, and we must acknowledge that even she whom we love and revere so much in sunshine seems oftentimes sullen, angry, fitful, and capricious in her moods. I often think, while in the presence of disagreeable people, that mother Nature, while bearing them, might have been in one of those unpleasant moods; and so they are more to be pitied than blamed, after all."

"You are quite a philosopher, Miss Green," said Mr. Babson, evidently pleased with her remarks. "I feel almost a compunction in carrying such a jewel among so many stones as you will find in Glenville."

Mabel wished that he had not said that. It embarrassed her, it seemed so much like flattery; but she said, "I beg you will proceed with the history of Glenville. I am interested, and not at all daunted with your description of the inhabitants."

"I am sorry to say that the ladies in the village are addicted to gossip; the gentlemen are purse-proud and overbearing; and the children inclined to strict obedience to papa and mamma, however it may differ from their teachers' counsel at school."

"Are there no redeeming qualities to this place?"

"O, yes, I have spoken of them as a class, taking the majority for example; but there are here, as in all places,

some true and noble souls, whom it is impossible to taint with communion with the others; and these same souls will make you love and feel at home in Glenville."

Mabel had been watching Mr. Babson's countenance while he spoke; and she wondered that she could ever have thought him plain, he was so noble looking, and his whole appearance bespoke generosity, and a soul uncramped by intercourse with the world and modern conventionalities. And he watched Mabel with no less interest, till she caught his gaze; and it embarrassed her. Then he said, —

"You wonder why I have been in such haste to portray to you the weak points in our village people. You will be thrown more among the disagreeable class; and I desired you to be prepared to meet those who compose it. You look so frail, that I thought you unfit to cope with the harsh world; but I see that you are a philosopher."

Mabel's heart swelled with a pleasurable pride, that she had never before experienced, as Mr. Babson applied the title of "philosopher" to her. How she wished that Effie could have heard it! — dear Effie! — towards whom she could bear no resentment, and who had striven so long and earnestly to make her a true woman, and had almost despaired of success; but now she realized that not all in vain had been those teachings, for the time had now come to act, and she felt that she needed all of her

strength for the trial. Every word of Effie's had been treasured up in the silent memory chamber of her soul; and now she would open the door, and let in the sunlight of *practice* upon them.

She must have grown stronger as she sat there thinking, and the light of lofty aspirations beamed from her countenance, reflecting its rays upon Mr. Babson, whose whole soul breathed in the words, "We shall be so happy to have you in Glenville, Miss Green."

And Mabel put her delicate hand in his broad palm, and said, "I am so glad that I am going there to live, Mr. Babson."

There was an embarrassing pause after these expressions, as Mr. Babson looked down upon the little, ungloved fingers of Mabel, upon which were two elegant diamond rings. It was evident that the teacher had seen better days; and Mr. Babson expressed the thought as it arose in his mind.

"No," said Mabel, "never so good as now; these are my best and richest days."

"In wealth?" inquired Mr. B.

"In the wealth that perisheth never; in the true wealth of the soul — in fact, the only wealth there is, that which will not depart from us when we shall leave this sphere, but will bless us forever through eternity."

"She is very beautiful," thought Mr. Babson. "I didn't notice it so much when I first engaged her."

"I shall have one friend in Glenville, at any rate," thought Mabel. "What a fine mind he has! He might be a king, his bearing is so lofty and noble." Then she smiled, as she thought he was only king of Glenville.

There he was watching her thoughts again — could he read them? She half thought he could as he said, —

"True minds, that may rely upon themselves, that possess that immense and imperishable wealth of the soul, are in reality the monarchs of earth; and beside them our gold-crowned kings and queens may bear no comparison."

"Are you clairvoyant?" asked Mabel. "You seem to read my thoughts so readily, I shall be afraid to think, by and by, in your presence."

"I am sure Miss Green could have no unworthy thoughts; but, to satisfy you, I will assure you that I am not at all clairvoyant. If my thoughts are so favored as to correspond to your own, I can only say that I am happy that our minds are so harmonious in their relations as to send forth congenial messengers."

How pleasant this ride and conversation were to Mabel! — just what she needed at the present time; and she almost dreaded their arrival in Glenville, lest the opportunity might be forever lost to resume it. She was musing thus when they arrived at the junction, where stages stood waiting for the Glenville passengers.

"How far is it to Glenville?" inquired Mabel of Mr. Babson.

"Only fifteen miles," said he.

"Only fifteen miles" was a great distance to Mabel, who had a horror of stage coaches, and of being packed in with women and children, dogs, cats, and handboxes.

"Gentlemen will take seats outside, and make room for the ladies," bawled the obsequious driver.

"O, dear!" sighed Mabel; "fifteen miles, and no one to talk with!" She moved along mechanically with the crowd, gazing wistfully all the while at a beautiful buggy and span of grays, that were impatiently pawing the ground, and longing for a trial upon the road.

"This way, Miss Green," said the voice of Mr. Babson; and almost before she was aware of it, she was seated in the carriage that she had so much admired.

"Dennis, you may ride on the stage," said he to the man holding the horses. "I prefer to drive home myself."

He must have observed Mabel's surprise, for her eyes were filled with grateful tears; but he appeared, not to, and said, —

"You will see enough of those people by and by. Some time we will take another ride together; and then I will ask you how you like them, and you must answer truthfully."

"I shall never answer you in any other way, I am certain, Mr. Babson," said Mabel, rather indignant that his words should imply a doubt of it. "But where am

I to board in Glenville? You said that I was to 'board around.' I do not understand the term. I am surely not expected to make my home with all of my flock."

"Just exactly what is expected of you, Miss Green. The district can only afford to pay so much for the teacher's wages; and you must get your board by dividing your time equally among the members of your school, and boarding so many days with each."

"Barbarous!" said Mabel, really horrified at the painful position in which it must oftentimes place the teacher. "I can never do it. Will my wages pay my board, Mr. Babson?"

He looked inquisitively at her, as he said, —

"And what is to clothe you and pay your incidental expenses in the mean time?"

"I forgot that," said Mabel, half betraying herself by her blushes. "I must try to do my duty, be it ever so hard."

"Now, confess," said Mr. Babson, "that there is no real necessity for your taking this step; that you are only doing it for the novelty of the thing; and that your name is not Miss Green."

Mabel's heart beat quicker at these questions. What if he should discover the deception?—would he send her back? Would he despise her? She looked into his noble face, and it said, No; and she was half tempted in that moment to tell him all; but she checked the impulse, and calling up a smile, said, —

"Why do you think that that is not my real name?"

"Because it does not sound like you; it doesn't look like you; it doesn't feel like you. In fact, if I had seen that name before I met you, I should never have called you by it. Sarah Green — do you like it, miss?"

"I do not call myself a competent judge of names; it answers very well for me, though. I cannot say that I am particularly pleased with it. But what name should you prefer, sir?"

"I think *May* is appropriate. You are like that month — so joyous, laughing, and golden, and yet withal so useful a worker in the field of nature. Or, I like *Bel* — such a little, tinkling name, giving the impression of joyousness wherever it goes. Or, perhaps it would be well to unite them, and call it *Ma-bel*."

She started; how could he know that that was her name? Alas! Miss Sarah Green could not destroy sweet Mabel D'Eon; the name and nature belonged together; and she thought how hard it would be to be called by another name than that which loving lips had so often called her by. These thoughts awakened sweet, yet painful recollections of the past; and she could not restrain the tears that would flow.

Mr. Babson was troubled. "Have I pained you, Miss Green," said he, "with my impertinent questions?"

She hastily assured him that he had not, but begged him not to allude again at present to her history — some

day she might tell him all. In the mean time, if he preferred the name of Mabel to Sarah, she hoped that he would use it.

They rode along in silence for some time, Mr. Babson wisely concluding that quiet would more effectually soothe his companion than exclamations of sympathy.

"What a beautiful mountain!" said Mabel, now for the first time noticing it, although for some moments they had been riding at its base. "And see that little village in the distance, hovered under its very wing. O, I should so love to live there, it is so full of ——"

"What?" said Mr. Babson, noticing her hesitation.

"God," said Mabel, blushing at her own impulsiveness.

They were riding through the village, when a little, odd-looking brick house, with boards nailed up against the windows for blinds, attracted Mabel's attention.

"What is that funny-looking place for?" said she.

"That with the board blinds? O, that's the school house."

"The school house! They don't have to teach in the dark — do they?"

"They might as well, for all of the knowledge they've ever got into the heads of the scholars," laughed he. "But they have plenty of sunlight. When the school term commences, they take away those boards, and let the full glare of the sun come down upon the children, making the perspiration start out of them like pitch out of pine knots."

"Poor things, and poor teacher! I pity her, whoever she is. I wonder, after the day's toil in that hot school house, if she has to undergo the martyrdom of 'boarding round.'"

But a more beautiful sight now greeted her eye — a cottage, with iron frame piazzas, so enveloped in trees that she had not before noticed it; and now through the shaded archway it seemed laughing at her surprise.

"O, how beautiful!" said she, her face glowing with enthusiasm; "most as fine as the ——"

"What," said Mr. Babson, "can surpass it?"

"Paradise, I suppose," said Mabel confusedly. "What, are you going to stop here?" said she, as he turned his horses into the nicely-gravelled drive.

He had not time to answer, before a matronly and neatly-attired lady appeared upon the piazza, and smiled as she saw Mr. Babson, saying, —

"We were expecting you, John."

He lifted Mabel from the carriage, and introduced her to his mother, who, kissing her affectionately, welcomed her to Glenville.

CHAPTER XIX.

EFFIE'S SEARCH.

THERE was no despondency in Effie's heart as she bade adieu to the inmates of the Dell. When I say the inmates, I mean independent of the household—the birds, trees, flowers, and the grave of Mrs. D'Eon. She lingered here a while, and breathed a prayer to Mabel's mother to come and aid her in her search for the missing one. And faith—even more than “the grain of mustard seed”—filled her heart, that her efforts would be crowned with success.

“And now, Anna,” said she, kissing her friend, “be happy, and smile often while I am away. You have looked so sad of late that it has made me sorrowful to look upon you; so, for my sake, let me imagine you smiling and happy while I am away. I will write you often while upon my journey, and do not fear for me; you know that my Father will go with me, and you surely are not afraid to trust me in his care.”

Anna's heart grew more hopeful at Effie's cheerful

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words, and she strove to smile when she said “Good by.” But despite of all of her efforts, the carriage wheels left a desolate impression upon her soul, and she only went to her room to weep over the effects of her unconscious scandal.

But the consciousness of perfect innocence rested upon Effie like a gleam of light impelling her, making her ever to go onward, and gemming her path with countless holy fancies, that seemed like steps up the mountain of progression.

Boston was her present place of destination, thinking, perhaps, that in the excitement and bustle of a crowded city, Mabel might have sought to drown her troubles. Now, Effie had never visited a large city, and the first emotions upon viewing Boston were very disagreeable. So many souls packed together in brick boxes was not at all according to her idea of a true life, where the mind, with the body, shall have room enough to go out into Nature, and attract unto itself her beautiful harmonies.

She stopped at the W—— House, being told that it overlooked the Common, and feeling that she could not be a stranger while the trees waved acknowledgments to her loving thoughts for them. A beautiful lady like Effie could not long remain unnoticed in Boston, for nowhere are woman's smiles and fascinations so keenly appreciated and respected as in that city of intelligence and sobriety.

Effie's first acquaintance had commenced at breakfast with a gentleman and lady who sat opposite, or, I should rather have said, a brilliant looking lady, with an appendage called a husband; for to call him a man were an insult to the race. The lady was very talkative, evidently trying to impress Effie with her own importance in the house, and hinting that if Effie would place herself under her chaperonage that evening, for the drawing room reunion, it would greatly add to the favorableness of her reception there. Effie would have preferred to have spent the evening upon the Common, talking to the old trees, than to try to make music upon the polished human machine before her; but she knew that to gain acquaintances would facilitate her in her search for Mabel; so for her lost friend's sake did she repress this yearning for Nature's sympathy, and accept the invitation of Mrs. Littleton to introduce her to the evening party gathered in the drawing rooms of the W—— House.

Mrs. Littleton — well pleased that she should introduce the beautiful stranger — found time to inform her friends of the fact, and that evening, an unusually large company waited anxiously Mrs. Littleton's *entrée* with her guest. But alas! they were doomed to disappointments; the lady herself appeared, richly attired and flashing with jewels; but the gems of the mind sent forth no rays. She was evidently vexed, and said, in answer to the inquiring glances that met her on either

side, "She has disappointed me in a very provoking and unwarrantable manner; but after all it is no loss; she is nothing but a country girl, uncultivated and unmannered. I can assure you now," blandly smiled Mrs. Littleton, "that I almost repented my invitation to chaperon her, and hesitated, lest she should not meet the approbation of my talented friends."

This admirable piece of flattery had the effect of raising Mrs. Littleton in the appreciation of most present.

"What excuse did she send?" said a little pale woman, dressed in black silk, and who was tolerated because she was fast acquiring fame as an authoress, and her unaffected and natural manners were classed under the genus eccentric.

"It was so simple, Miss Stanton, that I dislike to expose her," said Mrs. Littleton, affectedly; "but here it is; you may do as you like about showing it to the company."

"O, read it aloud," said all at once; "if we may not have the pleasure of an introduction to Miss Malie, it will be the next pleasantest employment to hear some of her original thoughts."

It was not upon rose-colored or rose-scented note paper, neither was it written in the hair line so common to boarding school misses of the present day; but a quarter sheet of common letter paper showed the clear, full lines of an easy, honest penman: —

"Dear Friend —"

"How familiar!" exclaimed several voices; "upon first acquaintance, too!"

"That is nothing to what follows," said Mrs. Littleton, languidly; "read on, Miss Stanton; I am sure the company will be amused."

"I would not read," said Miss Stanton, tears filling her eyes, "if I did not feel that the rest of the note will redeem her in the eyes of the company. But first you shall promise not to interrupt me until I have finished."

They readily promised, Miss Stanton's manner making them ashamed of their hasty judgment and censure of a person with whom they were wholly unacquainted.

"DEAR FRIEND: You will please excuse my absence in the drawing room to-night. I have no apology to offer for my seeming neglect of your desires, unless, indeed, the old trees beckoning me to come to them upon the Common may be an excuse. My soul yearns to be with them; God tells me to go. Forgive me if I prefer the rustling whispers of Nature to the confinement of a fashionable evening circle. Thine,

EFFIE MALIE."

There were a few there — a very few — who appreciated the noble yearning of Effie's heart, and none more than Miss Stanton; and it was only in deference to her that the other party refrained from comments upon the

unpretending and natural little note of Effie's. Soon after the reading, Miss Stanton left the room. She had been gone nearly an hour, and her absence was being pronounced unpardonable, when she suddenly appeared; and upon her arm leaned Effie. No wonder that they were hushed as Miss Stanton's clear voice pronounced "Miss Malie," for never had she looked more beautiful than now; her dark hair was wound in simple braids around her classic head, and her speaking eyes beamed with light that God must have loaned her, so divine and inspiring was it; her plain brown silk upon any other would have been considered *outré*, but nothing could have set off the brilliancy of her complexion more; how simple it was, to be sure! — cut low in the neck to show the beautiful contour of a perfectly developed form; and the short sleeves were looped to the shoulders with knots of brown ribbon.

Perfectly at home was Effie, and not at all daunted by the would-be withering looks of Mrs. Littleton. But that lady was determined to be revenged, and could conceive of no better method than to expose Effie's ignorance of all of those accomplishments which store a fashionable lady's mind. She considered herself highly intellectual — had read much — spoke of the ancient and modern literary productions — of the poets and more solid writers — extolled ancient philosophers, and despised the modern — flitted from authors to artists, and

through the world of imagination roamed a while ; but it was very evident that her creative wings were not well trained to fly ; as an automaton, she worked very well, as long as another mind pulled the strings, but of herself she was powerless.

Effie was interested ; not in any new thoughts that had been suggested, for the authors had lived in her heart, because she loved them. She had not read, like Mrs. Littleton, for the sake of retailing again, but for the enriching of her own soul. Every heart was chained as Effie's clear and melodious voice burst forth, tremblingly at first, like the rippling of a forest stream ; then, as she gathered the thoughts together, clear and bounding as the ocean waves. Into the poetical world she soared, through the clouds of soul-ground, money-getting authors, to the heavenly inspirations of the true poet soul. The present day philosophers were hovered under her appreciative wing, and fearlessly defended ; but in the artist's world she was at home. From out her generating picture gallery she brought scene after scene before her entranced listeners, tinting them with the varied and gorgeous colors of her imagination, until she brought the real and ideal worlds to shaking hands together, and portrayed them as twin brothers, one being in better circumstances than the other.

The little quaint note, the plain brown dress and unjewelled hair, were forgotten in the natural and high-

toned soul before them. This was unearable to Mrs. Littleton, who determined to make one more trial for supremacy. She was a fine pianist, and a gentleman led her proudly to the piano. She had a fine voice, and was an admirable performer, and this evening her effort seemed to excel her highest hopes. Effie clapped her hands with unaffected delight.

"You are fond of music," said a gentleman standing beside her ; "do you play?"

"Yes, sir, I play very well."

He smiled at her frankness, and said, "Allow me to invite you to succeed Mrs. Littleton."

If Mrs. Littleton sang with *spirit*, Effie sang with soul, that wild and thrilling music that binds the heart a captive, whether it will or no. Not Handel nor Beethoven music was there. It was her own original thoughts, *spoken* through her fingers.

As the magnet attracts the steel, so did Effie's mind attract the finer and nobler qualities of the minds around her ; and her heart was a magnet, drawing the loves and blessings of that throng of souls, and they followed her, even when away from their material forms, and gathered around her pillow like wreaths of flowered glories, and she said, from the fulness of her heart, "O God, how good thou art!" then was folded to sleep on the bosom of rest.

On returning from an early walk the following morning, she found a note, containing an invitation — from a

gentleman of the previous evening's acquaintance — to visit with him the Athenæum Gallery of Paintings. She gladly accepted, for she felt that Mabel might possibly be there.

If a true artist's eye should chance to run over these pages, he will feel what I cannot describe — Effie's emotions upon visiting for the first time that holy sanctuary of embodied imaginations. The spiritual atmosphere of the place seemed too holy to be broken by the sound of a voice, and she hushed her attendant, lest a loud breath might break the spell. When she turned to leave the bewitching ground, a little rapping at the heart attracted her, and when she opened the door, a voice came in and said, "Mabel is not here;" and she felt that she must no longer tarry, but journey again *somewhere* for Mabel. The world was wide, and Effie was young.

CHAPTER XX.

LIZZIE.

EFFIE was determined to travel south, thinking that in the vicinity of Ernest's home Mabel might be found. She had never felt that she was near Mabel; but still she seemed to be impelled onward, and her hope never failed her or grew dim.

The luxuriousness of the southern scenery brought out the poetry in her nature, and many stray verses found their way into her journal; but the hot and oppressive atmosphere made her languid and inactive, and she longed to leave it for the invigorating breezes of New England.

In Charleston she received a letter from Anna Armstrong, telling her that Ernest and Lizzie were in St. Augustine; and thither Effie determined to follow them.

In St. Augustine she stopped at the B—— Hotel, and the first person that she met in the hall when she entered was Ernest.

Tears filled her eyes as he clasped her hands so cor-

dially, and said, "Why, Effie! are you here? Am I dreaming, or do I really see our little rustic Effie Malie?"

"It is really myself," said Effie, laughing, "and I have come a long distance on purpose to see you, and Lizzie too, but more particularly you. I have business with you."

"Business with me!" Then his manner changing to an almost coldness, he said, "Pray whose agent are you, Miss Malie?"

"God's," said Effie, fearlessly. "The God in me impelled me to come here to you."

"And what may he have to communicate? I am all curiosity to hear."

"Is this the time, or place, Mr. Alliston?"

"You are right, and I am unwise," said Ernest. "I will procure you a room, and in the mean time you must go in and see Lizzie. Poor thing, she is ill."

Upon his countenance were depicted the deepest anxiety and tenderness as he spoke of her, and Effie wondered how he could so soon have transferred his affections from the peerless Mabel to one like Lizzie; but she said, "I prefer to communicate with you alone first, Ernest. After dinner please come to my room."

"But you will dine with us, Effie?"

"Not to-day; I shall dine alone. If I am here to-morrow you shall have my company."

"If you are here to-morrow? Why, Effie ——"

"Say no more here, Ernest. I will explain by and by."

"And now, Ernest, I will explain," said Effie, as, a few hours after the above conversation, he was seated in her room. I am in search of Mabel."

"Mabel! Mabel lost!" said Ernest, starting to his feet, and showing that all remembrance of the old love had not died out.

"Then you have not seen or heard of her," said Effie, disappointed. "It was with the hope that you had, that I have wandered here. I thought she must have sought you, as it was the night of your wedding that she went away."

"You are keeping me in torture," said Ernest, unable to restrain his emotions. "Tell me all you know of her, and do not spare me if I have been the cause."

So Effie told him of all Mabel's mighty love and wrongs, and how, by an insidious tongue, she had even been turned against her, until at last the agony became insupportable, and she left her home, and had gone, no one knew whither.

"I do not tell you this," said Effie, "to try to win your love again for Mabel. She would never have sent me upon such a mission. We both love Lizzie; and when Mabel first heard of your attentions to her, I heard her that night, in low, sobbing prayer, ask God to bless and bring happiness to you both."

"But, Effie, how happens it," said he, "that the harshest accusations against Mabel were brought to me as coming from your lips?"

"From *my* lips!" said Effie. "Who uttered them?"

"Eugenia Sanborn."

"O, when will she have lost the power to curse the earth! Ernest, she is a fiend in human guise. Not only has she added pangs unto your heart, and driven Mabel mad, but through her means I was driven from home and my lover, and scorned by those who had promised to love me always."

"I have wronged you, Effie," said Ernest, feelingly. "I may not make reparation in words, but my future acts shall prove how sincere is my repentance. But poor Mabel! I can never atone to her for my base and unpardonable desertion. Yet, O Effie, if you could have seen my heart-struggles then, even when I was trying to appear indifferent before the world, and Lizzie, so frail, and loving, and beautiful, clinging to me when I knew that her whole soul was mine, and when my heart was grieved and desolate at Mabel's supposed infidelity,—if you could have seen all this as it lay here like a weight on my heart, you would pity, and not chide me, for the course I have taken."

"I do pity you, Ernest, and love you the same as when, like brother and sister, we sat together at Daisy Dell. Circumstances have cast their transient shadows around

us, but our natures are still the same; and we may learn that out of all conflict strength is born, and that our trials have been only gem-gathering expeditions."

"Happy colorer of dark pictures!" said Ernest. "Ah, poor Mabel was right when she said, 'How you will love my Effie! she always sheds such a bright light over every thing.' 'Does she make the sun shine in the night?' said I, laughing. 'Not exactly,' said she, 'but we never recognize a night where Effie is.' Poor Mabel, I wonder if she is where the nights draw often around her. O Effie, *do* search for her, and never cease until you find her. She was so delicate, so unfit to cope with the rougher portion of humanity, I cannot but tremble for her."

Effie, seeing that his mind was becoming excited, proposed to go and see Lizzie.

"She will make so many inquiries about Mabel," said Ernest, "and it will not do to tell her of her flight; she is in so weak a state that it would distress her."

"She will also wonder at my being here for so short a time," said Effie, "and, as I cannot tell her the truth, I had better not see her at all, and you need not inform her of my having been here."

This seemed hard; but they at last concluded that it would be the better plan, and Effie determined to start on the morrow upon her homeward route, feeling all time wasted in which she was not looking for the lost one.

Very long after Ernest left her, she sat there trying to

feel reconciled to things as they were. For a long time her soul had not been so troubled as now. "All is right," had ever been her motto. Now she could hardly reconcile it to the case, for here so many souls were in trouble, with no hope of release, unless death kindly came and took them all home to their "Father's house," where sorrows come not. She was thus gloomily musing when a rap at her door aroused her; and hastening to open it, she was greeted by the sight of a servant with lights and letters, most cheering to her present mood.

One was from Anna, dear, good Anna, who had suffered and gained, and the other — why, it was surely Mabel's! The hand writing was hers, and it was postmarked "Glenville, New Hampshire," and re-mailed from Samsea. She hardly dared open it, lest she should be disappointed; but it was really from Mabel, in the old familiar style, telling her trials, her fears that her friend was untrue, and the troubles that tempted her to leave her home and seek peace in a new atmosphere — how all of her trials and self-conflicts had strengthened her, and brought her to appreciate the noble love and sacrifices of her friend. Then, in merry mood, she told of her experience as "Miss Green, the schoolmarm, that had to board round;" then ended with wishing to throw her arms around Effie's neck, and be forgiven and loved as in the times agone.

