

AND THE TWO YOUNG PEOPLE

THE ISLAND NEIGHBORS.

A NOVEL OF AMERICAN LIFE.

By ANTOINETTE BROWN BLACKWELL.

ILLUSTRATED.



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P R E F A C E.

THIS story of a summer holiday, dedicated to all idlers and holiday-seekers, is the normal outgrowth of a restful mood—the fruit gathered in the leisurely moments of a long play-day when there seemed nothing better to do. The action of the book, drowsy with the languor of summer, quickened a little now and then by the sea-breezes, moves on with the easy footsteps of unhurried rural life; and there is no more thought of a moral in it than there is in the plays of children and the friskiness of all young animals; or in the unreckoning content of comfortable, every-day enjoyment in our maturer years.

We talk sometimes of “holding the mirror up to Nature;” but there was not even so much of effort in the present narrative. Nature held her mirror up to me; and looking in there, I saw all these things as herein narrated. It was once upon a time when I was an idler upon the sea-shore, surrounded by a little band of friends and kindred.

There was a venerable, beloved form, wedded henceforth to all sea-side memories, but hidden now from all our eyes by the thick veil of the future; there was a pleasant maiden, now three thousand miles away, looking out upon old ocean from the English coast; there were other young girls, just escaped from the school-room, and one, weary with the early experiences of the teacher; there was manhood dropping out from business into holiday, and troops of children eager for new scenes. There were captains, and sailors, and fishermen-farmers: their wives and children;—many of them as pleasant to remember as the lingering echoes of the sea-shore itself. But not one of all these has found a place here in my book.

The pictures drawn in the following pages are only broken reflections of the real objects as I saw them mirrored in the little pools among the rocks, where there was almost always a disturbing ripple from the sea-breezes; and where the tides swept over often enough to break into fragments many of the veritable images which I should like very much to have preserved. The people about me were often reflected in these delightful mirrors—pass

Memorial

ing to and fro—sitting dreamily upon the sands—perched about on the cliffs, or grouped farther off along the breezy downs; but I knew that, under the circumstances, it would be possible to give nothing better than very distorted likenesses, and so forbore to make even the slightest attempt at portraiture. But gradually, as I looked, all these other people of the story began to gaze out at me from the hidden depths below. Where they came from, I don't know. They were all new acquaintances; yet in time they grew more real and tangible to me than any of the flesh-and-blood folks about us. They went with us everywhere, taking a share in every thing which we did, and doing many other things of their own free will, in which the rest of us had no part nor lot. In the main, their characters seemed to be genuine and sincere, yet they were sometimes guilty of a little masquerading—none of them ever hesitating to appropriate either the words, or deeds, or garments, or even the spirit and manners, of their betters, when this suited their own purposes.

If any one of our summer friends, therefore, should ever recognize his own property, let him have it by all means; but he will probably find it piecemeal—stray bits here and there in the possession of either of the *dramatis personæ* of these mystic Island Neighbors. They have perhaps unwittingly borrowed it merely for the occasion, and will return it always with the readiest good-will.

A. B. B.



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THE ISLAND NEIGHBORS.

CHAPTER I.

ON THE SAND-BAR.

"THE quickest sail you ever made, isn't it, Captaining Percy?" said old Captain Giles, passenger.

"La, no! I've come over under two hours. We've done well to-day, though; and had a pleasant social time all round. Now if we can only get over the bar to anchor, the boats will take us up to your house, ma'am, by three or four o'clock," turning deferentially to the "Boston lady."

"We shall all be very glad indeed," she replied, graciously.

This Boston lady, Mrs. Warner, was a pleasant, polite, middle-aged, rather pale and languid woman, who was accompanied by an invalid husband, a grown son, two young daughters, and Margaret—waiting-maid and companion. They were on their way to spend the summer in a primitive niche of this out-of-the-way island, where they had taken a little furnished cottage by the sea-side.

Mr. Warner was a man hardly past middle life; but years of suffering and infirmity, while they had left one sunny side to his character, had added also a shady one—like an apple which has ripened unequally: smooth and delicious-looking, from one point of view, but gnarled and a little worm-eaten, from the other.

"The sail has been very pleasant," he said, with condescension; "but I am just getting so tired—so tired!" His voice had gone up an octave in the last clause of his sentence, and it fell on the ear as plaintively as a sick girl's. He gave it further emphasis by shutting his eyes, folding his hands, and drawing a long, weary breath.

The only other passenger was jolly old Captain Giles—already in his seventy-ninth year. This aged salt was as shrivelled as a cucumber

after it has lain long in the brine; and, like that, he had not touched vinegar yet, but was pliant, tough, and sweet, in mind and body throughout.

For a few minutes every one sat silent, attentive, and trusting; while the little sloop tacked, gathering up all her final energies for her last expected feat of the day—that of passing triumphantly over the bar.

"There! aground! We're aground! Don't you see, captaining, we're aground?" roared the aged passenger, his voice rising like a spurt of effervescence from a suddenly-uncorked bottle.

"Yes, I see," muttered Captain Percy.

"U - u - ugh!" spluttered red-haired Alfred Brand, in a tone of excessive disgust. He suddenly dropped the rope with which he had been managing the sail, shaking his fingers as if it had burnt his hand.

The invalid groaned, and re-closed the eyes that had opened from the recesses of a nodding nap; the lady, children, and Margaret all looked more curious than alarmed—and rather eager, as it seemed, at the promise of a little adventure. Letting go the rudder, the captain strode forward, his lips blown into a funnel for whistling; yet the sound held back, as if in sympathy with the condition of his sloop. "Well, there is no time to lose; tide is falling every minute. We are strong-handed, and we must work her off."

Up sprang Captain Giles as eagerly as if the distressed sloop had been his own. Alfred, whose bunk was inside the little cabin, and who was himself both first mate and crew, after clapping his hands in a dumb show of regret and apology, unconsciously looking hard at Margaret, who looked back her assurance of his innocence of misdoing, if any such existed, seized

oars and poles, which he began distributing to the two captains.

"The Dickens! Let me help too," cried young Frank Warner, disregarding a pull on either side from father and mother; each trying furtively to hold him back.

Thrusting one end of the oar into the sand, the four men leaned forward, and all shoved together heroically. "She moves! she moves a little!" was shouted hopefully; but she did not move, nevertheless; or if she did, it was only to edge her way a little higher up on the sands with a miserly grip at every incoming wave.

"I'll help, please, captain," said Margaret, dropping off her shawl and taking her place without ado, amidst the protest and the admiration of the sailors. But the sloop had taken her stand also, and she was able to maintain it against them all.

"We must lighten her! Bring up the boat, Alf. Now row the ladies and the gentleman ashore."

Alfred sprang into the row-boat, which was conveniently towing behind, and the passengers were almost as speedily transferred, poor Mr. Warner grumbling and lamenting in so undecided a manner that if the two captains had not each lent him an arm, with that kind of imperativeness which means, "We are in earnest, and no time to spare," he would hardly have found the energy to step into the unstable smaller craft.

"Don't be discouraged, sir! We'll all help you to take hold of life with your right hand yet, sir," said Captain Giles, as he took his seat also, grasping one pair of oars. Margaret, who had been handing over boxes and baskets without ceasing, quietly said, "Let me stay and help. I can shove with the best of you."

"No," was the general verdict; but there was a brightening of eyes under all the bronzed foreheads.

"I shall need your help sadly, Margaret," called the invalid; so Margaret stepped into the boat, and was rowed ashore with the others.

With long strokes of the oars, Alfred and Captain Giles returned to the sloop, and once again the four men strained every nerve to shove her off.

"We must unload."

Trunks and barrels were lifted over into the boat, Frank Warner working with the others, wholly unmindful of broadcloth.

Meantime the children ran about the sands in ready glee, gathering the pretty shells and stones, while their parents shivered disconsolately. "How cold it is!" said the lady, wrap-

ping herself closer in her large shawl. "I hope the salt-water won't take the color out of my dress. They splashed me dreadfully when the two boats came together."

Margaret looked down at her own best green embroidered gown. The wave had dipped over her also, half filling her lap. She shook it off, saying nothing at the time; and now she only gave another silent shake, and helped the invalid on with an additional overcoat.

"Won't you have a seat made on the sand, Mr. Warner? There's a lovely rise; and I'll help you down and up."

"No. No, Margaret. I'm too weary to get down there. I'll stand till it's over. The wet sand at this hour would give me cold for life."

"Look at Mr. Frank, sir, helping splendidly with the rest. The stubborn sloop ought to slide off the sand-bar, for pure shame of her bad doing," continued the cheerful Margaret.

"Captain Percy should have anchored off the bar—there was the mistake," said the gentleman, testily.

"I hope we shan't be here long, Henry."

"No, dear, I think not—that's a comfort."

When the luggage came on shore, Margaret drew a large trunk to the side of Mr. Warner. "Now, sir, I'm going to build a sofa fit for a king or a sick gentleman. This barrel means to roll itself up for a sofa-back, and these wraps are upholstering themselves into a cushion. There, Mr. Warner, isn't that a jewel of an easy-chair altogether?"

The invalid sank into the offered seat contentedly.

"Yes. Yes, Margaret, it is very welcome. Thank you. There is always some way provided when strength is just ready to fail. Providence is always good."

"Yes, sir—and will be while I'm on hand!" laughed the quick-witted girl as she went off after another trunk, for the convenience of Mrs. Warner.

"We shall have to wait here a while, ma'am. I'm certain they won't get her off," she said in a whisper, as she returned.

"I am afraid they won't, Margaret," accepting the offered seat in a dainty, lady-like way, after first spreading over it her cambric handkerchief.

"I might have helped shove, though!" whispered the girl confidentially to the pebble which she stooped to pick up for one of the children. "But it don't signify."

"What are they doing now, Margaret?" asked little Fannie, aged nine, coming up with face glowing, both hands full of treasures.

"Carrying the anchor out, to drop it in the deeper water, I think, Miss Fannie. Pity they tried running into the pond at all at half-tide!"

"How do you know all about it, Margaret? Were you ever here before?" asked Anne, a staid, care-taking child nearly thirteen.

"Oh no, not I; but I heard them talking on the sloop. They tried going over the bar an hour too late; and as the water is now getting lower all the while, I doubt if even the small boats can go all the way up the creek. Yet here we are still, more than two miles from Mrs. Dill's cottage! But don't speak of it to papa, Miss Anne. Trouble is a black cloud—best let alone till it falls of itself; then sometimes it settles the rough waters more than it stirs them up."

"I won't speak of any thing vexatious; but that black cloud will fall, whether the other does or not," whispered Anne, pointing up at the threatening sky.

"Yes. I placed papa's back to that cloud, and mamma's too. Keep them both looking over at the blue just yonder—that's a darling!"

"Margaret, what are they doing now?" called Mrs. Warner.

"Reefing the sails. Getting the bad thing trim and tight, to leave her at anchor, I think, Mrs. Warner."

All eyes watched the movements on board the sloop; and when the men threw themselves into the boats, every one on shore breathed quickly with a sense of speedy relief. A second boat had started up from somewhere, like a double of the other—evidently ready to help.

"Better than a second umbrella in a rain-storm, that boat, to a party as large as ours," chattered Margaret to the children; every body looking on delightedly.

"But they aren't coming here! Don't you see, Margaret, they are going right away from us!" called the sick gentleman, nervously. And, sure enough, the two boats sailed away over the bar, carrying Mr. Frank, with the others. The stranded party seemed to be literally abandoned to their fate.

"They must be coming round, sir, to take us from the opposite side," cried Margaret, hopefully. The party were on a narrow peninsula of sand, and the boats were soon seen nearing them, as Margaret had predicted.

"Shall I run across, Mrs. Warner, and find out what's to be done?"

"Do, Margaret. Tell Mr. Frank to hasten here to his father; and, Maggie, hurry back, won't you? We are all so distressed." The poor lady looked weary and anxious to the last degree.

"How can I ever walk over there, exhausted as I am? Dear! dear! what miscalculation for us to undertake all this for the sake of a quiet summer. Better have gone to a great watering-place hotel, and lived in a crowd, than bear all this," grumbled the husband.

"But we are really on shore, dear, and not far from our summer cottage. There's a quiet three months just ahead. It can't be long now before you can rest."

Margaret ran with willing feet across the sands. One boat only came to meet her. Frank sprang on shore. There seemed a moment's parley. Then the two boats headed up the creek; while Margaret was seen returning slowly, followed by the young gentleman, who stooped to gather pebbles, tossing up and catching them as he walked. What could it all mean?

"You tell them, Margaret," said Frank. "Get it well over before I come."

"Oh yes," she replied, cheerfully. "I've got the only olive-branch to be found in the sands here, Mr. Frank; but I would sooner run all the way to the new house on foot and get the supper ready, than offer it to either of 'em. They'll think I croak like a raven, and look blacker than the faithless bird who didn't come back at all from his errand."

"Well, grin from ear to ear—that's as good as sunshine."

"So I must, then, and make believe black is white—if only they can be persuaded to think so." She hurried back, while the loiterer tossed his pebbles, and waited the result.

"They're coming for us with a carriage, Mr. Warner—a comfortable, close carriage—to take the whole of us to our very door. There'll be no walking up now from the water to the house, as there would have been if we had gone up in the boats. We have only to wait a bit and make ourselves comfortable."

"But why did they go off that way and abandon us?"

"Because the boats will only go up half-way at low water. To go in boats at all would give us a walk; but to go now would be out of the question. That old captain has a good mile to trudge with his carpet-bag on his back, and he'll be wet to the skin—that he will!"

Margaret threw up a large umbrella as she spoke. "If you'll let me get the wraps, sir, I'll spread them against the storm. Captain Percy will soon come for us with good horses, and they will take the baggage by itself."

"Storm! rain coming, with all the rest!" cried the invalid aghast, and springing to his feet, while Margaret hastily bundled every body

into water-proofs. Down came streams of water—cold, and driving in wild fury; and the thunder grumbled so impressively that every one else was silenced. Frank and Margaret planted their feet firmly on the lower edge of an immense blanket, and holding the upper side high above their heads, they made an effectual screen for the whole party against the tempest. It was any thing but easy work, and the umbrellas were of no service to either of them. The others cowered down under them upon the trunks, though Anne stuck out her feet bravely to press down the blanket where it blew up under the fierce gale, and finally she too slipped out from under her umbrella, and stood up between Frank and Margaret—her father's umbrella continually hitting her in the face as it veered to and fro. Margaret had found time to pin up her dress, rolling back the embroidered sleeves and fastening them at the shoulders; and the three, with their hats knocked over their eyes, stood upright in a little semicircle, hardly able to keep themselves from being tumbled over upon the sitting party below.

"The wind is still tempered to the shorn lamb," plained the invalid, self-pityingly.

"We're tempering it for all the sheep, father, old and young," retorted Frank. "There's one little *ba* in a fleece which must be both wind and water proof—oh, Fannie?"

"I'm not a *ba*, I'm a bear; and I'd just as soon tumble out into the storm as not, Mr. Frank Warner."

"Good for the bear! When this hurricane is over, he can come and give me a hug."

"I should like to give up my place to that poor old Captain Giles," said Anne.

"Oh dear! I shouldn't like to have him stand so close to me, then; your feet stepping into my dress every half-minute, child, is as much as I can bear."

"Do I, mother—the wind pitches me so? But I won't again, if I can help it."

"Captain Giles don't belong to the great unwashed, mother. He's been a kind of honorable male sea-nymph from his youth up, and goes out swimming to this day. I say, it's a pity he didn't cast in his lot here with us; and I invited him."

"Of course you did, my son."

"Captain Percy said his carriage was elastic, and he could easily stretch it to hold us all; but the old hero wouldn't wait. He said, 'Miss Giles will be expecting me; and I tell you, young man, if you can save your wife ten minutes of anxious waiting, it's better to walk than ride, and take your chance of a wetting, to do that.'"

"A very proper sentiment!" said Mr. Warner, emphatically. "The walk will be hard for the poor old captain, but, happily, his strong back has been fitted for the burden." Afterwards, when the storm waxed wilder, the invalid's depressed spirits rose to a sudden exaltation. He forgot himself, and, standing erect, drinking in long breaths of the purified air, he seemed to have grown strong and healthful within five minutes. "This is really grand," he said, as the ocean and the thunder roared together. It was hard to keep him from stepping out into the tempest, in his enthusiasm.

"I like it too, papa; and it's a real shipwreck, isn't it?"

"So it is almost, pussy," he replied, laughing.

"Quite, papa. There's the ship."

"There it is, sure enough, and better than wrecked; and here are we, six souls, on a bare, sandy shore, in a hurricane—as much cut off from all the rest of the world, apparently, as if we were in Juan Fernandez itself. It's quite an adventure, Fannie."

The children had never seen him in better spirits, and his wife's eye brightened. "Would the sea air work a permanent cure?"

So, talking, with abounding satisfaction, and battling successfully with the storm, which was finally conquered, the time wore away, and the carriage hove in sight just as a fine sunset came streaming over them. The sloop had been seen through the telescope, and her passengers expected at their future residence. A cheerful fire was in progress, and the fragrance of tea greeted their arrival. Then their landlady, who welcomed them to her well-spread table, vanished like the good genii of the tales; and the newcomers remained masters of the situation.

While the others were at supper, Alfred Brand drove up with the baggage. He and Margaret helped each other with mutual goodwill, while "big box, little box, band-box, and bundle" were all getting deposited in their various niches up stairs and down. They talked together like old friends before the last trunk was in its final position, and shook hands at parting—an operation which left a new tingle in the young sailor's fingers. But instead of shaking it off, he instinctively kept his hand clasped tight till he reached home, as if determined to keep fast hold of a very agreeable sensation.

That night Alfred Brand dreamed he had engaged to row a party of angels to a wonderful island, where the grass and trees were rose-colored; but they got aground near by, while he tried in vain to shove them off. Presently

another oar was put into the sand beside his own. Two hands grasped it firmly; and as he looked, the arms were covered with embroidered green sleeves, and a smiling face, only a little pock-marked, with clear, shining eyes, looked out at him, saying, in a voiceless language, "I am going to help you!" Straightway the boat floated again, and they found the island they sought. The angels landed; but as he rowed off, some one sat in his boat and worked one pair of oars; yet he tried in vain to find out whether or not it was Margaret. A mist came

between them, and he could not see distinctly; but they rowed on and on together till the dream faded out, and he awoke in the sunshine.

That night Margaret dreamed that they were at sea in a great ship, which was suddenly wrecked upon a hidden rock, and in the midst of the frightful scene Alfred Brand stood high up in the rigging, saying to her in dumb show, "If I had been master of the ship, all this shouldn't have happened;" and Margaret, believing him, slipped somehow out of the ship into a great calm and slept peacefully till morning.

CHAPTER II.

AN OLD DOVE-COTE.

"Is breakfast most ready, Miss Giles?" said Captain Giles, coming in from his early "chores," with his old hat held politely in his hand; "because if tain't I'll go out and hoe potatoes a spell."

"Most ready, captaining. I'm just turning the meat, and every thing else is about baked and biled. You had better lie down, after your cruise yesterday. It wouldn't pay to go into the garden now."

"Well, I guess I will. This morning early I felt ever so little knocked up; but that all went off, after a whiff of the fresh salt air."

A calico lounge stood invitingly on one side of the room, the nice chintz of the cushion protected by a home-woven, parti-colored blanket, which looked both serviceable and comfortable, and the pillow was faultlessly white. Captain Giles, hanging his hat on a peg, laid himself down, boots and all, with apparent good-will.

On the other side of the room the table was laid with two covers side by side. All the earthenware was of a flowing dark blue. The thin-bladed knives and two-tined steel forks were beautifully polished, and the spoons looked certainly of the best and brightest silver; but such queer little slender things of a very notable pattern—possibly heir-looms in the family. The cloth was not white, but brown; yet it had been smoothly ironed and folded, and was spotless, except for one little stain, which was carefully covered up a moment after by a blue plate, filled with leaves of crisp, green lettuce. Then this little table looked as tidy and pretty as need be.

Mrs. Giles peeped first into the oven, with a splinter from the broom in her hand, one end of which she thrust into something which was

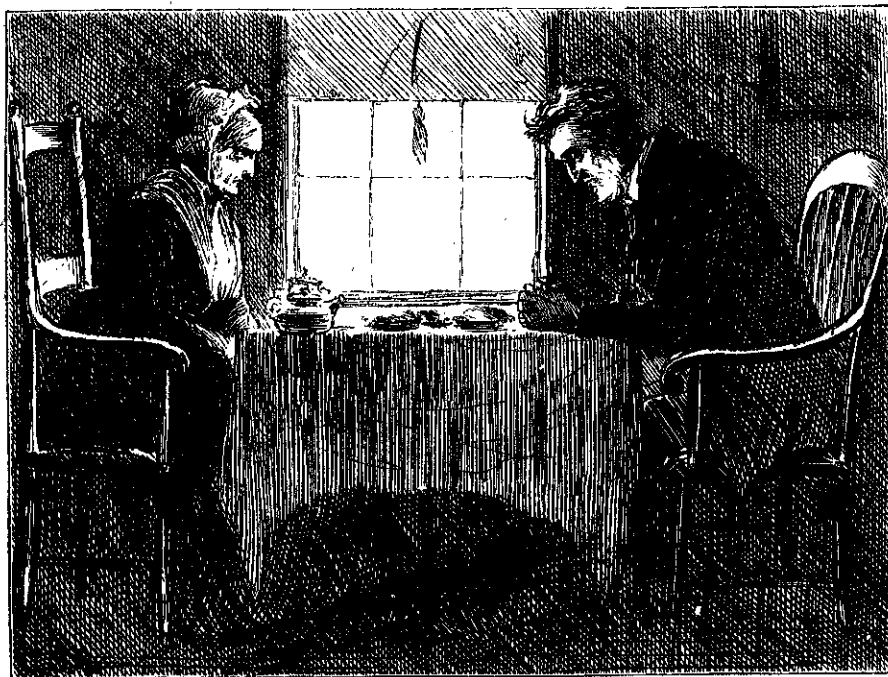
baking. Then she drew back smiling, and said aloud to herself, "I needn't a-done that, it's only johnny-cake!"

Arming herself with a fork, she next peered into a covered pot, and gave three several stabs into the depths thereof. Then covering the pot again with its shining lid, she lifted it deftly out of its place, shutting up the gap with the iron stove-lid, and poured off the water from the five potatoes which she had boiled to a turn, putting them back on the fire a moment without the cover, to evaporate the steam and make them "floury." Then she brought out an oval, dark-blue dish, placed on it her three slices of thin ham, and poured over it the gravy thinned with water. She cut the johnny-cake into six small squares, bringing it, in its yellow baking-plate, bodily to the table, and laid her five potatoes—all in their thin new jackets, which had broken open beautifully—into a dish which the maker had intended for a soup-plate. Last of all, she added a minute pat of butter and the tea-pot simultaneously.

"Come, Captaining Giles," said the smiling little old woman, "every thing is on the table getting cold. Don't wait a minute, if you want a nice breakfast."

"Done to a T, is it? Well, heave ho! My back's a little stiff this morning, Miss Giles. That walk was pretty hard, after the day's work I'd had of it; but I wasn't going to wait for the carriage, as if I wanted to seem city bred; and I got home an hour first—that's something."

"You had your supper, and fell asleep before they come past," said Mrs. Giles, sympathizing in her husband's feeling of triumph; "but you must be quite ready for breakfast."



THE OLD COUPLE.

The captain was standing half erect, with one hand pressed hard against his rheumatic back, and the other resting on his knee. His wife glanced over at him keenly. Her housewifely heart was with the breakfast which ought to be eaten without delay; but the wifely heart came instantly uppermost.

"Let me get you some opodeldoc, John, and rub it in briskly with a woollen cloth!"

"Pshaw, no! It's easy to get spleeny. I'll work it off. If I once get warmed with digging, it will go."

"Maybe it won't, captaining."

"I'll try it. Not much danger of rheumatiz in summer, if one is reasonable. It wasn't worth turning in at all, though, for such a candle-end of rest as you gave me, Miss Giles; but I'm pretty hungry. That's a comfort!"

The old couple drew up to the raised leaf of the table, which was still standing against the wall; and when the captain had asked the blessing, the old wife began pouring the tea, to which she added milk plentifully, but no sugar; and the old husband helped himself to the salad, which he cut up and salted, adding a liberal supply of peppered vinegar. This done, they both came to a pause.

"Which slice of ham would you like, Miss Giles?" asked the captain, eying the plate carefully in search of the best piece.

"Don't make a grain of difference," reaching out her plate.

"This one looks right, if it isn't just a little too lean."

"I can make that up with gravy."

"So you can," said the delighted old man, nodding his approval of her merry humor.

Then they both sat and peeled their potatoes gravely.

"They're nice, for new potatoes; don't you think so?"

"Don't know, Miss Giles. I expect it's in the cooking."

"They are not so very young, though; here are skins that would do for shoe-leather in case of necessity, captaining."

"The old ones used to be as floury as meal, and these seem just like 'em. We shall have good potatoes pretty much the year round, if I keep the strength to hoe 'em, and you do the cooking."

"This is light, I guess, for I put in an egg this morning," handing over her corn-bread.

"It's real Indian sponge-cake," he said, in a tone of sincere belief, breaking off a crumb and eying it proudly. After this, not a word was spoken till breakfast was nearly over.

For fifty-seven years this couple had broken bread together at the same table. For all these years the wife had been chief cook, while the

husband had kept a good appetite, good digestion, and a perpetually vigorous sense of gratitude. The table had sometimes been drawn out from the wall, while sons and daughters sat between them; and more frequently the mother had eaten her meals with children on either side of her, while the husband was far away over the waste of waters—generally in pursuit of the whale, but sometimes seeing a little of the world and dealing in merchandise.

All this had passed. The old couple had accumulated a sufficient competence. The sons had inherited the calling of their father, and the daughters the vocation of their mother. Two children had gone before to lay the table for them in the unseen country, which they were both ready to visit on the shortest notice. But they were still living in a green old age.

"That Mr. Warner, when he feels like it, is as merry as a sleigh-bell on smooth roads; but he sinks down all in a minute—like a baby that's lost its mother, and nobody to comfort it. It's wonderful odd!" The old man's eye twinkled, as he straightened himself with an added dignity and vigor.

"It ain't every one that can be as much a man as ever at nearly eighty," answered the wife, proudly. "Twice a child, comes from sickness as well as age, I suppose. Poor gentleman!" she added softly, and with true motherly pity.

"He talks like a parson sometimes, and I made him out to be one; but he says he was in business, and gave it up only for sickness. Rich enough, I guess, though, and lives now only to take care of his ailments. That don't pay; but then he don't know it."

"Like old Captaining John Wilson, he is always busy nursing his rheumatism. If yours got as much care, I expect it would be about the same thing. How is your back now?"

"All right; your third cup of tea just finished it. Old Captaining John's wife has gone; I expect it's that that has taken the marrow out of his bones, and I don't wonder."

A tear started to the old wife's eye, and her shrivelled face flushed a little with a bloom fairer than youth ever wore; but she got up without speaking, and reaching down the large Bible from the shelf, with the spectacles which lay upon it, she handed both to Captain Giles. They sat down side by side in two arm-chairs, while the old man read a chapter. Then, with his Bible still on his knees, he bowed his head. The wife folded her hands and bowed hers also, while the husband prayed—using the same fine old phrases which he had used for twenty-five or

thirty years, but with a new warmth and tenderness breathing through them, from the new stir of generous and grateful emotions.

So they went about the day's duties—he to his garden, and she to her unending little household cares, which she allowed no one to share with her, and at which she wrought easily, with the perpetual feeling that she wrought only in love.

Every few minutes she might have been seen with a plate or saucer in her hand, which she polished till it shone, and flickered its blue radiance over upon the opposite wall, while she stood looking earnestly from the window. She was waiting to see if the old husband still showed any signs of the threatened rheumatism; for her heart misgave her that he was making light of it, for her comfort.

More than a dozen times she still travelled to and fro between window and table, before she was fully satisfied; then the shadow of care was thrown aside, and her face beamed placidly. Captain Giles went on hoeing, and whistling as he hoed, with a free and easy motion which was unmistakable. He was a tall, rather spare, sinewy man, with a stock of gray hair, a gray beard, and a form upright enough yet to shame many a working-man at fifty. She was rather under medium size, and ever so little inclined to the dumpling order of women; but her figure was still trim and neat, in its calico dress, checked apron, and white kerchief. Her hair was almost as white as the muslin cap, with its Quakerish border, which lay over it; and her cheek, if it was wrinkled, looked soft and kissable enough to any one who loved her—as an abundance of children and grandchildren did. Altogether, she was a grandmother who always will get more caresses and more genuine love than most grandmothers do; and she deserved it all.

"Miss Giles," said the captain, coming in after an hour's work, "I guess I'll take about a dozen fish-hooks in my pocket, and go over and ask the Boston family to come fishing with me on the pond. They've been up and down the beach; but the poor gentleman has been sitting for half an hour in the shade of the house, seemingly with nothing in the world to do. 'Pears to me, it would be a mercy to get him engaged about something. How is he ever to get well if he don't!"

"Sure enough, I don't see how he can," said the little woman, looking out into the distance so wistfully that she was evidently in search of a vocation for the sick gentleman. "But perhaps he isn't strong enough for fishing."

"Whew! it's only a step! I'd carry him on

my back, if that would do the business; but I saw him walk five times as far up and down the shore, leaning on somebody's arm. Seems to me, he's got to learn to walk alone over again; and it's worth a trial."

"So it is," said the wife. Sharp glances went to and fro from the two pairs of old eyes; but neither of them would laugh. At last the woman took her husband's hand and said, coaxingly, "Don't never say any thing of that kind to any one but me, John."

"No, Mary, I won't, if it chokes me; but we'll cure him up yet; only"—and the old captain fidgeted about uneasily—"only I am just a little grain afraid of his wonderful dignity!" Here both eyes twinkled like two rockets just before they shoot off in a white flame.

"There, capting, there! Don't say any more; don't, as long as you live, or you'll forget and certainly say it to his face—as you did to Polly White when she got a sprained ankle."

"Cured her in two days!" said the captain, going off into a burst of laughter. "This case is altogether more desperate; and if it's beyond my remedies, I shan't make an ass of myself, little woman."

"Well, rich Boston merchants and country girls can't be dealt with exactly alike," persisted the dame, uneasily.

"Of course not; besides, this Boston merchant is really an invalid—no doubt of that,

Miss Giles. I only think that, *if he would make me his doctor*, I could cure him in a month; but I expect he won't do it. There, are you satisfied that I am a very prudent man—as I ought to be at my time of life?"

"I rather think you are," her face relaxing into a smile slowly, but still with something of rather dubious pleading in it.

"Don't trouble. I'm acting upon honor with you; and besides, you wouldn't have any fear of me if you once saw how *very* gentlemanly he is. Chances are, I shall give him a wide berth and go off on another cruise, taking up the youngster, instead, as first mate."

"That might do."

"So it might. I never shall be any thing but a great boy-loafer as long as I live; and my only regret is that I can't make you go fishing too, with the best of the young folks."

"Too late now to think of it, capting," giving him a little push. "Besides, I'm baking to-day; and here are three loaves as light as any sponge."

"So there are! Well, I'm off for worse company, then; remember that. I shall try my best to get the whole family in tow—tip-top Irish girl and all. She'll be needed, as steam-tug for the rest."

"If she isn't baking too."

"Well, yes, I s'pose there's housework there—and waiting, to boot. We shall see how they'll fix it."

CHAPTER III.

RALLYING THE FORCES.

CAPTAIN GILES trudged over in his shirt-sleeves to the house of the new neighbors, fresh from the city; smiling a little to himself as he walked.

"If I take a right-handed hold of the sick man now, perhaps I can do him a real service; but I rather guess it will be 'Love's labor lost.' Let it!" That was the current of his thoughts.

Hat in hand, he stood as upright as a sentinel at the side of Mr. Warner's easy-chair, running his fingers just a little nervously through his gray hair, while he made his proposal deferentially.

"I've a snug boat over here on the pond just by, Capting Warner—oars and sails, whichever you like—with plenty of fish-hooks, and bait. I have come over to ask the whole family to go

fishing with me this morning, or this afternoon—just as you may prefer."

The gentleman opened wide his blue eyes, and gasped despairingly at the idea of *his* being invited to go fishing.

"Thank you, Captain Giles; but I haven't done such a thing for seven years," he said, decisively.

Apparently, thoroughly established as an invalid gentleman, he looked with ineffable pity upon his thirty years' senior, who could be plebeian enough to cultivate the health to endure such fatigue at his time of life.

"I suppose it's a kind of second nature to you, a sailor," he said, soothingly; "but I really could not think of going. I haven't the strength for such an effort. Thank you, though, captain."

"You are quite welcome. I'm a very old salt, sir; but this pond is in the fresh-water line entirely."

"Is it?" said Mr. Warner, innocently, his face beaming with affability. "I suppose the water is smooth and safe. The children, I see, are eager to go. We shall be glad to trust them to your care and experience, and I wish you success."

"Little fear on that head, sir. The fish are about as thick in the pond as grasshoppers are in a meadow. Here's a little lady, warranted to take a baker's dozen on her hook."

"Oh dear! shall I, sir?" exclaimed Fannie, in excessive delight. "Then I wish mamma would go, or else Margaret."

"Ah! that would do capitally."

Margaret stood at the door, with a winning smile for the "nice old captain" on her face; but with a wistful look shining in her eyes, which was an unmistakable indorsement of Fannie's wishes. "If she only could be an indispensable comfort just now to some one who would join the fishing-party!" She was sure of remaining an indispensable comfort somewhere; but that luxury was destined to be enjoyed at present by the home circle. Mrs. Warner was too exhausted to think of fishing, and too dependent on Margaret to dream of sparing her this morning, of all others; while they were still occupied with the nerve-exciting task of unpacking and settling into new quarters. The operation of hanging dresses and dressing-gowns on rusty iron nails, against the white-washed walls, had already set her teeth on edge to such a degree that Margaret had taken it wholly out of her hands without loss of time.

Moving from an elegant city house into even a very neat and tidy country cottage, with its limited space and inevitable deficiencies, was a trial for which Mrs. Warner had willingly and heroically prepared herself; yet it was something to be felt rather severely by one of her somewhat over-fastidious tastes when it came to the actual trial. Besides, she was bound to cover up all the annoyance from her sick husband, which made it only the worse both for herself and Margaret; and moreover, she was really half an invalid herself. This Margaret fully realized, in her generous heart, so that she often served Mrs. Warner with a tenderness which was sometimes wanting even towards the sick gentleman.

From early morning till now the willing girl had been alert and active. There was a whole sea near by for a bath-tub; but in the absence of the requisite number of wash-hand bowls,

she had extemporized them from tin pans and yellow pie-dishes. Sailors' chests were conjured into wash-stands, bedsteads, or sofas, as the case demanded; and to such an extent that their owner would have looked on in surprise at the remarkable and unexpected qualities so suddenly developed in her various possessions. Margaret proved herself as fertile in make-shift ingenuity as a shipwrecked Yankee might, stranded on a wooded shore, with his jack-knife left, as his sole inheritance from a civilized past. Best of all, she kept Mrs. Warner from despair by a fund of good-humored mother-wit and suggestions which seemed perfectly inexhaustible. She remained at home cheerfully, to go on manipulating the family into an unheard-of state of cushioned comfort and even luxury.

Frank and the children were soon ready; but persistent old Captain Giles was still unwilling to give up his morning dream of curing the invalid. He clothed himself in some of the assured manner which he had been wont to use towards his sea-sick passengers when he was in command of a large merchantman, and began afresh.

"My dear Mr. Warner, I should be only too glad to lend you an arm. It is but a short distance. The little sail will be pleasant, and will certainly give you an appetite. We can return in half an hour, if you desire. I have quite set my heart upon it, sir."

Mr. Warner looked incredulous; then folded his hands and closed his eyes, leaning back.

"I haven't the strength for it, thank you."

"Ah, well, I am sorry! You would find it an excellent constitutional. Do you think you may be able to go in a few days, when you have rested from your journey? Our sea-air is a wonderful invigorator; and if you are not a well man by fall, I shall be grievously disappointed."

"No. No, it is hardly probable I can go at all. I never expect to be well again in this life. My highest hope is that I may be comfortable, and not too great a sufferer."

"Ah! I hope you may realize more than that!"

"We must submit to Providence," said the invalid, opening his eyes, and looking the faintest suggestion of reproof.

"Exactly, I suppose so; but I'm an old fellow nearly off duty. I'm going in for an afternoon play-day, with all the youngsters who choose to join me. I trust you'll enjoy a fresh perch with your dinner, sir, like the best of us; but if I eat three to your one, they'll all agree with me—if I've caught them first with my own hook."

"Will they, sir? Do you mean that, real-

ly?" asked little Fannie, coming up to his side and taking his brown hand as they walked towards the pond.

"Yes, my dear. I found out long ago that nothing ever disagrees with an old sailor when he's on duty. And since I have turned farmer, I find that almost any seed will do well if you only plant it in good soil."

Captain Giles had fallen back into his comfortable every-day manner, better suited to his jolly temper and his coatless condition. The children felt perfectly at home in his company.

"Don't you ever have to take after-dinner pills, then, like papa, Captain Giles?" asked Anne, looking up curiously at the smiling, bronzed face.

"No, child, never in all my life. Physic is just as unnecessary for my stomach, as red paint would be for my cheeks. I don't think it would make me any handsomer; do you?"

"No, sir," said the child, simply, but turning away to hide her smiles under the shadow of her great straw hat. His long deep wrinkles had possessed a curious fascination for her from the first. They seemed to be so twisted and crossed, and mixed up in a general complication with smiles and good-humor, that she had watched him all the day before with incessant wonder. Now, to think of putting rouge over all this, was almost too much for her gravity.

"I look plenty well enough for the old wife I've got at home. Don't you think so?"

"I like you," answered the child, laughing; and coming up to him frankly, she took hold of his other hand.

A light came into the old captain's eyes. "Well," said he, "we shall be friends, I see; and my wife is as much better than I am as the blue-fish we shall get next week are better than the perch we are going after to-day. Besides, she makes capital doughnuts and gingerbread for little folks. These may not be very healthy for the small city people who are sitting all day in school, but they are capital for little fisherwomen here on the island. I've no doubt Miss Giles would be glad to exchange a cake for a smile or a pretty word, any day. She has little granddaughters just your age, and you'll put her in mind of 'em."