"Too much, too much," said Effie, weeping, "for one

like me, but just repining at the ills that seemed so hard to bear; and now God has sent me the golden tintage to the clouds. O, had I never known sorrow, then joy like this had never been mine."

She sat up late that night writing long letters to the loved ones at home, and the hope of soon seeing Mabel sang her to sleep.

She was awakened soon after midnight by a rapping at her door, and the voice of a frightened servant exclaimed, "Mr. Alliston wishes you, miss, to come to their rooms. Mrs. Alliston is very sick — don't 'spec she can live afore morning. I will show you where they are," chattered the poor fellow.

Effie hurriedly dressed herself, and prepared to follow the servant, who, every now and then, turned to look behind him, and assure himself that the king of terrors was not following after him, instead of waiting patiently at the door of the Alliston rooms for the gentle being whose instincts would have guided her direct to heaven without the attending angel. Softly the servant opened the door, and ushered Effie into the room of her sick friend.

Lizzie's only symptoms had been general weakness and gradual sinking of the energies, rallying, now and then, and appearing stronger for a few days; raising hopes but to sink them again in the reaction. This night she had appeared even gayer than usual, but expressed no inclination to sleep. She wanted to sit up, she said, and see

the angels when they came ; they came so beautifully the night before, and told her that they would take her with them the next time.

"And leave me, darling?" said her husband, sorrowfully.

"Yes, for a while. I will not forget you, and if God is willing, will come to see you sometimes ; when you hear a little fluttering of wings you may know that it is Lizzie."

"But I shall be lonesome without my little birdie's presence ; the cage will be lonely, and I shall miss its songs."

"There are other and finer songsters than Lizzie, and you will one day attract another to fill my place ; besides, I do not think ——"

"Think what, darling?"

"That — I really belong here. I, somehow, feel out of place. Not," she hastened to say, "because you have not been kind, and loving, and true, for you have been all that I could wish, — but — I don't know why — but, O Ernest, I am so glad that I am going."

"And who do you think belongs here if you do not, pet?"

"Will you forgive me if I tell you all I want to, now?" said she, putting her little thin arms around his neck ; "perhaps — by and by — I cannot speak to tell it."

"Tell me every thing that you wish to," said he, fondly.

"Well, then, I think that Mabel belongs here. Your heart seems like a home fitted up for her, and when you speak I only hear the confirmation of her sentiments. I have loved you very dearly, Ernest, but beside of hers, my love seems weak and tame."

"And has this made you unhappy, Lizzie? has this caused the fading of my flower?"

"By no means ; you plucked a fading rose. You knew that it must soon die ; and it has been my dearest wish, that when I should die you would seek Mabel, and win her back to lay her golden hair where mine has lain so often."

"Dear, generous wife! live, that I may learn you. You were never half so dear as now, when I feel that I am about to lose you."

"But, darling, I am going to tell you a secret, and may be you will not think me so generous."

"I am sure you cannot say any thing that will make me love you less."

"Not if I tell you that I love another better than you?"

"But you will not tell me that, Lizzie. That would be too cruel ; you are jesting with me."

"My moments are few to jest. I am in earnest ; but hush, darling — it's only an ideal love. I cannot grasp it

with material arms, but my soul yearns for the love of that ideal. I cannot shut my eyes but I see him floating around me, and I love him better than you, better than myself, and every body."

"When did you first learn to love this — vision?"

"I loved without learning; and what is strangest to me is, that I cannot tell when I first saw and loved him. It seems as though it must have been always; and last night he came with a band of angels, and to-night I shall go with him to his home. O, isn't it joyful? All in the castled clouds we'll live and love forever. O, I love you no less than ever, my dear husband, but him a great deal more."

Ernest could not tell whether this conversation made him sad or happy. Lizzie had grown very dear to him, although, as she herself had said, she sometimes had seemed out of place upon this earth — she needed a higher spiritual mate. He humored the mood that she was in because it made her happy; and he sat the long hours through, holding her, and listening to her strange and beautifully wise words. He felt that she was dying, and yet death came so softly that it did not chill or sadden him; it seemed natural.

Suddenly she started and said, "He comes! he comes! and I must go. I shall soon seem cold and lifeless to you, dear Ernest, but a warm and living spirit to him. Do not weep, but smile, darling, for my great happiness.

Kiss me. Good by now, darling, and promise to direct your thoughts, very often, heavenward, that I may meet them."

She sank so fast after this that Ernest rang the bell and ordered the servant to call Effie. As she opened the door to enter the room, Lizzie's spirit with its host of angelic attendants floated out, and the less favored ones left behind could not have the heart to weep, for it had been a bridal, and no death. It was only the old garments that lay before them; in her more fitting bridal robes she had gone with her love to his home in the skies.

The next day the remains of Lizzie were carried home, to be wept and mourned over by those who, without hope, returned grudgingly to God the treasure he so willingly had loaned them.

CHAPTER XXI.

KATIE.

MEANWHILE well sped the wooing at the Bently mansion; and Willie Dayton's dream of happiness was well nigh being realized; for Kate the queenly — peerless Kate — had promised to join hand and spirit with him, and be his helper in the great field of life. Scandal had been busy with the happy pair, but this time seemed to be foiled in the attempt to destroy their happiness.

Mrs. Bently had increased very much in importance as her children seemed to prosper. Loula Monmouth was of one of the first families in Wellen; and although she was a tame and insipid beauty, yet Kent was sufficiently infatuated to wish to wed her, and Mrs. Bently lost no opportunity to extol her merits in his presence. Kate shrank from all this, and her mother's officiousness often wounded her feelings.

"What, sad, Kate?" said Willie, entering the drawing rooms, one day, where Kate sat, with her face buried in her hands, and weeping. "What grieves you?"

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"I am sad because I live, Willie; and yet I would not die, I am so unfit."

"Live a little while, Katie, darling," gayly sang he, "that I may experience the joy of hearing you say, 'O Willie, I am so glad that I live!' But what has my Katie done, so very wicked, that she wishes to forget it in death?"

"I weep for what I have not done, Willie — for the idle, useless life gone by, that has brought me in no rich reward of self-approving memories; for the listless hands that should be workers in the great field of humanity; for the brain here almost torpid for want of exercise. It were better far that it should sleep forever than to be aroused by the scandalous chitchat of our village gossips. See, the weeds have overgrown it; when, had I but cultivated it, I might have now been gathering bright bouquets, to have gratified and helped to adorn the world."

"Why, Kate, what has put you in this strange mood?"

"The thought of becoming a wife. Willie, I cannot be as all the wives around me are — a parlor ornament, to be looked at, but not touched, because too frail; a thing to be loved and worshipped, like a golden god within a crystal case. May women never be of use? What profit is the union of a man to a weight that shall drag upon him through this life, and break the wings that would bear him to the spirit world? O Willie, may

our union not be such! I would go forth with you, an equal, strong in spirit as yourself. Though my hands may not be fitted for the labor that you seek, yet in my own department may I not be as useful? But, O Willie, I would work with you; and while you go forth to win the laurels, I would stay at home and weave the ribbons that shall combine both usefulness and elegance; and together we will crown humanity with the fruits of our joint labor; and our own diadem shall be God's smile of approbation, as he shall say, 'Well done, my children.' "

Willie doubted whether he had ever loved Kate before, so different were his feelings now, so filled with respect and admiration of her noble mind and lofty aspirations. He pressed her hand, and looked with loving eyes upon her, as he said, —

"You fill my soul with noble thoughts, dear Katie — with hopes for higher things. I need not bribe you with pictures of a luxurious home and a life of ease, although these may be ours; but whenever my wife feels that her hand is needed in a work, my heart shall never be the one to keep her back. We will learn the use of life here, that we may better appreciate the true life hereafter."

Kate's face beamed with love as she heard Willie utter these sentiments, so in unison with her own; and she felt that then they were married. They needed no

mockery of ceremony to unite them; they were one, whatever might betide them.

Thus they conversed together, the hours wearing away, until Kate said, —

"Describe me a home, Willie."

"Well, I should say, a woman of Kate Bently's appearance —"

"Nay, I said not a *wife*, but a *home*."

"Home is where the heart is, Katie."

"Then I will word my question differently. Where shall be the material abiding place of the home?"

"Out in humanity, Katie, where the field is broad and the harvest is large; where the aspiring soul shall not suffer from ennui, for want of something to do; where our children may mingle with all classes, without fear of contamination — we will rather instruct them to be little ministers of good, and their childish prattle shall carry its purifying influence to the poor and despised of the world, whose souls crave the knowledge of Christianity, but, alas! have not the means to buy it. This shall be our home — yours and mine, Katie; we will choose such stopping place on the journey of life."

"But the real home, the true and only resting place, is, —"

"When we have a little eternity to spare, we'll talk about that," said Willie, kissing her, and taking his hat to go. He did this because he had seen Mrs. Russell

and a neighbor come upon the piazza; and he had no desire for a chat with them, after having enjoyed Kate's interesting society.

Mrs. Bently very cordially welcomed her friends, and, to Kate's displeasure, requested her to remain in the parlor.

They had been seated but a few moments when Mrs. Russell commenced, —

"Have you heard about Minna Smith, Mrs. Bently?"

"No, I have heard nothing about her; pray, what now?"

Mrs. Russell looked mistrustfully at Kate, as she said, —

"O, nothing, if you haven't heard. I thought that every body knew by this time."

"I thought that something would happen to her by and by," said Mrs. Bently. "She has conducted in a manner that I would not like to see my girls adopt. But what now? Has any thing new occurred?"

Here Mrs. Russell whispered in Mrs. Bently's ear; whereupon that lady threw up both her hands, and exclaimed, —

"Mercy on us! Has Minna Smith come to that!"

"What, mother?" said Kate; "what has poor, misguided Minna done?"

"Nothing, child. You had better go up stairs now, and dress for tea. I am sure the ladies will excuse you."

"I do not wish to go," said Kate resolutely, who but

a moment before would have been glad of the opportunity. "I prefer to stay here, and hear about, and defend, if need be, poor Minna."

"The hussy!" said Mrs. Russell. "Why, dear Miss Kate, you would have no sympathy for her if you knew how she has disgraced herself. Why, they say that her father will disown her; and then where she will go for refuge I know not."

"If I have a home, I will share it with her," said Kate indignantly. "You say that she has disgraced herself. Pray, has the libertine who seduced her no share in it? Or, while she is bowed down with the weight of her shame, does he walk more proudly erect, as though revelling in his fiendish wreck, perhaps caressed and fondled by the very ones who even now are scourging poor Minna? Away with such stories; I have no heart in them. Why, do you know, Mrs. Russell, that Wellen and scandal are synonymous words, and that they are never separate in one's thoughts? And who has wedded them so closely?"

"Not I," drawled Mrs. Russell. "You speak sarcastically, as though you thought that I meant to injure Minna's character. O, no; I wouldn't do such a thing for the world. Why, I knew years ago what Minna was a-coming to. I told Clinton Smith that he would spoil her, he was so fond and indulgent. Poor thing, I pity her; but of course she never'll be any thing after this."

"Yes, it's ruined her for this world," chimed in Mrs. Vandyke.

"But, thank God, it has not for the other," said Kate feelingly.

"Why, Kate!" replied Mrs. Bently; "after all that I have said to you, after all of the principles that I have tried to instil into your mind, I declare it grieves me that you should countenance such a character as Minna Smith." Here Mrs. Bently held her handkerchief to her eyes. "What would Mr. Dayton say to such sentiments?"

"It matters not what *he* would say; these are my *own* individual sentiments; and I am not, and never shall be, obliged to succumb to another's opinion. Willie Dayton wishes no reflection of himself in his affianced wife. He has a mirror in his own room, I presume."

"Miss Kate," said Mrs. Russell blandly, "we have been friends for a long time; do not let us part now in anger. I am sure it is very far from me to wish to injure Minna. I know that there is a great deal of scandal circulated in Wellen; but I can assure you that no one can rightfully accuse me of being interested in it."

"Hold, Mrs. Russell! *I* can," said Kate. "I do know that it is by you, and such as you, that the name of our village has been disgraced. Have you not to-night been helping to enhance the misery of Minna Smith? Go, now, lest I express in too strong language

my utter contempt of you and your kind. Nay, do not look so threateningly at me; you are wasting ammunition. I am not afraid of you; do your worst to me. But, for the love of God and your own happiness in a future life, desist from further persecution of Minna. Do not try to crush the fallen lower than they are; although it is my firm belief that, in the scale of justice, you are lower than she. If I forbear to speak further, it is not for lack of words, but a too utter contempt for the object to waste them."

So saying, Kate at once left the room, and a half hour after might have been seen ascending the steps of Clinton Smith's aristocratic mansion. The servant ushered her in, and as she was familiar there, said,—

"Miss Minna is in her own room. Will you go there, or shall I call her down?"

"I will go there," said Kate.

She gently rapped at the door; but no answer being returned, she softly opened it, and entered. Minna was rapidly pacing the floor of her apartment, and took no notice of Kate, although she knew that she had entered.

"Minna!" said Kate; "Minna, darling! Come here, little one. I want to comfort you. I know all, Minna; and now I want to love you."

Was this the proud and haughty Kate Bently that spoke thus in loving tones to the world-degraded girl?

Even Minna, with all her anguish of spirit, turned to see if it could really be her. The haughty curl of the lip was changed to an expression of intense love and sympathy, and the white arms were outstretched to receive her. She did not attempt to resist, but kneeling, buried her face in Kate's bosom, and sobbed as though her heart would break.

"O Katie, am I all to blame?"

Kate looked at her, the little, soft, childish thing, reared in luxury and indulgence, trained to evil by pernicious example. "Was she all to blame?" "Not *all*," she whispered, "though very much, Minna. But there is still hope; so cheer up."

"No hope for me," sobbed the wretched girl. "In a little while I shall be an outcast from home — wretched, penniless, and sick; and I know how it will be — even the children in the street will hoot at me, and God is even unkind to the erring. He will not take me home."

"Do not say so, Minna. He is your best friend. Because you have done wrong, you must not go to him with fear and trembling, but with faith and hope for forgiveness. Be sure that he will give it you; he will not turn you away — O, no."

"What, God?" said Minna, drying her eyes in the look of astonishment that she gave to Kate's question.

"Won't he send me to hell for this, Kate?"

"Poor darling!" said Kate, kissing her; "are you not in hell now? O, let this be the refining fire, dear Minna; and when you come to the light again, you will be purer than when you entered it; and many years hence, may be, you will look back and bless God for this shame and humiliation that you now endure. It will make you a better woman, little Minna, than though in idleness you dallied your life away. I do not mean by this to uphold your course of action — far from it; but it is past, and now the suffering comes, intense and bitter. O, pray, dear Minna, pray for strength to bear it. God will hear your prayer; he will, for he is your Father."

"But, Katie, my own father here has cursed me; has — O Katie, look here," said she, baring her shoulder, and showing the marks of severe blows. "O," said she, bursting into tears, "it was so hard! And he told me that God's punishment would be a thousand times more severe."

"We need to be grateful," said Kate, indignantly, "that God does not come to our earthly fathers for examples. Rest assured, little injured one, that God will love and bless you; his works all speak it; and we may judge him by them, and not by man's prating. Pray to him; the prayers come nearer through a stricken heart, because they shut out all the outer world, and rest alone on him."

But the thought of love made Minna weep afresh; and she again sobbed, —

“I have no hope — no hope! What have I to live for?”

“A tinier life than yours — a growing soul. Think of the responsibility of that trust. Be a woman, Minna — a strong, determined woman, — feeling in herself ability to brave the world. Cheer up, dear Minna. Instil the child you bear even now with those brave principles of truth and right. A noble mission yours, now, Minna; and although you have not begun right, still a soul is a soul with God. He questions not its parentage, but its aspirations, its nobler qualities of mind. Shall yours be lacking in those gems which shall make it acceptable at the gates of heaven?”

“But, Katie, it will be the child of shame; the world will despise it. How can I or my child face this hideous, howling world?”

“It need not be a child of shame unless you wish to make it so. Do not bow your head because you have done wrong; but hold it up, because you mean to do right hereafter. Bring up your child as becomes a virtuous mother, and it cannot be the child of shame, but the child of virtuous aspirations; and when it shall grow up, the world may not harm it with the finger of scorn, because it will live above its reach; and should some weak souls point the scornful finger, it will be as though they

were pointing out the stars, so farther heavenward will it be.

Thus Kate cheered the poor girl; and when she left, Minna thought that if God was unkind, Kate was higher than he in noble sympathies for the fallen.

CHAPTER XXII.

BOARDING ROUND.

"A — B — C — Here, turn around, and look at your letters. What are you looking at over there?"

"Tham Joneth hath got thum hop-toadth in hith dethk, and he thaid he'd jump 'em at me when I rethited my lethon."

"Samuel Jones, walk this way; now let me see what you have there."

Sam sheepishly opened a box, and disclosed a number of very small toads, saying, "I won't do so again!" and "I didn't mean to! Dave Bowen give 'em to me!" But Mabel was inflexible. This was not the first offence. Samuel Jones had been a great source of annoyance all through the term, and now she determined to punish him. He was the largest boy in school, and she knew that the usual mode of punishment would only be remembered so long as it was being inflicted; so she determined upon another.

"Now, Samuel, go and sit down upon the floor in the

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entry, directly opposite to me — there! so that I can look at you. Now take your toads out of the box, and play with them the rest of the afternoon. Mind that you do not let any of them escape. There are fourteen of them, and if I find, at the close of school, that any are missing, I shall call in Mr. Babson, and let him punish you severely."

Poor Samuel! the object of ridicule to the whole school, and in constant dread of visitors coming in; yet, on the other hand, should he rebel, was the dread of Mr. Babson; and he knew that the teacher would keep her promise. But soon he had no time to dread or think of any thing but his toads; for, as they began to feel the air, they became lively, and it needed all of Sam's energies to keep them together. His arms flew in every direction, and Mabel could scarcely refrain from laughing; and even the boy himself became interested in the game, and now and then a grin of satisfaction would pass over his face, as one toad, more lively than its brothers, would cause him an extra effort to catch. Once he broke out into a broad laugh, and only checked himself by holding his hand full of toads over his mouth. But at last he became very weary, for the novelty wore away, and his punishment began. School closed, the children kissed her, and Mabel started with two of her most ungainly scholars to their home, where she was to board their education's worth.

The children ushered Mabel into a little dingy, unfinished room, where a slovenly looking, fat woman sat nursing a baby. She looked at the teacher, but said nothing, and Mabel sat down, feeling very much embarrassed, and not liking to take off her bonnet until invited. Presently, the woman bustled out of the room, and left Mabel for nearly an hour — still with her bonnet on; then opening the door enough to admit her head, said, "You can come to supper now, if you think our victuals are good enough for you."

Mabel sadly laid aside her bonnet, and smoothing her hair, prepared to follow the sound of the voice. She entered a dingy kitchen, where the smoke of burnt fritters nearly suffocated her. The table was spread with a very unpalatable supper of cold corned beef and potatoes, with a very meagre supply of suspicious looking fritters. The hostess, however, excused it by saying, "My folks are all proper fond of biled pot and green sarce, and children are all desput eaters. I don't hold to feedin' 'em on sweetened bread and sich like stuff. I suppose yer haven't been usened to't; but if yer would board with poor folks, yer must live as poor folks do."

Mabel expressed the desire that she would make no difference in her style of living for her, as she would as soon eat crackers as any thing else. Poor Mabel! crackers was her fare after that. She longed for night to come, as she thought she should then be free from the importunities of the troublesome children. But the

children were sent to bed, and nothing said about her room, until, at last, longing to be alone, she requested to be shown to it.

"Why, don't you know where 'tis?" said the woman, with an astonished expression.

Mabel expressed her ignorance of the locality, and Mrs. Turner, with an impatient tone, said, "Follow me." She then lighted a very small bit of candle, — grumbling all the time that she "didn't hold to people's burning out candles to go to bed by," — and proceeded to ascend a very narrow and rickety flight of stairs, telling Mabel, as she neared the top, that she must be very careful on that platform, as the boards were misplaced, and one false step would precipitate her into the cellar. Just then a gust of wind extinguished the light. Mabel was half dead with fright. The chasm widened fearfully in her imagination; but she was aroused from this by the still greater fear of Mrs. Turner, who, saving, "Here! what are ye 'fraid on?" jerked her over on to the other side.

Mrs. Turner did not offer to relight the candle; but the moon was more considerate, and streamed its light into the rude, unfinished attic, disclosing a partition of tattered cotton cloth, which swayed in the wind, and tore, as if for the very fun of the thing. On one side of this, Mrs. Turner declared that the men folks slept, while the other was Mabel's coveted resting place. She dared not express her emotions of disgust to Mrs. Turner, and

felt grateful to that lady when she withdrew, leaving her alone to her reflections and her tears, for she felt that she could no longer restrain them. She sat by the window and looked out, to assure herself that the same stars looked down upon her that had smiled the night before, when she was walking with Mr. Babson. As she thought of him, and their pleasant conversation, her tears ceased to flow, and that one memory made the wretched little attic a receptacle of sunbeams.

But alas! even undisturbed revery was denied her; What was that? a cough! and in her room! Her heart beat faster as she listened. But Mrs. Turner's coarse voice at the foot of the stairs soon solved the mystery.

"Miss Green! Miss Green! I say!"

"What, madam?" said Mabel, making an effort to answer in a firm voice, although her emotions almost overcame her.

"I only wanted to say that Charlie there—the one that sleeps on the floor—is subject to the croup; and if you hear him coughing croupy in the night, just call Jim, the Irishman, that sleeps in the next room." Here Mrs. Turner slammed the door, without giving Mabel time to answer, but a moment after, opened it, and screamed, "I put the other young 'uns into bed with you, for fear you would be lonesome, here in a strange place so."

"O, dear!" said Mabel in despair, and now looking, for the first time, at her bed—a little cot, in a dark

corner, where the two children were lying, at all sorts of angles, and as though it had been their study for weeks to discover the most approved method of occupying every inch of the room. In another corner of the apartment, lying on a straw mat, with a bundle of rags under his head, was little Charlie. This was one that Mabel had not seen. Poor little fellow, he had been sent to bed before she came, for some trivial offence, and had cried himself to sleep, and now and then sobbed, as though dreamland was comfortless. How her heart yearned towards him, as she heard it; she longed to see his little face; so she pulled the wretched little rag bed out from its hiding place under the eaves, and brought him where the moonbeams would fall upon him. They fell upon no sleeping face, but the great black eyes of little Charlie, open to the full extent, and gazing with wonder upon the beautiful teacher.

"Charlie," said Mabel, "have I frightened you?"

His answer was not spoken; it was only enclosed in a parenthesis of dimples that played around his mouth; but Mabel understood it, and she laughed too, and did not ask him any more questions, but unloosed her dress, and lay beside him, drawing his curly head to rest upon her bosom. How softly he nestled there, and at last ventured one little bruised arm around her, lifting his eyes to steal a glance of approbation.

"How I love him!" thought Mabel; "and yet it is so

strange that I do not want him to speak. I could almost wish him dumb, that he might always express his language in looks."

Little Charlie had made the coarse mat and rag pillow so downy, and draped the chamber with love's soft influence, and Mabel felt glad and shut her eyes, while Sleep stole around, and caught them under her beautiful wing, and carried them where Mabel took little Charlie's hand, and led him through scenes no longer cheerless, but rich with Nature's sublimest handiwork.

Morning came, and the noise of the quarrelsome children soon aroused Mabel from her pleasant dreams to the stern realities of earth-life. Little Charlie clung closer, as the shadow passed over her face; but when she smiled, his contentedness repaid her for the effort.

"Run and get your clothes, Charlie," said she, "and I will dress you."

But he only looked sorrowfully at her, and did not obey; all her efforts failed to extort a word from him. Meanwhile the two older children had been giggling in the corner; at last, one of them stepped forward, and said, "You might question him all day, and he couldn't answer; why, ma'am, he's a fool, besides being deaf and dumb; the only way that you can start him is so" — striking him upon his bare shoulder.

"*Never do that again!*" said Mabel, indignantly, drawing Charlie nearer to her. "Go now and get his dress for me, that I may put it on."

From out the bundle of rags on which their heads had lain, the girl drew a dirty, ragged frock, saying, "That is all."