"Do they live here, too, Captain Giles?"

"No, none of 'em here. All on the mainland; but they come to see us sometimes. Now, young capting, can you row?" he asked, turning suddenly to Frank.

"Just a little, sir; I'm not very skillful, but I can learn."

"Good! It will blister your hands, though."

"Well, let it."

"Shall you wear gloves?"

"I? No!" said the young gentleman, a little contemptuously; "I've come to get brown." So they stepped into the boat, all in holiday mood, and rode away, all four, into fairy-land.

But the perch bite in the enchanted realms quite as readily as they do in the most prosaic waters; and the party, after two hours, came home plentifully laden with fish and unbounded satisfaction. Fannie's baker's dozen, plus two, had been fairly caught; and were found delightful eating by the still enchanted fishing-party, though no one found any ill effects following from sea-air appetites and an ample supply.

"That Captain Giles is a brick, mother!" said Frank. "When I'm an old man, I'll retire to a safe pond somewhere and set up a boat. It's immensely better than only sucking one's thumbs and growling half the time, like a winter bear."

"Remember though, my son, that a gentleman is more than a fisherman."

"Yes, mother, but a fisherman *may* be a gentleman—at least I know of one who is. He's the very best old sole-leather I've met in a lifetime. He suits Fannie and me just equally; and as for little Miss Sobersides, she looks upon him already as a wonderful and many-voiced oracle."

"All the virtues combined, and delightfully flavored with perch!" answered the mother, laughing.

"I suspect so, a little," said Frank, modestly, trying to moderate his very sanguine belief in his new friend; "but at any rate he's a wonderful prize as a summer guide and rural tutor; you'll admit so much, mother?"

"I am inclined to think he is, Frank. His experience and discretion will be of great value, and I shall feel all the easier if you are in his company."

"So, then, he is to be cultivated without stint. Hooray! he's worth a dozen youngsters!"

As for Margaret, she took the fish vigorously in hand; looking every one in the mouth curiously, as its turn came, and pretending to the children that she had a dim idea that it might possibly contain a golden coin—a marvel which tradition had whispered to her did once occur in the olden times.

So they all ate their fish for two meals in thankfulness, and the evening and the morning were the first day.



CHAPTER IV.

ON THE HILL-TOPS.

"WHAT party is that, Frank, over on the hill yonder?" asked his father. "I have seen them there every night since we came; and if we form as picturesque a group as they do, we are almost as pretty a sight as the fine old sea itself."

"Evidently they think we do, father; for they seem to look often enough this way. It's the Mayboughs, parents and children, gone up there to see a little of the world after sunset; and a neighbor or two have come to gossip in company."

"These people really take a good deal of comfort," said the invalid gentleman, meditatively. "They sell us their eggs, cream, and green peas, and live themselves contentedly on fish, potatoes, and hard work; but they all seem to enjoy it."

"That little Molly came tugging her basket of new potatoes, bigger than herself, up the hill to-day, her bare legs scratched woefully with the briars—but persisting that her load wasn't very heavy, and she didn't want any extra pennies for bringing it up. She was just a convenient little tame donkey, I thought; but if that is she dancing on the top of the stone fence, she is frisking now like a pet lamb. Her voice floats over here as charming as a bird's, without a note of care in it. It's really wonderful!"

"The donkeys, you know, sir, eat thistles, and thrive on them beautifully," said Margaret, who came up just in time to hear the last few sentences; bringing a warm cloak, which she proceeded to wrap about the invalid.

"So they do, Margaret. There are blood-horses who must have oats, or die; and donkeys, who will do well enough if they can only get thistles."

"Blood-horses might not win in steeplechases, father, without oats; but I expect they would survive if they got only hay; and very likely would roll over famously in the pasture if they once got out of the stable."

The gentleman shook his head positively, without deigning a reply; but he drew his cloak about him, and sat up with a conscious and majestic presence which was almost overwhelming. Frank only lifted his eyebrows; but Margaret turned away with a little gesture of impatience, which she meant no one to see, and used only as an outlet to her own feelings. Then she went vigorously to work helping Mrs. Warner, who had just come up on to the hill with the children, in finding a more comfortable position for her rocking-chair. So the family were all assembled here in their out-doors evening drawing-room.

Mr. Warner sat in his large-armed, stuffed chair; Mrs. Warner in the little rocker, that never could find a perfectly satisfactory place for its large and restless feet; Frank occupied a camp-stool, and the children and Margaret, either a long, hard bench, or the more comfortable grass at their feet, as they chose. The uncompromising wooden bench was a fixture of the place for the season; but the easy cushioned chairs went up and down the hill daily, and sometimes even three times a day, in Margaret's arms. The camp-stool, which folded and unfolded just about as easily as a pocket-handkerchief does, and was about as useful to its owner, was the personal property of Mr. Frank, going with him wherever he saw fit to carry it. This hill-top overlooked the sea; indeed it was almost on the edge of the overhanging cliff, and yet was but a little way from the cottage.

One marked feature of this neighborhood was its apparently interminable number of distinctly-rounded, smooth hills, varying in size and shape; some of them clustered in bunches, and others more remote, with valleys and lesser swells between. They were almost always covered with grass, either closely mown, or eaten off by the sheep; while along the sides or in the valleys nestled the cream-colored, lime-washed, weather-worn houses, mottled with their brown

patches where the wash had peeled off—in the distance harmonized in a pretty neutral tint suggestive of stone. The gardens and cultivated fields clustered also in the sheltered nooks, and the scant shrubbery, which ventured to lift up its head some distance from the shore, stood grouped about the dwellings; mutually giving and receiving protection against their blustering foes, the sea-breezes. Yet this landscape, even if judged solely on its own merits independent of the ever-restless ocean upon its borders, was most charming at this hour, when the lingering rays of sunset covered it with regal glory landward, and the young crescent moon hung over the sea. Even in the broad glare of sunshine the sky outline of those treeless, brownish-green hills was always beautiful; while if you could peep over them or between the most distant, you almost always caught the gleaming of blue water—in one direction generally studied thickly with sails; and in others, quiet bays or inland ponds sleeping peacefully in the valleys, or lying at the feet of green, uprising hills. Here was a scene far enough away from the great busy world and its care; yet it was a little world in itself, teeming with its own little restless, earnest, pungently-flavored life.

The Maybough party, perched on their hill-top, perhaps an eighth of a mile inland, occupied a broad stone fence which began in the valley, running directly over the summit. Another stone wall, starting from this at the apex, ran off at right angles in one direction, making a delightful terrace, on which the little ones scampered to and fro in their play. Four small moving figures stood out distinctly against the rosy western sky, and, in the distance, every movement of these barefooted country children seemed full of grace; while the elders, sitting quietly on the fence in various attitudes, made a very striking and picturesque group.

"It is really a charming tableau," said Mrs. Warner, her placid face lighting up as she looked.

"Rural felicity exemplified," laughed Frank, "made rose-colored in one instance at least," pointing to the now partially-faded sunset.

"'Tis distance lends enchantment to the view," added his father, rather pompously, but good-naturedly.

"And yet, I'll wager that the actors in the scene find it entertaining, father. You see, they repeat it every evening, and apparently find their hour of chit-chat more comforting than an evening cordial."

"It is a very pretty custom indeed for a few neighbors to gather in that way into a social

knot in the twilight; but I confess I am very glad their hill is not any nearer to ours," said Mrs. Warner, with a little complacent lifting of the eyebrows.

"Why, mother?" asked Fannie, with wide-open eyes, looking longingly over at the playing children.

The lady only laughed, and said, "Make Frank give you a game of romps, pussy."

"Will you, Frank?"

"Yes; and if you catch me, I'll answer your question to mother."

The young gentleman was caught after a time, stopping to take breath very near his mother's chair.

"Now, Frank, why doesn't mother wish the Mayboughs to come any nearer to us?" demanded the child.

"Because their blood is just as much thicker than ours as the soles of their feet are, Miss Pussy," replied her brother, with the utmost gravity.

"Is it, mother?"

"Now, Frank!" remonstrated the lady, with a rather pleased smile; and Fannie discovering that she had been sold, as her brother would have expressed it, scampered away, scrambling down over the sandy cliff, to join Anne and Margaret, who had gone to enjoy the sea-shore by moonlight. Frank followed her half down the slope, where, digging his heels into the sand to secure a firmer foothold, he stood tossing pebbles out into the ocean until the party came within hailing distance. Upon the cliff near the shore, some furlongs off, was a solitary gray rock; and lying upon this, in the shadow, was a motionless figure in a red shirt, which gleamed out in the soft moonlight, though the face of the wearer was not visible.

"Margaret! Margaret!" called Frank, in a tragic tone, "who is that sitting upon the great rock yonder? He has been perched there like a black crow for the last hour; but seems to me he has red on his wings."

"Whist! whist! Mr. Frank," called back Margaret, reproachfully. "You are out-roaring the ocean. It would be better to go and ask him. It's some fisherman, likely."

"Looks more like a sailor," laughed Frank. "I wish I only had my spy-glass. Do you wish for my spy-glass, Margaret?"

"Hush, lad! I say, hush! can't you? You needn't call the stars down to look, since it's no concern of theirs! Seems to me, he isn't seeking the notice of any one, whoever he is."

"Oh! only noticing, likely;" and the great merry boy, not quite out of his teens, went

laughing back to his mother. He had recognized Alfred Brand, and divined, as Margaret herself did, that he had perched himself upon the rock this evening, as he had been observed by them both to do several times before, sim-

ply to overlook Margaret, in whom he evidently felt a rapidly-growing interest. Frank was far from giving a hint of this discovery to either of his discreet relatives, as he threw himself upon the grass at his mother's feet.

CHAPTER V.

M A R G A R E T.

MARGARET had lived in the Warner family for more than eight years. She was but little more than a child when she first came to them; yet the sharp discipline of life had already given her a developed womanly nature—forbearing, sympathetic, and fertile in resources—though at that time she stumbled over long words, and could only read in the simplest book with great labor and difficulty.

She had passed with them through prolonged and heavy trials, and had borne their burdens with a patience and heroism which few of the world's heroes may ever hope to equal.

Frank Warner could never forget the comfort which she had brought to him on the day when his little sister died—the only one near his age, and his early playmate. Her care had seemed as timely as a draught of water to one dying of thirst.

He lay sobbing upon the floor, a forgotten morsel of desolate, broken-hearted humanity; wishing and half believing he was going to die too. Margaret lifted his aching head from the floor. She soothed him and croned over him; till it seemed to him that by some gentle, holy incantation she had literally drawn out a choking, heavy weight from his throat and lungs which was stifling him. The touch of her hand, as it lay over his forehead and drove away the great throbs of cruel pain, had left in his memory a gratitude which could never die.

It had invested her—a simple nurse-girl for the little ones—with a half-motherly, half-angelic dignity, which all these years had not effaced. That first and greatest grief stood apart, in its bitterness and in its healing, from every other event in his life.

He remembered, as in a dream, how, as he lay upon the carpet while Margaret sang in low tones, all the pain gradually receded, and he himself seemed floating into Elysium.

When he awoke next morning, he was lying in a mass of dainty pillows, the fluted white ruf-

fles contrasting pleasantly with the bright flowers of the carpet; and the well-known cradle-spread, which was thrown lightly over him, made him feel for a moment that he was once more a little child. Every pulse bounded with a new and delicious happiness, and it seemed to him that it would be delightful to lie just there forever. The windows were all heavily shaded, the dim light prolonging the waking reverie which he had no wish to break. It was only when his eye wandered to the clock on the marble mantel, which slowly pointed out to him "ten minutes to twelve," that he understood it was already noon, and remembered what had happened.

But the truth seemed to him now almost as though it must be a fiction; and though he condemned himself that it was so, and tried to realize his sister's loss as he had done at first, yet the sense of it never returned to him again as a present, terrible reality.

Even when he took the last look of the dear little face, though something cut through his heart like a knife, it seemed too sharp a pain to last long. He began thinking how very beautiful she was now, with that still, white, marble sweetness which he had never seen before; and that memory clung to him always afterwards.

In those dark days, all the family had hung upon Margaret with almost filial dependence. The mother—sick, and worn with the care of her child—drooped helplessly when it was taken from her; and the two little girls fell into Margaret's almost exclusive care. Only a month had passed since little Alice died, when Mr. Warner's long illness began. At first there was prolonged and excruciating suffering, from the effect of which his constitution had never recovered. The disease was apparently removed, yet he had never rallied into his old self again, but had settled into a chronic invalid. Thus there were months together when

the whole family seemed to belong to the nursery; and the young Irish girl, hardly seventeen when she came to them, really felt herself almost a mother to them all.

Hers was a broad unselfish nature in the beginning, and life's discipline had only increased its wealth in that direction. She was from the north of Ireland, with a Scotch ancestry. Her father had brought her, his youngest and only surviving child, to this country when she was ten years of age. Her whole ninth year had been employed as nurse to her sick, gentle mother; who had pined like a fading flower from grief for her five lost children, and still more from want and over-work.

The husband had wrought faithfully; but there had been famine in the land. Both parents and all the people about them grew hollow-eyed; but Margaret had never suffered with hunger. This last child was fed even while the parents both fasted. Margaret didn't know this at the time; but when she came to learn of it afterwards, it filled her whole heart with a wonderful tenderness which yearned to repay this debt of gratitude somewhere.

When plenty came again, her mother still drooped; and when she left them, they came over to this country to forget their sorrows. For two years Margaret was kept in school, and then her father went suddenly to rejoin her mother; and she was an orphan in the New World, with only willing hands for her patrimony. She had fared much as others like her fare, who are honest and willing to work; had gone from pillar to post, picking up a good deal of general training in many directions, and learning a wonderful and steady self-reliance for one so young.

So she had drifted into the Warner port, where her wide experience already made her feel that, in spite of its drawbacks, it was safest to remain. Other servants came and went; but her heart had entered into their trials, and she served them all willingly. Very soon she came to know their limitations, yet she readily forgave them.

In return, she was abundantly appreciated; and had long since become a treasure to them, that they were prepared to hold with a miserly and unscrupulous tenacity which her own disinterestedness could never have justified.

In their darkest hours she had been to all the household like a ray of incarnated sunshine. There was always a little cheerful breeze stirring if she entered the sick-chamber, for her nature was as subject to ripples and dimples as the chubby cheeks of a rolypoly child. There

was too much of it to lie evenly in a smooth level; or perhaps the whole was made light and bubbly with the old leaven of Irish vivacity. So, without being either a wit or a genius, she was an every-day household comfort.

Frank taught her to write; she had already made pot-hooks in school, for some months in her childhood; Mrs. Warner lent her books and encouraged her to read with the children; and, with leisure and a good library at her command, she had become in these eight years a cultivated and well-informed young woman. She often took turns with Frank as reader to the family in general, and to Mr. Warner in particular.

Yet Margaret remained a servant; very rarely taking her meals with the family, and performing some of the most menial duties. They needed to have such things done for them. She was well paid, loaded with presents, and never over-worked. The presence of other servants was often disagreeable, and became every year more and more intolerable. She was never in the way; and even Mr. Warner himself would have nursed her like a brother, without feeling himself demeaned by it, if she had been sick.

But Margaret never was sick. She was a robust, sensible woman of twenty-four, whole-hearted and courageous. Her early sorrows seemed to have drifted very far past; and if her life-voyage was sometimes squally and threatening, there was sunshine enough in herself to enable her to bear it, and to look under a long series of arched rainbows into the future.

She understood her social status in the family, and appreciated it; but she was a woman; and at twenty-four every woman begins to think rather seriously of the future, and to find something stirring within her which is not wholly satisfied by the kind of care and affection with which Margaret found herself surrounded, nor yet with that which she herself was able to lavish so generously upon her various protégés.

The web of social relations had grown up about her naturally. It seemed silken and bright-colored in texture; yet she often felt that she was entangled in it almost inextricably, and she began to feel a little as if it was nearly impossible that she should ever tear it open and get free. Naturally she rebelled against this, and often snapped a thread here and there, either in vexation, or in pure self-assertion. There had been those outside who would willingly have helped her, but they had not succeeded. So the pock-marked servant-girl, who had read fairy tales in abundance, in

her secret heart compared herself to an enchanted princess locked up in a castle, and wondering if the right prince would ever come and unlock the door.

But the wardens promptly warned off every one who made the attempt. Many a young mechanic had made advances in the right direction; but the ruling powers had always managed somehow to keep them at a distance. Handsome young workmen in shining caps had been allured from the premises, or smuggled quietly through on false pretenses.

At first this amused Margaret, giving her not only an added sense of her own value, but also an almost grateful feeling towards those who so obviously prized both her presence and her services. At that time she was under twenty, and the changes in her short, friendless life had already been far too many. Afterwards it was different.

At twenty-three, a handsome young carpenter met her often, here and there, in sundry places where he was least expected, always with a smile and a few very commonplace, yet, to her, exceedingly charming words—till she was beginning to think something was drawing him to her, as feathers are attracted to amber, and to wish heartily that he was not altogether so light-weighted a person as he seemed in her estimation—when he suddenly disappeared. Some time after she learned that he had secured an excellent business-opening in New York, but she never saw or heard from him afterwards. She certainly was somewhat surprised at this, and always a little less forbearing and more watchfully suspicious of those about her, but was in no sense heart-broken.

Frank knew what Margaret only surmised—that Mr. Warner had procured the young carpenter's transfer and promotion; but even he did not dream till afterwards to what unjustifiable length his father's interference had extended. He thought he observed that Margaret

was both a little surprised and vexed at her admirer's taking French leave, and his sense of justice made him wish that matters could at least be left to take their own course; yet he honestly believed that none of those who had seemed available were half good enough for Margaret.

Some months later he discovered that the young carpenter had left a letter addressed to Margaret, which, falling into his father's hands, had somehow failed of ever being delivered. At this he was exceedingly indignant; but he had never ventured to speak on the subject even with his mother. His father was hardly the person whom he would presume either to reprimand, or to call on for an explanation in a matter of this kind. But since then, Frank, like Margaret, had been more open-eyed and on the alert—like parties always on the defensive, and a little prone to look out for aggressions.

When, therefore, he had detected two or three glances of admiration bestowed upon the helpful Irish girl, soon after they had taken possession of the little sloop Constance, and had noted that Alfred looked and listened with evident interest whenever Margaret talked with the children, or in various ways proved herself to be a general family treasure, as well as a kind-hearted, intelligent woman, Frank immediately thereafter fell into a long chat with the bright-looking, red-haired sailor; and finding him to be a sensible, self-respecting man, who had sailed half over the world with his eyes open, he afterwards quietly amused himself by casually drawing out Margaret's best qualities and covertly watching the effect upon the appreciative Alfred.

Frank had no special intention of playing the rôle of match-maker; but here was a bit of by-play which amused him during a long afternoon's sail. His boy's heart delighted in it; but his smooth boyish face looked preternaturally grave and innocent.





CHAPTER VI.

SOME OF THE NEIGHBORS.

In the afternoon of the day following their arrival on the island, Frank, who lay sprawling upon the grass under the window, looking idly off at the tossing blue waters, suddenly started as Margaret ceased her monotonous little song, and the heavy bass of Alfred Brand followed in its stead.

"Good-day, Miss Margaret. This basket was left behind in the sloop, and I have brought it to you."

"Ah," said Margaret, "it is little Miss Fannie's. She'll be glad to get it, and thank you for the trouble of bringing it over."

"It's not far, and it was no trouble. I live at my cousin's—the house just back there over the hill. You can see the chimneys and the roof. So we shall be neighbors for the present."

"But you will be off on the sloop most of the time, I suppose?"

"Oh no. We sail only occasionally, as we find cargo. The rest of the time I am farmer. I have been working all day in the corn-field over yonder."

"Won't you sit down, then, Mr. Alfred—neighbor. You see I don't know any other name yet," laughed Margaret, saucily. "You helped me so nicely with the trunks when you brought them last evening, that of course I feel half acquainted."

"Of course," said Alfred, smiling, blushing, fidgeting, and trying hopelessly to find something to say.

"Then here is a chair, neighbor," said the self-possessed Margaret, smilingly bland and amused in the face, but a little softened at the heart.

"Thank you, no, not this time. I meant to say that I hope we shall become well acquainted before the summer is over; though I don't know your whole name either, yet, Miss Margaret. But will you offer me a seat the next time, if I come again?"

"Not unless I find that you bear a good name!" laughing.

"Very well," retorted the youth, recovering himself, and giving back a look as smiling and straightforward as he had received; "you must find out about that from some one else, then; but I am afraid you won't take the trouble to inquire. It was certainly a shabby thing to leave you all on a sand-bar for two hours in the rain; but I did my best."

"That you did, and got much the worst of it yourself," said the girl, warmly.

"Good-bye, then, Margaret, till we meet again; and don't lay up the bad luck against me."

At the door he stopped, hesitated a moment, and then picked up a handkerchief which was lying on the wood-box in the outer porch. "I know your name now—Margaret Nelson;" holding up the marked handkerchief. "Mine is only Alfred Brand."

"Ah! well; it seems a very good brand, short and handy—if only you bear it honorably, as I believe you do."

"I certainly do, so far as I have learned how." Then, carried away by something which he read in Margaret's face, or by something which came surging up from his own heart, he could never tell which, he said hurriedly, while his face grew redder than his own red hair, "My present belief is, that if you will ever give me the opportunity, after we know each other well enough, that it is a name which I shall offer you the chance to take for yourself. Will you promise to think about it, Margaret?"

"I—I don't know yet," stammered the girl. "Don't forget that we are really strangers," she said quietly, after a moment. "An acquaintance for a lifetime is not wisely made in a day."

"I know it, and I have not acted prudently; but I have acted as I felt. Good-bye." He dashed out of the house, carrying away the



"HERE IS A CHAIR, NEIGHBOR."

handkerchief, bounding along, strong and supple in every limb, and was soon busy again in the corn-field.

Frank, still sprawling in the sunshine like a sleepy lizard, pondered over the look which came into the eyes of this sailor-farmer, who passed without seeing him. He peeped slyly up also at Margaret, who stood looking out at the window with a far-off thoughtfulness in her eyes. Then Frank rose up like a man, walking directly over to Captain Giles, whom he found leaning on his hoe in his potato-patch, awaiting him with a pleasure expressed on his dry old face which made the boy at once proud and happy.

"Captain Giles, tell me about some of the people who live around here. You see, I want to know something of my neighbors."

"Well, come into the house, and I'll introduce you to Miss Giles. She's the very best person I know about here," said the cheery old man.

"I don't doubt it, if she's akin to you, captain."

"Oh! she's no relation o' mine—not a grain. I never heard of her in my life till I was your age."

Frank laughed cheerily at the joke; but his real entertainment arose from the delightful appreciative flash of sunshine in the old captain's eyes.

Declining to go in, he began pointing out all the houses within sight, and asking after their respective owners.

"That large white house there, half in sight, with the whale-ship and the whale for a weather-cock, that's Captaining Hezekiah Percy's—our Captaining Ephraim's brother, you know. We are almost all kinfolks! You see, the whole stock of the island—this end of it especially—is linked in and out like one of those brain-corals we were talking about. Captaining Hezekiah's place is varnished up with sperm oil; and it's about as trim and tight as any thing to be found hereabouts. He cast anchor under fifty—got tired cruising, I suppose."

"Rich, probably!" suggested Frank.

"Gold enough for ballast," laughed the captain. "Mebbe he got pretty nigh frozen up often among the Northern icebergs; the chill, I think, struck a little into his heart. Some of us here fancy he might have swallowed an icicle, and it petrified afterwards—he's so very upright. You ought to know him, though; and your father will think him worth twenty old boys like me, who can't help frolicking at a hundred, if we try."

"Ah!" said Frank, with an awkward boyishness which showed that he was not quite at ease yet.

"You see, sir, sperm-oil ought naturally to

keep it light and warm all round, if it's only kept burning. But don't think I am hard on Captaining Hezekiah though; he's an own cousin o' mine; but I got a start from the kitchen-side of the house, and he from the parlor, I expect. He used to ride on my shoulders like a young nabob, when he was six, and I six-and-twenty or thereabouts. It's nature on both sides, you know. He keeps up the dignity of the hills here, and I keep up its fun, so as to bring it to an average."

"I see!" Frank had found his reckoning at last, and began to enjoy it. "You went to the South Seas generally, Captain Giles; so you always got entirely thawed out coming back along the equator."

"Exactly!"

"Who lives there under the hill? The house looks as though it was trying to burrow in the earth, to get out of the way of the winter blasts."

"Likely that's the very feeling which went in with every nail from the foundation to the roof. It's a house with a history, too, but I won't stop to tell that. They are poor folks, but honest. That's Captaining Salathiel Maybough's."

"Oh yes; they made our garden for us. These hills misled me so much, I had lost the direction."

"Captaining Salathiel is a cripple, you know, and was down on his back last year for months. Mrs. Salathiel ought to have been a captaining herself, if ever a woman should; for she could steer around the world on a short cut as well as any one I know. Last summer, when she had a bad felon, their little Molly was the life-boat that kept the whole family afloat. Hard times they've seen altogether. I am glad your folks have taken 'em in tow. Couldn't do a better thing for them, or yourselves either."

"If they have every thing as refreshing as their green peas were for dinner to-day, I shall be a powerful steam-tug in myself; you may be sure of that. It is to be hoped their garden is well supplied?"

"So it is. It's a little place, but they keep their land fat all the time. They're so near the shore, you see, they can feed it with sea-weed without stint. The Sahara Desert would raise good crops, only gorge it with sea-weed, and water it now and then. Do you see how black the sandy soil has got to be in all our gardens?" kicking at the dark mould under his feet.

"So that's sea-weed, is it? I wish, then, you would plant trees, and feed them as you do your corn and potatoes, Captain Giles."

"I've half resolved to do it again and again; but it wants a great regiment of 'em, each to keep its neighbors in countenance. A single tree won't grow well; but I remember woods about here with all sorts of trees bigger around than my body—some four times as large; and when I was a boy I got lost in a forest, just over there, and wandered about half a day with my finger in one eye, and the other keen for an opening almost anywhere into daylight. Times change, you see; but this ocean-side is hard on any thing that lifts its head up—that's a fact. They have trees yet in some parts of the island—oaks generally, with low tops and wide branches—but pines do well, and other sorts. Over at Wauchatti there are trees still, two or three feet round."

"Bless me! I'll drive there to-morrow. My eyes are sore already from looking so hard to find a tree anywhere; but these sand-knolls, with the sheep-grass on them, make a sky-outline even prettier than trees. So I'm satisfied."

"Yes, I should think so. Fish and flesh are almost too much for one meal, if you want a good digestion."

"Whose large field of corn and potatoes is that yonder? It's well cared for."

"You may say that, you may! If he keeps on, he'll be the best farmer in all the region, and he's half sailor, too; but, for all he's amphibious, he's thoroughgoing in both elements. That's Alfred Brand's farm—you remember him; he sails the sloop with Captaining Percy. If he was captaining and the other mate, it would be none the worse; though one of 'em is my cousin, and the other isn't."

"Where's his house? Is he married?"

"Don't you know he isn't?" said the old man, with a keen look into Frank's face. The young man received this arrow of questioning with an expression as innocent and woolly as a lamb's.

To be sure, he had come here on purpose to learn about Alfred; and nobody else especially interested him at present; but he was not inclined to confess as much, and the shrewd old sailor was really thrown off the track. He had noted a little of the by-play of the various parties on the Constance, and thought he had some insight into the state of the case; but now he became doubtful about it.

"I thought there was always a free-masonry about unmarried men which revealed their standing to each other," he continued. "Young men have a way of casting eyes which don't belong to married folks, who have picked out a wife already. But Alfred's a steady boy; and though he must be about five-and-twenty, he

has never taken specially to any girl, as far as I have heard. I've thought, for a few months back, that he was looking about some, but I dunno."

"Red-haired and fiery!" suggested Frank.

"Quick to feel, I've no doubt, but I've never seen him unreasonable in little things or in great; and he went his first voyage with me. I had him on board five years, off and on. He hated liquors and liked books, and he never was afraid of work. That's enough to say of any man, red-haired or not."

"He's a happy fellow, captain, in having you for a champion. Where are his folks?"

"Never had any from a baby—nothing but an uncle, who took pay for bringing him up till he was ten years old, and so sucked out the very small nest-egg his parents left for him, leaving nothing but the shell. After he started for himself, he always hung on to a cousin who lives over there—you can just see the chimneys. There's where he boards now."

"Has he much land?"

"Nearly fifty acres here, and meadow over on the flats. I dunno where he'll put his house. I s'pose he will build some day—and marry, likely. Not many women on the island would have a call to give him the mitten—so Miss Giles and I think, both of us: and if he would take a fancy to either of my dozen granddaughters, all city bred, I should not object; but they might, maybe. Girls brought up on pavements can't like any thing, generally, which touches either land or sea. There must always be smooth roads outside and magic carpets inside the house for their sweethearts to walk on. I was born on this island, and I am going to be buried here; but I expect not many of my posterity will be content to lay beside me on these bleak old shores."

The old man's thoughts had wandered away somewhere; but though Frank had learned all he came to ask, he didn't choose to leave abruptly. Perhaps, too, he was desirous to recall the kind old captain from the one vexation of his life—the want of adhesive love which his otherwise dutiful children all felt for this beloved bit of fatherland, to which he himself clung so tenaciously. Other men's children settled about them; his had all gone!

"There's one house more in sight," interrupted Frank, breaking in upon the reverie from which the old captain awoke with a start.

"Give me a bit of gossip on the people over yonder, and I have done questioning."

"Over there? More Percys: father, mother, and two children, all deaf and dumb, but one child, who can hear, and chatter like a bobolink."

"Deaf and dumb—the whole family, almost!" echoed Frank, inexpressibly shocked.

"That is a rather common infirmity in our neighborhood—at least it crops out in a dozen families or so; but all springing from the same root. Even potatoes won't grow forever in the one soil. It reconciles me to all my children's marrying off the island. All the young men ought to be sailors, and find wives from abroad; but that's not altogether a good reason for settling away."

This brought Frank's thoughts strongly back to Alfred and Margaret; and he went home pondering, but fully prepared to let things take their own course.

"Unless somebody tries to get 'em in a tangle!" was his mental reservation; in which case he resolved manfully to interfere.

Nevertheless, he couldn't forbear giving Margaret and all the others a very full account that evening, when they had assembled on the hill-top, of all their neighbors round about, Alfred Brand included. He followed Captain Giles's version minutely, with a few flourishing additions gathered from his own fancy, which were vastly entertaining to his parents, and gave Margaret time to ponder deeply in her own heart every thing which he had said in earnest.

Later on in the evening, and for many evenings after, when the "red-winged black-bird" had perched in the shadow on his distant rock, Frank never resisted the temptation of privately calling Margaret's attention to the fact, gravely asking her whether he was really "carrying coals to Newcastle," by his friendly wish to point out one of the most interesting features of the neighborhood. Farther than this he was neutral—stoutly resolving upon entire non-intervention.





CHAPTER VII.

A YOUNG MAN IN SEARCH OF A WIFE.

POSSIBLY Alfred Brand was a little morbid in his ideas of young women, else he would hardly have reached the age of twenty-five without once being seriously in love.

Under all the unkempt roughness of the man, there was the poetic dream of a beautiful life, made noble and unselfish by sharing it freely with another; but then, that other must give as much as she received, both in hearty, unfeigned love, and in every thing generous and disinterested. A thoroughly practical man, yet he was an inveterate dreamer; and this was always the one burden of his dream: He must have a noble-hearted, sensible wife; though he could do very well without beauty, or education, or wealth.

There were nice girls in abundance, with whom he was more or less acquainted—some of them a great deal too good for him, as he regretfully acknowledged in confidence with himself; for he was shy, awkward, and self-distrustful in matters of this kind. The world had been a good practical school-mistress to him in every-day affairs, but in all the details of refined breeding, his rough, stern teacher had left him wholly outside in the cold; and he felt his deficiencies. And yet, somehow, all the nice girls were either wanting in something which he regarded as essential, or else, for some other cause, they didn't get on well together. Of course, it was all his own fault, he knew that; but it only made it all the more vexatious. He was a prickly, green burr, trying to fasten himself on to something as smooth, fresh, and delicate as a porcelain vase; but all the best vases that he knew wanted flowers as bright and showy as morning-glories; and they shrank away from the prickly, green burr, as it seemed to him, with a blind but unerring instinct.

The sunny side of a girl's character was always especially attractive to him, as it generally is to most people; but he could have borne to be

pricked pretty sharply, and often, with the needles of a good-natured wit. He would never have pricked back again; though he would have rather enjoyed the zest and piquancy of the thing even where he himself was chief sufferer. His sense of humor was of the eminently appreciative order; but it was not at all developed into a creative faculty of which he was himself the happy possessor. Indeed, he was habitually conscious of being particularly deficient in this respect.

All the hidden springs of his own being seemed to be always vibrating with a wiry and intense earnestness, and he was extremely dissatisfied at his fully-recognized lack of general sprightliness and versatility. It had always prevented his being a boon companion or especial favorite among the great fraternity of jolly sailors; yet he always sought out the youngest and merriest of the crew, and sat down in the midst of jokes and laughter in something of the mood in which a quiet old tabby likes to be surrounded by her playful kittens. Occasionally he would put out a paw and poke the others up, or would give them a pat if they became too boisterous; but to think of frisking and capering himself, was wholly out of the question.

Alfred was an extremist in nothing except in a peppery sensitiveness over his own defects, or those of any thing, or any one else, in whom he was especially interested. Yet even this sensitiveness was often internal; for he was generally too proud to make it manifest. It might be the "worm in the bud" of his happiness; but there was no placard put up outside to advertise the public of that fact.

He was conscientious, but had never considered himself to be in the least religious. He had never joined a temperance society, and could freely drink grog on an occasion—especially after any unusual exposure; but he always scorned to use it merely as a beverage. He

could smoke an immense pipe with all the phlegm, and some of the enjoyment, of a genuine Dutchman; but he disliked the smell of stale smoke among his books and clothes, and his own little attic room was never polluted with it. Segars were a luxury in which he rarely indulged; and in general, when the stimulus of tobacco was weighed in the balance with the cost of it, tobacco went up till it flew quite out of his hands; but it never got into his mouth or nose, as something to chew or sniff.

Moreover, Alfred swore now and then, and sometimes even very desperately, under exceeding provocation; yet he despised himself so heartily for it afterwards, that he was not likely to be very often guilty of repeating the offense. Low, coarse, vulgar language was so utterly hateful to him, that he was never guilty of that, even in a moment of fiercest anger.

This was the young man who was in search of a wife. He was generally rather a favorite with other young men, and not at all disliked by the young ladies; so that his prospects were not considered discouraging. Having fully determined that it was best to be married when he could find the proper person, he had been quietly prospecting for some months. But it is wonderful how many obstacles he found in the way. A young man who is fascinated by every pretty girl he meets, has no idea of it. He could step into matrimony through any one of a hundred easily-opened doors with about equal zest; but this young man had been looking all his life, and yet had found no acceptable approach.

He had seen charming visions of grace and beauty, which lingered in his thoughts long afterwards; but these were the bright particular stars, revolving in orbits so remote from his own as to be quite inaccessible. He had dreamed of others—humble, and wholly within his own sphere—had created them as an artist does his picture or his statue before he gives it embodiment; but he could neither manufacture nor discover the living duplicate. Besides, he could not possibly advertise his wishes like a street-crier, so that every lady friend might be enlisted to help him; and if any one guessed at the situation and came forward as volunteer, this sent him off in a tangent directly.

It was strange that he was so perversely cold-hearted. He reproached himself for it bitterly; but taking himself to task didn't in the least mend the matter. Finally, he gave up the idea of ever getting into that state of very fervid fascination to which all his young friends were so prone. He would first choose the wife, and

then compel himself to love her. But even that task was not easy. He selected and rejected from among all the fairest flowers, till he was half disgusted with all young-womanhood, and wholly disgusted with himself.

At last he drew up a list of all the eligible parties of his acquaintance, either on the island or off of it. It embraced nearly every woman he had ever known who was neither married nor engaged, and who was somewhere between the ages of fifteen and thirty; and he went over all the names one by one, like a Catholic telling his beads, with a longing that was almost a prayer in itself, for the wisdom to make a sensible decision. At the very first sitting, nine out of every ten names were ruled out, because of some supposed incompatibility either of taste or temper.

He coolly wrote out the revised list and burned up the old one over the lamp, smiling grimly and viciously as he did so—it was late at night, in the privacy of his own room, with his door locked and bolted. Two-thirds of his grievous dissatisfaction recoiled upon himself. It was he who was in fault, not the young ladies; and he really pitied himself profoundly, at the same time that he pronounced his own solemn condemnation.

The new list was comparatively a small one, yet it still contained about a baker's dozen; and the poor fellow went over these with pros and cons so often, that he fairly surrounded himself by a halo of young women. He was the central figure, with his bristling red hair; and around this were grouped curls and braids and frizzes of every hue from the fairest flaxen to a jet black. When the image of any young lady became pre-eminently attractive, he invented some pretext for seeing the original; but after a few of such casual meetings he was invariably disenchanted, and another name was stricken off from the rapidly diminishing list, till only three or four remained.

After philosophically studying these—all exceedingly charming young persons—as convenient opportunity offered, he at last half decided to offer himself to a bright-eyed, gentle, and rich neighbor, who was always as fresh as a rose-bud, and without the thorns. This was Mary, youngest daughter of Captain Hezekiah Percy. The father, who was the most dignified retired captain on the island, was always gracious to Alfred; and the young lady chatted with him as freely as though she had not been a year and a half at boarding-school.

Certainly he was not exactly in love with her; but he had determined that he would be,

when his mind was once made up to win her love in return! He had known Mary Percy all her life—had carried her over rough places in the old school days more than a hundred times; and he always said hopefully to himself, when he thought it over, "She is so young, she will be all I shall want in time!"

He never dreamed of saying, "She is all I want!" So he still wavered and waited.

Mary was already twenty-one, and, having no other vocation, would have taken very kindly to housekeeping; but the perverse man, deploring his own unparalleled obstinacy of heart, could never bring himself to a positive decision. He even thought of doing a few years' further penance by renting his beloved farm, and plunging once more into the midst of his kindred Northern icebergs in pursuit of whales.