Mabel wept as she looked upon the little body, covered with the bruises of ill usage, and the blue and pinched arms and legs, so ill protected from the chilly mountain mornings. Charlie was deaf and dumb, but his great eyes floated in tears, and the anguish of a crushed spirit spoke from them. The high, broad brow and sensitive organization bespoke a nature entirely different from the other children, or the mother; and Mabel could not help feeling as though he did not belong to them.

"How old is he?" questioned she of the oldest girl.

"Three, I suppose," replied she, looking mysterious.

"You suppose; do you not know, then?"

"Nobody does, as I know of; why, don't you know about him? He ain't any thing but a game come on father."

"What do you mean, Mary? Come, explain yourself," said Mabel, winningly; "tell me all you know of Charlie."

"Why, you see, once father went to Boston, and when he was coming home, a woman got into the cars. She had a little baby in her arms, and she came up to father, and asked him if he would hold it while she went into the depot for a bundle that she had left. So he, like a fool, — mother says, — took it, and the cars started, and

father had to bring the baby home. Wasn't he green? You ought to have seen mother, when he brought that young one home. She vowed it shouldn't come into the house. But father is *real* up when he *is* up, and he carried the day; and ever since then the plague has been here, laying down upon us, and eating us out of house and home; but it won't be so much longer, for father has consented to have him carried to the alms-house."

Mabel's eyes brightened, as she thought that now Charlie might be hers, and she could scarcely wait for school hours to begin, that she might despatch a note to Mr. Babson, and lay before him her plans and wishes.

Kind Mr. Babson! Could she doubt that her benevolent purpose would meet with his approval? But he did look very seriously upon her all the time that, with impulsive enthusiasm, she was describing Charlie and his disagreeable situation, and ended by pleading, "Can he not be mine, Mr. Babson?"

"He *can*, but he *must* not."

"Indeed, but he *shall*," fiercely replied Mabel. "Who dare dictate to me? Who dare tell me what I shall or shall not do?"

"God," simply replied Mr. Babson.

"So he dare!" said Mabel, "and to him alone will I turn for advice; and he will tell me to-day, to-morrow, and always, as he told me this morning, when I prayed for little Charlie. The answer beat back through my

heart so loudly that it reached the ear of the deaf boy, and he smiled. It was, 'Take little Charlie to your heart, and love him always.'"

"But, Miss Green, your purse will scarcely admit of a sharer in its contents——"

"Do not call me Miss Green! I am not! I am Mabel D'Eon! I am rich! I am powerful! Who dare gainsay me?"

"God!"

"Always him; but he will not; he will help me when I would do right; he will help me now!"

"Listen to me, Miss D'Eon."

"I will not; you are penurious, mean, heartless! You have locked the door of your soul, and ground up the key, lest, only broken, it might knit together again, and, mayhap, some poor object in humanity might find and use it!"

"You are severe, Miss Mabel," said he, sadly; "you judge without a hearing; now, in justice, listen, while I explain."

"While you were poor Miss Green, — the teacher who by her struggles barely supported herself, — I would not have allowed you to have encumbered yourself with another burden, but I would gladly have taken little Charlie to my own home, and blessed him to the extent of my means. But your confession has materially changed my

views. I would say now, Take the child, and God bless you for the benevolent act."

He would have left her, but Mabel clung to him, sobbing, "How weak I am! How powerless! All the base epithets that I have bestowed upon you, I double now unto myself. I would ask forgiveness, but alas! I am too low!"

"Rise, Miss Mabel, I beg you; let us forget and forgive, and in no sadness think of the hasty words here spoken. See, I cast them out of my heart and memory, never to be taken up again. Nay, no words, little one; listen to the pleasant news that I have for you. There is a friend at home waiting for you."

"A friend! Yours or mine?"

"Both — ours."

They had been walking towards the house, and now entered. "Softly," said he; "we will surprise her."

But Mabel could not be kept back; a moment more, and she was clasped in the loving arms of Effie.

The hours passed by; Mr. Babson had dismissed Mabel's school, and had obtained Mrs. Turner's very willing consent to part with Charlie. And at night, when Mabel and Effie met him upon the piazza, the little mute's arms were around his neck, and little Charlie put out his lips to receive the first kiss of his virgin mother.

CHAPTER XXIII.

TRUE LOVE.

How proud was little Charlie when Mabel first drew on the warm stockings and pretty ankle ties! and the little plaid dress, with its ribbon trimmings, was a wonder in itself. His beautiful hair was brushed smoothly from his brow, and then curled in light, wavy ringlets. He was very beautiful; and the girls could never tire of kissing him. Poor little Charlie! he could only weep in an agony of delight and intense appreciation.

"His eyes and mouth are very familiar," said Effie, thoughtfully. "I cannot remember where I have seen their like; yet it seems to me at some time we might have been very nearly connected."

"They are very like Eugenia's," replied Mabel, carelessly.

"The same! only in Eugenia's mildest, sweetest mood. But we will not name them in connection. I do not love to think of her."

At this moment Mr. Babson entered the room, and in-

vited Effie to a ride. She accepted; and a few moments after they were enjoying the fine and invigorating breezes of Mount Peek. They rode some distance without speaking, so keenly did they appreciate the scenery, the atmosphere, and all of their surroundings. Mr. Babson broke the silence by inquiring, —

"How can I best make myself agreeable to you, Miss Malie?"

"By silence, at present," said Effie. "When our souls are full to overflowing, then in words we will throw off the surplus drops; we may then give from an abundance, and not from what we need ourselves."

They continued their ride without speaking, till at last Effie said, —

"Now you may speak, Mr. Babson."

"I am busy thinking, Miss Malie."

"When your thought is formed, may I hear it?"

"What a child-woman you are, Miss Malie!"

"I have been the subject of your study, it seems, and this is the result. Well, I like it; nothing could please me more than to be called 'a child-woman.' It has been my desire that, when I grew to womanhood, I might still retain my childishness of spirit."

"I cannot fathom you. Sometimes you seem like a merry, thoughtless child; but when there is need, your strong spirit and sound judgment are not to be questioned. I respect, love, admire, and feel at home and

unembarrassed in your society. It seems natural that you should be here. You brought no shock when you came; it was as though God had sent a sunbeam, and I loved it as a matter of course. But I cannot help feeling that there will be a shock when you leave us. We shall miss you very much, Miss Malie."

"Not if I am natural to you, as the sunbeams. You would not wish God to concentrate all of the sun rays upon you, leaving others in darkness; you would rather he would equalize them, giving to you as the others. It will be the same with your loves; you will send them forth upon their mission of good to humanity as unselfishly as God sends his sun rays."

"Could you?"

"I will never ask a love unless I can do as I would be done by. I would not cage my bird, and confine him in one room, though that were filled with choicest gems of art, and myself his constant companion."

"Pray, what would you do with him? What could a reasonable bird ask more?"

"I would give him the wild wood — freedom to rove with his kind. I would not clip a feather of his beautiful wings, but would rather, by my own flight, tempt him to soar higher. I would be the freest, wildest birdie alive; and could he mate with me in speed of soul aspirations, and did his own indwelling sympathies attract

him to the flight, then would my soul receive him with a joy that only wedded hearts can know."

"How would you receive him?"

"As an equal — neither stooping to receive his love, nor requesting that disgrace of him. I would go hand in hand with him, so long as we could help our God by working in unison."

"Very beautiful to dream upon, but hardly practicable, Miss Malie."

"Then I prefer to dream rather than live at war with my own conscience. After all, it is little matter here; in heaven the spirit will meet all of its needs, and my love its ideal."

"What is that ideal like?"

"A man. There are very few of them — I mean a true man, whose spirit, being made in the image of God, tries to make it recognizable as a likeness of the Deity."

"Alas! you may not find perfection here, Miss Malie. We have so profaned the likeness of our Father, that we may scarcely recognize ourselves as his children."

"Who says, Because the world has profaned my Father, I will walk idly in their footsteps, and be like them? Not you, Mr. Babson — not you, indeed. I had thought to hear you say, I will arise and ask the God in my soul the right, true path to my Father's temple; and with the light of my own striving will I find my way through the

darkness of error to Him, and he shall baptize me anew in his image."

"I do say it, Miss Malie, — from my soul I do, — I have ever striven, and am still striving, to be a *man*, worthy the respect of men and the love of women; yet I am very far from the object of my ambition."

"I do not seek perfection, but a soul that is aiming to meet its own goal of right, recognizing the guidance of the heavenly Spirit within, and acting up to his own highest principles. Such an one may I shake hands with now," said she, holding out her little sunny fingers to be clasped in his broad, honest hand.

It was very natural, that joining of hands; but a thrill of quiet blessedness stealing through their souls told them that hearts, as well as hands, were joined in that one moment — so short, and yet its worth could have spanned an eternity.

There were no downcast eyes, no blushing cheeks, or quivering of the full, happy lips. There was no need of these in the plighting of spiritual troth. The souls had always been acquaint; wherefore, then, should the cas-kets blush at their meeting?

"You will not return to-morrow, Effie?" How soon one little minute may untittle one!

"I must, John. I have a great work to perform in the circle where I have lived."

"Then I will not urge you; for by that 'must' I

know that it is necessary. I should not love you as I ought, could I urge you away from duty, even to devote one dear little moment to me."

"They will be devoted to you, wherever I am. If I am doing good, it is your gain; if you are engaged in noble works, our perfect oneness of spirit shall make me to realize it. I feel that we could clasp hands, John, though worlds rolled between us."

Mr. Babson looked wistfully at the dear little fleshy wrapping of the spiritual hand that lay so cosily in his; and he shuddered at the bare possibility of worlds rolling between them. But he only said, —

"Go, dear Effie. I will send my love forth on her mission of good, so that when she cometh back to my heart, I shall clasp her there with a keener appreciation of her truth and purity, and by the trial of my own trust, feel myself more worthy to call her wife."

There is no title in the world that awakens so holy a rapture as that of "wife." Beside it all other endearing names are tame. Effie felt this; all the holiness, the delight of this title was appreciated by her who was so well qualified to become a wife. Mr. Babson watched her with interest, as her eyes dilated and sparkled with the new-found joy; but they suddenly saddened again, then grew firm and quiet, as if gathering strength to say what the heart was tearfully begging them not to; and between their struggles, they had at last to ask the lips to speak for them these few, low, decisive words: —

"It cannot be, John. I had forgotten, in the happiness of our congenial spiritual intimacy, that I might be called upon to take that highest earthly responsibility that woman can take — that of wife. Had I only myself, I might say, Now, indeed, I have no other wish; but I have others to work for. I can wear no selfish crown, even though that were a wifely one. God bless you, John; do not think that it is easy for me to put aside this crowning joy of woman's life; and do not think me unmaidenly, when I say that it has been a dear wish of mine that some time I might be a proud, blessed wife, and that tinier lives might in time be unfolded beneath the shelter of our one great love. But it's past now — not the wish, but the hope."

Effie was in tears. This picture of domestic bliss had been taken from her heart, and gazed upon so often, that it had come to be one of the realities of life; and now it seemed to her as though some mightier power had caused her to cruelly daub the canvas, irreparably spoiling the picture. She did not resist the strong, protecting arm that was thrown around her; she yielded to the yearning impulse to weep upon his bosom; she listened with all the wild craving of a hungry soul to the delicious, thrilling, and only words he spoke, "My wife — my wife."

Effie's life was too truly given to others to weep long for a wreck of her own happiness; but her tears would

flow again whenever she looked upon the serious face of her lover, now expressive of intense mental suffering and heart-struggle. The still, fixed expression of misery frightened her, and she softly said, —

“John, speak to me.”

“Tell me, Effie, what those duties are, that I may know for what I sacrifice so much. Do not fear that I will selfishly urge you to remain with me. I will rather bless you as you go, my Effie — bless you always; but we shall be happier to talk about it. This stillness is frightful now, while I have you by me. I can think when I am alone; I can work out the good of that heart-struggle. When I hold you here in my arms, close to my bosom, — mine, mine, — O Effie, I could have crushed you one moment, and worshipped a little mound in the graveyard, rather than that you should leave me. Now 'tis past; and I see that you are not, cannot be mine, exclusively *mine*, for God claims you; his children's needs are many, and you are a strong helper in his field. See, now I smile to give you up to Him whom I love even better than you.”

It was a faint, struggling smile, like the sunbeams through prison grates; and Effie thought that God must be sad to see how hard it was for him to give back so precious a gift. But she smiled too; and while her head was leaned against his shoulder, like a white lily petal against a strong tree, she said, “I love another very dearly,” and then waited for an answer.

“Well?”

“He wished me to become his wife. I had seen few gentlemen; he was very kind; and I loved him because he said he was lonely, and seemed to wish my love very much; so I gave it to him. And all one day it made me very happy, although he was not my ideal — very far from it. I could not depend upon him; I felt myself the stronger of the two. I did not even respect his principles; but I was glad that he had asked me to be his wife — I had known so little love, and he seemed very fond of me. As I said, all one day I was very happy; yet the next I was very miserable, for the world just then went ill with me, and Guardie's love grew cold. I was very miserable; I cannot tell you how sad I felt. But the next day I was glad again, for I saw of how little worth was a love so changeable; and my heart was wisely heavier for one gem of experience.”

“What became of the — the monster?”

“O, he was no monster at all; he was very kind and good ordinarily; he was surely not to blame if he could not love me two successive days. After that I saw very little of him, until one time, when Mabel went away. I was very sick; they thought I was dying; and then he held me in his arms all one night, and I lived. After that he told me how much he had always loved me, and again begged me to become his wife. This time the world went well with me; and although I loved him, I

said, 'No,' for I knew that no ceremony could make us husband and wife; and a perjured life I would not live."

"Do you love him now?"

"O, yes, very dearly."

"O Effie!"

"Why, John, would you have me hate him? I do not love him as I love you, but as a dear brother, or more, perhaps, as a guardian would a ward. I can never desert him; he must always be my charge. He is in danger now — about to unite himself with a very wicked woman; and their future life must be one of misery."

"Why do you not warn him?"

"He is thoroughly acquainted with her character; my words would be of no avail. I shall only endeavor to guard him from all the vice and iniquity which such a union will naturally lead him to."

"How will you do this?"

"I will follow them wherever they go. I will be his counsellor, adviser, and true friend. I will teach him a higher than material existence; and his earthly misery will make him luxuriate in and appreciate the worth of a spiritual life."

"What is he to you, that you should leave my love and protection for him? Is my happiness nothing?"

"Every thing; but you are strong, firm-principled. You know and love God; you do not need a little guide like me to lead you to heaven. You are walking in the

true path, and it is familiar to you. Poor Guardie is supine and fickle by nature; he knows no God, and recognizes no spiritual helpers. Yet, through his indecision and native kindliness of spirit, a child might lead him to heaven."

"Is this self-appointed guardianship all that keeps you from me?"

"No; I have wealth, that was left me by Mabel's mother. It is not mine; I did not earn it; I have done nothing to deserve it; and I do not want it — I mean for my own personal use. I thought of taking it all, and founding a sort of home for the fallen — I mean one to which poor, deceived girls can come, and be loved, and honored, and forgiven."

"My blessed wife, is this all?"

"*All!* Is it not enough? You forget that, in doing this, I risk my reputation in the world. Why, sir, you would not want me now. I shall be nobody; the world will despise me."

"And God will bless you always, my precious wife. Listen: the 'home' shall be established; the lover shall be cared for and blessed from my Effie's abundant store of blessings. But Effie shall be my wife, my honorably-wedded wife, in the sight of God as well as man. I will wander with her wherever her work calls us; and 'together we will help our God by working in unison.' You said it yourself, Effie — you know you did."

"God is very good to me; he maketh all my sorrows turn to gladness. Mabel's flight, that seemed the greatest ill that could befall me, has proven the greatest blessing. John, I will be your wife — happiest of all wives, for my husband and I have that perfect love which casteth out all fear. O God, I bless thee for the bitter cup that bringeth such sweet reward."

"And now, must my Effie leave me to-morrow?"

"I must."

"That 'must' is a cruel, truthful word; yet I am glad to know that even love may not win you from your duty."

"Can you not accompany us to-morrow, John?"

"I cannot. But before you go, I have a boon to ask of you."

"It is granted; what is it?"

"That this very night, in the eyes of the world and the law, Effie Malie will give me the right to call her wife."

"To-night? As you say, John; it will be the same always."

They had now arrived at home; and Mabel stood upon the piazza to meet and chide Effie for the long absence. John did not come in; and the tea waited. Mrs. Babson looked anxiously from the window, and at last was heard nervously to exclaim, —

"Here comes John, and the minister with him."

She hastened out of the room, to put another plate upon the table for the minister — of whom, next to John, she stood in the most awe.

"Where's mother?" said John, as she entered the room; whereupon he astonished her and Mabel by saying, "After Mr. Conant gives me the right, I shall introduce you both to my wife." A flush of joy passed over Mabel's countenance, and a double love shone through the tears in Mrs. Babson's eyes.

In a few moments Mr. Conant had told them, what the lovers already knew, that they were "husband and wife."

"Mother," said Effie; and she was folded to her mother's bosom. How should she introduce her husband to Mabel, who had always shared all things with her? She only put one of his arms around Mabel's neck, and the other of its own accord stole around hers; and she softly whispered, "This is *our* John." And deep through her heart, with their intensified, real, practical meaning, came the soul-thrilling words, "*My wife — my wife.*"

CHAPTER XXIV.

GOSSIP.

"Jusr as I said, Mrs. Vandyke. It's just exactly as I told you! Now I an't a talking woman,—rather reserved than otherways,—but when I know a thing, I know it. Kate Bently needn't have been so uppish to me. I am always pretty sure of a thing before I speak; and if I hadn't have been the forbearinest creeter in the world, I should have spoken a leetle plainer than I did to her. Now you see how it's all coming out."

"If I've said once, I've said a thousand times," replied the echoing Mrs. Vandyke, "that for truthfulness, good-heartedness, conscientiousness, and scrupulousness, Mrs. Russell beat all. Says I to Mr. Vandyke, this morning, says I, 'Mrs. Russell is a good woman.'"

"And what did he say?"

"I forget; but—'Mrs. Russell *is*'—or something to that effect."

"Mr. Vandyke is a sensible man. But about Minna Smith—of course, you know who 'tis!"

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"No, indeed! Do you? I haven't the least idee."

"Is it possible, Mrs. Vandyke, that after all that you have seen and heard, you can't put this and that together and judge who it is?"

"No; I'm sure I've no faculty for putting things together, or finding out any thing. But as I was telling Mr. Vandyke this very morning—says he, 'Polly, do you know who the rascal is that has seduced Smith's daughter?'—says I, 'No. But there's Mrs. Russell; if there is one person in town cleverer than another, it's Mahala Russell; and she'll find out if it's a possible thing.'"

"Polly Vandyke, it is William Dayton! that pesky young southerner, that's hanging round the Bentlys, and making them feel so toppin lately. He's too big to speak to common folks, and he's put Kate in the same trim. The first time that I ever see that feller was at the sewing circle—no—I remember now, I was sitting at my window, and the blind happened to be opened, and I saw him swelling past as big as New York, with Kate Bently hanging upon his arm; and says I, 'There's no good in that feller, no way;' and now you see how it's all come out. I'm an excellent reader of character, and I can't be mistaken. I knew the minute I set my eyes on him, that he warn't nothing; and he ain't."

"O, no, of course he ain't; nor Kate either, for that matter. But how did you find all of this out?"

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"There's nothing in the world like putting this and that together, Mrs. Vandyke. Do you remember the first evening of our sewing circle after Ernest Alliston's marriage, how Eugenia requested Minna Smith to give her first evening's experience at Saratoga, and how she cried and left the room? I was satisfied then, but, of course, I wouldn't say any thing; for if there is any one class of people that I despise more than another, it is scandal mongers. But just as soon as this came out about Minna, why, of course, it was just as plain as day. I am glad for one thing; it will humble Kate's pride some, and that, in my opinion, is just what she needs."

"What will she do?"

"Do? — why, she's as well able to bear trouble as any body else! — go and tend baby for Minna, like enough; 'twould be just like her; she's humble enough where she takes. But who have we here? Mercy sakes, if it isn't Mrs. Drake! Why, Mrs. Drake! I am delighted to see you. I was just speaking to Mrs. Vandyke about you, and says I, 'What upon earth has become of Mrs. Drake? She hasn't been here in an age. But how sober you look! What can have happened?'"

"I have just come from Mrs. Bently's."

"Have you, indeed? Well, how are they all?"

"They have just received very bad news."

"News? — what news? Then they've heard, have they?"

"Of Lizzie — she is dead!"

"Lizzie Bently dead! Why, Mrs. Drake, that cannot be possible! She never was baptized! What will become of her? Really, we have something more to look after than our poor perishable bodies. But tell me the particulars."

"They have received no particulars, excepting a short telegraphic message, stating that Lizzie was dead, and that they need make no preparations for robing, as Effie had done all that was required. They are to bring the body on immediately."

"What do you mean, Mrs. Drake? Effie Malie there in St. Augustine with Ernest Alliston, and he a widower? Heavens and earth! What are we coming to? This is even worse than poor Lizzie Bently's dying with an unwashed soul! How do the Bentlys take it?"

"Mr. Bently is inconsolable. Mrs. Bently shows more anger than grief, and Kate alternately laughs and cries, and says, 'Lizzie's gone home.' And she shocked her mother, and all of us, by saying, 'I am glad dear Effie was there to cheer Ernest.'"

"Is that girl a fool, Mrs. Drake? Effie Malie a comforter, indeed! She'll feather her nest, see if she don't; mark my words. She's been playing her cards for that, this good while; first, in driving Mabel off, and then in wearing Lizzie's life out. If Lizzie Bently had been *my* child, I would have Effie Malie tried for murder. I

would, indeed, the wicked hussy. She's after Ernest Alliston, and always has been; and she'll get him, too. Mark my words; they won't live together a year; and she's a perfect wildcat. When will they be here?"

"Let's see — to-day is Saturday — they will be here about Thursday or Friday."

"O," drawled Mrs. Vandyke, with her handkerchief over her eyes, "I was saying to Mr. Vandyke, no longer ago than this morning, says I, 'Mr. Vandyke, in the midst of life we are in death,' and hadn't heard a word of Lizzie's sickness or death."

"I suppose you knew that they have heard from Mabel," said Mrs. Drake.

"No, indeed! Where is she?"

"Why, way up in New Hampshire, somewhere. She's coming home soon."

"How did you hear?"

"Why, I was riding past the Dell the other day, and I took it into my head that I'd call and see Mrs. Armstrong. You know she's stopping there. So I questioned her about Mabel. She was not at all communicative, — simply saying that they had heard from her, and that she was well and happy. I hope it is all right, but, Mrs. Russell, I have my doubts — her conduct hasn't been just plain."

"It's been plain enough to me, Mrs. Drake. She's an unprincipled girl; one could see that, to look at her;

and it's been no good to her racing round with that Effie Malie."

"Just as I was telling Mr. Vandyke, no longer ago than this very morning; says I, 'Mr. Vandyke,' says I, 'Birds of a feather will flock together.'"

"Well, Mrs. Russell," drawled Mrs. Drake, "this is a very wicked world, and we can only bless the Lord, that, being in it, we are not of it. We are Christians, my friends; and being Christians, it is our duty to keep as far from sinners as possible, lest their uncleanly garments soil ours. I am sure, I wish them all well. But it is dreadful to think where they will have to go."

"As I was saying to Mr. Vandyke this morning, 'Mr. Vandyke,' says I, 'God's vials of wrath will be unloosed upon them.'"

"But it will be delightful," solemnly said Mrs. Russell, "while from our heavenly seat we hear their groans and shrieks in the land of fire and torment, — it will be delightful for us to know that we have walked in the true path and served the Lord faithfully all of our days."

"Amen!" said Mrs. Drake.

"Amen!" squeaked Mrs. Vandyke.

"Are you having a prayer meeting?" said Eugenia, now entering. "I have rapped at your door several times, and receiving no answer, ventured to enter. Hope I don't intrude. You are all very solemn; what can be the matter?"

"Lizzie Bently is dead."

"That is news, indeed; but it does not surprise me. I was expecting it. They have all comfort, however, for you know what the Bible says — 'Blessed are they that die in the Lord.'"

"Ah, Miss Eugenia, that's what troubles us. We have every reason to believe that she did not die in the faith of the Lord. We fear that she died in her sins, poor thing!"

"Not many, at any rate," said Eugenia. "She was nothing but a chirping bird — a water lily. Her greatest sin was breathing in a world of sin. But don't worry about that, my friends. I'll risk but what she'll slide into heaven some way. Come, smile! Think of Kate's approaching marriage and be merry. I was just going to give them a congratulatory call, but I shall have to change it to one of condolence. However, fortunately for me, I have tears or smiles at convenience."