Before this crisis arrived, Margaret drifted across his path; and straightway every one else seemed wholly out of the question.

"Let me take the basket, Mrs. Warner; there is room enough for it here, and Miss Fannie can sit nicely on my lap."

This was what he heard Margaret say, in a voice which arrested his attention even before he had seen her face.

All were intent, on that well-remembered afternoon, upon stowing themselves comfortably in the very limited space afforded by the sloop Constance, and Margaret's cheerful tones contrasted charmingly with others a good deal less considerate. Some slight had been cast upon the certainly not very ample accommodations of the little craft, and the partisan proprietor felt rather piqued at the time. He watched Margaret, who was sitting upright on a box, contentedly holding Fannie on her lap, and an umbrella over the head of the invalid gentleman. This continued for the first half-hour of their sail; and she became a heroine to him even before he had caught a glimpse either of her clear, frank eyes or of the ugly pock-marks on her sunny face.

From that hour forward it was impossible to put her out of his thoughts. He contrived to meet her everywhere; often exchanging a brief word or a smile, and sometimes indulging in a more prolonged conversation. He thought he read her character as an open page, and his heart surrendered without a question, dreaming deliciously over his good-fortune for some days. All the ice of his nature melted with a fervent heat.

Alfred went about for a week or two with a perpetual song of triumph in all his thoughts. "Eureka! Eureka! I have found her! I have found her!"

Better than all, at last he had found himself. He really was not the insensible monster who had so exasperated him lately that he was ready to invent a liturgy of anathemas against his Maker. He was only afraid now of repelling Margaret by his own hasty and too ardent affection.

Very naturally, Margaret, from her isolation and her real warmth of nature, responded almost unconsciously to the always respectful, earnest tenderness and good-will which expressed itself in every look and gesture. Alfred himself was wholly unaware how very plainly his sentiments had been thus unwittingly revealed to her. The figure, perched so quietly every twilight on the gray stone, and trying to conceal itself in the deepest shadow, gave her a comforting new sense of being thought of and watched for by one so respectable and sensible as the sailor-farmer; and her frequent reveries in those days were not at all unpleasant.

When Margaret and the children were seen flitting along the sands, chasing the ebb and flow of the waves by moonlight, this was something to touch a heart far less susceptible than Alfred's; but Margaret's movements became more and more constrained under a sense of his perpetual presence. She thought more and frolicked less—as was but natural.

She often sat through half the evening, intently watching the jet of rushing foam speeding with a wild dash along the crest of the breaking wave and vanishing against the distant bank. Then her eye came back again like a pendulum, and watched the same process over and over as it was endlessly repeated. In daylight, the wave always seemed to break all at once in a long line of leaping white spray, and only at night did it become a live thing driven inward by some dark object behind—at last suddenly shooting off sideways in a rush of passionate frenzy. This fascinated Margaret as she sat wholly outside of it all, a passive observer. It stimulated a vague feeling that her woman's nature had need to treasure up a world of enduring and waiting patience over events which she was powerless to influence; yet she was hopeful now, and, like the sea, her feelings were beating to and fro in tides of uncontrollable unrest; but Alfred, sitting alone on his distant rock, often likened her to a statue, pulseless and immovable.

Then, evening after evening, Mr. Warner wanted his cloak, or his slippers, or a draught of water, which Margaret went cheerfully to bring; or Mrs. Warner needed some of the

thousand little changes, which, as simple matter of course, Margaret alone could effect for her. No sense of degradation was attached to these perpetually exacting services in Margaret's mind. They needed her; and she had learned to care for them almost unceasingly—something as she would have cared for her own little children, if she had been a mother to beloved helplessness.

Alfred, who was born and reared a practical democrat, entirely failed to understand this. On the boat, Margaret's helpfulness had seemed charmingly natural. He understood the spirit in which it was both given and received, and had found it all wonderfully refreshing. But then he was in the very midst of it all, and was better qualified to judge. Now he was sitting afar off, and looking on from the outside. Then Margaret was only a stranger. Now he felt a personal interest in her, and in his thoughts had already appropriated her to himself. It rasped him to be so perpetually reminded of her servile position, and he began to accuse her of a want of proper self-respect.

He had waited so long for a divinity whom he could sincerely worship; and now to find that even his accepted idol was only part of iron and part of potter's clay! He felt wronged and defrauded.

He had fallen in love with a good and generous woman, without even once thinking of her being an Irish servant-girl, and it exasperated him to be so perpetually reminded of this unpleasant fact. Possibly his very democracy was intensely aristocratic, and so continually gnawing into itself. He believed he was indignant, not that Margaret was the servant of others—he had been that himself, and thought the position an honorable one; but he was vexed and irritated at what he interpreted to be a spirit of servility shown in so willingly and continually waiting upon those who might often better have served themselves.

His face grew hot and angry out there in the darkness, when he saw her "so continually on the trot," and his most fervent indignation lighted on Margaret herself for consenting to become "such a pack-horse." He privately anathematized "that fine gentleman, Frank," who was only "a donkey under his lion skin," and refused any longer to be civil to him when they met.

How was Alfred to comprehend how much

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of all this was merely the force of habit? How was he to know that both Margaret and the "fine gentleman" himself regarded poor Frank in the light of an over-worked martyr, bound to a great, relentless, Boston tread-mill, where he toiled early and late; and that this, his first long vacation in years, was coveted for him by both as a sorely-needed holiday?

When Margaret trudged down, therefore, from their evening hill, loaded with a large, upholstered chair, it never troubled her. She was too strong, physically, to feel it a burden—too well armored, mentally, to even think of it. They had no other servant in the house at present. The Mayboughs washed, scrubbed, ironed, and baked, and Anne and Fannie were practising the lighter housewifely arts under Margaret's supervision; so that her proper vocation for the summer was double-lobed—branching into the details of waiting, on the one hand, and house-keeping on the other. But Alfred, looking on from the dark outside, was learning to tear his own red hair, and anathematize himself afresh for getting himself so hopelessly in love with one who at bottom was so evidently only a mean-spirited drudge.

Having begun to despise Margaret for her supposed faults, his manners changed, and most inevitably hers changed also. She reproached herself for having been too easily influenced. She even questioned if it were possible that she had misunderstood his attentions and his real sentiments, becoming now proportionately distrustful and reserved; or she used pleasant laughter and sharp sallies of repartee as the convenient cloak most easily manufactured to conceal her real feelings. Sometimes when they met, as they were still sure to do very often, they smiled or blushed and chatted a little; but oftener they only bowed coldly, passing on with affected dignity and indifference.

Frank still whispered Margaret good-naturedly about the "rock-bird;" but, finding that she either blushed painfully or looked moody, he desisted, without even asking an explanation, and soon he had forgotten the whole matter, supposing that nothing was likely to come of it. He rejoiced at that.

Alfred, also, sorrowfully and angrily by turns, wished profoundly that he could forget—that he could even go back again to all the dearth and iciness of his old insensibility; but this was out of the question.



CHAPTER VIII

MUTUALLY BENEFITED.

MRS. SALATHIEL, as Frank always persisted in calling Mrs. Maybough, in admiration of Captain Giles, was a native of "the main land," but a resident on the island since her marriage. She was tall, strong, and dark-eyed, with a long, free step worthy of a princess. The life-long habit of walking upon the sands had given her, like many others, a peculiar mode of lifting her feet, and, added to this, she had an indescribably easy carriage and freedom of movement which not one in thousands could ever hope to imitate. There was a little, also, both of protest and resolution in every step and attitude; something which said, "I can not overcome the ills of life, but I will trample over them and half ignore their existence."

The first time the Boston family saw her walk, they all sat in open-eyed admiration. She had gone down to the sea to bathe her feet, after a weary morning's work, happily unconscious that there were any eye-witnesses; and as she strode over the beach in search of a sandy point without pebbles, thinking more cheerfully than usual of the good pay which lends its sunshine even to weariness—now and then unconsciously lifting her dress a little in anticipation of the turbulent waves—Mrs. Warner exclaimed, with sudden and unusual interest, "Did you ever see a more unstudied or a more elegant movement?"

"It is worth fifty cents to see it done!" cried Frank. "Such a walk as that on Beacon Street! wouldn't people stop to look?"

Molly was paddling on at her mother's side—a rough, rolypoly little figure, high-shouldered, and with the irregular child's step, but pretty, by way of simple contrast; and in the rear were two small boys, with trowsers rolled up to their utmost, prancing to and fro like frisky ponies. They all stopped at nearly the same moment, waiting upon the outer edge of the line of incoming waves; and as the white spray came tumbling over their feet, the children sent up a shout of delight—one long trill of musical treble amidst the ever-sounding bass.

"Those Mayboughs are determined to be picturesque," said Mr. Warner, half vexed. "They are like the flock of sheep that stood looking down at us the other day from the great rock on the downs. Up there against the sky they were charming; but when they came running past us, lean, dirty, and sheared to the skin, the difference was wonderful."

The foot-washers soon drew back from the water, the little ones running about in childish play, and the mother, seating herself on a rock, began putting on stockings and shoes, which till now she had carried in her hand. The long line of breakers came surging in every moment upon the shore; not turbulent, as in a strong sea, but quiet and self-poised, raising a long bluish-gray crest just beyond the edge of the waters—lifting it so high that you could see the light breaking through the transparent thin layer of compact fluid, and then slipping suddenly over the retreating under-tow with a shimmer of pearls and a sudden dash of spirit which never lost its fascination, even when endlessly repeated. On either hand, but at some distance away, the high banks extended out into the sea, bluff, irregular promontories; and outside of each of these was a straggling group of rocks nearly covered at high tide, but at low tide lifting up their black and gray heads to break any possible monotony of view. And now at half tide the surf rushed over them in white, broken masses, like an ever-restless drove of white steeds dashing heroically over interposing difficulties.

Far out upon one rock you could catch the outline of a single black duck, sitting alone in solitary state.

"There's the fisherman, mother," called the little Mayboughs, pointing out to him. "I've seen him sitting there ever since we started."

"So he is," and the ready smile came to the mother's eye. This was a sad-eyed woman, who seldom smiled without some outside stimulus to call up the always transient glimmer; but it came at the very first word of child

or husband. Now she re-commenced brushing the sand from her foot, and putting on the shoe she had held extended in her hand while she looked off along the sea. Presently the whole group was seen approaching the place where the Warners were seated. The mother hesitated a moment when she became conscious of the near presence of her neighbors, and then came steadily forward, as a self-respecting Massachusetts woman should.

"I was going to your house, Mrs. Warner, to inquire about the sewing."

"Yes, that was right; but I can explain to you here."

While Mrs. Warner is explaining, we can look more closely at Mrs. Salathiel. Her hands and face are as brown and horny as any farmer's in harvest-time. And well they may be; for she has done half the work in a large garden this spring, and, with Molly's help out of school-hours, the work of the household besides. The brown face tells of care and patience, and the firmly-shut mouth says more plainly than words could that there is still an exhaustless stock of enduring energy. "I am ready to bear any thing which humanity must bear for the sake of these," is the language of the mother-look as she turns to the children who are just spoken of by the lady; but the language of the great brown-black, sad eyes is not easily translated. There are women with eyes like this. I have seen a good many of them in different places, expressing various degrees of some kindred sentiment; but I can not wholly read the always stereotyped words they utter, though I have studied the subject a good deal.

When the eyes speak in this way, the tongue is generally silent; for it is not many souls who need a double language for expressing a current feeling. I think the feeling itself is often indefinite even when most powerful. Frank remembered Captain Giles's remark on the instant: "Mrs. Salathiel ought to have been a captiving herself, if ever a woman should;" but she was not a captain—was nothing but a volunteer on board a very much shattered craft filled with helpless passengers; and though she was always working at the pumps with a strong arm, yet if she could have got into any sound boat and taken the helm into her own hand, I think the sadness would have gone out of her eyes permanently, as it always did now whenever she turned to sympathize with one of her children.

The neighbors said simply, "None of her own folks live here!" and that seemed to explain every thing. She herself assented. "I am away from all my own folks," was her only ac-

count of the matter; but if she suffered with homesickness, yet all that makes home most dear was here with her. If this pair had accepted certain modern theories of good domestic economy, the wife would have gone into some outside business, while the invalid husband cooked the dinners, teaching all his boys and little Molly to help him. As it was, the wife eked out the crippled husband in the garden, but she never rested in the house; and so, poor thing, no wonder she was always tired. A man's work, but a woman's wages, might well make any mother of four young children sad-eyed, if uncomplaining.

Mrs. Warner felt something of this when she said, with a touch of compunction, "Don't let me put more upon you than you are able to get done comfortably, Mrs. Maybough. You are attempting a great deal already in addition to the work of your own family. If the sewing is too much, pray don't even try to do it."

"But I would rather you gave it to me, Mrs. Warner. It's a rest from harder work; and I shall be glad if I can do it neatly enough to suit you."

"Well, take time for it; I like it neatly done, but the piece you sent home did very well. Do it as nicely as you can, and I shan't mind paying you a good price."

"Fine sewing used to be much easier to me than it is now," said the woman, a glow rising perceptibly over the brown skin; "but the skill will come again by practice. My fingers are stiffened a little by rougher work."

"I don't see how your husband does any thing at all in his present feeble state, Mrs. Maybough? His garden shows work; but I shouldn't think him able to give it."

"It's a great comfort to my husband to begin work again; but of course he can not do much, and so the children and I help him all we can."

"You have had a hard time, haven't you?" said the lady, with real sympathy.

"Not nearly so hard as many, I suppose; but I can not forget that what you will pay me will be warm clothing for us all next winter. Last year, for the want of it, Molly had to stay at home nearly all the late fall, though she is fond of school."

A softened intonation came into the voice, and a mistiness needed to be swept off from the eyes before they could see clearly again. But she went on steadily: "Give me all the work you have, Mrs. Warner, and if I find it too much I will tell you."

"None of the children are in school now, are they?"

"We have only six months' school—in the spring and fall. In the winter it is too cold and stormy for the children to walk so far, and in summer they are needed at home. They must all make the most of half the time."

The three little Mayboughs stood together with open mouths, listening; and as Frank looked at them, it seemed to him that in all three there was a wonderfully odd resemblance to the faces of some fishes he had seen. Their eyes were a little cast down, a great blanket of shyness covering up every ray of intelligence; and the corners of all the little mouths were so drawn down, even after they were closed, that the little shut-eyed perch he had caught in the charming pond came irresistibly to his mind—the one seeming to be a funny caricature of the other.

"Do you mean to be a sailor, little fish?" he asked laughingly of Ben, the eldest.

"I am not a fish," said Ben, sturdily, "and I'm going to learn a trade when I grow up."

"What will you be, then?"

"It doesn't matter," said the boy, defiantly.

"But won't you be a sailor when you are a man?"

"No; mother doesn't like it."

"But you can't be a captain on land."

"It doesn't matter," repeated the child, turning his back and walking off. He was displeased with the fun, and perhaps ridicule, which he saw peeping out of Frank's eyes; and the young gentleman rather relished the rebuke. A little way off the boy stopped, carefully rolling down the hem of his trowsers, which had been left turned up since his foot-bath, and then faced about, waiting for his mother.

"His name is Ben," said the youngest boy, in a tone of apology.

"You are a nice little shrimp," said Frank, patting the little cheek under its scanty round cap; "and I thought his name was Perch; but of course I was mistaken. You must give him some of these, and tell him so." He dealt out a handful of bonbons, smiling as the boy's eyes lighted with pleasure.

"I thank you," replied young five years old, scampering away.

Frank came forward now, and spoke to the mother with the deference of a genuine respect.

"Mrs. Maybough, I have engaged your husband to saw a cord of wood for us. Was it right for me to propose it? I was afraid afterwards that the work was too hard for him."

"Thank you!" she answered, in a tone which Mr. Warner thought was cold and uncivil; but Frank saw her hand go up to her throat as though she were struggling with emotion. It

seemed an odd little pause while they waited for her to speak.

"He will do a little at a time, I suppose, as he is able. We are glad of the work." She merely bowed to them all, and went off almost as abruptly as little Ben had done.

"Takes it easily," said the invalid gentleman, with a long sigh. "It's one of the greatest providences that every tree is adapted to just the little patch of mother earth it grows in. Some of them must spring in the clefts of the hardest rocks. I suppose the oak-can't change to an aspen if it would; but it's more useful, perhaps."

Frank opened his eyes with a stare, and was on the point of opening his mouth also; but catching his mother's eye, he thought better of it, and walked away along the shore. A little fishing-boat had been lying off in the water just in sight, and this was now seen slowly coming to land. It was rowed by a single man; but a boy sat also in the boat; and jumping first on shore, helped draw it up on to the sands.

"Did you have good luck?" asked Frank, sauntering up leisurely, and lending a hand in the final haul to the boat.

"Well, no, I didn't. I kinder forgot my cel-skin."

"Your eel-skin!" echoed Frank, mystified.

"Yes; can't fish without bait."

"Oh! you'll try it again I suppose, then?"

"No; guess not. It's most night, and rowin' isn't child's play. Wind and tide are against me, you see. That's always my luck."

"You won't want me any more, I suppose, Mr. Dennis?" said the boy.

"No; you can go back to diggin' for your pa."

"Is that a young Maybough?" asked Frank, who had recognized a likeness to the other little fish-mouthed branches of the common stock.

"Yes; he didn't row, so he can hoe," said Mr. Dennis, making a feint of drawing up coat-tails which were not there—for he wore a soldier's blue jacket with brass buttons in all their glory. Having adjusted the imaginary appendages, he seated himself deliberately upon the sand.

"You have been in the war, I suppose, Mr. Dennis?"

Frank having caught the stranger's name from the child, seated himself also, ready to make the acquaintance of every genuine native.

"I enlisted, but I only waited round to New Bedford, and got back without a fling. The war collapsed sudden at last. Got badly pricked, and shrunk up like a worn-out old bladder, you

know. It was the wind from that last puff of General Grant's great bellows that blew me home again without a scratch or a scar."

"Were you glad or sorry, I wonder?"

"Well, maybe a little of both. The flavor was a good deal mixed—sweet and sour in the same cupful, like lemonade. There was a pretty strong Hand on the helm of that war-ship, I conjecture. It brought her into port a little too soon for some of my private plans, but I didn't grumble. I never expected to be a general, and wasn't over-anxious for a ball to be lodged anywhere under my skin. But I would like to have done just a little something patriotic after I had fairly set out to."

"It was too bad," said the listener, in a tone of sympathy, and with an inward struggle to keep back a smile.

"I wanted to go, all along, but my sister wouldn't hear of it at first; and she is all I've got to look to."

"You are not married, then?"

"She is as good for me as a wife and ten children, I judge. I'm near fifty, but she's four years to the fore, if not a little more."

"You like poetry, Mr. Dennis?"

"Take one, young man?" said Mr. Dennis, slipping two stumpy pipes out of his pocket, and offering the best to his neighbor. "Poetry can be lit up from the end of this. I've seen spirits before now—black, white, and gray—dancing like moonbeams in a good whiff of smoke."

Frank coughed a little.

"Don't you choke, that's no joke; and don't you croak. But take it, if you like it."

"Thank you, but it's an accomplishment not in my line."

"Have some tooth-polish, then?" handing over a paper of tobacco.

"Nor that either. I've never learned how."