"If I am not mistaken in Kate Bently, Eugenia, she will never marry Mr. Dayton."

"Why not, pray?"

"You, of course, know all about Minna Smith. Well, William Dayton is the cause of all that trouble, and it is in every body's mouth; but were it untrue now, Kate Bently would never attach herself to a slandered name."

"You are right," replied Eugenia. "But then she is foolish, for I do not believe it was he after all — more

likely to be Lionel Berry, the young New York lawyer, whom her father was so anxious for her to marry. They seemed very fond of each other. Poor thing!"

"It's my opinion that Clinton Smith's brought all this on to himself," said Mrs. Drake, pursing up her mouth. "Such a wild, impulsive nature as she had, and he always let her have her own way — such girls need a straight hand with them."

"And she'll get it now," said Eugenia, laughing heartlessly. "The world will go hard with her after this; but why need you and I care? What is done *is* done, and there's the end of it. Her punishment she must bear herself. It will be some consolation to her to look back upon the happy past. God pity her."

This was said with an air of half sympathy, half mockery, that puzzled her hearers. But they took it for granted, that whatever Eugenia said must be right, and even gave her credit for generosity.

"I should like to see Kate Bently, when she hears the news of Mr. Dayton's perfidy," said Eugenia. "It will be as good as a tragedy to see her rave and tear her hair. I think I will be the first to tell her."

"You, Eugenia?"

"Why not? If, as you say, it is in every body's mouth, it is the duty of some of her sincere friends to break the news to her as gently as possible. Who better than I?"

"O, no one, certainly. But I can assure you that it will be no desirable job."

"I will go to her now, while I feel in the mood."

"Now! Her sister's death weighs heavy on her heart just now," said Mrs. Drake, more compassionate than the others.

"You do not suppose I shall rudely break the subject to her," said Eugenia, half angrily.

"O, no, indeed!" replied Mrs. Drake, alarmed by Eugenia's manner. "Of course, you will be gentle; but at this time of mourning, I questioned the propriety of such a step. But allow me to say, that I have all confidence in you, Miss Eugenia."

"Then, if you please, Mrs. Drake, I beg that you will not question the propriety of any step that I may take."

"You are not going?" said Mrs. Russell, seeing Eugenia rise to leave.

"Yes, I must; my time is limited. Good evening, ladies."

"I am sorry to have offended her," said Mrs. Drake.

"I think that your sympathies carry you too far," ventured Mrs. Vandyke. "I am sure, I see nothing improper in Eugenia's speaking to Kate at this time, if she feels so disposed."

"Your friends seem inclined to make war with me," said Mrs. Drake, bidding them a very cool "Good evening."

"Well, what is the matter with every body!" exclaimed Mrs. Russell. "Here's Mrs. Drake and Eugenia gone off in a huff with each other, and all the rest of us. I believe it's all your work, Mrs. Vandyke. If you had kept still, I should have got more news out of her. She hadn't begun when Eugenia came in."

"Well, if you don't like my company, you needn't have it," whimpered Mrs. Vandyke. "I was telling Mr. Vandyke this very morning, says I, 'If there is one woman more difficult to get along with than another, it is that Mahala Russell. She's the talkinest creeter that ever I did see, and she's mad if any body else says a word for themselves.'"

So Mahala was left alone, sighing over the fallacy of human friendships. She sat up very straight and prim, and thanked the Lord that she yet had faith in him; as though she thought that God might be blinded by the hypocritical veil she threw between her sins and him.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE FLUTTERING OF WINGS.

"How beautiful! how beautiful!" was whispered from one to another, as they looked upon the corpse of Lizzie Bently. She was, indeed, most beautiful, lying there, so like a natural sleep it seemed — that hushing of the features into moveless repose.

She was lain slightly upon one side; and upon her little clasped hands her head reposed, as though she might have thrown herself there some summer afternoon, and died away a-thinking. The blue, half shut eyes spoke unutterable still beauties, as though the body knew where the soul had tripped to, but wouldn't tell. She was robed in her bridal breakfast dress — a loose robe of white thibet, with blue satin facings, and simply confined with cord and tassels of the same color.

But hush! here comes Kate.

"How still thou sleepest, Lizzie, my sister! Dost know it's Katie speaking? Why, sister Lizzie! When did those dear lips e'er refuse to answer me before? Or

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those eyes remain so sparkleless and still while I was speaking? Speak to me but one dear word, my sister, my beloved! Tell Katie, lonely Katie, of the angels, darling! Are they singing to thee now? And is that heaven as beautiful to realize as we have dreamed? O, fold thy wings around me, sister Lizzie, and whisper in thy summer zephyr voice, so fitting for a spirit, 'Peace, peace, be still.'

"Hush! stand away, there, you who idly linger around to gaze upon and ridicule my grief! My sister cannot sing while you so densify the air with your foul, scandalous breath! Go; sister does not want you, and I know you keep God out. Is grief a public statue, that all the rabble flock and stare?"

"Dear Katie," said Ernest, folding his arm around her, "this is not Lizzie. Let them look; it will do them good. Lizzie is weary, and on some soft couch where lulling voices soothe her, she is sleeping. Smile, Katie; think of her blue eyes waking up in the great heaven, like two little star flowers in our meadows. Hush thy heart, lonely one; Lizzie will come by and by, in the great quiet that must come after all this painful ceremony. She will come to you and me, and sing, and her clear voice, so full of love and happiness, will echo on the tightly strung æolian wires with which our hearts are filled, and thus our lives shall be one sweetly blended melody."

"Let us go, then, Ernest."

"Where, Katie?"

"Any where, away from these rude, blank faces; O Lizzie," said she, rushing to the coffin again, "when did I ever say any where away from you? They may talk; they may say comforting things; my father and mother are but parents, after all, and Ernest was nothing but husband; but I—O, I was *Katie*. Was not mine the dearest relationship, the highest, most? O Lizzie, I'm not going to cry any more, but it seems to me as though I should wail my life away; or as though I could kneel here and shriek until you answered me."

"Come away, Katie, do," said Willie, beseechingly.

She took his hand mechanically, and led him up stairs, and into an attic, where from a trunk she took out their childish playthings. "Now, Willie," said she, "sit down, and hold me in your arms, where I can look at those playthings until I grow to be a woman again."

All the afternoon he sat there holding her, hearing the carriages going and coming, the calls and confusion in the house; but she appeared to hear nothing, only gazing fixedly at the broken dolls and torn books, as though her eyes would grow into them. Suddenly she seemed convulsed, as though Nature disliked to force the child so suddenly into womanhood; then, as though weary of the struggle, she sank into a calm, natural sleep, from which she awoke, not Lizzie's weeping sister, but "Kate Bently," calm, dignified, self-possessed, ready to meet the world and its strife with a brave woman's heart.

"Willie," said she, "I should not weep so if you should die."

"I hope not, love; but why not?"

"Because you are strong, and could take care of yourself; but she was so gentle and unobtrusive, it seems to me as though she could never have the heart to put herself forward, and I was afraid that God wouldn't know that she was there: any love-slight would wound her dear little spirit so."

"Has Ernest spoken much to you of her sickness and death?"

"No, I have not felt able to hear him; I was afraid to hear that she did not want to go. It would be so dreadful for her to die if she didn't want to."

"Listen, Katie, while I tell you;" and in low, soothing tones, Willie told Kate, as he had heard from Ernest, all the beautiful history of Lizzie's dying evening; of her spirit-lover; of her joy to go, and how hard it would have been to have kept the strong, yearning spirit in the frail casket. He told her all this, until she said, "I am satisfied; it is good to die; it is good for the living to give up their dead."

It was, altogether, a pleasant evening, that Ernest, and Kate, and Willie spent in a shaded part of the drawing rooms, waiting for the "fluttering of wings." They were only heard in their hearts, yet it was a satisfactory coming, uniting them more closely to each other, and to

the spirit-world. Ernest had told them of Effie's visit, and its import, and they all blessed her as she deserved to be blessed.

"I wonder why she was not here to-day," said Kate.

"She left me and went to New Hampshire for Mabel," said Ernest. "Mabel is her charge, you know, and for no cause would she neglect her. She said she knew that Lizzie would not care; she should always love her spirit."

"How like sisters they are!" said Kate; "I wonder if blood relationship does make a difference in heaven."

"I have thought not," said Willie; "so often do we see strife and ill will between children of the same parents, while oftener with strangers they form congenial ties. I think that God recognizes only heart relation."

"You have never seen Mabel and Effie — have you, Willie?"

"Only in imagination, I see sometimes two beautiful and true-natured women."

"They are, indeed, both beautiful and true, and yet very much misunderstood and abused by the world."

"They are no losers by it; no mind, worthy of their friendship or trust, would listen to the idle stories so grossly framed and maliciously circulated."

"I wish we didn't live here," sighed Kate.

"We will not long, if you do not wish it," said Willie.

"When you will say that I may take you away, I shall be too happy to do so."

Ernest, fearing that he might be one too many in this conversation, arose to leave them.

"Stay," said Kate; "we are not three; we are one; what we say you may hear. Our moments are not so precious that we need to exclude you on this lonely evening. Why, we have a whole eternity to talk in, after this."

After he was seated, she resumed her conversation, saying, "I do not know but that I am superstitious — nervous I certainly am. But I have a vague fear of this same scandal, that I — as well as you — thoroughly despise. I have always tried to live above it, and away from it; but now it seems to me as though I was being drawn slowly and fearfully into the whirlpool that will be my destruction."

"Well, Katie, don't be turned against me," said Willie, "and I can help you to bear all else."

"I know it, Willie; I could bear every thing else myself, but that is the very thing that I'm afraid of."

"Why, Kate, who knows me so well as yourself and Ernest? And can any outside scandal affect our happiness? If it can, it is based upon a more slight foundation than I had thought. But this is borrowing trouble, which is something that I don't approve of; so let's be merry while we may, and meanwhile I will extort a promise from you that shall insure our future happiness. Are you not curious?"

"Most curious, my lord," said Kate, mockingly.

"Then you shall tell me, as soon as you have heard, all good, bad, or indifferent reports about me, and then I shall stand a fair chance to plead my own case, which is as good as acquitting myself. Is not that fair, Ernest?"

"Most fair, Willie; and I am serious when I say to you, Kate, that you will do well to heed this. And another bit of advice I would give you is, to place yourself in a position where scandal cannot reach you, or so easily affect you. You see I am speaking a word for Willie."

"I should think that he might speak all such words for himself," said Kate, a little tartly.

"Don't I, Katie? But you have only given me indefinite answers, and I do not wish to hasten you unless it is for your happiness. You ought to know best yourself."

This was said with such a wistful kindness, that Kate involuntarily placed her hand in his, and said, —

"When you please, Willie; only remember Lizzie's death; be kind to her memory."

"I should like to hear one of Lizzie's old songs," said Ernest; "do you object to playing one, Kate?"

She did object — she had objected, ever since Lizzie's marriage; but she could not say so to Ernest, who longed for a voice to remind him of the dead. So she opened the piano, and with a low and trembling voice sang, —

"Come rest in this bosom,
My own stricken deer;
Though the herd have fled from thee,
Thy home is still here."

How often they had sung that together, Lizzie with one hand upon Kate's shoulder.

Her fingers rested listlessly upon the keys, her voice died away on the notes, and her thoughts went back into the past. She was aroused from this state by the pressure of a soft hand upon her shoulder. She thought it was Willie, and said, without looking, "Don't now, dear; I can almost feel her." Still the little hand pressed lovingly upon her shoulder. This time, she turned to look. Blue eyes peeped into hers; a transparent face laughed through the wealth of wavy hair that floated around it.

"Lizzie, sister," sobbed Kate, and knelt to clasp the beautiful creature, but it rippled away like laughing waters, and dreamily swimming through the air to Ernest, clasped him in those fair ethereal arms, then disappeared.

All knelt together in awe, for the vision was clear to each.

"Did you see it, Willie? Did you, Ernest?" Kate tearfully asked. "How happy that little face looked! We'll not doubt any more, will we, darling?" said Willie, softly.

Kate placed her hand upon her heart, and said, —

"It's all right here now. It never would have been

quite right if I had not seen her just once, to be sure that all she hoped was true."

"Ever the way with us," mused Willie; "we are quite willing to say, in the sunshine, 'Lord, I believe thy word,' but when he comes to test us with the trials, he finds us wanting."

"I wish that I could treat God as I ought to," said Kate; "but he always seems so far away, when I worship him as others do! I want to go by myself, and talk to him as I do to you—ask him questions. When I bring him near me in that way, my soul fills with love towards him, mighty and supreme; I forget every thing but that he is God, and I am Katie, and he loves me. But when I worship in the temple, with a heartless, faithless throng around me, I lose all of heart-faith; there is no beauty, no solemnity in the service; they are paid Christians; I have no heart in their worship; I feel indignant for God, that they should thus assemble and make a mockery of him. If they feel that he comes there once a week, and only then, why don't they get him to speak, and not an automaton?"

"They want words, Katie. There are many that cannot understand that beautiful and voiceless language of the heart as we can, and to them those same words, that seem so tame to you, are full of beautiful meaning. And I am sure, Katie, you yourself will acknowledge that some ceremonies are inexpressibly touching."

"I know it, Willie; I know it when I feel calm; but I meant here; every place isn't like this, where the evil seems to have gained the advantage over the good, and means to keep it."

"It is very late, dear Kate, and you are tired; the evening's happiness has scarcely repaid you for the day's misery; so now let us all retire, and the morrow will find us all more calm, and fit to think."

Ernest went first, thinking that the lovers might like to be left alone; but Kate only staid to say "Good night," and then followed him. Willie was left with his face buried in his hands, thinking over the day's experience, very new and very strange to him. He had sat thus but a moment, when Kate came tripping back, and said, with a wistful look for forgiveness, "Did I say 'Good night' affectionately, Willie? I meant to, but to-night I scarcely know what I do."

Tears were in the eyes that looked into hers; but he said, very quietly, "I am glad that you came back to speak a kindly word to me, for to-night I am very lonely."

It needed only that word "lonely" to bow Katie weeping upon his bosom.

"I wish I were your wife to-night," said she; "I cannot live alone another hour, another minute; 'tis such a desolate word, a desolate feeling; I have no strength left, Willie; I dare not face the world to-morrow; I shall want your arm and heart all day."

"You shall have it, darling; but go on—I love to see you weak for a moment; I love to hear you say that you need me; I feel an added strength against that need shall come; but here I am keeping you talking, when your weary little head is drooping all the time. Good night, now, pet; good night."

It was a happier face that vanished out of the door this time; but a second after, the half open door disclosed a half comical, half earnest countenance, that said, —

"Willie, Willie, do you think God cares for what I said about him to-night?"

"No, indeed, pet; why?"

"Because it's truth, and I couldn't take it back, if he did. I said what I really thought."

"Always speak what you feel to be true, and there will be no fear of displeasing him," said Willie, smilingly.

He was glad, for once, that Katie could be childish.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE TEST OF FAITH.

"'Tis very sad," said Eugenia, with her handkerchief to her eyes, "just growing into all the deeper joys of life, and now to be taken away so rudely,—'tis very sad."

"O," sobbed Mrs. Bently, as every word of Eugenia's seemed to bring a new pang to the mother's heart, now lacerated by its first real grief.

"Do not talk to mother so, Miss Sanborn," said Kate; "say something to cheer her; if you really wish to comfort her, bring her a balm, and not the knife that wounded her."

"Forgive me, dear Miss Bently; it was my own sympathies that overcame me. You have every thing to cheer you, my dear friends. Lizzie was a Christian."

"Alas, alas!" sobbed the poor mother, "it seems to me if I were sure of that, that I could better give her up. My poor child! my poor child! Where is she now?"

"In heaven, mother, rest assured; if God could not

take our pure Lizzie, then no one will be saved. Now you have made her worse," said Kate, impatiently.

"Would you not rather have Lizzie where she is than in Minna Smith's place?" said Eugenia, adroitly turning the conversation to the theme that she most desired to speak upon.

"O, yes, indeed. But do not name them in the same breath; Minna is so low."

"Not lost beyond reclaiming, mother," replied Kate. "She is not so low, in my estimation, as her seducer."

"Then you have heard," said Eugenia, hastening to take up the conversation at this point.

"Heard what? Who the villain is?"

"I knew that you must have known, Miss Bently, when Mrs. Russell was telling me, although I refuted the story, for I disdain scandal, and always plead for the weakest side, whether right or wrong. Even though it should not be true, his good name is lost here. Who would have thought, said she, musingly, of William Dayton? he always appeared so upright and frank. But I must say, that their conduct in Saratoga was very singular — very."

Eugenia appeared not to notice Kate's face, which first flushed, then grew ashy pale; the compressed lips, and bright, flashing eyes, spoke volumes of misery that words could not have portrayed. She waited very patiently for Eugenia to finish speaking, then in low, choked tones,

said, "'Tis a base, malicious lie! and I half believe that you framed it, Eugenia Sanborn."

"Why, Miss Bently, I am surprised. I really ——"

"Hush! and hear me. You cannot separate Willie and me, as it has been your delight to do with others. You cannot destroy our happiness, for it is based upon the surest of foundations — a true union of souls. If shame comes to him, it must come to me; it will fall as though upon one being."

"But listen to me, Miss Bently."

"I will not! I shall never listen to you again; it is your turn now to hear me. I love Minna Smith: through all her sinfulness I love her. She was more sinned against than sinning. And be it Willie, or whoever else has caused her ruin, I will still be her friend, and with my love try to raise her up again. Listen! If Willie is the father of her child he shall take care of it. If he loves her better than me, he shall marry her. And, be it as it will, she shall live with us so long as our love can make her happy and contented."

"But how will you know?" ventured Eugenia.

"I shall take his own word for it;" and Kate swept out of the room with the air of a queen. She did not stop to weep when she found herself alone, but, putting on her bonnet, hastened to the home of Minna.

"In her own room; she never comes down, poor thing," said the kind-hearted servant in answer to Kate's inquiries.

"Always pacing the floor," said Kate, as Minna's little nervous feet kept up their steady tramp.

Minna stopping a moment, and looking into Kate's face with eyes that seemed to have wept their lustre out, said, "Most always;" then began again that weary, agonizing march. Kate sat down, trying to gather strength enough to give to the weary injured one; then she held out her arms and said, "Minna, come here."

Minna mechanically obeyed, and as listlessly answered when Kate said, "What were you thinking of when you were walking there so earnestly?"

"Of this," said Minna, drawing a letter from her pocket—a letter that had been crushed so tightly in her little hand, that her finger nails had cut through it.

"And what is this, Minna? May I read it?"

"O, yes. It is nothing but my death warrant."

"Hush! don't say so. We shall get you a life warrant yet. Why, by and by, Minna, you shall love life as well as any of us."

"Ah! you don't know, Kate, what it is to have trouble. It seems as though God had draped the world in black, with, now and then, a hideous death's head peeping through by way of horrible relief."

"Perhaps not," replied Kate, sadly; "the world has gone well with me, and sorrows have been few. Yet I know what it is to have my heart ache very bad."

"You," said Minna, surprised. "O, yes, I heard

something about Lizzie's death, and I wondered why it couldn't have been I. Life was so bright with her, while to me it is all gloom. I wonder why God always takes the happiest. If there is one child in a family brighter and more beautiful than all the others, it is sure to die, while the weak in spirit, poor, and crushed, are sure to live on until sorrow becomes a funeral shroud for them."

"God doesn't want his beautiful heaven filled up with deformity, Minna. The poor and crushed live, not until their sorrows become a necessity of their being, but by living they gradually gather strength and philosophy to see the good that will spring from them, and then the trials seem only like stepping stones to the blessings. Thus you see that we all have an opportunity to make ourselves adornments to the kingdom of God."

"How beautiful!"

"Lizzie was fit for heaven; she was pure and gentle, and more than all that, yearned to go. You and I are not fit. It would be insulting God to ask him to take us as we are. We must live, Minna, live and work, wash our garments from all impurities, and become as little children. Then he will be glad to take us, and we shall be glad to go."

"That is for me. You are ready now."

"No, I am not. I have a great struggle in my heart

even now, between right and wrong; but I shall try to conquer, and you must help me."

"How?"

"By being very truthful, and answering all my questions straightforwardly. You see that I am going to question you. Have you any objections?"

"Not any." But Minna looked uneasy notwithstanding this affirmation.

"Do you love Willie Dayton?"

"No, certainly not! That is — I like him very much, — I respect him."

"Answer me truthfully, Minna."

Minna saw how anxiously Kate looked at her. Her whole life seemed to be in the question, and she knelt at her feet and passionately said, "Now I have turned my last friend from me! Forgive me, forgive me, Kate! Eugenia has told you all, and I have nothing more to say, only that he was not to blame. It was I, or rather Eugenia, who instigated it."

"My God! then it is true," said Kate, who felt now how much she had depended on the hope that it was not. "You do love him, then. O Minna, how could you? But Minna, Minna! don't leave me. I have something to say to you here; come, and lay your head upon my bosom again. I do love you, poor little crushed flower, so well that I can give my love up to you. I will tell him that I know all, and then he will marry you. So,

cheer up, little one. Some time I'll come and make my home with you, to prove how cheerfully the sacrifice is made."

Minna was bewildered, — Kate thought with happiness, — but she was soon undeceived when Minna said, "You are mistaken, Kate; here, read this letter, it will solve what is now a mystery to you."

Kate's eyes beamed with hope and joy as she read an answer from Lionel Berry to a threat of Mr. Smith, and a promise to marry Minna immediately. She could only breathe a prayer of thanksgiving, and bless God that Willie was true. Still there was a misunderstanding. Minna, however, hastened to explain that. She related their experience in Saratoga; Eugenia's words and her temptation; Willie's resistance of evil, and his noble conduct. Minna told this with trembling, but truthfulness; not attempting to excuse herself, but Willie, and even begged charity for Eugenia.

Kate's lips were compressed with anger as she said, "Eugenia shall rue this." Then, addressing Minna, "Nay, little dove, you need not flutter so; I am not angry with you. But stay! what answer shall you give to this letter? Acceptance, of course."

"I have my choice to answer it favorably to-day, or leave the house forever. I have chosen the latter."

"Why, Minna!"

"It is true! I have not forgotten that you told me to

be a woman. I care for the future of my child. I hate Lionel Berry. I will not be his wife." Then, in a softer mood, "I think I can work, Katie. I understand music, French, Latin, and Spanish. I could teach,—or, perhaps they wouldn't want such as I. I forgot that one needs character as well as talent. Well, I can embroider; that doesn't need so much character," said she, with something of her old happy manner.

"I will tell you what is better than that for the present," said Kate; "you shall come and live with me for a while, and then I will see what can be done."

"But your parents?"

"I shall have a husband."

"And he ——"

"Will unite with me in striving to make our home happy for you. Let's see, this is Saturday; next Saturday we shall have a home away from here."

Kate kissed Minna, and left her — left the little trembling one to her thoughts again.

"O that I had a mother!" said Minna; "somebody now to tell me what I ought to do, — what it is right that I should do. I have been so wicked, I feel as if I wanted to do every thing right now. Would a mother tell me to leave my father? And yet I cannot help it; he will make me."

Again the feet paced the floor in that agonizing tramp, as if she could outwalk her anguish. The night shades

were gathering around her, — the dismal, dreary night to the unhappy, — seeming to condense misery into smaller quarters. Good old Mary brought Minna her tea and toast, and tearfully begged of her to partake of it.

"What was it that father said, Mary?"

"Shure now an' 'twas o' no account, child! Don't be afther thinking aboot it. Shure, an' yer know that 'twas in anger he said it. What's the use o' fritting; cheer up, little bairn; it'll all be well in the mornin'."

"It is of account, because he said it; and I remember perfectly well it was, 'You will never sit at the table with honest people again.' But, some how or other, I feel as though it wouldn't come true, and I shall sit with honest people and be honest myself, by and by."

"Shure an' yer will, child; and its enough sight honest yer are than those that's afther talkin' aboot ye."

"Then they do talk very much, do they, Mary?"

"Faith, and their tongues are as busy jist now as crows in a cornfield. Its nateral, you know, Miss Minna, that they would have a bit to say."

"Mary, stand there! Now hear me while I swear ——"

"Och, murther! What'll she be afther doin' nixt? Don't, Miss Minna! Faith and I'll be afther dying with fright whin she begins the swearin'."

"To redeem my character in the eyes of God and the world. I swear ——"

"Holy Virgin, protect us! She's gettin' off another big oath."

"To make all those who slander and revile me now, court my society and favor, by and by."

"Ah, ma'am, how I tremble like all oover! I'll have to ax lave of yer to-night, to go oot, that I may be afther gittin' yer blest by the praist."

"No matter about that, Mary! there is a higher Priest blessing me this moment. And I feel as I have never felt before; so filled with love, and faith in Him. O Mary, this is the happiest moment of my life, for God is with me."

"Poor child," said Mary, compassionately. "It is like as though she wasn't quite right in her mind."

"I am right in my mind; so do not fear for me, my good Mary. Go down now; and when father comes in, ask him to come up here; I want to see him. I can meet him now, because I have seen a higher Father, and I did not tremble at His approach; then, why should I in presence of the earthly?"

Mary obeyed her mistress, although her eyes grew weary with the watching; for the night had nearly reached its noon before Clinton Smith's steps were heard in the sorrowing mansion.

"D——n! What are you prowling about for, at this time-a-night? Get to bed, and that d——d quick, or I'll find a way to send you there in short metre!"

This oath was accompanied with a kick, which sent Mary, groaning with pain, up stairs, and mumbling to herself, "Och, sure! and the maisther is intoxicated. Miss Minna wouldn't want to be afther seeing him to-night, at all, at all."

But a moment after a little wan figure, with a cherub's smile, glided down the stairs, and boldly confronted the demon.

"Minna! Hell and furies, girl! do you want me to crush you? Get back, or I won't answer for your life!"

"You needn't, father," said Minna, calmly. "I have only come to give you an answer to that letter. I want this suspense over; it's horrible to bear."

"Very prudent in you," said he, softening, as he fancied he saw the acceptance; "I will write to Berry to-morrow, and tell him to come on immediately."

"Not to wed with me, father. I will not be Lionel Berry's wife!"

"Will not, girl! Why?"

"Because I cannot, father. All the ceremonies in the world could not unite us."

"The curse of God rest upon you! Remember what the Bible says, 'Thou shalt not commit adultery.'"

"If I marry Lionel Berry, father, it will be a life of adultery; for I say, that in the eyes of God we can never be one. Which is the better, to begin now, and by a life

of good atone for this sin, or keep on sinning, and let the death angel find me unprepared?"

"It shall never be atoned for in this house, harlot! Go out into the world! I hate, I curse you! no longer my child."

And out into the night glided the wan spirit, with a wreath of repentance upon her head.

CHAPTER XXVII.

SCENES IN THE FARM HOUSE.

"WE are getting old, Martha."

"Yes, James, we are getting old — in spirit, as well as body. I find that I cannot keep up with the times at all; and I love better to go back in thought, and dwell with the memory of our lost children, than to try to keep up with the modern ways."

"Martha, do you think that our children are lost — I mean eternally lost?"

"Don't say that; it is a fearful word. I can only think of my children as beautiful angels in heaven — looking down with pity, perhaps, upon their poor, old wrinkled mother."

"How long have we been married, Martha?"

"Sixty year, going on. Why do you ask?"

"Sixty years too many for me — sixty ill-spent years. I wish I could look back upon sixty good acts in that time. Martha, I have been a great sinner, and most of all to you and the children. Somehow I feel as though

it needed something more than the church baptism to wash that out. Little Effie used to say, 'Grandpa, it is better to live Christians than to be named Christians.' And I believe that little Effie was about right."

"I think myself, James, that we've got to earn the name before we are fit to wear it. Ever since my children died, I have been anxious to be a Christian, that they might not be ashamed of me when I meet them in heaven."

"You have been a good Christian, Martha — a good wife, a good mother. Would that I could say as much of myself; but to-night my sins bow me down. I feel that it would be good to see little Effie here again."

"Why don't you write to her, James? I am sure she would come. Things really have not gone so well since Effie was away."

"Eugenia does not fill her place." Here the old man looked fearfully around, to be sure that she was not near.

"No, she gains by fear what Effie won by love."

"Do you never think that it is singular Eugenia's wishing to stay here as she does? There is something not just right about it. I dislike mystery."

"And I; I have thought of this. It is also singular that her father does not visit her, or her friends, excepting those that she has won in Wellen."

"A city belle and beauty staying in an old-fashioned farm house, with old-fashioned people, — I am afraid

that it must be necessity that makes contentment here. I wish that Effie were back again, and Eugenia away — that's what I do," exclaimed the old man, rather louder than he intended.

"Indeed," said Eugenia, now entering, "it's the easiest thing in the world to have your wish gratified. Just write to Effie, and make out my bill — nothing in the world simpler."

"But, Eugenia —"

"No buts about it, Mr. Gray. It is enough that I have heard from your own lips that my company is disagreeable to you. I would have gone before," said she, with downcast eyes and trembling lips, "but the old farm has grown very dear to me; and its inmates, — I cannot tell how near they seem. I know that I am related by no ties of blood; but when Effie so cruelly deserted you, I seemed to take her place, and felt myself your child."

"So you are," said the old man, arising and embracing her; "so you are, and we have not appreciated you. Say no more about this conversation; the future shall repair the past. We are old and childish, Eugenia; bear with us a little while, and we shall be away."

"The old sinner! the old heathen!" said Eugenia, in a paroxysm of rage, when she had reached her room. So he suspects me — does he? I'll teach him to pry into my affairs. Old — is he? Childish? Going to the

grave? I wonder if he wouldn't like to have a slight push to help him on.

"Didn't I do that nice, though? I love the farm house, indeed! I hate it, curse it, and the fate that brought me here. But I haven't made a bad matter of it. In a week I shall be sure of Guardie. The fool! I despise him for his supineness; but never mind — he's got the gold; and we will live away from there, — live here, — why not? I will make the old man give me the farm, and that will be a good excuse for living here. May be he will never hear — Pooh! why need I care if he does? After we are married, he cannot help himself. He will only rave and swear; and what care I for that?"

Eugenia sat, with angry eyes, and lips compressed, that opened but to let the hot and hellish spirit hiss its venomous words; but suddenly her features changed, convulsed, and shivered her whole frame, as one little picture in the past came up before her view. She knelt and tore her hair; made shreds of her dress; clinched her hands until the blood streamed from them, and shrieked out in her wild despair, —

"O God! O devil! O you who are most mighty, come and tear my heart out, that that little yielding spot may never tempt me more! That little, puling face! That gasping mouth, and half-shut, blinking eyes! That first, low cry, as though life began with wailing, that should

strengthen with his boyhood, and even in manhood, though 'twere sounding in the inner temple, will not lose a jot of that intensest misery that must make up a bastard's life. And, like all other things, it will descend more glibly the downhill of life; nor end him there, — O God! — nor end him there! O, I shall hear it, however I may stop my ears; O, I *shall* hear it, — that shriek, — as thou shalt launch him into hell.

"O Power above, if thou hast might as thou dost boast, then take away my thought, my memory. No — no! thou canst not; O, I must think, now, even of that baby face, that, were it resting on my bosom, nursing life from me, I might be good and godlike, that no sinful nourishment should taint its nature. Where is it now? Receiving kicks and blows, or lying in a little coffin far beneath the sod, where cold stones press it down, and the sun cannot reach?"

"No wonder that I'm mad, reckless, demoniac; no wonder that I curse all hearts that come in contact with me. My name is Curse. The wonder is that the grass lives that I tread upon — that the flowers bloom, or sun shines, in my presence. But 'tis my life — I've chosen it — to be a demon; and if I must be damned, I'll drag a goodly throng of victims with me.

"Hark! What's that I hear? Groans — and not mine? Who can have cause for groans but I?"

"Eugenia! Eugenia!" was heard from the stairs.

She quickly changed her tattered robe, and hastened down. She was met in the door by Mrs. Gray, who said, "James has gone." Eugenia did not understand her until she saw the old man lying upon the floor, pale and dead.

"What! Death been here, — here in this house, — while I was cursing? O madam, this is frightful. What — what was the matter?"

"A fit."

"O, dear! Is he quite dead? What can I do?"

"'Tis as though it had struck me here," said the old woman, placing her hand upon her heart. I think, if you will hush, that my breath will go too; to be sure it isn't worth much here; and James will be likely to need me. He never did look after things here; and I'm sure he's going into a strange place, so he'll be apt to get confused."

And James did want her; for Death came back, as though he had left something, and chilled Eugenia as he passed by her, and caught up old Mrs. Gray.

To a sinful heart death is appalling. It chills and freezes it with dread of that mysterious power that steals away so silently all the life essence from the frame, leaving it a lone and tenantless house.

Eugenia stood, in speechless horror, looking on the two bowed forms before her — the same that but a little hour before she had been cursing. God's mood was different, for he blessed them.

A rap at the door aroused her from this stupor of horror. She opened it, and admitted Guardie. She did not speak, but pointed to the dead bodies.

"Who did it?" said he.

She pointed above. The strain upon her feelings had been too intense; and she fell senseless to the floor.

Many days Eugenia was speechless, but not thoughtless; for in those silent hours she travelled over the past, until the road grew hateful, and she longed to begin anew. Her recovery was slow; and when for the first time Guardie carried her into the sitting room, real, genuine tears of sorrow trembled in her eyes; for the old people had loved her despite of their misgivings, and she had betrayed their trust.

The old witching smile played around her mouth, and sparkled through the eyes, perhaps a shade more soft; and Guardie's heart was won again to forgetfulness of all beside.

"In a little week, Eugenia, we shall be married; and then we will go south; you will be better there."

"Why leave here, Guardie? I'm sure this is pleasant; and we can build a new house where this stands. I am strangely fascinated to this spot."

"As you like; we will stay here for a while, at least. But you know that the farm doesn't belong to us."

"Effie will sell it, I know; for *your* sake she would. Nay, nay," said she, as he chided her for the insinuation,

"I will not be jealous, although your horrid dream, when she was sick, did fright me terribly."

"I never saw a face so real as yours seemed at that window. It well nigh crazed me."

"And yet it was so improbable! If your nerves had not been excited, you would have laughed at yourself for conjuring up so frail a phantom."

"We will leave that, Eugenia; 'tis a vision that I do not like to look back upon. Tell me now of your father. Will he approve of our union?"

"It matters very little whether he does or does not; I suppose, however, it is immaterial to him so long as I am suited. He is wedded to his business. I may marry whom I please. But what are you thinking of so earnestly? Don't think. Talk."

"I was wondering how you could have contented yourself here so long, after having lived in New York."

"Why must every body wonder at that?" said Eugenia, rather impatiently. "I hate New York; or, at least, I'm always sick there; you know that that will make one dislike a place very much."

"Well," said Guardie, "we'll blot New York out of our visiting list; we'll not go where it will cause unpleasant feelings, but choose the pleasantest and easiest paths of life."

Eugenia was satisfied for the present; she did not feel able now to bear the wrath that must come when her sin-

fulness should be discovered. And there was an almost formed wish in her heart that she might die ere it ever should be.

A week after this conversation, Guardie and Eugenia knelt before the altar of the little Episcopal church in Wellen, and repeated the beautiful and impressive marriage ceremony of that order; and the little, weazen voice of the salaried saint pronounced them husband and wife.

"Married," said the world.

God spoke not, and the angels were silent; for they knew better.

But the burden was not taken from Eugenia's heart, even after the vows were pronounced and Guardie was hers. Her smiles were given unsparingly; but in the silent depths of her own heart was a gnawing pain, as there is at every starving sinner's.

There was a little, wee face, and helpless form, that came before her vision, when happiness seemed about to reach her, and drove it away.

There was a yearning there that sometimes almost overmastered every other feeling—to go out into the wide world, and search for that little form, even though bleak winds tore her clothes into shreds, and Starvation with its gaunt and hideous arms outstretched to clasp her. If they could but die together! It was so much better than to live apart!

But they were separated; her own hand had caused

it; and more than worlds rolled between; for uncertainty is a vast eternity, that even a mother's heart, with all its far-reaching yearning, cannot span.

The farm had become dear to Eugenia; and what she had at first desired from a darker motive, now became an intense wish of her heart—to possess the farm. But, judging Effie's character from her own, she imagined that Effie, knowing that it was her desire to own it, would be unwilling to favor her. In answer to Guardie's desire for this, however, Effie said,—

“Is this your wish, or Eugenia's?”

Guardie hesitated a moment, and then said,—

“Eugenia's, particularly; but I like the place enough to humor her in the desire to purchase it. You—you—wouldn't let any former prejudices stand in the way of this—would you? Eugenia's health is very delicate, and the least opposition to her wishes disturbs her very much.”

“Are you quite happy, Guardie?” queried Effie, anxiously.

“Quite,” replied he, with a subdued air. “But, if you please, we will talk about the farm. Can I have it, Miss Malie?”

“Mrs. Babson, if you please, or Effie, as you like; both names belong to me.”

“You married! You, Effie!”

“I am, and very happily, too. But, if you please, we

will talk about the farm. I will come over, this afternoon, and see Eugenia; and we'll all talk it over together.”

“Will you? O Effie!”

“Hush! Not another word! Why should we remember any differences now?”

“I suppose I can make a present to the bride,” said Effie, after she had kissed Eugenia on both cheeks, forbidding the explanations which Eugenia was endeavoring to stammer out.

“Never mind, Genie; we must live, and love, and forgive, you know. We've both been wicked; but we're going to be good—ain't we? Come, now, I have only five minutes to stay; say that we shall be friends.”

“We shall,” sobbed Eugenia, with genuine emotion.

“There, wait until I am gone before you cry,” said Effie, the tears sparkling in her own eyes. And as she left the room, she slipped a little package into Eugenia's hand. It was only a deed of the Gray estate, with the love and good wishes of the donor.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

CRAZY KATE.

It was one o'clock, and the stars looked down upon old Kate, sitting in her doorway.

"Coming," said she; "I knew that she must come to-night. Youth injured, forsaken — that's what I felt, and I'm always true. I wonder who it'll be." Then addressing herself, "Why, you old, crazy fool, what do you care who it is? You are doing your duty — ain't you? Well, then, do it without grumbling. Here's a grand chance for you to make up with God for your own sinfulness. Hist! here she comes. I'll go in; I'm so wizenlike, it would frighten her. I'll put on a kerchief, and look like other people; though, to be sure, I don't know any set fashions for old women — crazy women, especially."

A little, trembling rap at the door. Kate let her rap twice before she opened it.

"Heavens! Kate — crazy Kate!"

"The same, at your service, ma'am."

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"Perhaps you are more kind than sane people. Kate, I am very, very miserable. I have no friends, no home, no money; sick and sinful. May I come in?"

"Come in, ma'am, and make yourself at home quite," said Kate, compassionately. "I haven't much to offer you, though, to be sure, it's better than it might be, and enough sight better than it has been. Poor thing!" said she, as she observed Minna's situation. "The world has gone hard with ye; but Kate will be kind; she's got a heart, if she hasn't got much other furniture. Sit down any where, it does not make much difference — there on that bed of grass, if you like, if you don't want to rumple it before you sleep there. Rest ye, now, while I make a cup of tea."

Kate soon made a nice fire, which looked cheery, even though it reflected on bare walls. It made Minna feel more at home; for the nights were chilly, and Minna's feet and hands were very cold.

Kate soon made some herb tea, which, although rather unpalatable, diffused a warmth and quietude throughout her system that she had not known for long.

"Now throw off your dress, and put on this," and Kate exhibited a large, woollen wrap.

Minna obeyed, and lying down upon the rough bed that the old woman had prepared for her, was soon in a sound sleep.

Old Kate watched her. *She* never needed sleep, and

only lay down and shut her eyes sometimes, because she said that other folks did, and she didn't want to get out of their ways entirely.

"How very like his face it is! If 'twere larger and more florid, I should say 'twas the same. Let's see, the same that — How many years is it since I was young? Pshaw! old woman, what do you want to go back into the past for? The future is enough for you.

"Poor little one!" said Kate, throwing an old mat over her for warmth. "Yes, Kate's got a heart; and that's more than rich ones can boast of, any way. I'll go, to-morrow, and buy something nice and comfortable. I'm not stingy when I'm buying for others. O, no. We'll live like queens, pretty one; and little dormouse, when it comes, shall think he is heir to a throne. And so it is, — why not? — heir to the throne of God. He will not dispute it."

"What did you say, Kate?" said Minna, half arousing.

"Hush, child! May be, I was talking to the moon. Mustn't be asking questions. There, go to sleep again. Mercy! how hot your head is, and your hands! Are you sick, child? Let me feel of your feet. Cold as ice."

"O, such pain!" groaned Minna. "I thought that I was dreaming; but I see now that it was real. I suppose I shall die — shan't I, Kate? O, I'm so afraid! Come up closer. There, now I know that I am likely

to die any moment, and I want you to answer me this question: What is God?"

Kate was puzzled. God was clearly defined in her own soul; but how to bring him out, and describe him to another, was more than she well knew.

"Tell me quick, Kate; I shall grow mad with pain by and by; and then may be I cannot hear it."

"He is like — he is like — O, he is like — No, he isn't; he is more like — No, that won't do. I'm sure he will take you, dear. He loves the stricken lambs of his flock. I'm sure he will take you."

"So am I sure of that; it isn't that that I want to know; I want to know *what* he is. I want him defined in my own mind."

"I cannot tell you what he is like, dear child; but I can tell what I feel him to be unlike."

"What is it?"

"All mankind. Humanity is a cruel burlesque on him; and those who profess the most Christianity are in reality the most ungodlike."

"Enough! enough!" said Minna, joyously. "If he is not like men here, I am sure that I shall love him — he will not deceive me. If his acts proclaim him God, then I shall love and reverence him; but if, like Christians here, he only bears the name and acts a lie, then I will never bow, though all heaven be sounding with his praises."

"How strange the wee thing talks!" said Kate, sorrowfully. "I wouldn't wonder if God did want her. I was in hopes that, if I took care of her, she would live with and learn to love me — I do so long for love ever since those fair, white arms were wound around my neck, and brought me back to the womanhood that I had thought was crushed beneath the load of grief. May be God will bless me now, and give me this one."

It was a sad night to Kate, while she sat watching the sufferings of poor Minna. But it was with something of pride and joy that she laid a little miniature of Minna beside its mother, and said, —

"This is your daughter. Will you not bless her?"

"A daughter, did you say, Kate? O! O!"

"Why, child, what's the matter? A girl will give you twice the love of a boy, with but half the trouble."

"I know it, Kate; that's what I'm dreading — the love. She will be so sensitive, so unfit to cope with the rough world — ever unkind to women, whether their wrong is by their own acts or by birth. Poor little thing!" and Minna's tears bathed the little sleeping one beside her.

"But what makes you shiver so, Kate? Are you cold?"

Kate did not tell Minna how she had taken off her own scant clothing to wrap the little new comer in; she only said, —

"The fire has all gone out, dear. If you think you

won't need me for a few moments, I'll go out and pick up some wood."

"Do go, Kate; it will look so cheery with a nice fire. And then you will make me some gruel — won't you? I am so thirsty!"

Kate procured the wood, and made the gruel, and was repaid for all her exertions by seeing Minna smile, as the bright light played across the silken head of baby.

"See how like a little mouse it looks, Kate. Isn't it pretty? What shall we name it?"

"Never mind now. Don't talk; it will make you sick. Here, drink this gruel, and then try to go to sleep, while I go into the village after some necessaries."

"Into the village? What, Wellen?"

"Yes; why not? It is nearer than any other place."

"Well, I suppose so. But if you should happen to see my father, and he should ask you if you knew any thing, you wouldn't tell — would you?"

"Who is your father, dear?"

"Clinton Smith. I am Minna. Didn't you know? I thought every body had heard."

Kate took her bonnet, and rushed out of the house, and into the woods.

"Away — away from her!" said she. "His child! And have I been harboring, nursing *his* child! Curse him! curse him! Clinton Smith! who would have crushed my bones beneath his carriage wheels; who stole

my youth and beauty, all my happiness, away. O God, help me to revenge myself. Thou hast placed the weapons in my hand. Help me! Tear humanity from my heart; let me be deaf to prayers and entreaties — blind to tears and anguished looks. Revenge! revenge! O, I will have it; I will gloat in blood; I will murder. Ah, Clinton Smith, 'tis many years since, but the curse shall come back upon thy shoulders with tenfold intensity."

"Hush, Kate! Love thine enemies."

"Miss Mabel?"

"The same, dear Kate, and very glad to see you, but not in this mood. Kneel with me, Kate, and I will teach you how to pray for revenge of the sweetest and dearest kind."

The old woman was passive in the hands of her worshipped Mabel; and her heart was somewhat calmed, as together they knelt upon the crisp autumn grass. And Mabel breathed the prayer, while Kate repeated after her, as Mabel had requested, hoping that it would more strongly impress it upon her mind.

"O God, thou seest my heart; thou hast witnessed my life, the past and present — my deep wrongs and intense suffering. Alike thou hast witnessed my struggles to be good, to be like thee. But now, O Father, I am sorely tried; my heart calls wildly for revenge. O God, wilt thou help me to attain my object? Make me humane; replace the hate in my heart with love. Make me to

perform my duty to the suffering with love and gentleness, even though it be the daughter of my vile persecutor. Give me strength to gather his offspring under the wings of my love, and say to mine enemy, 'I harbor no ill to thee or thine.' Make me to *feel* all this, my Father, that my heart may not shudder at its own villany."

Kate had at first repeated mechanically, yet with wonder at the words; but as Mabel proceeded, the beauty of this revenge filled her with admiration, and a desire to gain it; and ere she closed, the tears were streaming down her cheeks as she said, —

"It is granted, Mabel, it is granted; and poor Minna is saved."

"You are so good!" said Mabel. "I knew you would choose the best revenge; but then you know one's passions do almost overpower them sometimes."

"I know," said Kate, attempting an apology; but Mabel interrupted her by saying, —

"See, I have brought my basket, and have come to breakfast with you; are you willing?"

"Yes; but — but — you know who is at the house?"

"No; I half guess from what I heard you say."

"Did I speak any names?"

"You said Clinton Smith. It cannot be his daughter, Minna, that is there. And yet she is his only child. I have been away so long that I haven't heard any thing about Wellen affairs."

"This is Minna, Miss Mabel. Poor child, she has been sadly wronged and deserted. She came to me last night; and this morning a child was born to her, — a little daughter, — and her heart grieves for it through all her love."

"How sad! and yet for Minna a needful lesson, perhaps. You see, my good old Kate, that I have got to be quite a philosopher since I went away, and still retain my love. I have not forgotten the good friend who helped me so much when I was wretched. Kate, how would you like to leave the old house in the woods, and come and live with me? You know that winter is coming on, with its storms and privations; and you are old, Kate — too old to suffer from want. Now, Effie and I have been thinking that we would like to have a nurse — somebody to take care of us when we are sick, if we ever are; and it has given us quite the blues to think that we might be, with no one to take care of us. What say? will you come and be nurse of our establishment? We will give you a comfortable little salary; and then you can be laying up something to give to the poor, or to do what you please with."

"Me, Miss Mabel! me! What, crazy Kate! You are not in earnest, surely. See what a shrivelled old thing I am! And then I don't look fit, you know."

"We'll see to all that. Will you come?"

Kate thought it all over, and then said, very decisively, —

"No, I cannot."

"Cannot? Why?"

"I must live to gain my revenge; you forget that I have Minna. I shall devote my future life to her and her child. God bless them! May they live for me to show them what good I can do for my enemy."

"Very kind in you, dear friend; but I was going to make another proposition — to take Minna and her child to the Dell; and we will all live together, and try to make each other happy. This is no place for Minna; when she gets well, she will grow lonesome; and, besides that, little baby must not grow up to be pinched by poverty. Say yes, and we will send this afternoon for you."

"Let us go and ask Minna herself about it."

Minna looked fearful, as they opened the door, and hugged her child closer, lest some one might be coming to take it away. But a bright smile broke over her face as she saw old Kate, then flushed with shame as she met Mabel's mild glance. But Mabel knelt with such a sweet air, and asked to kiss baby, that Minna threw her arms around her neck, and begged forgiveness, weeping bitterly all the while.

"What will you name her, Minna?" said Kate, brushing the tears away.

"You will think I am whimsical when I tell you, it is such an odd name; yet I am fully determined upon it."

I do not feel as though I could call her any thing else but — Sad."

"'Sad' for a name! O, I wouldn't," said Mabel. "Call it Rosebud, Birdie, or something cheery, that will make you smile when you speak it."

But nothing could induce Minna to change the name, "Sad" was so congenial to her feelings.

Mabel did not oppose her, but proposed a removal to the Dell. After much persuading and pleading, for little Sad's sake she consented.