"Not! and you straight from Boston? There's hardly a boy on the island who don't do one or t'other, or both."

"Have you caught many fish lately, Mr. Dennis?"

"Well, I went out the other day and got into a real shoal of 'em—blue-fish biting round enough to have given me half a barrel; but an ugly fellow got hold of my hook, and the line was kinder weak, perhaps, and away he went scot free."

"You mean away he went with your hook for booty, don't you?"

"That's about it; and I never thought to take a second hook, so I lost the chance that time, and haven't been since till to-day. That's why I forgot the eel-skin, likely—getting up a new

tackle. Now I'll wait till there's wind enough to carry sail one way at least. There's a kind of Providence in every thing, I expect. I didn't mean to forget the eel-skin."

"Of course not."

"Of course not; and if I feel stirred up any day to go fishing from any thing either inside of me or from outside, I always go; but I don't know that it's best to be forever beating the sea because it won't give me a living with a free will. If a sparrow doesn't fall to the ground without the Governor up there taking notice, then I calculate not a wave in the sea lifts its head without, and not a fish bites the hook or don't bite it, as the case may be."

Mr. Dennis jerked his eyes upward as he spoke—not at all religiously or reverentially—but with a look and tone of the most every-day, entire conviction.

"It is best to measure every thing squarely by the same rule. The old minister who expounded the law from the inside of that old finger-pointer upon the hill there said so, and I have always as much believed in it as I have in the bread-and-butter that I grew up on. He's gone, and the church stands without an echo; but I accept the doctrine."

"I suppose you are right," replied Frank, rather at a loss as to whether he was expected to look edified or amused; but concluding that, on the whole, he was a little of both.

"Of course I am right—makes day out of night; that is my delight."

Mr. Dennis turned a little away, and smoked for some five minutes as if for dear life.

"That's a thousand times better than grog, young man," he said, facing about again, evidently comforted. "It kills the raw edge of sea-air twice as well. Never touch that, whatever happens—unless, maybe, you've been drowned and are just coming to life again."

"I am likely to follow your advice."

"Better do it."

"Is fishing generally profitable work, Mr. Dennis?"

Mr. Dennis gave a droll sidelong glance at Frank, and then, taking out his pipe, puffed away a great mouthful of smoke. "Oftenest about like that!" rising at once to his feet. "I wish you good-day; I've but little time to play, for I never get a holiday."

"Good-day, and I hope for further acquaintance."

Frank got up also, and made a deferential bow at parting. An hour after, on returning home, he found Mr. Maybough sawing at the wood-pile, while little Ben played quietly at his

side. Frank slipped up stairs, and sat looking out at them from his window. Presently the crippled wood-sawyer, shaking with the palsy, stopped to rest, wiping the perspiration from his forehead with a dark cotton handkerchief.

"Run in and bring me a kitchen chair, Ben. I must rest a little; and I guess I can split this sitting down."

Ben was only seven, and short for his age; but he came tugging the chair like a sturdy little hero as he was, and placing it for his father, he said, "Now, which stick, pa? I could split the little ones, if you would let me."

"No; you place them, Ben, just as they come. That's right." As the child leaned the stick against the log he drew back. The father split it into fragments, and then rested while Ben threw the small sticks into a pile and laid another large one in place. It was small gnarled oak—such as is most abundant on an island only twenty miles long—and was by no means easy to work; but they toiled on, father and child, sometimes silent, and sometimes chatting cozily over all the events of the neighborhood.

Frank looked out from his window like one fascinated. This trembling, crippled man and this baby building up his wood-pile, and he looking idly on. His sense of the fitness of things was a good deal disturbed, and he kept vaguely reasoning to himself: "These Mayboughs are not beggars; they wish to work and be paid for it."

By-and-by Margaret came to them. "Mr. Maybough, Mrs. Warner sends word that some of the wood should be cut fine for kindlings."

"Yes," he answered, "I'll cut it so."

"But it doesn't matter much, after all," said Margaret, looking on with sympathy as he worked. "I can use the hatchet myself. So, if you can do the large splitting, I will do the small as I use it, and you needn't trouble about it at all. It's but little I shall want, at any rate, especially if I burn peat."

"Bravo, Margaret!" said Frank, *sotto voce*; his eyes beaming cordial approval, "and I'll use one plate and tea-spoon less for every meal, to make up for it; and offer my arm seven times oftener to father every week," he mentally added, with a slight shrug and a little laugh. "Poor father," he thought, more seriously, after a moment; "he has suffered intensely, and I deserve hanging! He would take out his eyes any time to give them to me or to any of us, if we were in real need of them."

Thus wholesomely pricked in his conscience, Frank straightway laid hold of "Pickwick" and began reading aloud to his father, who had been sitting discontentedly, smoking his cigar in the shade of the house. Mr. Warner joined in the laugh over poor Mr. Pickwick's adventures in the pound, till the tears rolled down his cheeks; and he declared himself half ready to join a hunting-party himself—if he could only go in a wheelbarrow.

A faultless white handkerchief extra went into Mrs. Maybough's wash the next Monday thereafter; but as they paid by the piece, a handkerchief innocently wet with tears of laughter only amounted to another item of Mr. Frank's unwonted charities.

CHAPTER IX.

TREASURES FOR THE BELOVED.

ALFRED BRAND, sleeping in a small attic room at his cousin's, woke one gray early morning and thought of Margaret. Indeed some thought of her had dwelt with him almost perpetually, sleeping and waking; but his dreaming that night had been much more rainbow-tinted than his late disconsolate day-musings. Why Margaret interested him so much he could hardly have told himself. She had a pleasant, honest face, which almost any one would have called rather pretty, if the envious small-pox had not set its signet there; but as Alfred's thoughts rested on this defect, he felt that he could love her all the better for it. He wanted to care for something that stood in need of him!

He went back to the suffering which doubtless accompanied the repulsive disease, and his heart softened with a manly wish to add joy and love as an offset, not only to the pain of body, but also to the necessary mental distress, which perhaps she sometimes felt keenly even now. Was it this which had kept others aloof? To be certain of that would have comforted him; for his feelings had already reached that exacting stage which could not easily brook a rival.

A cloud had come between them of late; but was it any thing more than the empty, worthless vapor of mischief and mistrust? It was ignoble in him to rest under this mere shadow of suspicion. He was at least bound to solve

his own doubts; and this was a duty which rested with himself alone.

If he could have met Margaret freely—could have conversed with her without restraint for a single half hour, each might readily have understood the other, and every thing would probably have ended delightfully.

Alfred had long felt this, and had even sought for an interview. He had called manfully at the house; but Margaret was away; and Mr. Warner, meeting him at the door, had kept him there without giving him an opportunity of stepping inside. Affable, but frigidly polite from the first, the master of the house had ended by warning off the visitor, and bidding him not to return.

"You ask for our Margaret, sir; but Miss Margaret is a transient visitor here for the summer; and it is quite unnecessary that you should trouble yourself to make her acquaintance. She finds society enough, and quite suitable to her, in our own family. She was humbly born; but we have raised her in social standing, till we regard her as a friend—almost an equal; and we have far other plans for her than settling her permanently on this very retired, small island.

"Indeed, sir," Alfred had answered, with immense self-restraint, "I had not exactly called this evening to propose to you for the young lady's hand; but I suppose, even in that case, she would be allowed to speak for herself."

"Of course! of course! but I am her guardian. You could hardly wish to seek her society if her friends all disapprove. Don't think of her again, young man. You are every way worthy in all respects, according to your position in life, I have not a doubt; but her sphere and yours are as wide asunder as the antipodes. She is a pearl to us, and not to be thrown away by the family that has protected her, during a summer's brief rustication. Your intentions are simply of a friendly nature, I presume; yet it would be more agreeable to us if your acquaintance with her was not farther continued. I am sure I wish you well as a very useful citizen, and one to whom we were all much indebted on our passage to this place. This is a very pleasant evening. Good-day, sir."

Alfred's tongue was petrified, and he felt like a walking mummy under the first shock as he turned abruptly from the house.

Was Margaret, then, another "bright particular star," so high above him that even to address her respectfully was an insult? No; he had himself been insulted, and he had been found wanting even in a proper spirit of resent-

ment. But the resentment was rising now to a fervid heat. He kicked at the insult vigorously in the likeness of a potato-hill in his own fields through which he was passing; and wisely determined that it would be only manly to try with new vigor for this exceeding prize.

The real question in his own mind was quite a different one. Was Margaret worthy of him? He must take time to settle this last query, and act accordingly.

This morning a ray of insight into the real nature of the case had opened it out to him in a new light, and one full of encouragement. He had misinterpreted Margaret's simple good-nature—possibly had mistrusted her very best virtues. Who had made him judge, without even a fair and impartial trial?

He rose on his elbow, and looked about his dingy room with a smile. It contained little except his books, clothes, bed, and two sailor's chests, which served him also as chairs. His eye resting on one of these green-painted boxes, the smile deepened. Slipping out on the bare floor, he tumbled himself into his clothes, and having locked the door and taken a chest-key from its hiding-place, he knelt by one of the boxes, and, opening it, began to examine the contents. It was a collection of odd treasures, chiefly sea-shells and other foreign curiosities, gathered in his boyhood from many far-off shores.

In this island, where the legitimate ambition of more than half the boys is to become sea-captains, almost every house can display some reminiscence of distant travel. Rare shells lie upon the mantel, or peep out from some open drawer, or gleam from an out-of-the-way shelf in the strange company, perhaps, of flat-irons, squashes, and bundles of garden-seeds; or some provident, hopeful girl has them stored away with other keepsakes, as the nucleus of a future cabinet. Shell boxes and baskets ornament parlor tables, and tasteful shell-frames, containing very choice and beautiful specimens of marine wealth, ennoble the common prints which ornament walls sand-finished or covered by brilliant, large-patterned paper.

Wives and daughters who never perhaps went off the island even once in their whole lives, keep these gifts of husbands, fathers, brothers, and sweethearts, as beautiful suggestions of the tales that have been told to them, and of the strange things they instinctively long to see, but without once dreaming of ever doing so—for the feminine branches of a sailor's household stay at home even more than other women—by way of keeping up the average of home care-taking.

They are often more energetic and practical in outside business than most ladies; but their knowledge is frequently of a narrow and limited kind.

"Sea-faring men are not only often away from home, but they form ties and associations different from their families; and the breach widens every year." So said a sensible spinster descended from a sailor's family, who is reported to have herself refused a sea-captain, remaining unmarried to this day; and her low voice of quiet conviction left an impression upon my mind which will not easily wear away.

Men who receive the sharpening and polishing discipline of a wide experience, leaving their wives year after year pottering only in kitchen and nursery, wake up too often to a late sense of hopeless difference in development between those who should have gone hand in hand in all progress; but an enlarging civilization is steadily taking feminine humanity more and more into the counsels of male kindred, and into a practical share of their duties and experiences! Possibly the time may come when more families will accompany their sea-faring relatives on their voyages; the ship becoming more nearly a home where men, women, and children may share largely in common duties and common interests. If that day ever dawns, sailors will be better, nobler, more self-respecting men, and their wives and daughters wiser and stronger women. Meantime, mementos from foreign lands will remain treasured evidences to many that they have not been wholly forgotten by their absent loved ones.

Alfred Brand had a good deal of untrained love for all beautiful things. He had seen pretty trifles duly prized by the receiver, and had picked up many of his treasures, not only from real admiration of them, but with the thought of a possible sweet face which would one day bend over them admiringly, nestled close to his own. He had planned a neat, convenient cabinet, which he himself would make—for he was a clever workman with tools—and had mused over the bright smiles beaming from a vaguely-defined face, in acceptance of his collection as a bridal gift.

This morning the face was Margaret's; and if it was not exactly pretty, it was sweet and bright enough to satisfy him entirely.

One by one he spread out pearly and bright-colored, gleaming shells, over floor, and bed, and chests—assorting them in kindred groups, and remembering where he had gathered each. There were Cypræas—Map-Cowries, Poached Eggs, Money-shells, and their various mottled,

mouse-like kindred; smooth and beautiful Olivas; spiral, strongly-marked Turbos, the thorny Murex, and the silvery Sea-ear; oddly formed and prettily sculptured Bivalves; corals and bright pebbles, and multitudes of other treasures miscellaneously gathered from the antipodes. Many of these had been originally picked up by himself, and were rippling over with sunny memories. The great homely green and brown Turbo from Africa, with its pearly lining, the beautiful Venus's Comb from the Moluccas, and the immense blushing Conch-shell from Cuba, was each strongly marked in his calendar, and each was telling its own wonderful tale to his delighted ears. They were all in a rough, unpolished state; sea-weed, clay, sand, and barnacles still clinging to many of them; and these queer groups of parasites were sometimes even more beautiful than the shells to which they grew.

Those seemed bright days, some of them not very long past, when he added to his treasures with the vague hope in his heart that there were yet brighter days rising one beyond another in the possible future. Was their rosy dawn coming to him already? and was it this which now flooded his morning heart with unspeakable, tender gladness? He knelt down and prayed as he used to long ago—offering up all the vague longing and thanksgiving of his soul, though he couldn't remember kneeling thus at his bedside before in many years; and he had passed through peril and storm time and again, when no prayer went up from his clouded heart.

Suddenly the thought came to him that he would at once burnish up all these treasures, putting them in the completest order for a bridal gift. So, gathering them all together again into the green chest, he shook out his yesterday-worn boots, piling up the little heap of sand which they contained, and, finding a bit of old flannel, selected one of the prettiest, parasite-laden shells, and sat down on his treasure-box in his red woollen shirt-sleeves, with his open jack-knife, ready for work. The sun came peeping over the horizon just in time to witness the commencement of his task.

Vinegar was an acid with which he was familiar as a means of cleansing off the rough outside; but much could be done even without this, and he carefully scraped away the foreign substances with his knife, working on with infinite painstaking. Then he took up the piece of old flannel, to commence rubbing with the sand; but there was no water in his room; for his washing was all done either in the great

salt-water basin outside or in the little wash-hand basin in the porch.

His first impulse was to wet the cloth from his mouth; but no! he would not spit on any thing which might ever belong to Margaret; so, slipping the shell into his pocket, he went softly down stairs, where he found an old cup, which he filled from the water-pail. The opening of a door aroused the family; but he escaped to his room with the full cup, locking it carefully into his treasure-chest for future use. Putting the flannel and knife into his pocket, he prepared for the customary work of the day.

When he reached his own little farm, lying along both sides of a great ancient sand-drift, now one of the pretty rolling hills of the region, he stood thinking of the best place to locate a house—looking off wistfully towards Margaret, and hoping to catch some glimpse of her before he began work; but he saw no one except Mr. Warner, who was sitting in his arm-chair in the shade of the house. The cloud-cottage which had arisen up at his side tumbled down before the memories thus awakened, and his reddish face grew hotter than ever, indicative of his internal state. He turned his back, striding hastily down to the farthest row of corn, and began a vigorous hoeing by way of having something to hit with a will.

After some hours of work, Alfred sat down, hidden in the midst of the long rows of broad green leaves. First looking cautiously about him with a little shamefacedness at the consciousness of his loving task, and wetting his bit of flannel with some of the water he remembered bringing in his tin can for drinking, he dipped it in the sandy earth and began polishing his shell, with the cheerful face which he had worn in the morning.

"A little oil now," he said in a low tone to himself, "and it will do nicely."

He turned it this way and that in the sunlight, smiling as he admired its increased beauty.

"I beg pardon of the wasted barnacles. Some of them were too pretty to be scraped away; but they got out of their places!" he said, with a shrug and a laugh. Then he smoothed and polished again.

"Margaret must like shells. I have seen her picking up the common little things about here and hoarding them as if they were jewels. I should like to drop this somewhere on the beach, if I was only sure she would find it. Wouldn't she look surprised? But those children are always on hand."

Alfred put the shell regretfully back into his

own pocket, and started home to dinner; but he grew a little cross as he walked.

"It must be a stupid thing never to be alone, morning, noon, or night. I couldn't abide it, and I wouldn't!" and, feeling what he thought to the tips of his toes, he kicked at an unfortunate corn-stalk with a force which nearly tore the poor thing up by the roots.

Directly after he met Frank Warner, who came singing across the field, like any easy-going boy enjoying a holiday.

"Halloo, Alfred! Sailor or farmer to-day?" he called, merrily, as he approached.

"A man all the time, Mr. Frank," replied Alfred, sullenly, passing hastily on.

"The dickens! What's in the wind, I wonder? I can't make him out. I guess he won't do for Margaret after all. He's as full of points as a weather-cock, so I won't burn my fingers for him, as I have been ready to do half a dozen times lately."

From that time Frank supposed that the love-making was all over.

That afternoon, as Alfred and a little son of Captain Percy's were driving a hay-cart to the meadow, they overtook Margaret and the two children.

"Oh, Mr. Alfred, please do let us ride!" cried Fannie. "I want so much to ride in a hay-cart with oxen; and so we all do. Don't we, Margaret?"

"Whoa!" called a heavy, deep voice, unsteady with joy and doubt; and as the willing oxen came to a stand-still, the driver looked with eager questioning into Margaret's face.

"Yes, Mr. Alfred, the children have been longing for a drive after the oxen ever since we came here."

"Come in, then," springing blithely to the ground, and lifting Fannie high over the hay-rigging. But Margaret began to scramble up unassisted, and her lover felt as if she were intentionally giving him the cold shoulder.

The children were riding in a chariot of delight, and Margaret, wholly unconscious of offense, was as sunny-tempered as the cloudless sky overhead. At length Alfred, though a little more cautious than before of expressing too much either in words or looks, recovered his usual cheerfulness, and it was a merry, long-remembered ride to the whole party.

"Don't you like hay-making, little boy?" said Anne, turning to Edgar, who had sat from the first perfectly silent, but watching them all intently, with a pleased smile.

The large brown eyes went pleadingly up to

Alfred's face, and a shadow of infinite longing and regret darkened the childish brow.

"He is deaf and dumb," said Alfred, in a low tone, as though the lad might hear, and be pained by what he said.

"Deaf and dumb!" echoed both the children, in surprise and pity, Fannie staring at the boy in curious awe, and Anne turning her eyes suddenly away, as though it were sacrilege to be peering into his infirmity.

Poor Edgar's eyes grew moist, and he turned away, looking vaguely out towards the sea.

"Ah! poor boy," said Margaret, pityingly; "we'll show him good-will, at any rate;" and, getting up, she went over and took his hand, which she held gently, with an encouraging smile. "Now let us get out, Mr. Alfred; we have ridden as far as we intended; but tell us the boy's name first."

"Edgar Percy—Captain Percy's only son."

"What! our Captain Percy? Dear, dear! If we only could cure all the sorrow there is in the world! Tell Edgar we all want to be friends with him, and we hope we shall see him again soon."

"I hope, then, that Edgar and I will happen to be together when you meet next; for we all want to be friends, don't we, Miss Fannie?" said Alfred; but he looked steadily at Margaret, who blushed a little, answering, "Yes, certainly, of course we do."

"Oh yes, Mr. Alfred. We always speak to any body in the country. Mamma says we may; but she don't let us when we go back to the city," replied Fannie, innocently.

So each party went its way; and while Alfred thought of Margaret's kindness and sympathy for the little mute, the black blood was yet boiling in his heart; for Fannie's childish comment had roused him to unwonted anger.

"She's her father's child," he muttered; but when little Edgar began to speak rapidly in sign language, expressing admiration for both Margaret and the children, the bright glow of delight on his sometimes vacant face fell like sunshine over the murky pool of Alfred's discontent, making that radiant also. Heartily indorsing the boy's opinion, Alfred concluded to look on the bright side himself—till next time.

CHAPTER X.

QUARRELLING AND SIGHT-SEEING.

NOT many days after this Margaret and Alfred met—for almost the first time since their acquaintance—without the presence of a third party.

Who hasn't longed to make a loop-hole in the curtains of fate, and take a peep into the next world? And yet, when the spirit-rappers come, proposing to knock a hole for us right through into the presence of the unseen mysteries, we run away in a chill of dread? Who hasn't wanted many a thing, and yet, when it was offered him, grew suddenly afraid to touch it even with his little finger? Somewhat so it was with our pair of lovers. Either would have offered a year of life for one hour of peaceful interview, and all the resulting comfort which doubtless would have ensued; and here they stood, unexpectedly, face to face, by the roadside, shut in by the friendly hills from every mortal eye. They only stared at each other like two strange cats, every hair bristling up a little in ready defiance.

Margaret was going in haste on some errand when she came thus upon Alfred, who was sitting on the grassy bank with a handsome brown and green Turbo in his hand, dotted all over at

present with round, gleaming, pearly eyes, which he had introduced expressly for Margaret's gratification. He had been filing off the outer surface here and there, till he reached the brilliant pearl lining beneath, and had just stopped in his work, highly gratified with the novel effect.

"It will be a change, at any rate; and I have two others. Margaret is sure to like it!"

He held it sparkling in the sunshine, smiling, and half disposed to caress it in Margaret's stead.

Suddenly she stood there before him, as if he had evoked her from the unrest of his own wishes; for he was thinking only of her. She blushed, stammered, and hesitated; and the young man, hastily concealing his shell, hesitated, stammered, and blushed, even more than she herself.

So, after scarcely a pause, she went rapidly on her way, leaving Alfred gazing after her with a sinking, self-tortured heart. Some conjurers can nestle live coals into the palms of their hands with the coziest comfort; but there are others who would get badly burned even if they were playing with icicles, and the sensible, staid-

going Alfred, in his present state of fermentation, belonged to this latter class.

Presently Margaret was seen returning, and the fitful sailor gathered up all his energies for decisive action. I am bound to say that a look of nervous, black desperation seemed to wrap him up as he stood, in a suit of cast-iron armor; and his whole attitude became so wholly martial and defiant, that a stouter heart than Margaret's might have fled in dismay. As she approached, her whole laughing face looked awe-struck, when she recognized this unwonted mood of her admirer. She even thought of Apollyon stopping the way against Christian in the Pilgrim's Progress; laughing a little, and gaining courage at the not very complimentary conceit; but when she came up to his side, her heart was beating again with some undefined terror, and her companion was not in a mood to reassure her in the least.

"Stay a little, Margaret, and let me speak with you. I have something which I think it very important to say."

"Has the bottom of the sea fallen out, Mr. Alfred? You look exactly as though you had lost your calling. I would stay if I thought that had happened; or that your farm had fallen into a chasm and been swallowed up; but otherwise I can't, for the whole family are waiting for me."

"Are they of so much more value than I am?"

"Yes; of course. They are five to your one. It takes very little arithmetic to make that clear; don't you see?" Margaret smiled conciliation, and waited.

"I see," answered Alfred, moodily.

"Well."

"Well, can you give me five minutes with a clear conscience towards your employers?"

"Hardly. Half of them are already in the carriage, and we are just driving out for the day to the Painted Cliffs."

"Go, then!" indignantly.

"Well, say it, Alfred! I can run all the way to make up lost time, if necessary."

"Margaret, do you really prefer to be trotting after that family like a little dog tied to them by a long string?" cried the foolish lover, losing all self-control.

The blood flushed up angrily over Margaret's face. "The string is a long one which binds me to them," she said in low, concentrated tones.

"Good-morning!"

"Good-morning, and good-bye. You go, then, deliberately?"

"Of course."

Alfred had forgotten that he really had not



SO THEY PARTED.

asked the question he had intended, and Margaret's cutting indignation of words and manner seemed to him at the moment like an answer. He had meant to inquire whether or not it was with her approval that he had been sent away from the house so curtly and decisively when he had called a few days before; but instead of that he had blundered into an unintentional insult, which Margaret's quick blood had promptly and hotly resented. So they parted; she hurrying on, leaving him, at first, standing there in the road, and then slowly following, still keeping her in sight, as she would otherwise have disappeared over the hill.

Five minutes afterwards he saw her step into a carriage. The whole family drove off in bright colors, with a showy, handsome turnout, and at a festival rate, which completed his indignation.

"Bah! She'd rather be a foot-ball in that family than to manage the helm of my boat, that's certain. Now I've done with her!" The unlucky fellow struggled resolutely to tear all thought of her forever out of his heart. "I've done with her! Let her be a shuttlecock to the end of the chapter. She likes it! I'm a fool, that's certain; but I can keep my own counsel, and thrive on it."

As for Margaret, she had not taken twenty steps before she saw clearly that she had accepted an insult, though none had been offered by her hot-headed admirer, who, in his present mood, was simply beside himself, and that was all. She half wanted to turn back, but was

too proud for that, and was a good deal indignant still, even at such unconscious impudence.

"Why couldn't he have said it at once, whatever it was, and have done with it!" she thought, testily. "It wasn't to ask me to marry him outright, as I thought it was at first, but it was something which he thinks important. I am afraid somebody is meddling, and yet I don't see how."

By this time she had reached the carriage, and, once seated, there was leisure for more thought; though every body chatted about her in the sunniest of morning moods. Her present temper was by no means a sunny one, for she was about equally vexed with herself and with Alfred.

"Why, Margaret, did you breakfast on lemon-juice?" asked Frank, as she sat with her face turned away, and not only entirely silent, but evidently uninterested in all that was going on.

"You went in too much haste, Margaret," said Mrs. Warner, kindly. "Don't do it another time; a few minutes' longer waiting would not have mattered to us, and you looked tired and flushed."

"I was in too much haste," answered Margaret, quietly.

After that the chatting and the girl's troubled thoughts both went on together again.

"Somebody said, father, that a great *savant* visited these Painted Cliffs some thirty years ago, and he announced to the world that they were extremely interesting and magnificent; but that, in order to get there, he had to let down seventeen different pairs of bars."

"Capital! How expert you will become then, Frank, in the art of jumping in and out of the carriage."

"He'll learn to put up bars as nicely as any cow-boy, won't he, papa?"

"I wish I hadn't flared up suddenly, like a smutty lamp, at the first breath of wind," thought Margaret.

"Ah, now, isn't *this* pretty?" called Mrs. Warner.

"It's fine, very fine! A clear pond of water on both sides of the road; and these hills are full of character, and suit the location," said the elder gentleman, patronizingly.

"When I see him again I'll put away pride, and make it right. The poor boy deserves it, for he is not happy. And there is blame somewhere, too; but I'm sure it isn't with him, though his temper is as hot as a red pepper, apparently. I don't mind, though. If one was used to it, and could get it soothed with the milk of real loving kindness, it wouldn't

matter at all. I'm in scalding water half the time as it is, and always have been. Besides, something is wrong and unnatural. That I've felt for a long time, and he is suffering for it. So I'll do my best to make it up when we meet again, or at any rate to get to the bottom of it."

With this good resolution Margaret thrust away her troubled thoughts, determined to enjoy a pleasant holiday. She smiled once to herself as she thought that Alfred would be sure to turn up somewhere soon, and give her the necessary opportunity; for in her heart she was almost as certain of his constancy as she was of following her own shadow when she went down to the ocean at eventide and it was a clear sunset. The one and the other had been almost equally unailing ever since she came to the sea-side.

"Aha, Frank! not bars now, but a gate!" laughed Mr. Warner, as the road seemed to be suddenly cut off by an obstruction; which, however, is not at all unusual in these parts, where all side-roads seem to be private property.

"That's a modern improvement, then! In another thirty years, I suppose, it will really be a public highway," said the lady.

"Aha, father! no jumping this time, though! Don't you see? Here's a new luxury coming."

A child, with a mat of curled, woolly hair, and a smiling brown face, swung open the wide gate and stood holding it for them to drive through. Her little bare, dark feet and hands were as nearly the color of the red man as of the black; and she was in reality of mixed blood—a little slip of Indian ancestry grafted into the Africo-American tree—though her people, who were settled in the region, were called Painted Cliff Indians, and, like other Indians, had been, till recently, exempt from taxation.

"Here are pennies," said Frank, "and thank you. Open it again when we come back, by-and-by, little girl."

"There! I want to give a penny too," said Fannie, handing one to the child, whose shining face brightened wonderfully at this unexpected donation.

"Can you read, little girl?" asked Mrs. Warner.

"Yes, ma'am; I'm in the 'Second Reader.'" So this little slip of dark-blooded humanity was not a savage, but a school-girl; and a sensible enough, and not over-dirty, merry little thing she looked.

"Can you sew, and wipe dishes, and hoe corn, besides?" asked Frank, laughing, and imitating his mother's tone ever so little.

"Yes, sir, and pick up potatoes," retorted the child, with a suppressed giggle, twinkling two impish eyes, which were neither Indian nor African.

After this, they drove over abominable roads, or off on the grassy sides, which were smoother than the dreadful ruts in the sand, finding every thing delightfully rural, till they had gradually risen to the top of a magnificent high plain, still knobby, however, with the old-time sand-drifts, now covered with their green garments of short grass and whortleberries. Here an almost unrivalled view burst upon them like a sudden wonder. There was ocean on three sides, with banks and wooded hills across the gleaming water in one direction, the intervening space literally covered with white-winged ships, on their passage to and fro along the great Atlantic highway. A little Indian church, and Indian country homes, inoculated with civilization, yet hanging still upon the skirts of the wilderness, were in the background; and the Government light-house lifted up its stately warning finger from the outermost land-point in front.

There was a suppressed murmur, and yet no one spoke. The horses were brought to a halt, and the children stood up in the carriage—every face radiating back again the light of beauty which was falling upon it in full measure. The invalid had forgotten his often infirmities—transported out of himself into a frame of mind worthy to be one of the beatitudes. If Captain Giles could have seen him now, he might have discovered the secret of a radical cure for his ailments; for the interest which a fishing excursion would inevitably fail to awaken was now in fervid and cheerful action.

"Better than we bargained for!" said Frank, at length, drawing a long breath. "It's like solid gold, when you expected only gold-wash; isn't it mother?"

"It certainly is very, *very* fine."

"The cloud-shadows exactly suit the landscape, and seem to belong to it. It is a blessing that the sunshine is not unfailing, otherwise we should only half enjoy the more perfect moments like this," said Mr. Warner, taking off his hat, and looking about him with a placid benignity.

"That means we are to stop here for lunch, I suppose, father?"

"Yes. Yes, my son; we couldn't do better."

There was a sudden scrambling out of the carriage by all the younger members of the party; and Frank, who was driver, began to be concerned for his horses, for there was not a

tree or fence in the neighborhood to which he could fasten them. He soon settled the matter by tying them to the carriage itself, where his father and mother preferred to remain seated.

"Frank! Frank! do you know that man sitting up there at the very highest point under the liberty-pole?" called Anne, running back to her brother in some trepidation.

"Make him go away, Frank! we want that place ourselves; and he's got a gun," said Fannie.

"If it's a liberty-pole, then he's at liberty to sit under it, if he wants to, I suppose, Fan; but I'll give him a poke under the ribs, if you like. Lend me your darning-needle, and I'll put a few stitches in his neck, Margaret. That may enable him to sit up, at least."

"Can he be tipsy, Mr. Frank? That would spoil the picnic for your father and mother. Perhaps it's one of the Indians."

"Bless you! no. It's Mr. Dennis; and it isn't a gun, but a telescope. That's not amiss, for I was just wanting one; so don't be troubled, for I'll entertain him, children. You'll find he's a better man in a desert like this than a court-jester would be at Court. It's half an hour yet to lunch, and if he stays we'll give him a sandwich."

Mr. Dennis suddenly flopped over, and then sat upright, staring at the company in some astonishment. "Asleep, by George! Well, I b'lieve I had dozed off!" he said, nodding to Frank, and making a general bow to the others, without rising.

"Glad to meet you, Mr. Dennis. Here's a field worthy of your telescope."

"Well, yes. I come up to spy about. *This thing* kinder makes neighbors for you in dull times; helps you to board any ship you fancy, and scrape acquaintance without a grain o' trouble."

"It's as good as a magic wishing-cap, you see, Fannie; if not rather better up here, where there is something to be seen."

"There isn't much to see to-day; but I caught sight of something floating, and it went out of eye-shot from my house, and so I come on up here to get a clear view; but Kier Williams, he put out and brought it in—a set of boxes swimming about, it appeared to be, cast over from some ship; but whatever it was, I've lost it, and that's generally my luck. I saw him just a hauling 'em into his boat as I got up here. Kier wasn't one born with a silver spoon in his mouth, but he was born to pick up all the dropped shillings which any body else loses. He picks up an amazing deal from wrecked ships, and one

way and another, out of the sea and off of the land."

"He's the early bird, I suppose?"

"Well, yes; but 'taint that altogether. If a dozen men went down to draw sea-weed, the others might not get a full load; but he *would*. Seems kinder as if the stuff would come tumbling up at his feet if he wanted it, just to be obliging, you know. He and I often went berrying when we were boys together, and if all sorts of little wild fruits didn't just flush up and ripen for him on purpose: then I'm certain that they must have helped pick themselves at the very least, for he always had his basket more than twice as full as any one of the rest of us; and when we've been a-gunning along shore, I declare I've seen little birds bob right up before him, and sing out, "Kill dear! kill dear!" in a way just kind and knowing like, as if they really meant it; and when he did kill 'em, they'd just topple over in such a peaceful and resigned way, it was a sight to behold."

Mr. Dennis looked furtively out from under his bushy eyebrows, watching the effect of his words; but to the children his face looked dreamy and half asleep, and they were both inclined to think him a little daft or crazed. Poor Anne started nervously when he turned to her and said, with unusual earnestness, in a tone of sincere conviction:

"You mayn't think it, Miss, but it's really so. You see that's his gift! That's his gift!"

"Why, Dennis," interposed Frank, "you must belong to the age of poetry and marvels. It seems very certain to me now that this island is a suburb of the real wonder-land. It looks like it just here, at any rate." He said this gravely, with a quizzical glance towards Margaret, and a prolonged, admiring look over the rather eerie landscape. "The ghosts of the old aboriginal Indians must be stalking about here, I dare say; and over there in the cliffs I hear that one can still find bones of the primitive mermaids and their fishy first cousins."

"More fact than fancy, young gentleman," responded Mr. Dennis, with preternatural seriousness. "Whoever says that the old Indians don't walk hereabouts, had better prove it; that's all. If a man had tended a flower-garden all his life, it stands to reason he would like to come back and see how it got on afterwards. The original red men used to like this hill, there ain't a doubt of it; and if they are alive, it don't do to say positive, you know, that they've all turned their backs on it, 'cause maybe they haven't. As for mermaids, I don't say about them; but if a fish is alive, it is alive like ev-

ery thing else, and whether in the body or out of the body, it don't matter. It's pretty certain that there isn't any life now in the fossils out yonder; and it's a little more certain still that there is life *here*."

With his long thumb and finger he pointed downward, thoughtfully nipping off spire after spire of the stubby short grass at his elbow.

"This will be dead hay to-morrow; but you see I can't pinch out the life. That will go somewhere; won't it?"

"It would seem so, Mr. Dennis," replied Frank, slowly.

"Of course. You can find curious dead things over there, from little stone quahaugs and champed up mouthfuls of crabs, along with the real teeth of monsters that very likely might 'a done it, up to the spine-bones of sea-creatures, every jint of 'em big enough for the head of a wooden mallet. They are all preserved."

"Do you mean it, really, Mr. Dennis?" asked Anne, timidly.

"Yes really, miss, really. Just you ask the light-house keeper to show you some—if seeing is believing. You see Providence wa'n't a-going to let all the old juicy past go on and dry up into nothing, and He just contrived it so that a good many things got hardened somehow into stone, and a good many more got preserved-like, mostly in a natural state, or, at least, about as much so as dried apples are like green ones. Round here He used a kind of sirup of iron, I take it, or something of that sort, for keeping a good many things; and He used it pretty much as my sister Jedida does molasses for the more common kind of preserves. The white-sugar relics are a little choicer class, I suppose. You see this island is one of his general store-houses, and things are packed away here done up mostly in heaps of clay and sand—something like the way they store grapes in bran and saw-dust, to preserve 'em for winter. It's all curious enough, and a great many things are curious. I tell you, Providence keeps all the ends up even, and He never lets go of a single thread or ravelling, or drops any stitches, or allows a shred of any thing that He takes in hand to go to real waste. Some folks are ashamed of economy; but the Almighty, he isn't!"

The little group had gathered about the lounging historian and moralizer, listening in amused astonishment—shaded by a solemn awe in the minds of the children, who watched the ceaseless movement of the long thumb and finger, which seemed to be plucking away bit by bit from a great mine of mysteries hidden beneath their very feet.

"It ain't likely that the live part of this little creature here that enjoys to eat and jump, and struggles, and wants to spring away from me now, is going to perish out and out, is it? Look there, now; away he goes, and he gets comfort out of it. His life's worth having, if he is a grasshopper!"

The man had made a sudden lunge to seize the insect, and now he extended his open palm towards it with a wave of dismissal and benediction. "There he goes out of sight, but not out of existence; and it will be just the same when he jumps clean out of his body into the grasshopper's future state. Shouldn't you say so?" he asked, appealing to Margaret.

"I am almost tempted to believe it," she replied, seriously.

"I hope so," laughed Frank.

"Oh! I wish every little thing like that could live forever," said Anne, sympathetically.

"Mosquitoes and all?" added Frank.

"Maybe they could get enough to eat there, and wouldn't bite us," said Mr. Dennis, with the sidelong glance of scrutiny from his half-shut eye. "I suppose we should have mighty little blood to draw from, at any rate."

"Like enough," said Frank, dryly.

Here Fannie giggled, and every body's feelings were perceptibly lightened.

"To come back to Kier Williams," said Mr. Dennis. "It's reasonable to conclude that he was just made with a special gift, as I said before. So, maybe, we all are. I think so, beyond a doubt; but his lies more on the surface, maybe, and it's a kind of profitable gift to the man himself, now isn't it?" he continued, looking up with a cheerful and approving smile, like a man not disinclined to patronize even the Providence whose wonderful power he was always so fond of applauding.

"Kier Williams is a man that I could almost envy, but not quite."

"If I lived neighbor to such a man I should claim him for first cousin," laughed Margaret.

"Would you, miss?" said Mr. Dennis, admiringly. "I never thought of that, but I shouldn't wonder if it would pay;" and, with a smile of great good-will, the long figure which had been sprawling over the grass all this time stumbled up to its feet, poking the telescope at Margaret with *empressment*. "Take it and try it; you won't have to buy it."

"Thank you. We'll let the youngest begin to look first, then. Now, Fannie!"