That night Minna nestled in a downy bed; and little Sad luxuriated in a nice blanket and linen pillows; yet Minna thought she had looked more beautiful upon the tuft of moss that Kate had plucked for her.

CHAPTER XXIX.

LITTLE CHARLIE.

LITTLE Charlie had improved wonderfully under Mabel's care and instruction. He was a peculiar child; sensitive to an extreme — peculiarly sensitive, for although the power of speech and hearing had been denied him, yet they seemed unnecessary to his nature. He seemed to *feel* all that it was necessary for him to know. That was impressed upon his internal sense, which others received by their external.

He was conscious of the entrance of strangers into the room, although his back was turned towards them, and would be immediately attracted or repulsed, as their different natures acted upon his.

"It seems as though he must speak," said Mabel, one day.

"I think he will some day," replied Effie.

"In heaven?" said Mabel, inquiringly.

"No, here."

"Here? no, that cannot be; he was a born mute."

"His spirit is not mute; see it speaking through his eyes, in a language more eloquent than words; and even his little hands will work out some imagery of his soul. May not some outward chill have forced back the words upon his soul, until he has forgotten, or rather, has never yet discovered the power of using them?"

"But how can we bring him to a knowledge of them?"

"Some sudden emotion will break the channel; after which the words will flow smoothly. But we will not talk of that now; when God is ready to give our little Charlie words, he will find a way to prepare him to receive them."

"You are so hopeful, Effie; but even you have looked grave for a few days back. You have not lost confidence in your Mabel, have you, that you keep the cause concealed from her?"

"It is only care, darling. I have a great project in view. I have half feared to express it to you, lest you disapprove; and as I could not give it up, even for you, you must know that it has caused me some anxiety."

"How could you feel so, Effie? You know that you are sure of my sympathy, in any project that you may propose; so tell me what it is."

"I desire to appropriate that wealth which your mother bestowed upon me to some good purpose."

"In other words, you wish to place it in a bank, where

it will bring in the interest of self-approval," said Mabel, laughing. "Well, so far you have my sympathy. Go on."

"I wish to select some quiet little spot near here, where I can build a home, and adorn and beautify it."

"What then?"

"Invite those—like poor Minna—whom society casts out, and humanity will not take into their sympathies, to come and live with me, make it their home there, teach them to become noble women, that their children may not be ashamed of their mothers. Now you have it, Mabel; that's what I long to do."

"But are you sure, dear Effie, that such a course of life will really benefit them? Will not a life of luxury and ease tend to make them indolent and inactive?"

"No; I will inspire them with great desires for future usefulness; I will teach them that nothing good can be gained but through trials and much striving. And I have a surer way of reaching their hearts—even through their little ones. They will do for their children's good what they might not do for their own, or for another."

"But this feeling of dependence no woman ought to suffer, if she can avoid it."

"True; I have thought of that; I will provide means for them to earn their support, when they are able; I will help cultivate their spiritual above their passionate or material nature; I will teach them how to fit themselves

for heaven. What have you to say to this plan, my sister?"

"It is a noble, godlike undertaking, Effie, and were it any other than my sister who proposed it, I should tell them that it was a wild scheme of the imagination, one that could never be realized here — never. But, Effie, I have worlds of confidence in your clear head. Here, take my hand, and heart, and purse — I will go with you."

"You! No, no, Mabel, I cannot allow it; you forget the sacrifice that this step demands."

"And why not I make sacrifices, as well as Effie Malie? What have I to live for, but to love and serve my fellow-beings? Sitting here, and saying, 'God help the poor,' does not feed the hungry, clothe the naked, or, what is more, does not fill their souls with that spiritual bread which shall give to them everlasting life. No, no, Effie; I have been idle long enough; I am longing to work, now; give me a part of your employment; let us be sisters in this great work for human good, as we have ever been sisters in spirit; one heart shall be enough for both."

"But, Mabel, there is a difference; you forget that my education has fitted me for privations, both physical and intellectual, while you have known nothing but luxury all your life."

"You forget, sis, the country schoolma'am. O, that was a grand lesson for me, Effie; I long to take another;

did I not bear it bravely? Now don't flatter — but in real earnest answer me, if I am not improved."

"You are, indeed, dear sister, improved as my teachings would never have made you, for all you place so much confidence in them. You see that you needed the self-lessons. It was very hard for you, while you were struggling with the flames, to hear me calling, 'It will do you good! it will do you good! bear up bravely!' This was hard at the time; but now can you not look back upon the ashes of those perished hopes, and bless God for the torture that drew forth such strength?"

"I can, Effie, bless him with a heart feeling that then was unknown to me. How good he has been to me, Effie!"

"No better than to the rest of his children, Mabel, although you may recognize it more clearly. As soon as that recognition comes to us, it glorifies our whole existence, throwing light upon all the dark places in the past and in the future, and making all sorrows seem like blessings, were they only borne with a recognition of his love in their hearts."

"I never saw any one that loved God so entirely as you do, Effie; so wholly without ostentation; and yet it pervades your whole life — this quiet and constant loving and worshipping of the Deity."

"I'd scorn to give God only the half of my heart, Mabel, or show the least doubt that he'd care and provide

for the whole. My love for him is entire and beautiful. I'd scorn a show of words to tell the world I had it. If in my life it does not show itself, then I was mistaken, and do not possess what I had thought. Ostentation is a painful hump, too often worn upon Religion's back, but it bears heavy upon the wearer, and is painful, as deformity is ever painful."

"If God has all your heart, how is the world to get a share? And my part, Effie—where's that coming from?"

"Never fear, little one, but that you will get enough. How can I love God but through his children? Every good act that I perform towards them is one more proof of my love for him; and he accepts it, too—I feel that he does."

"You ought to have been a man, Effie, and a minister, you preach such good sermons."

"I ought to be just what I am, Mabel; and do you know that I am proud of being a woman, and that I mean to be a minister?"

"You don't mean to preach, do you?"

"Yes; I shall preach with my faith to the soul-distressed and spiritually needy; with my money to the hungry and naked; with my love to humanity generally; and with the latter, I shall preach to you continually. Come, little sober face, let's have a run with Charlie in the garden, and talk this over some other time."

"Not until you make me two promises."

"Well, speak them quick; this hazy autumn day is so inviting, I long for a ramble among the rich-hued flowers and falling leaves."

"About that enterprise—may I join with you?"

"If you have considered the sacrifices, dear, and feel able to meet them, I shall not withhold my consent."

"I have considered, and I am able to meet them."

"Now the other question; quick, there's a sunbeam burst down there by that grape arbor, and I want to catch it; so what will you?"

"That for the purpose you propose, we take the Dell. No more desirable spot could be obtained, and this is very beautiful; the grounds are luxurious, and the house is large and commodious, and can be made more so. I am sure it will make them good to look at the beautiful things that God has growing here. Then we have a fine library, music room, and a great many things which, in a new home, it would take a long time to establish. The Dell is mine, Effie; may I not contribute this much?"

Effie was too much astonished to speak; she forgot the sunbeam out of doors. There had one burst in the house, and its brilliancy eclipsed that without.

Could this be Mabel, the high born and delicately reared Mabel, that had offered this sacrifice, not that it might be known and lauded by the world, but by the free

generosity of a heart that would live for others. She had only time imperfectly to utter her thanks to Mabel, when little Charlie came running towards her, his eyes sparkling with intense delight, and clapping his hands to keep time with the dancing joy in his heart.

"What is it, Charlie?" said Mabel.

He only jumped up and down, clapped his hands with delight, and looked as though his eyes would burst out of his head, for want of words. He left Mabel, and taking hold of Effie's dress, tried to pull her from the alcove in which she was sitting.

She bounded out, to amuse the boy, when a larger and stronger form caught her in his embrace.

"Do not look so frightened, Effie; it was only your husband."

The frightened look gave place to one of deep and quiet joy, as she said, —

"You are welcome, John, to our home and our love."

Generous Effie! even John's love might be shared with Mabel; but this day Effie could afford to be generous, for God had been bountiful with his sunbeams, and every nook in the Dell hearts was lighted.

Even little Minna began again to respect herself, when she saw that others respected her. Little Sad was Charlie's especial favorite; he could not conceive at first of a human being so small, and when it cried, he thought it was making up faces to amuse him. Now, while all

hearts were absorbed in their guest, little Charlie went up to tell Sad about it, and a very eloquent conversation it was, — Sad, with her winking and blinking, and Charlie, with his vain attempts to make her understand; and at last she went to sleep, right in the pith of his eloquence. Poor Charlie felt discouraged, but he kissed her little velvet cheeks, and ran down stairs again, looking into the library, where they were all gathered, so cosily talking that they did not notice the half-wistful look of the mute boy.

This was Charlie's first slight since he became an inmate of the Dell, and he felt it severely; he ran out into the garden, half crying; suddenly, and wilfully, he turned and took the carriage path that led to the road. Now, this path had been forbidden him, lest he should stray away and get lost. Charlie had understood this, and he did not feel quite right about it, but consoled himself by the thought that the party at the house were not doing what he felt to be right to him.

Through the gate and out into the broad Samsea road he wandered, first moodily, and then, his soul filling with the beauty of all around him, he forgot that he was upon forbidden ground. Singing in spirit, his little hatless head and wavy curls catching the delicious autumn breeze, bounded little Charlie, till suddenly he stopped, and his cheek grew pale, and his eyes filled with tears.

What could it be to attract little Charlie so?

"Little boy," said a voice behind him.

But Charlie couldn't hear. That he *felt* something, was evident in the working of his countenance — so easy to read by those who had studied him — on which was depicted the most intense yearning, and his outstretched hands were pleading for an embrace.

"What a stupid child!" said the voice; "he don't know enough to answer when he is spoken to — belongs to some of these boors around here, I dare say;" and a female figure swept proudly past the child. She could not help turning back, however, to see the face that was so stupidly silent.

"That face! hush, my heart; why need you make an uproar at every child's face that you see? Yet he would have been — pshaw! I'll go on."

Again she turns; and the yearning look and outstretched arms are still there; may be a grieved expression trembles on the lips; she almost crouches as she hastens back to him, like a beast about to spring upon its prey; her eyes are wild and fiery, and her hands involuntarily clinch each other. Yet little Charlie fears not; the grieved look floats away, and joy sits in its place, yet every nerve quivers as if strained to its utmost for some great purpose.

✓ "My child! my child!" screamed she, as she caught him to her heart, and pressed him there, unconscious of

the cruel grasp, until she saw his head droop with the pain.

"My child! my child!" again, in agonized accents, screamed she; "speak to me!" and back upon her heart came the low, uncertain wail, "Mamma."

Charlie had spoken; and Eugenia had found her child.

CHAPTER XXX.

EUGENIA.

AFTER Eugenia had left Charlie at the gate of the Dell, she hastened to her own home. Her heart was filled with fear and dread; yet deeper than all that was the satisfied mother-spring of love.

"I must tell my husband," thought she, "and that will ruin all his hopes of domestic happiness. Yet I do not really love my husband; but my child, — O, yes! O, yes! If I could only pray now, I would; but I cannot, I dare not. I would not dare to turn my eyes towards heaven, even though the lids were closed over them. Ah me! if Effie were only here, — Effie, whom I have so foully wronged, — I am sure she would pray for me; she would sympathize with and forgive me."

A rap at the door. "Please, ma'am, Miss Malie is down stairs, and wishes to see you."

"Miss Malie! Effie?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"Tell her — tell her I'm not at home."

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"Sure, ma'am, and I jist told her yer was."

"Then go down and tell her you lied, stupid." This was said with something of her old savage manner.

"Sure, ma'am, and that would be anither, wouldn't it? For the holy Vargin, ma'am, I can't be afther telling lies at that rate."

"Go, say that I'm engaged, then, impudence. You lose your place for this."

The servant had scarcely left her when she called her back again, and said, "Tell her that I will be down in a moment."

"The holy Vargin herself couldn't work for such a changeable craythar," growled the girl.

"I will tell her all," thought Eugenia, "and seek her advice. O, where has my pride all gone to? I would bow down in the dust to receive the loving embraces of my child again. My child! hush! the walls must not hear me speak it; but O, how it makes my heart thrill with delight!"

"Ah, Effie, I am glad to see you," said she, as a moment after she entered the parlor, all smiles, to greet her friend. "I am really very glad to see you. How did you come? Are you alone?"

"No, my husband is with me, and Charlie. I did not know as you would be at home; or perhaps you might be engaged with visitors, in which case we should not wish to intrude; so he staid in the carriage with Charlie."

He will come in now. How pale you look! you are faint!"

"Charlie, Charlie! O Effie, he is *my* child! How shall I meet him before a stranger? My poor, little-injured boy."

"What do you mean, Eugenia? Charlie *your* child? No, no! You are ill; you do not know what you say."

"Can a mother's heart be at fault, Effie? I know that Charlie is my child, although I have not seen him before to-day since he was three days old. Yet think you that I have lost his image from my heart? or that the mother-love has grown cold? O Effie, not until you yourself become a mother, can you know the intense suffering that I have experienced."

Effie could only repeat, in her amazement, "Charlie your child! Our little deaf and dumb Charlie!"

"Deaf and dumb did you say? No, no! The sweetest sound that ever greeted my ear was that dear word, 'mamma,' as uttered by his lips. O Effie, forgive me; I have been very wicked to you as well as to Charlie, but your nobleness has humbled me, has made me long to be good, and worthy your respect. Forgive me, Effie, and pity my grief, my distress. What shall I do,—how act in this emergency?"

"You must confide in your husband first."

"And incur his severe displeasure? perhaps hate?"

"Have you deserved it?"

"O, yes! O, yes! I have, indeed; but it is hard to be left entirely friendless."

"You cannot be. God is your friend,—must ever be."

"Not mine, dear Effie. O, you cannot imagine half of my sinfulness; and now it presses so heavy upon me I would gladly hasten my own death, if I felt sure that death would bring annihilation. But O, the thought of a hereafter—that gaping, burning abyss in which such wicked ones as I am hurled. Too dreadful! too dreadful!"

"Don't think of such things, Eugenia. Rest assured that your greatest horrors are now; your worst hell is here. Heaven and hell must be of our own making, my friend, and your after home may be most beautiful, if you will sacrifice all evil inclinations here, and devote the remainder of your life to fitting up and beautifying your spiritual temple. But, first of all, you must tell Guardie of this; it is due to him, it is due to yourself; and, Eugenia, it is due to your child."

"Will you not tell him, Effie?"

"I do not shrink from duty, Eugenia; but this is your duty, and my performing it would not assist you. God knows that I would gladly take the burden from your shoulders, if I did not see that it was better for you to bear it; but pray to God, and he will make your burden light."

"How can I tell him, my husband; I almost love him now that I fear to lose him. How can I look at him again with this great shame upon my heart? How can I face the world again? Ah me! ah me!"

"Learn to respect yourself first, Eugenia, and then what need you care how much the world may sneer? This same world has its own shames to conceal. There is no heart, however well the Christian cloak may set upon it, but hides some petty sin beneath its folds, and blushes when it feels that God must see it. Do not dwell upon what you are, or what you have been, but strive with all the strength of your soul to be better in the future. All that we can do is to act from our own highest ideas of right, and good must result from it."

"O, I cannot, Effie. I have no ideas of right, and if I had I have no power to act from them. You speak so philosophically, so coldly, as though you thought it was an easy matter for me to confess to my husband a long list of crimes; a tale of horrible iniquity that will make his blood grow cold, and curdle in his veins to hear. You think this is easy. It might be to you, who have lived a life of sacrifice for others, but for *me*! for Eugenia Sanborn! God pity me and take my soul, for it will kill me; I feel that it will! — O, my boy, my child!"

"Mamma," and the soft curls of Charlie were laid against her cheek.

Effie could doubt no longer. If the knowledge of the

mother's presence could make the dumb boy speak, she had no right to doubt; and might not Charlie be blessed as a peacemaker between God and his mother? Their love was too sacred to be interrupted, and she silently stole out and busied herself by showing John the farm, the brook where she used to paddle her feet, and the little front garden, where the clamshells had been replaced by rows of box.

Mr. Babson knew by Effie's manner that something had occurred to agitate her; but he asked no questions, feeling that all in good time Effie would tell him herself, — for no secrets existed between Effie and her husband.

As they stood upon a little knoll in the garden, from which they could overlook some distance of the Samsea road, she espied Guardie's beautiful span of grays in the distance, and himself, as she supposed, driving them; so she said to John, "If you please, we will walk towards the house," wishing to relieve Eugenia of any embarrassment in meeting her husband before Charlie.

Eugenia was very pale, but calm. She sat with Charlie in her lap, but upon the entrance of Mr. Babson, arose, and taking Charlie firmly by the hand, said, "This is my son, Mr. Babson. I am proud to introduce him."

Mr. Babson expressed no surprise, but said, smilingly, "Ah! I am happy to hear it."

"Mercy! what is that?" exclaimed she, as the sound of horses, rushing furiously up the carriage path, attracted

their attention. "My husband's carriage! and he not there! O Effie! Mr. Babson! Somebody, go quick and find him; don't stop to look at me. O, go! Why does every body stand still? Go away, Charlie, I do not love you. It is only him, my poor, wronged husband, that I love. Give me the horses," said she to Peter, the hostler, who stood with an ashen face, endeavoring to hold the almost frantic horses. John had already started upon the search, and no persuasions of Effie's could dissuade Eugenia from her almost certain death, with the wild and frightened horses. But suddenly, as she had drawn up the reins, and bade Peter loosen his hold upon the horses, little Charlie darted from Effie's grasp and stood before the unmanageable animals.

"Take that child away," screamed Eugenia, pale with terror.

"I will not," replied Effie, firmly.

"In God's name, take that child away!" again screamed the terrified mother.

"Not until you stand here by my side," replied Effie.

"Then, by Heaven, I shall dash you both down!" said Eugenia, pale and fierce.

"Do so," replied Effie, as she stepped forward and took little Charlie's hand, looking the horses firmly in the eyes until they cowed down, trembling, and covered with a cold sweat. A child might have managed them then; Eugenia could not, for her fright had made her powerless.

But now new thoughts and mightier emotions occupied her mind; for laid upon a litter, and borne by four men, was Guardie, her husband, pale and cold in death! His head was bound, but the bandage was bloody.

"He's only fainted," said she, hoarsely. "Give me some water; give me a towel; give me — O God! is he dead? Dead! and seeing my sins before I had time to confess them? O, O! why don't you do something, all of you, standing around here? Why don't you weep? why don't you scream? why don't you howl all of your lives away? O God, did nobody love him but me?"

The servants had stood around in frozen horror, until now, when, as if following their mistress's desires, they all commenced weeping and wailing, and wringing their hands, only chilled again by her fierce glance as she looked up and said, "Stop that noise! You'll craze his spirit so that it cannot find its way to heaven."

There was one there, who, though silent, felt this blow most keenly, and that was Effie. None but her husband knew her agony of spirit, as she looked wistfully into his eyes and said, "O, I loved him so much!" and he folded her closer to his heart, and wept with her for the loss of her love.

The vehemence of Eugenia's grief soon exhausted itself, and left her calm again. Then she said, "Charlie, come here."

The poor little fellow had never witnessed death, and he came tremblingly and knelt beside her.

"My child, can you make his place good?" pointing to the corpse of her husband.

Charlie laid his silken head upon her bosom, and, with his soft eyes looking into hers, said, "Mamma."

"And will you help me to make all the atonement in my power for my past wrongs; as now, with this dead hand in mine, I swear to do?"

"Mamma——"

"To take no heed of scorn, or hurling world-jeer, but forever to tread the stern path of duty, be it ever so bitter to my feelings; that when I, too, shall be called to heaven, I may be able to say to the spirit that animated this body, 'My husband, I have tried.'"

"Hush!" said Effie, coming forward, and putting her arm around Eugenia. "Hush! and let us pray."

Every knee was bowed and every heart was lifted up, as Effie's impressive voice breathed a soul-felt prayer. Even Eugenia clasped little Charlie closer, and said, "It is well."

Effie would not leave her friend that night, and so John rode back to the Dell alone to acquaint Mabel with the sad and fatal accident at the farm house.

Mabel was shocked, and wept, when John told her of Eugenia's feelings. "But," said he, "there is another thing that I have not told you."

"Before you tell me, let me inquire for Charlie; he has absented himself so much this afternoon, that I really long to see the little fellow. You didn't leave him at the farm house, did you? It is no place for him now; he would be an annoyance."

"What if I should tell you that Charlie had found his mother; would it grieve or please you?"

"Impossible! You will not tell me that, because it cannot be true; he has seen no one but us at home here."

"Are you sure no one else?"

"Unless, indeed, it be Eugenia to-day; but, of course, she could not be the one. Come, come, you are jesting with me. What did you mean?"

"That Charlie has found his mother, and that Eugenia Malbourn has found her child."

"O John, I shall die! I shall die to give up Charlie to her treatment; she will be unkind to him. He will not love her. O, I wish I had him here."

"She is a widow; think, under such sad circumstances, can you not give up one of your many joys to cheer her?"

"Not if that joy is my little Charlie; I cannot make him unhappy. It would not be right; don't ask me!"

"But Charlie does love her; and he speaks and calls her 'mamma,' and she dotes on him."

"Speaks! Charlie speaks? O, her love must be mightier than mine to cause him to speak to her. I never won a word. I will give him up to her; but it is very hard."

"Spoken like my own Mabel! To-morrow we will ride over there, and you shall see how perfect is their love."

Before retiring, Mabel went up to tell Minna what she had heard.

Minna wept for Eugenia, and, clasping her hand with little Sad's, said, "God forgive her, as we do with all our hearts."

And Mabel fervently responded, "Amen."

CHAPTER XXXI.

AFFAIRS AT THE DELL.

"WOULD you?" said Effie, as she sat conversing with Mabel, a few weeks after the burial of Guardie.

"Ask John," replied Mabel, who had perfect confidence in the judgment of her brother-in-law.

"What is it?" said he, looking up from the newspaper, which he had been poring over.

"Why, Mabel has just proposed that we invite Eugenia here to spend the winter. What think you? is it best?"

"This is very generous and noble in you, dear Mabel," said he, fondly, and taking her hand. "But have you no fears for yourself? Remember the sufferings and trials that she has caused you to pass through."

"I do remember them with gratitude, dear John, and I feel them to have been blessings. So you see that I am under obligations to her. I wish to release myself, and in making her happy now, in her lonely widowhood, I will prove to her that I have forgiven her the motive of her persecution, and only bless her for its effects."

Effie looked proudly at Mabel, and said, "This is our sister, John."

"God bless her," said John, with emotion; then resuming his paper, abstractedly, said, "Yes, I would, Mabel."

"Come in, Minna," said Effie, as Minna passed the door with little Sad in her arms, and looked wistfully at the cheerful group gathered around the glowing fire.

"Come in, darling, and let us talk. Besides, I want to kiss baby."

Their most honored guests were not treated with more kindness and respect than was Minna. Even John laid down his newspaper when she came in, and smilingly outstretched his arms for the child.

"No, no," said Effie, "I spoke first; and I am to have the first frolic with her."

"Hush, my children!" exclaimed Mabel, with mimic authority. "Give me the child, Minna. They will quarrel so that we shan't have any peace. Come here, little Sad."

"I don't like that name," said John. "Our little Minna is going to be very happy all of her life, and our cherub must not be forever Sad."

"Let's call it Sadie," said Effie, "and that will please us all. It's derived from Sad, so Minna cannot find fault."

"I begin to think," said Minna, tremblingly, "that

our truest happiness is derived from our greatest sadness."

"Bravely said, our Minna!" said John encouragingly. "Verily, Effie, we have need to be proud of our sisters."

"And *our wife*," said Mabel, laughingly.

"Do you not feel well?" said Effie, anxiously, as Minna drew a low ottoman beside her, and laid her head in her lap.

"Not quite."

"In spirit or body?"

"In spirit, Effie; but I will not keep you in suspense. Here is the cause of my unquiet."

Effie took the letter that Minna handed her.

"Read it aloud," said Minna. "There shall be no secrets here on my account."

Effie opened the letter, and, in a clear voice, read as follows:—

"MY DEAR CHILD: I cannot express to you my sorrow, that you should have taken up your abode at Daisy Dell. I have to acknowledge to you my hastiness and want of consideration for your situation, on our last interview. Forgive me, my child, if my passion and indignation overcame my reason. I would make reparation. It is not easy for a father to part with his child, Minna; and you are my only one. I offer you my home and love again, and we will go away from here, any where that

you like, where the world may not point the finger of scorn at you. Will you come home, Minna?

"There are many ways in which you can dispose of the child. Have it sent to the almshouse. I doubt not but some good person will adopt it. Of course, you would not let that stand in the way of your future happiness. I shall expect a favorable answer immediately.

Your father,

CLINTON SMITH."

"And the answer, Minna — what shall it be?"

"It is answered, Effie. Do you think I would hesitate a moment?"

"No. But your sadness — I cannot account for that. If you have answered it as I should suppose that you would, it must make you happy."

"It has. I felt proud when I wrote to my father, that I was glad to give up wealth and station for my child, — that I was glad to give up the world and study myself, that I may be able to bring up my child as I was not brought up, and despite her parentage, make her a worthier woman than I am."

"And you wrote this, Minna?"

"I did, without a quiver of my heart."

"Bless you, darling! The lessons of life are hard, but O, so richly paid!"

"So richly paid," echoed Mabel, as she hid her head in little Sadie's robe, that Minna should not see her tears.

"Richly paid, indeed," repeated John, as he resumed his newspaper, and all at once appeared to be deeply absorbed in its contents.

They were all silent after this expression, it was so truthful. And there were none better qualified to judge than this little party, for they had all learned the lesson, and had received the payment. At last Effie said, —

"You said that this answer gave you pleasure, yet you are sad. Have I a right to ask the cause?"

"I have been trying to gather strength enough to tell you, my dear friends. I am well, now; indeed, quite strong; and Sadie is doing well, and is very little trouble, and I know that I have trespassed too long already upon your kindness. I thought of — of going away, and trying to do something for our support. I am sure I could if I can go where I am not known."

"Not yet. No, you must not go now, Minna, while Sadie is so little," said John, almost sternly, as he went around to where Minna sat, and took her hand in his own. "You shall not be a dependant. I have some copying that I shall have to hire done. Can you do it for me? Do not blush so; it is a simple business transaction."

"Do not engage all of her time," said Mabel, interrupting him, "for I have some embroidery that *must* be done. Can you do it, Minna?"

"How selfish you all are!" said Effie, laughing. "You

are engaging all of Minna's time, when I wish to learn Latin and Spanish. Can you teach me, Minna?"

"Can I?" replied Minna, tearfully. "What could I not do for those who have been so kind to me? But, if you please, I would rather not take pay for it. If you will let me stay here a little while and work for my board, I shall be very grateful. Sadie is most too young to be turned off much now, and by and by, may be ——"

"Hush, Minna; let the great 'by and by' stay where it is, and let us revel in the delightful present. Come, play, Minna; let's serenade the sunset. See how beautifully it is shimmering in here, as though it didn't know where to alight."

"There it is!" said John, "resting on little Sadie's head."

"Hush!" said Mabel. "Who knows but that it is God's hand blessing our darling?"

Minna involuntarily knelt and prayed that it might be, then arose, and by Effie's request opened the piano. As she did so, the sunbeam left little Sadie, and lingered a moment over the mother, then glided away.

She had not played before for months; and now, as her fingers glided nimbly over the keys, it awoke the spirit of other days, when she used often to say that she gave "vent to her happiness through her fingers." She always played with expression, but to-night more than ever. Her voice arose clear and birdlike in the old, familiar

songs, and the trio blended their voices with hers, and little Sadie, awakened by the music, vainly bobbed her head in the endeavor to sit erect, as became an auditor.

"Didn't you imagine that the sun looked proud, when it went off of the stage?" said John, gravely.

"I propose that we encore," laughed Effie.

"It would probably not appear again before the morrow, and we should get over our enthusiasm by that time."

"Hush!" said Minna, keenly alive to sounds; "there are strange steps in the hall! Can it be my father? Give me my baby! quick!"

"Can you not trust in us, Minna?" said John, twining his arm protectingly around her, while Effie quickly sprang to the other side, as if to shield her.

"Ernest Alliston!" said the waiter, opening the door and ushering that gentleman in, at the moment that the group were gathered for defence.

"O, let me go to my room," said Minna. "I cannot meet him here, and now."

"Stay!" said John, firmly holding her. "You are not to shrink from these ordeals, you know. You promised yourself that you would not, and you must respect your own promises."

"Ernest!" exclaimed Effie, gladly, springing to meet him.

"Have you no welcome?" said he, approaching Mabel.

She placed her hand in his, and smiled the welcome that she could not trust her voice to speak.

"My husband," said Effie, presenting Mr. Babson.

"And — Minna Smith!" exclaimed Ernest.

"Our sister," replied Mabel.

"I have a letter for her," said Ernest, "when I should find her. I did not think to meet her here."

"Where is it? whom is it from?" hastily questioned Minna.

"Mrs. Kate Dayton."

"Then she is married! O, where is she? dear Kate!"

"She is married, or she wouldn't be Mrs. Dayton; and I left her in New York last night. I expect she is there now. She bade me not rest nor sleep until I had found Miss Minna Smith; but becoming very drowsy in the cars, I ventured to steal a few moments' sleep, for which I beg your pardon. Ah, here is the letter."

Minna begged to be excused, that she might read it. An awkward silence followed her departure for a few moments. But Effie — who never let conversation flag where it was needed — declared that she had a thousand and one questions to ask. And Ernest laughingly said that she had better begin immediately, as he had another engagement that evening. She had not asked the first, however, before Mr. Smith was announced. None was as firm then as Effie, who, handing him a chair, said, —

"Will you sit, Mr. Smith?"

"No!" thundered he, "not in this house! Where is my child?"

"Where she will be cared for," replied Effie, nothing daunted by his manner.

"By G—d, Miss Malie, the law shall visit you for this d——d plotting!"

"Hold, sir!" exclaimed John, stepping forward. "This is my wife; address such words again to her at your peril."

Mr. Smith cowed before the stern, unflinching gaze of Mr. Babson, then sullenly exclaimed, "Where is my child? I will have her."

"Here I am," said Minna, coming into the room with her child in her arms. "Here I am, father. What do you want of me?"

"To come home, girl, with me! and drop that brat! You sickly, fawning thing, what are you lugging around that trumpery for?"

"Then, father, if that is what you want, I can tell you now, that I shall not go home with you, and this 'brat,' this 'trumpery,' that you speak so lovingly of, I love as much better than you, as God loves me better than you. You drove me from my home when I was sick and distressed in mind. I will never go back to that home again! Never! father, never!"

"Will not, girl! Well, we'll see; if you won't go by your own will, you shall be made to go!"

"Do not, father, add another to your list of crimes."

"Crimes, hussy! Who accuses me of crimes?"

"I!" said old Kate, at that moment entering the room. "*I* accuse you of crimes!"

"And who are you, you old shrivelled piece of humanity?"

"One who proclaims *you* a murderer, Clinton Smith!"

"O, no, no, no!" shrieked Minna. "No, no! you do not mean it, Kate! You do not know what you say! He is my father!"

"A murderer!" exclaimed Clinton Smith, sinking back pale and terrified. "By what authority, madam?"

"My own, and a hundred added to that! Listen, Clinton Smith. I am old, and shrivelled, and gray; but twenty years ago I was young and fair as Minna; twenty years! twenty years! Twenty years of happiness might have left me blooming even now. Who wrought this change, so sudden, so entire? You, Clinton Smith! you, the murderer!"

"Hold, madam! I am no murderer!"

"What does 'murder' mean?"

"Taking life, I presume."

"Then you have taken my life! Twenty years ago you took away my life, my happiness, and, worse than all that, damned my remains!"

"Who are you, old woman?"

"I was Katrine Lane, the flower of Mountfort, when

you loved me. Now I am 'crazy Kate,' the hooted hag of Samsea!"

"Katrine! Katrine!" exclaimed he, horrified. Then turning to the rest of the company, who had stood anxiously waiting the issue, he said, "She isn't safe! Confine her!"

"Isn't safe, is she!" screamed the exasperated old woman. "Isn't? Look here, old man, — for you are as old as I, — I might have crushed your child — I might have murdered her, when she lay there in my care, after you had turned her away — but I didn't. No, I didn't. I cared for, loved, and fed her from my scanty store. I took off my own clothes to wrap her child in. I did this, Clinton Smith, and I knew that she was your child! Now go home! You shall not take Minna; and if you make any attempt to do so, or to interfere in any way with her arrangements, I'll hoot your name from one end of Wellen to the other! I'll do it!"

Mr. Smith evidently did not doubt her word, for he took his hat and immediately left the house.

Ernest, feeling his presence an intrusion upon the disturbed family, soon after took his leave. And then the little group gathered once more around their wee strayed Minna, and loved and blessed her, even as our Father in heaven will bless them for their care of her.

CHAPTER XXXII.

CHANGES.

THE cold winter passed without any marked change in the family at the Dell. Eugenia and little Charlie gladly accepted the invitation to spend the winter with them; and the widow Armstrong was induced to leave her bower for a few months, and join their party. She shrank at first from being within Eugenia's influence; but the latter had changed very much — the pure and loving influences around her had called out her better nature; and her much striving for good had made her an object as much to be loved as before she was hated.

Charlie, too, had improved. He could now speak as readily as any one; but he was very delicate and sensitive; his intellectual faculties, too hastily pushed forward in the days of his suffering, were in danger of devouring the physical; and those who loved him watched with anxious hearts his every new unfoldment. Charlie, however, unconscious of the anxiety that he created, devoted his time and talents exclusively to the amusement of

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little Sadie; and she would lay her little head upon his shoulder, and look at the pictures that he showed her with delighted attention. The attachment of these two children, attracted by a bond so peculiar, was beautiful to witness.

The family at the Dell possessed a world of entertainment within themselves — rare and cultivated minds; and now that their united object was the elevation of their own souls, they were a happy and harmonious combination of spirits — as different as the flowers in the wild wood, but freely lending their beautiful colors and fragrance to form an harmonious bouquet.

John was obliged to spend the most of the winter in Glenville, in order to arrange his business preparatory to a removal from that place. But it was not necessary for Effie to see her husband every day to love him; and she sang about her duties as joyously in his absence as presence — always the same imparter of strength and happiness to those around, swallowing up her outer self in her devotion to humanity, while the inner drew nourishment from the sacrifice upon which to grow great and beautiful.

Ernest, also, had been engaged in Washington, sparing only time through the winter months to make them one short visit; but his letters were frequent and interesting, judging from Mabel's blushes as she read them.

Spring found much peace and happiness at the Dell;

and in every heart were glowing hopes that were to burst forth with nature's early buds.

Mabel's hope, however, absorbed the interest of all of the others; and it was realized one bright spring morning, when the other birdies were mating — Ernest drew our Mabel into a little nest in his heart, and God married them.

"Isn't this a fairy Dell?" said Minna, weeping and laughing over their great happiness.

"May I come in?" said a voice at the door.

Minna turned quickly, as she recognized it, and was clasped in Katie's arms. Her hope was realized — she had so longed to show little Sadie to Kate, and receive her blessing.

Willie kissed Minna, too, and said, —

"God bless the baby!"

"And he's blessing us all to-day as fast as he can," said Effie, gayly. "I only wish John was here."

"That's granted," said John, entering, and presenting his mother to those who were strangers to her.

Eugenia only stood aside, feeling that she had no right to share this happy scene.

But little Charlie had no idea of having her left out; and running up to Mrs. Dayton, he said, —

"Won't you love my mother, pretty woman?"

"Certainly," said Kate, kissing him. "Where is your mother?"

"Here I am," said Eugenia, advancing.

Kate, at first, looked severe; then softening, at Eugenia's sad appearance, held out her hand, saying, —

"Here, take my hand, in token of forgiveness and forgetfulness of all wrong."

"For Charlie's sake, will you try to love me?" faltered Eugenia.

"No," said Kate; "but for your own, I will."

Eugenia smiled, and was satisfied. They were all satisfied — Mabel inexpressibly so.

The bursting spring day attracted some out to walk, while others grouped in cosy niches in the villa, to converse. Among the latter were Kate and Minna, while Willie devoted himself to Eugenia.

"Well, Minna," said Kate, "I am glad that you have been so happily situated; yet I would gladly have done for you myself what they have done. But my turn will come now — will it not, Minna? I want to do something for you."

"And what have you not done, dear Kate? To you I owe all my present happiness, which, I can assure you, is more than I ever before experienced. It was you that gave me the index to my own soul. I shudder to think to what temptations I might have yielded, if I had not learned it. It was you who taught me the beauties of the mother-love, forcing its immense responsibilities upon me, and making me to feel them. Why, Katie, I hated my child before that."

"Why, Minna!"

"I did. I would have murdered it; but now I am so glad I love her so. To be sure, I could have wished her birth different; it grieves me when I think of it; but that is past; I cannot help it; and I mean to make all of the reparation in my power, by teaching my child to respect herself, that others may respect her."

"O little Minna, I'm proud of you. Who would have thought that your spirit could be so strong when it was aroused?"

"It seems that you thought so, else you would not have tried to arouse it. But tell me, Kate, from what did you judge that I had any better feelings than exhibited themselves through my every-day life?"

"I judged from those very impulsive acts that others condemned. I saw that there was a great want in your nature, and you did not know how to answer it; nobody taught you; and your mode of life only made the want larger. If a great virtue had come in your way, you would have filled it with that; but, alas! vice came; it temporarily met the want, and you accepted it. You are as easily impulsed to good as evil — is it not so?"

"It is; you have read me aright so far."

"These impulsive natures are the best, the richest, and truest that we have; and were they placed under the proper influence, they would distinguish themselves by noble deeds."

"Alas, alas, Kate! that is what I may never do."

"It is what you have done, Minna, and nobly done; and I must confess that you have shown more firmness and self-possession than I had given you credit for possessing, or at least in being able to call out in so short a time."

"But you are wasting time in talking about me, Kate. Tell me of yourself, and of Willie. Is he kind? and are you very, very happy? and do you board, or keep house? O, I have a thousand things to ask you; but answer these first."

"Of Willie first, then. He is very kind and indulgent, possessing that evenness of disposition, and sound, practical judgment, that I admire — perhaps because in that I am lacking; and, best of all, Minna, his views of marriage and its relations perfectly correspond with mine. We live as harmonious as doves, and as free as nature. There are no matrimonial restrictions imposed; and we have dispensed with all of those forms that make marriage hateful, tyrannical, and unbearable. But what a rig I am running! Now, Minna, you needn't believe a word that I have said, until you come and judge for yourself, which I hope you will do very soon."

"If it were possible for me to procure employment there, how gladly would I go!"

"That is just what I wished you to propose. There is a fine situation which we can procure for you, if you

will go. The Lenly Institute is a large and select seminary for ladies. There are now two vacancies in the teachers' department, for either of which the salary is good."

"What are they? Perhaps I am not qualified to teach in those branches."

"Music and Latin. Which would you prefer?"

"Music, by all means. I have a thorough knowledge of that, besides a good faculty for imparting it to others. But how do you know that I can obtain that situation?"

"Mr. Murray, the principal, is an intimate friend of Willie's; and when Mr. Murray spoke of these vacancies, Willie immediately mentioned you."

"Ah, Kate, I should be deceiving him. He would not have such as I, did he know ——"

"He knows all, Minna. Mr. Murray is a noble man. He has known trouble himself, and he knows how to sympathize with others, as also to appreciate efforts like yours to wipe out that first stain, and again be respected in the world."

"Kind Willie! how much I love him for that! But, dear Kate, there is one more obstacle to this!"

"Name it, and see how quickly it shall be removed."

"Little Sadie — you have forgotten her youth. How could I leave her, as I should be obliged to, to attend my daily duties?"

"Rest assured that I have considered all that, Minna.

Little Sadie must have a nurse, — a good, trustworthy nurse, with whom you will feel safe to leave her."

"She has been so used to my care and Katrine's, that I doubt whether she would be contented with any one else."

"Who is Katrine?"

"Why, old 'crazy Kate.' She took care of me when I was sick, and ever since has considered me her especial charge."

"Why will she not go with you?"

"I never thought of that; but I suppose she would. I will go and ask her now."

It was not hard to gain Katrine's consent to accompany her darling; and Minna came back, all smiles, to give Katie the welcome news.

"And so we shall carry our birdie home with us," said Kate, approaching her husband, who still sat conversing with Eugenia.

"Shall we?" said he. "I am glad."

"Take Minna with you!" exclaimed Eugenia; "when?"

"To-morrow, perhaps."

"O, no, no — not so soon as that!" said Eugenia, much excited; "not so soon as that! I have something — at least, I have a request to make of you."

"If it is any thing reasonable, Mrs. Malbourn, you may rest assured of its being granted."

This was spoken in a cold tone; and Eugenia, observing it, said, —

"Do not be afraid of me, Mrs. Dayton. I have no inclination to do evil now, had I the power. I only wish to make reparation. But this request you must grant — all of you."

"I, too," said John, entering at that moment, with the truant party, all rosy and happy from their walk.

"Yes, you too," replied Eugenia. "I wish you all to grant this one request. Perhaps I shall never ask you for another favor; do not refuse me this."

"No, we will not, Genie," said Effie, sympathizingly, observing that Eugenia was in earnest.

"It will require a sacrifice from all of you," said Eugenia, doubtingly.

"We are ready," replied Effie. "Gird on the armor of your strength, my friends, and show this lady that we are ready to battle with our own inclinations for her sake."

"And the sake of right," said Eugenia, sadly.

"But we are not to march in the dark — are we?" said Mabel, laughing. "You have not told us yet what this boon is, that, through sacrifice, we are to grant."

But all merriment ceased when they observed Eugenia's pale and distressed countenance.

"What is it, Genie?" said Effie, affectionately.

"Only this," replied Eugenia, endeavoring to speak calmly, but her voice was husky and choked; "only

this: I wish you all to attend, with me, the 'Wellen Sewing Circle' to-morrow evening, which meets at Mrs. Russell's."

"No, no, I will not," exclaimed Mabel.

"Nor I," said Ernest.

"Nor I, for the world," said Kate.

"Of course I couldn't," said Minna. "You didn't mean me — did you, Genie?"

"Yes, I meant all. I knew that it would require a great sacrifice on the part of each of you; but I see that you are not willing to make it."

"I am," said Effie; "I will go, dear Genie. Will you go with me, John?"

"Certainly," replied John.

"But what is your motive, Genie?" asked Mabel, hesitatingly. "If I were sure that it was right —"

"I cannot tell my motive now," replied Eugenia. "If you go, it must be at your own risk."

"I will go," said Mabel.

"What!" said Ernest; "you will go! — go to the Wellen sewing circle, where they have reviled and persecuted you so?"

"Bless them that persecute you," said Mabel, unconsciously looking at Eugenia.

"Thank you," said Eugenia, taking it to herself. "You have blessed me, and more than you imagine, by this decision."

"Mabel shall not go without her husband," said Ernest.

"Shall we stay behind?" said Willie, taking Kate's hand, "when our friends who have suffered so much more enter the field?"

"No," answered Kate; then turning to Eugenia, said, "Consider us of your party."

Now one was left; and all looked towards poor little Minna, to whom this sacrifice would be more than to all others. But the smile was calm and self-reliant that answered their glances; and every heart beat one throb more of love towards her, as she stepped forward, and said, —

"I will go, Genie; and now I think of it, I really long to meet the old friends once again, and show them how much I respect — myself."

"Darling!" said Katie, pressing her hand. "Words would not tell you how much we think of you."

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE SEWING CIRCLE.

"WHAT a strange freak of Eugenia's!" said Mrs. Russell to Mrs. Vandyke, an hour before the members had gathered for the sewing circle. "I wish it had been at Mrs. Bently's, or any other place. I shouldn't wonder, now, if something unpleasant occurred; and all of the blame will be laid upon me."

"How unfortunate," drawled Mrs. Vandyke, "and how strange! It was only this morning that I dropped my dishcloth; and says I to Mr. Vandyke, says I, 'I'm jest as sure that somethin' will happen over to Mahala's to-night, as can be. I never knew it to fail but what somethin' happened.'"

"Well, my shoulders are broad," said Mrs. Russell.

"How fortunate!" said Mrs. Vandyke; "and they are beautiful, too. Your dresses all fit so nicely over them. I was telling my dressmaker, this morning, says I, 'There's Mahala Russell, and she has got the beautifulest shoulders that ever I see.'"

"And what did she say?" said Mrs. Russell, who was rather susceptible to flattery.

"I forgit; but 'she has,' or something to that effect."

"But about this note, there is no help for it now. I have answered it."

"What did she say?"

"Here is the note; you can read it for yourself. I wish Eugenia Malbourn and all of her friends were in — ahem. Here, let me read it for you, Mrs. Vandyke."

"So do. I was telling Mr. Vandyke, this very morning, that I thought my eyes was a gittin' weak."

"MRS. RUSSELL: I am happy to accept your invitation to the circle to-morrow evening; and, being a member myself, I have taken the liberty to invite a few friends to accompany me, towards whom I trust you will extend your accustomed hospitality.

EUGENIA MALBOURN."

"Well rit, I should say," said Mrs. Vandyke; "but is she a member now?"

"Why, yes; I suppose so. I've no objections to her coming; but supposing she should take it into her head to bring any of those Daisy Dell people; there'd just as sure be trouble here as my name is Mahala Russell."

"Well, Mrs. Russell, I can only advise you to trust in the Lord. He can bring us out of the crooked, and into the straight place; trust in the Lord, my friend."

"Confound the — ahem! Excuse me, Mrs. Vandyke, but I don't think that the Lord knows any thing about this; besides, this path is straight enough — they are coming, and there isn't any crook to that, is there?"

"No. There couldn't be any thing straighter than the road from Samsea to Wellen."

"Too straight for Mrs. Bently's liking, I guess."

"They do say that Ernest will marry Mabel D'Eon, after all."

"Perhaps I have later news than that, Mrs. Vandyke. They do say that he *has* married Mabel D'Eon."

"Married her! Mercy to me! and his first wife ain't cold yet."

"Well, yes, Mrs. Vandyke, I rather guess she is cold by this time; you forget that the winter has passed since she died."

"O, yes; but it's dreadful soon. But men are all monsters. I was saying to Mr. Vandyke, this very morning, says I, 'Mr. Vandyke, if I should die should you marry again?' and said he, very decidedly, 'No.' Then I felt pleased, and thought I had got a model husband, when he looked up from his paper and growled, 'If I should ever have the good luck to lose you, I should know better than to get my head into the noose again.'"

"How provoking! Well, every family has their troubles, and you and I cannot expect to escape. Now Mr. Russell is just the opposite of Mr. Vandyke. He is

so exceedingly tame that I sometimes meditate putting him in vinegar to make him crawl. It is only by continual scolding, fretting, and worrying that I can make him comprehend the uses of life. But then I'd enough sight rather have him, or Vandyke, than Bently. I pity him sometimes; he's completely under her control. He don't dare to stir without asking her if he may."

"And she's such a disagreeable woman. I was telling Mr. Vandyke this morning, that I did think Mrs. Bently was the most disagreeablest woman that ever I see."

"And what did he say?"

"I don't exactly remember; but I think it was, 'Ah!' or something to that effect."

"A very sensible man, and doesn't wish to commit himself; although I'll be bound to say, that he despises Mrs. Bently as heartily as I do. Ah, here she comes now."

"How do you do, Mrs. Bently? We are delighted to see you; how kind in you to come so early! Mrs. Vandyke was just saying that she hoped you would come in early, so that we could have a little chat before the circle commenced."

"Ahem!" coughed Mrs. Vandyke, endeavoring to swallow the falsehood that her friend had imposed upon her. "It most always happens that our friends are near when we are talking about them."

They had no opportunity for their private chat, how-

ever, for now the members began to assemble, and soon Mrs. Russell's drawing rooms were filled.

"We have not had so full a circle," said Mrs. Russell, with pride, "since Eugenia was here."

"By the way, where is that lady?" inquired Mrs. Drake.

"Here she is," said Eugenia, at that moment entering the room; then taking Kate's hand, said, "Mr. and Mrs. Dayton you are all acquainted with, I believe, — as, also, Mr. and Mrs. Alliston. My friends, the Babsons, are strangers except in *reputation*; allow me to introduce them. And Minna and I" — twining her arm around Minna's waist — "are too old acquaintances to require any formality. Mrs. Russell, are you particular where we sit?"

The whole company were astounded at this unexpected *entrée*; and Mrs. Russell falteringly bade them select their own seats.

Eugenia laughed and chatted with all, unmindful of their disturbed manners. At last, calling to Mrs. Drake, who sat at the opposite side of the room, she said, "You cannot imagine the reason of my coming here to-night."

"What is it?" cried several, their curiosity overcoming their panic."

"Why, nothing in the world, ladies, but to gossip. To tell you the truth, the Dell is stupidly dull in that respect. Nobody knows any thing about your business,

and you know nothing of theirs—more than they are pleased to tell; so you may imagine how pleased I am to get back here once more. Come, what's the news? do tell me something, and may be I can give you a bit in return."

That last clause saved her the wrath that was kindling against her. For the "bit in return," they would have restrained a volcano of passion.

"Horribly dull here," said Mrs. Drake. "Nothing stirring at all."

"Nothing stirring," replied Eugenia. "How strange, when I heard ——"

"What, what!" exclaimed the ladies.

"O, you won't like it if I tell! Of course it wasn't true; but then you know it makes people outside of the village feel unpleasantly about coming here, after hearing such horrible reports."

"Mercy! What do you mean, Mrs. Malbourn?"

"Why, for one, I heard them say that Mrs. Russell had beaten her husband; and that Mrs. Giles, observing her through the open window, had vowed to inform her neighbors, but Mrs. Russell, getting the start of her by an early walk in the morning, had cast all the stigma upon her luckless neighbor."

"Shameful!" exclaimed Mrs. Russell, turning very red. "And is such a story as that circulated much?"

"O, it's all over the country—in every body's mouth;

but then, of course, if it isn't true, why need you care? God knows which way it is, don't you suppose he does? And Christians must not heed the malicious remarks of the world."

There was a chuckle of satisfaction around the circle at Mrs. Russell's very evident discomfiture.

Eugenia did not appear to notice it, but continued, "And who would have thought that they *could* have made up any thing about Mrs. Drake!"

"About *me*!" said Mrs. Drake, rising in her anger. "What did they dare to say about *me*?"

"O, it isn't worth getting angry about. These are mere stories; folks will talk, you know, and if they cannot get truth to talk about, why, they will make up stories. It can't be helped; the world's the same every where."

"But what did they say about me?"

"Why, if you will have it, I will tell you. They do say that your character was none of the best before marriage; and that your husband, from motives of pity, took you from a house of not very good repute, and brought you here; and—would you believe it?—they are wicked enough to doubt whether a marriage certificate can be produced."

"Shameful!" exclaimed Mrs. Drake, turning very pale as the company involuntarily shrank from her; "and is this story currently reported?"

"O, it's all over the country; I guess nobody doubts it. But, thank God, we are all Christians, and need not be dependent upon the world's people for their opinions; so long as we are assured of our own purity, why need we care for others? But then, Mrs. Drake, you needn't complain; you are quite well off, in comparison to Mrs. Vandyke, here."

"Me!" exclaimed Mrs. Vandyke, holding up her hands in sanctimonious horror. "What can they accuse me of?"

"O, nothing but shoplifting. They say that you have been arrested more than once; and they do hint, that the inside of a prison may not be unfamiliar to you."

"O Heavens!" exclaimed Mrs. Vandyke, in terror; "who found ou— who made up that awful lie?"

"Tut, tut! Mrs. Vandyke, you are getting angry over a simple report. Folks will talk, you know."

Eugenia was unsparing in her remarks. No one escaped her. Every heart was filled with wrath and indignation; but Eugenia sat as calmly plying her needle as though nothing had occurred to mar the tranquillity of the little circle.

"I declare, it's too dreadful!" sobbed Mrs. Drake.

"Diabolical!" said Mrs. Russell, stamping her foot with rage.

"Scandalous," whined Mrs. Vandyke. "I declare it's awful to think, so near us, — almost in our midst!" —

Here she cast savage glances at the Dell group, who were not, by any means, the least interested of the company.

"Why, ladies!" exclaimed Eugenia, looking up in mock surprise — "thinking of that now? Why, I didn't suppose that you would give it a moment's thought, being so untrue."

"Do you suppose that we can hear such reports circulated about us without a thought," said Mrs. Bently. "Supposing that they are false, they do in reality injure us as much as though they were strictly true; for how can strangers know the difference?"

Eugenia laid aside her work, and looking commandingly upon the company, said, "Pray, ladies, did you ever consider of *that* when you were circulating petty scandal about your country neighbors? Did you ever stop to consider whether or not it was true, or how it would affect their characters in the eyes of those who were unacquainted with them? It is only now that you can feel one tithe of what you have caused others to endure. Imagine these emotions that are now raging in your bosoms like a mighty sea of flame, — growing stronger and fiercer each day, as your relentless tormentors are pleased to heap new coals upon you. With all of your pretended Christian virtues, how long do you suppose you could exist in the furnace?"

"I never meant to injure any body!" snivelled Mrs. Vandyke.

"Your tormentors may say, 'I didn't mean to burn her; I only set the fire a-going to watch the blaze.' Be the motive what it may, Mrs. Vandyke, I assure you that the victim knows no difference in the heat of the fire. Scandal, whether maliciously or unconsciously circulated, is the same slow and deadly fire encircling its victim within its heated arms, and leaving no chance of escape, unless indeed the soul possesses within itself the fountain of faith in that almighty Power that shall shield and render it unsusceptible to the hell of malicious tongues, that seek to destroy. Be sure, my friends, that from this hell of scandal the *words* of Christianity cannot save you. The outward baptism will not quench the fires of the soul; and the arms of the church on which you lean are wooden, and cannot protect the spirit from the foes that invade. Christianity, the church, and baptism must be in the soul, and not even there lie dormant, but be acted out through the life! Do you hear? *Through the life!* Who among you, professing Christians, can say, I have done this?"

"I am sure I have tried," said Mrs. Russell.

"And I," said Mrs. Drake.

"And I," said another, and another.

"I have never allowed myself to circulate or listen to scandal," drawled Mrs. Vandyke.

"Nor I! nor I!" echoed around the room.

Eugenia arose, and for a moment looked upon them

with an expression of disgust and indignation that cowed the craven souls before her gaze, then said, "Well, I have! God forgive me! I have circulated the basest scandal, and have reaped the bitter fruits. But far above me I have seen a richly laden tree, — 'tis in my Father's garden, and was first shown to me by a soul that I had often tried to crush. I longed to reach this tempting fruit; but, lo! my sins, like loadstones, bound me down. I was well nigh in despair, when, one clear night, a voice came to me and said, 'Wouldst pluck this fruit?' I answered yes, and reached forth my hand to grasp it — but no, it was not mine till I had earned it; and now the path shone plain before me. High and rugged cliffs were to be scaled, — the sharp stones I knew would pierce me all the way. Chasms were to be leaped, the sight of which made me grow cold and shudder; yet with these dangers before and around me came the longing for the fruit, more strong than ever. At last I resolved to try. I've scaled the cliff, my friends, and now the chasm must be leaped. Look at me while I leap it!"

Eugenia's words were inexpressibly earnest and solemn. All eyes were rivetted upon her. Every heart was chained by her strong will, a listener while she spoke.

"I came here a wild, misguided girl, maddened by a wrong that I had done another, — an innocent life dependent upon my own. Why I did it, ask the world, whose bitter tongue would not allow me rest from the

first race of crime, but maddened me to a more desperate deed, — one worse than murder. O, yes; for it gave me not the damning certainty of a murderer. I came here with a great want in my soul, a great hell gaping for victims. I would not hear the prayers of Nature's child, because I thought God could not come to her, — she had never been baptized, — so I gained your acquaintance, children of the church, — and what did you do?"

"O, don't, Eugenia," sobbed Mrs. Bently.

"Did your Christian hearts soothe my grief, and whisper comfort to my soul? Did you advise me to take up my cross and go to my Father, who would love and succor me? Did *you* do this? No! you found me victims for my hell! Ay, more! you showed me how to send them there ——"

Eugenia paused and gazed earnestly and lovingly at the Dell group, as if to gather strength from them to help her over the fearful chasm; then, in a firm voice, she continued, "In every scandal monger's breast their list of victims is most clearly written. Some strive to hide it; they place the softest acts of life upon it to conceal it from the world. But O, my friends, did you ever think that that would not hide it from God? O, it is clear as light before his gaze, and cannot be blotted out, except by a struggle to uproot the tares where you have planted them. The list of victims that's written in burning letters in my heart I'll read to you, else I shall forever have to stand upon this dizzy height, and never dare leap the abyss.

"First is Mabel D'Eon. The fire was burning when I first knew her; I did not light it. You know best who did. Neither did I quench it. I only stole a burning brand and laid it upon her lover's garments, that he might curse her for the pain she caused him. It all went well for a while; her heart was nearly as anguished as my own, and I gloated over it with a fiendish delight. But Mabel had a greater friend than we were enemies, and He carried her safely through the fires, and has now given her an exceeding great reward.

"Next came Effie, a lonely orphan whom no one truly loved but God. My lover was handsome and winning, and while he won her, she by her artlessness won him. They loved, — I meant that they should, and then I built the fires of scandal around them, and they were wrecked. Twice they loved and twice I wrecked them; but again, that true Friend of the innocent reached out his hand and drew my victim away from me. She too is rewarded.

"Poor Minna was rich. She was flattered and petted, and I hated her because she was happy. So I poured poison into her soul, and gave you the match to kindle the fires around her, — and you did it. Then I gloried more and more, for she had none to save her; but, lo! again the great arm encircled her and drew her within his fold to pasture with the other pure lambs of his flock. And from her the reward was not withheld.

"Kate Bently was to be a happy, wedded wife, and so I thought to crumble all of her hopes around her. But the fountain of faith welled up within her stronger than the fires without: thanks be to God.

"At last the tide turned, — they had me in their power. What did they do? Rush against me in one merciless tide of revenge? No; they did not; but with loving arms they embraced me, and thanked me for my kindness in pointing them to happiness through misery. *God bless them!*"

"God bless them" echoed involuntarily through the circle. But now all eyes were turned upon Eugenia, who had sank to the floor in a fit of exhaustion and faintness.

"Where am I?" said she, as she slowly revived.

"On the other side," whispered Mabel. "The leap is taken, — it was fearful, — but you are safe!"

CHAPTER XXXIV.

PICTURE GALLERY OF EVENING.

WHEN the ivy of age creeps around our earth-forms, and the shadows of the evening of life encircle us, how pleasant it is to turn the gaze within and view the pictures of the soul, that age cannot tarnish, that the shadows cannot cloud.

Many years have passed, dear reader, since you and I tripped so merrily beside Morning, to view his picture gallery. It was a glorious sight that he showed us, — those young lives just bursting into maturity, and all of the backgrounds formed of the uncertain, hazy light of the great untried future. And yet for all their beauty there was a finish lacking. It seemed to us like the work of a young artist, — like the emanations from a young and untried mind, who, having only lived among the petals of the roses, could not paint the thorns.

Thus, while they stood forth like the glory of a new day-beam, they lacked the shadows that the old artists, with such thrilling effect, threw around their finest productions.

But who is this kingly old man, with a sunset crown upon his head? Ah, it is Evening; and he invites us to take a stroll with him to view his pictures. Shall we go?

What a dear old farm house! O Evening, are you going in there? Do you know the inhabitants? Why, it's Katie Dayton! I shouldn't have known her, if you had not told me. How lovely she looks in that brown silk with the plain collar, and the neat lace cap caught under the chin by a single pearl.

But whose are all these children? There are, at least, a half dozen young ladies and gentlemen, to say nothing of the younger ones, in groups around the room, or clinging about her chair, and they all call her mother.

But old Evening tells me that she gave birth to only two of these, — a second and third edition of Kate and Willie, with all due improvements in the binding — more substantial, and less gilt. All of the others Kate is mother-of-mercy to, having raised them from poverty and wretchedness by her love and bounty; and she has been abundantly repaid for all her care and sacrifice.

There is Belle, the poetess, a little foundling that was left upon her doorsteps, and she could not have the heart to send her away; and now she has grown up, a perfect embodiment of poetry and inspiration. Her whole life seems one song of joyful thanksgiving and praise to God for the boon of life. Heaven and earth were one to little

Belle; for Kate had taught her that God would walk side by side with her through life, if she lived pure and for a noble purpose. Kate's eyes filled with glad tears to-day as little Belle threw her arms around her neck, and said, —

"O mother! mother! How I *do* love God, and the flowers, and every body."

"Hold still a moment, sis," said Harry, as he hastily sketched them in that attitude. "There, mother, that will be the first picture in the Exhibition yet."

"How fortunate you always are, dear Harry!" said Belle, fondly; "and yet you ain't proud a bit."

"Who could help being fortunate, with such a little inspiration around him as you are? And, besides," said he, blushing with pride, "I am only keeping my end of the family up. You know I do want dear mother to be proud of me, and to feel repaid for all that she has done. And I mean to make somebody else proud of me too," said he, looking roguishly at Belle.

Belle caught up her roses and ran out of the room to scold at her heart for throbbing so fast every time Harry spoke to her.

"O dear!" said Lillian, who sat at the piano, "I wish you would come and help me, Fred."

"What is it, dear? You look tired and vexed: let me do it for you."

"Why, I promised to compose some music to suit

these words of little Belle's; but they are so beautiful, that I cannot compose any thing that feels like them." With a very little of Fred's help, however, Lillian's fine ear for music was gratified.

"'Lady of Lyons' for to-night," said Charlie, running in. "You see I have cast the characters to suit the strength of the company; mother, you for the 'Widow Melnotte,' because you are so good and motherly, and Fred and Lillian for 'Claude' and 'Pauline,' because I thought it would come kind of natural for them to make love."

Lillian was obliged to apply herself very closely to her music at that moment, and Fred shook his fist at the roguish Charlie.

"But what is the matter with my little Lenny?" said Mrs. Dayton, seeing him vainly endeavoring to keep back the tears.

"Nothing, mother. You said I must never find fault with the manager's cast of characters."

"Well, doesn't this suit you?"

"No, ma'am; I want you for 'Pauline,' and father for 'Claude.'"

"O, yes, yes! Will you, mother?" cried all the children at once.

"It will be more natural for mother to take that part, than me," said Lillian, gently, "for she has loved longer."

"What say you to that?" said Mrs. Dayton to her husband, as he entered the room.

"That we have acted out love all our lifetime; and we need not falter at this — need we?"

The children left them, one by one, as we instinctively leave lovers to their closer interchange of thought. But their shouts of laughter, as they frolicked on the lawn, or Lillian's bird-like voice mingled with Harry's bass, came echoing through the room, bringing a deep joy to the parents' hearts, and with one accord they offered up thanksgiving to their Father for his many blessings.

"Do you remember, Katie, when you asked me once, where our home should be, and I answered, 'Out in Humanity, Katie, where the field is large and the grain is many'?"

"But the harvesting is more than I had dared to hope, dear Willie. God is too good."

We think Evening has a fine sense of propriety, for just as we are preparing to listen comfortably to the lovers' conversation, he wipes a tear from his eye, and says, "Come, I have another picture to show you; let us leave this."

"Do you know any one here?" inquire we, as we ascend the steps of a fine city residence. "George Murray" on the door. We feel positive that we do not know any Murray; but behold, upon inquiring for the lady of the house, our Minna appears before us. More beautiful now with the natural shadows of time, gathered, like a mantle of beautifully matured hopes, around her, than

when an unkind hand had forced the shades upon a younger, fairer brow. Minna is Mrs. George Murray, and as she presents Mr. Murray, there is a look of pride upon her countenance, that says, "This is my husband," before she speaks it. His gaze rests longer and more fondly upon her than upon any other, and we come to the conclusion that they are very proud of each other, as also of the beautiful girl that bends so busily over her writing in the farther corner of the room. We are very anxious to learn who this is, and are gratified when Mrs. Murray calls, —

"Sadie, love!"

"What, Minna, mother?"

"Do not confine yourself so closely to your writing. You will injure your health."

"Hush, mother, till I have caught this beautiful thought, and then I will kiss you a hundred times."

Many thoughts followed that one, and for nearly an hour the fair girl sat there unheeding aught but the ideal beauties among which she roved. Then, taking up her manuscript, she hastened to her mother, exclaiming, while tears of joy filled her eyes, —

"O, mother! Minna, mother, it is finished! and if it is as successful as the last, I shall be independent! Think of that, mother! Independent! and all in my own right, and by my own earnings. O, I half wish that you and father were poor, that I might make you rich. What shall I do, I am so glad?"

"Thank God for your success, my child. He has been very good to you."

"I do, mother! O, I do! But you cannot imagine how glad I am that it is finished. I got so tired, and my brain would ache, and be so dizzy that I could scarcely see. O, I think if people who read books could know through how much suffering they are oftentimes produced, they would be more merciful in their criticisms. Now, if this is successful, I shall not need to work any more."

"You need not now," said Mr. Murray. "I have enough for us all, and you know, Sadie, that you are welcome to it."

"I know it, dear, generous father; but it's all in my nature. I cannot feel that your money is mine; nothing is mine but what I earn; and O, I so long to be independent! It seems as though I couldn't write as I want to, until I am so. I know it is foolish, but you must humor me."

"My dear child," said Minna, "I think that we are all in the wrong. Wealth is not ours to hoard, while there are so many suffering around us. If your brain is filled with rich and beautiful thoughts, and by bartering them you can gain food for the hungry, clothing for the naked, and homes for the outcast, would you shut your heart from the cries of humanity, and say, 'I have enough for my own pleasure, and no more?' No, my child, we can

never be rich, and we can never cease to labor while we are able, if we live as we ought."

"But, mother, if we live for that motive, it is not labor; it's a pleasure. O, you are so good, Minna, mother! Bless you a thousand times for giving me life."

"And I thank you for giving her life," said a noble looking young man, entering at that moment.

"Charlie," screamed Sadie, with joy.

Do we know that Charlie? Ay, something tells us that it is the same little deaf and dumb boy that slept upon the heap of rags at Mrs. Turner's. Long since Eugenia smilingly bade them good by, and with a happy heart passed on to live with God. Charlie's little footsteps have been trained to walk in the high path of duty, and now that he has grown to be a man, he does not swerve from it. He is truly a nobleman; and the coronet that Nature has placed upon his brow the world cannot shake off.

He is well worthy of Sadie Smith; and Minna feels so, as she joins their hands and blesses them. We would fain linger in this home, but Evening says, "No; we have as near and dear friends as these, that we must visit to-night."

"Where is this?" we ask, as we now enter a flourishing town.

"This? O, this is Wellen," replies Evening.

Wellen has grown considerably since we were here,

and now boasts a small park like that of any other thriving town. In the centre of this park stands a large tree, and on either side of this tree is an apple stand, superintended by two old wrinkled hags. We feel some amused as we watch them, conversing together as cats and dogs are supposed to do, with a snap and a snarl.

"How do you do, my good woman?" say we, addressing the nearest one. "What is the news?"

"News, eh? News enough. Why, they do say that Bently died without a cent o' property, and Lyddie is e'en a most crazy about it."

"Ah! Mrs. Bently we remember. But your countenance is familiar, good friend; may we inquire your name?"

"Mahala Russell. Mahala Russell used to live in the brick house by the hotel, where the blind is off. You can't help seeing it when you go past. That blind swung off when I lived there. I remember, I *happened* to be a looking out, and left it partly open one night, and there came up a wind and blowed it off. Three cents, ma'am," says she, as I was moving off without paying for our fruit.

"Apples?" says the second old woman, as we turn our gaze upon her.

"Ah! let's see. What is your name, madam?"

"Polly Vandyke, thankee. Mr. Vandyke died a-goin' on twelve year ago; and says I to him, the very mornin'

he was a dyin', — which was a year arter Russell died, — says I, 'The Lord knows what Mahala and I'll do now.' And sure enough, it's all in his hands. Though I'd a leetle rayther not have taken to sellin apples — ”

“ Shut up, Poll Vandyke ! ” said Mahala, bobbing her head around the tree. “ It was your own proposition. ”

“ It wan't ! ”

“ It was ! ” And so we leave them with feelings of disgust at their coarse, gross natures. And never was haven of rest more eagerly hailed by weary travellers, than is Daisy Dell by us.

The handsome iron gate is swung open as we enter, by whom ? Why, it must be, and it is, old Jake, the harmonious philosopher.

But there has been change at the Dell since we were here last. The old villa has been torn down, and in its stead a noble marble mansion rears its imposing front. Its construction is peculiar, being composed of three oval wings, encircling an oval centre. It is the realization of old Jake's harmonious philosophy, and he prides himself upon it as much as his master, although Ernest is the architect.

The ivy loves to cling around the carved balconies, unmindful of the wistful looks of the gardener, as he holds his pruning knife in his hand, and thinks it a pity to have the nice house cluttered up with such trash.

But we have lingered long enough upon the exterior ; let us go in, where a correspondingly beautiful interior

presents the appearance of harmony and completeness. And Mabel still lives to love, and work for those she loves. She has changed, but time has been kind to her ; and the clear blue eye discloses, at every sparkle, the gem-wealth of the heart, and makes her more beautiful to our eyes than when we first saw her by the fountain, too ethereal for our material gaze ; but now the shadows of life have subdued and made her of the earth earthy, living for the uses of life, and not for its frivolities ; acting out in realities the idealities that were woven among the daisies, looking at the clouds.

But where is Effie ? We long to see the noble heart that has been the main spring of all the happiness that we have witnessed.

“ Gone home,” says Mabel, smiling.

“ What ! dead ? ”

“ O, no ! no ! ”

“ How you frightened us, when you said ‘ gone home ! ’ We thought she must be dead. ”

“ My friends,” says Mabel, and her voice is inexpressibly sweet, as she lays her hand upon my shoulder, “ how could Effie die ? Her soul is immortal, isn't it ? ”

“ Certainly. But is her body dead ? ”

“ God came one day and took Effie's spirit home with him. He was very kind, and gave her time to say ‘ Good by ’ to us, and beg us not to weep. She said that she would come every day to us. And Effie never told a

falsehood. She has kept her promise, and we know that she is not 'dead.' Her body was very dear, but it wasn't Effie, and so we laid it away in God's jewel vault, — the earth, — and he will set it again next year in flowers, I suppose."

"What — what was the cause of her death?"

"It was a malignant fever, that she caught from a poor old woman, whom she insisted upon nursing herself. The old woman got well, but Effie had exhausted herself so much in watching, that she had not strength to battle with the disease. Dear Effie, she was so afraid that we would think hard of the old lady, that she particularly recommended her to our kindness. And we have been doubly kind to her ever since, to please Effie's spirit."

We cannot help weeping as we think of poor Effie, who lived and died for others, but we dry our eyes when we think of her supreme happiness in the kingdom of light; and we know that the most orthodox priest of the church might bow his head and say, "She will sit with the Lamb at God's right hand."

Mabel is very happy and contented. She tells us that Ernest and John have been favored by the world with the title of "Honorable," but that God had given it to them before, and as it was only he who had a right to bestow it, the world's opinion does not take them by surprise, or shock them into unwise habits, as it has many others. We asked Mabel how many children she has,

and she answers, eight, — four of them are with Effie in heaven, and four are here. She says that Effie has six, and all are here.

We have been talking with Mabel in a little upper parlor, but now she invites us down stairs to see them. She tells us that her two oldest sons are with Effie's in college, and her eyes beam with a matronly pride, as she recounts their noble qualities and their marked talents.

But those girls! how can we describe the sight that feasts our eyes, as she admits us into that sanctuary of life and beauty? Let every heart paint its own ideal of a true woman, and it can imagine, better than we can describe, the forms that are presented to us, with a voice tremulous with happy pride, as "My daughters."

"What do you think of them?" says John, entering with Ernest.

"That they are worthy of the parents who reared them," we at once respond, as we heartily return his earnest shake of the hand.

"And what do *you* think, little Bess?" says he, taking his youngest, a girl of fourteen, in his arms.

"That I will try to be worthy of the parent who watches me from the world where mother lives," says Bess, with a tear in her eye.

"And who is this?" we ask, as Mabel leads forward a child of three years who is shockingly deformed.

"This is our little pet," replies Mabel, "a poor child,

who was left here one night, and so we have loved and cared for it ever since. But this," said she, handing us a little book, with Effie's name upon it, "will show you a list of the many weary and troubled souls who have found rest and peace within the Dell, and moreover, where most of them, through Effie's means, have found honorable employment."

I am very happy talking over old times with Mabel, and I determine to stay here. So I bid Evening good night, as also all of the rest, excepting little Pet, whom I take to my room for company.

And here I am in the guest chamber of the Dell, with little Pet in my arms. I am very sleepy and o'erwearied with talking, as I presume you are with listening. I've half a mind to go to sleep. I believe I will. But then I am so apt to talk aloud. Heigh hum! Well, I cannot keep awake any longer; so here's for a comfortable nap, and if I say any thing aloud, why, you are welcome to it.

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