So they looked, each in turn, with eminent satisfaction, highly entertained, meantime, by the remarks of Mr. Dennis.

Frank carried the great supplemental eye to his parents, but neither of them would consent to use it.

"The view is wide enough, my son," said his father, positively.

"I don't care to try it, dear," said his mother.

"Do get the man away, Frank, if you can; he spoils every thing!"

So Frank started back with a wry face, but came *into the presence* smiling from ear to ear.

"Mr. Dennis, when you go fishing again couldn't you take me as mate, in the place of that small Maybough. Then he can go on hoeing, and I'll do half the rowing. It seems you always have to entice him from his father's garden; but I'm off like thistle-down at the smallest notice, and no one the worse for it."

"Certain! it's just the thing. I'd go to-morrow, but I can't, to my sorrow."

"Why not?"

"Well, I've got some hay to draw, and some wood to saw."

"Do that to-day, can't you?"

"Yes, so I might, so I might, and so I will; but I must be off at once, if I do. Good-day, all!" sidling off, with a sweeping nod. "I'll be along past your house, young man, about eight o'clock, looking for you."

"So that's settled. I was afraid he would stick like a bur and prick my fingers, for mother wanted I should pull him off. For my part, I shan't mind wearing him as a bosom-pin all to-morrow, for he's entertaining."

"Mother is waving us back, and it's lunch-time," said Anne, running on before, and climbing into the carriage.

The whole family were soon seated again, partaking of as dainty a cold lunch as Margaret could prepare—all with sea-air appetites. Meantime the horses nibbled their oats under the same invigorating influences, and all feeling the fresher for their repast drove on with renewed interest in the scenes yet to be visited.

The sun was shining brilliantly down upon the Painted Cliffs when they reached them, lighting up their many colors with a marvelous beauty. These cliffs are composed of plastic clay and sand of almost every hue—from inky black to a dazzling white. There are whole slopes colored blood red, chocolate, or yellow, or gray, and still others with a mixture of several of these—the whole rising up from the sea like a great rainbow, stretching away a mile or two in length, and some hundred and fifty feet in height.

Our holiday party stood upon the crest of these bluffs, looking down upon the vivid color-

ing below and off upon the ever restless, matchless ocean, with its green islands, feeling immensely more than remunerated for all possible fatigue. Mr. Warner cared very little either for the ugly fossils displayed by the light-house keeper, or for the beautiful Fresnel lamp which is the crown and glory of the light-house itself, and which once added a wonderful brilliancy even to the great Exposition at Paris. This remarkable lamp has both a constitution and a history, for it is six-hundred-sided, of a marvelous, complicated beauty, and it has been twice purchased by the Government from some of the shrewd Labans of commerce, as Rachel was twice won by Jacob, and it is prized accordingly. While the others were examining this miracle of science and art, Mr. Warner, in order to best enjoy the scenery, sat so far out upon the edge of the bank that he was in imminent danger of going down with one of the frequent land slips which are so continually changing the whole face of the cliff.

He had forgotten weakness and pain; and, when he had enjoyed this view long enough, was as ready as the gayest or youngest of them all to scramble down the steep path to the shore and look up at the wondrous coloring from below. The attention of the children was especially arrested by the iron conglomerates which abound here. Hydrate of iron, in nodules of all sizes and shapes, generally filled with clay or sand, which would fall out, leaving a hollow basin, enchanted them, and they ran about hunting for fanciful iron cups in the greatest glee. Numbers of these had fallen out of the cliffs and been tossed to and fro by the waves, which had smoothed and rounded them as it does the pebbles upon the beach.

Quiet little Anne found one wave-polished goblet not much thicker than ordinary glass, a prettily shaped oval, capable of holding more than a pint of liquid. This she filled with sea-

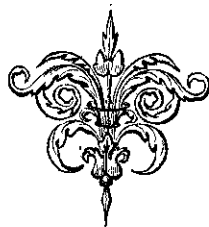
water, colored with the bright pigments which had fallen from the cliffs, till it was not unlike a rich, dark wine, and brought it to her father, who held it in his hand admiring, laughing, and even sipping like a great boy in a frolic; and then Frank began to batter the immense nodular masses which lay about, chipping off dozens of little rough, striking forms, generally reddish brown in color, but some of them almost black, and others striped with yellow ochre, or ornamented with shining pebbles. The water, even a good way out to sea, was rosy with the dissolving colors which had washed into it; for in yesterday's storm the waves had laid hands on the cliffs, and carved them into new lines of beauty, and both were still flushed and glowing after all this excitement.

Loaded with treasures, the Warners returned home, all still in the best of spirits, and ready for supper. Margaret, who had greatly enjoyed the day with the rest, began expeditiously to prepare the tea, thinking of Alfred as she worked, with a smile always at her heart, sometimes rising till it dimpled either cheek. She had fully persuaded herself that the morning's little misunderstanding would be speedily blown away like a passing cloud, and this thought was highly satisfactory. She had just made the tea and taken it in, when she returned to find a package, addressed to herself, lying upon the wood-box in the porch. Her heart beat as she opened it, yet the smile deepened and spread over her whole face while she slowly untied the string. Then a great blank weariness fell over her, and all the light went out of her eye and out of her heart. The paper contained white linen, and a slip of paper was pinned to it with these words:

"To Miss Margaret Nelson.

"I return your handkerchief."

So then it was all over.



CHAPTER XI.

MORNING AND AFTERNOON.

ANNE WARNER was a child whom people called "old-fashioned," possibly because she had learned self-sacrifice by the easy-chairs of two invalids. While Frank was away at business, Margaret occupied with her manifold duties, and Fannie skipping from attic to cellar, and sometimes over the pavements outside, Anne sat reading the newspaper aloud to her father, or daintily sewing at the side of her mother, ready, any moment, either to light her father's cigar or to carry a message for her mother to one of the servants. She quite liked these duties, and considered them as privileges rather than privations; for she had listened to their grown-up conversation till her busy little brain seemed to have grown up also in sympathy with her surroundings. It was not strange, therefore, that the child should have felt an immense attraction for the contented, motherly little Mrs. Giles, and that one of her greatest pleasures at the sea-side should consist in spending an hour or two almost every day with the nice, chatty old lady, who petted her as a child, and talked to her as a woman.

She was there sometimes before the morning work was finished, and then she glided quietly about on tiptoe, looking on, with thoughtful interest, at the polishing of knives or the pickling of delicate young onions; or she stood at one side of the bed, delighted to turn over the sheets and blankets in the same deft and clever way that the old lady did at the daily bed-making.

Mrs. Giles's dark, shining blue dishes were an immense luxury in Anne's eyes, and a slip of pie eaten from one of these glorified plates, or a sip of milk drawn up from the blue depths of a small tea-cup, were more acceptable to her than when taken from her mother's best gilt and white china at the Boston home; yet it is right to say that the milk was neither blue nor chalky, and the pie always intrinsically palatable.

"Frank tells me, Mrs. Giles, that I am wearing out my welcome, and that I should be on

the look-out for the patches which you must be obliged to sew in now every time I come here."

"Tell him, then, dear, that your welcome is alive, and growing more and more thrifty every day. It is a green plant which puts out a bright new leaf at every visit." The old dame looked so thoroughly satisfied with her visitor that Anne felt no misgiving.

"I like so much to hear about your grandchildren," she said. "Will you let me look at all their daguerreotypes again? I shall care more to see them, now that I know something about them, and what kind of people they are."

"Oh, yes; bring them all out, and all their fathers and mothers, and we'll have a good look into their faces once more. I always feel as if I had had a houseful of company after I have looked at 'em all a good while, and given each of the babies a kiss—the darlings! I shall always love the babies the best."

"So do I, Mrs. Giles. Baby-pictures are a great deal sweeter than grown-up ones."

"That's so; and you are a real little woman."

"I hope Totum and Midget will come, Mrs. Giles; for I think you ought to have some of your grandchildren all the time; and then this is such a nice place to be."

"Capt'ng Giles expects 'em confidently by next week; and it's not often they disappoint him when his heart is set on a visit. Lay all the pictures in my work-basket, and first come up with me and see how I've got their room fixed already."

The old lady and the child climbed the stairs hand in hand, and stood together in the visitors' room admiringly. The bed was covered with a delicately-colored patchwork quilt, and the little old-fashioned bureau and wash-stand with white dimity spreads, hung with curiously-knotted fringe, matching the white-fringed curtains at the windows. This old-time fringe was Mrs. Giles's own handiwork in the days of her maidenhood, and prized accordingly by herself and

her descendants; so that to bring out this choice fringed drapery was to do the highest honor to her guests. Grandchildren were becoming more and more precious every year in the eyes of the warm-hearted grandmother, and she had brightened and beautified the room with a new glow of loving sunshine, warming and freshening her not yet withered old heart.

There was a little chair for Midget, and a grown-up chair for Totum, besides a great easy-chair for a visitor. The little table, with its black and crimson cloth, was brightened with six new books; three grown-up ones, with brilliant covers, for Totum, and three little ones, with gay pictures, for Midget; and there was a small china vase, to be filled with flowers by Midget; and a larger colored-glass vase, to be used for the same purpose by her sister.

The grandmotherly eyes glistened, and she wiped away a tear or two as she looked; though the eyes were sunny and smiling all the time, even when the tears dropped from them. Anne felt instinctively that the whole atmosphere was laden with loving kindness. She was quite used to handsome apartments, expensively fitted up for the use of young girls; yet this one suited her, and made her put her hands softly together, and say, almost under her breath, "It is all so nice and so pretty!"

"Their grandpa brought home the books yesterday, and he's writ their names already, I think; for he was busy with pen and ink just before you came."

Anne went over to the table and read—the old lady looking over her shoulder—"Totum Giles, from Grandpa Totum."

"Bless the man! he gave her that name, and now he's taken it himself."

"I think it's so nice! I should like to be called almost any thing besides Anne," slowly taking up another book, and reading, "*Miss Mary Giles, from Grandma Giles.*" Mary is a sweet name, though; but I want to call her Totum—if she lets me."

"Oh dear! yes. She's full of frolic, like her grandfather, and will let you call her any thing."

"*Miss Mary Giles, from the Mariners' Lodge; in anticipation of a grand play-day.*" Now what will the others say, I wonder?—"*Miss Helen Giles, from grandma. Read and learn.*"—"*Miss Helen Giles, from Grandpa. Live and learn.*"—"*Midget, from the great swing in the barn.*" I like them all; don't you, Mrs. Giles?"

"Just like him," said the old wife, brushing away the tear and smile which were struggling together in her eye.

"How nice it must be to have a grandfather

and a grandmother, and a house to visit at which is just another home for holidays," said Anne, who had few relatives of any kind, good or bad. "All this seems so pleasant; and now, when I see the room, I feel sure they'll come; but before I couldn't realize it."

Then the two went down together, and had a cozy time over the daguerreotypes, with a brief biography of each original, by way of refreshing the memory; for the dear old lady liked to talk of "her numerous posterity," and the young girl liked equally well to hear. She knew all the Giles kinsfolk, near and remote, and could have made out a pretty accurate list of names and ages.

"Just what kind of a girl is Totum, Mrs. Giles?" she asked, looking intently at her picture. "Tell me something that will make me understand her—something about her ways, you know, and what she likes."

"She is always good-natured, and ready to take part in every thing I am doing—just as though her heart was in it—when of course it can't be; and I never saw the time when she wasn't ready for a joke or a frolic. It's like a steady summer breeze to have her going in and out about the house."

"You'll enjoy that, won't you?"

"I always do. Some of my other grandchildren are as different as the north and south winds."

"Is little Midget like her?"

"No, dear; not a grain. She is entirely another pattern, and put together different every way. It's curious; but the two sisters are no more alike than a full damask rose and a sweetbrier. Midget will go round like a little queer old woman—sometimes not speaking for half an hour; and you can see she is thinking away, and enjoying something all by herself; and another time she'll ask questions and questions, as odd and serious as can be. When she gets on any thing, she can't see any other till that's done with. Captaining Giles says that Midget always strips all her currant-bushes off clean as she goes."

"Is she as good-natured as Totum?"

"Why, she don't seem to understand a joke, or to care for it; and when her grandfather gets into one of his merry turns, she'll open her eyes as wide and wondering as if she couldn't make him out at all. That pleases him amazingly. He laughs over her sometimes till the whole sofa under him shakes as if it had gone into a fit of the ague; and between the two, I'm never in danger of dyspepsia."

The old lady wiped her eyes, which were drip-

ping over with pleasant reminiscences—laughing as she thought over the past, till she quivered from head to foot like the old gentleman's sofa, or like a placid mound of disturbed gelatine.

Suddenly she checked herself, when she saw Anne's eyes opening rather wide with a look of repressed astonishment and inquiry. "It's nothing, my dear; I was thinking of one day just before the child went home last. Midget is a nice little thing; and, on the whole, I think we find her rather more entertaining than any of the others. She does me as much good as taking a strong cup of a new kind of tea; and I always like to have her here as well as any of my grandchildren."

"I am almost sure I shall like them both," said the child, slowly and reflectively.

"I am quite sure they will both like you," was Mrs. Giles's grandmotherly thought as she looked over at her young visitor affectionately—smiling, but not speaking. After a while they drifted off into local gossip.

"Is it possible! Did you never see beach-plums, dear child? They are very nice, and make excellent preserves. You will have a few on your place; but there are not many just about here. They grow mostly in the Painted Cliff neighborhood, and are not nearly as abundant as they used to be. The Indians don't like white folks to pick 'em; though some of them say they don't approve of forbidding any body to gather a handful of wild plums; and old Sally Williams says she thinks the Lord don't approve of such close dealings, and he makes the beach-plums get scarcer and scarcer."

"The Indians sell them, I suppose?"

"Yes; and all kinds of wild berries and grapes; and so, as they grow mostly on their reserve, I suppose they have the best right to them. And then, dear me! there are plenty of blackberries almost everywhere, when people will let them grow, and huckleberries and grapes. You can get 'em by the bushel if you go over to the Wykobskie neighborhood; and every body may pick who likes. There it's first come, first served."

"But don't they belong to any one in particular?"

"The land belongs to some one; but the wild fruit isn't cultivated, and people gather it as they gather nuts in the woods; but the Indians don't always allow it on their grounds. There is a law that no one shall get cranberries till all the Indians have first had a chance to pick for three days; so, when the cranberry days come, every man, woman, and child among

them who can be is out in the cranberry-patch from the first daylight to the last."

"What a funny custom! I should like to see them all picking, with their brown faces, and their great baskets of red and white cranberries."

"Some of the people—boys especially—pay them off, though; for while the Indians are away after cranberries, they can't watch the grapes, and so the boys load their baskets from the wild vines."

"The Indians should gather the grapes beforehand!"

"So they do a great deal, but there are so many; and they don't all ripen in time to gather in early."

"I rode in the stage the other day, Mrs. Giles, with two Indian girls, who were dressed as nicely as any one, and they talked as well as we do. One of them was almost white, with a long Roman nose, crooked like a hawk's bill."

"Yes; some of 'em appear as pretty as any girls on the island; but some can't be trusted quite like our people, for all. Why, Anne, dear, there's Captaining Giles coming; and I declare I've forgotten dinner!" and Mrs. Giles bustled into the porch to prepare her vegetables while Anne waited to see the captain.

"Why! well, is this the little peaked-faced girl who came out from Boston about a month ago? I declare, pretty soon you'll look like a squirrel with six nuts in each cheek!" This was the old captain's greeting to the small maiden who stood up rosy and smiling as he entered; and then he took her hand in both his own, looking down at her with a grandfatherly kindness. "I declare, I almost wish you were another of my granddaughters, and I guess Miss Giles quite wishes it. You've won her heart out and out; and I'm more obliged to you than you know, little one, for brightening up her old days a bit."

"Oh, it's she who brightens my days. She never is in need of any thing more than she has, I think."

"That's just about hitting the nail on the head, child. She would go on smiling and comfortable on a dry crust, with a deluge pouring down overhead; but, for all that, you've brought her a world of comfort, too, and we both know it. Where's your brother Frank today?"

"Gone fishing with Mr. Dennis, captain."

"Has? Well, I like that. The boy's come out for a summer's holiday, and he means to get his money's worth."

"Yes, sir," said Anne, a keen sense of hu-

mor gleaming out suddenly from her childish face. She had been looking up, with an admiring fascination, into the old sailor's kindly eyes; for if she was very fond of Mrs. Giles, she found the captain a perpetual source of wonder and entertainment quite unfathomable. Their interest in each other was mutual. Captain Giles saw the brightening of the little thoughtful face, and his heart was touched.

"Her poor little life has been a deal too quiet and burdened," he said to himself, as he looked. "We must contrive to let in more sea-breezes there also. I can't bear to see any young thing frost-bitten in the bud."

He went on talking and watching the effect of his laughing words and tones upon the appreciative child with a tender solicitude, for the captain was constitutionally a generous busy-body in other people's affairs. His zeal might sometimes have outrun his discretion but for the perpetual loving check of his clear-sighted wife.

"Your brother has already taken a right-hand grip on most of our land doings, and he takes to the water like a fish. It gives me a new relish every day for my victuals just to watch him; and I expect that to look on and see him enjoy it will do me more good than quarts of mustard or grated horse-radish, eaten with my summer's meat."

"Yes, sir," added Anne, still smiling and happy; "he says he feels as though he had just got out of jail, where he has been shut up all his life."

"Well, only wait till my granddaughters come, and then we are all going into merry-making as a steady diet. You children are all invited to share our pot-luck, and it will be a wonder if we don't enjoy some delightful chowders. Shall you like it?"

"Oh yes, Captain Giles, I am sure we shall."

"You see, dear, I am anxious to put a new snapper on to the end of my own life. An old whip that won't crack isn't really worth much," continued the captain.

At this moment the little deaf mute, Edgar Percy, stood in the door-way, and the girl's face, at once losing its smiles, expressed friendliness and compassion as she came forward and took the boy's hand, leading him in with a gesture of welcome. The two children were of about the same age, both just at the threshold of their teens; yet the infirmity of the boy made him seem much younger and more dependent than his companion, who treated him something as a mother might have treated an

ailing child, taking his hat out of his hand, and seating him in an easy-chair, rather against his will. Captain Giles's welcome of his little relative was as cordial as his own sunny nature required, the delighted old man acting as interpreter while the two children conversed.

"I am going to school. I am going away next week," said Edgar, at length, his eye dimming a little at the thought.

"It's decided then, is it?" answered the captain. "Well, be brave and bear it, my boy! It's for the best;" and then he repeated the news to Anne, who looked both surprised and piteously sympathetic.

"Tell him I am so sorry, Captain Giles."

"He knows that already, little puss. You have told him yourself. But it is best that Edgar should be educated; and so, you see, he must go away to school."

"But it will be so hard for him to part with his father and mother, and go among strangers."

"Yes, missy; but he must learn to be a man all the same. Can you see that large boy out there on the hay-cart in the meadow? Well, he is sixteen, to be sure; but he and another boy of about the same age are going off to sea next Saturday, to be gone for at least six months without once hearing from home. That's his old father pitching up the hay, and he has sent seven sons, one after another, off to sea, and this is his very last boy. An older one sailed only two weeks ago for Greenland, expecting to be gone for three years. Edgar can get news from home every week or two, and come back if any thing is amiss."

"Yes, but it's all so sad. I don't like partings; and I pity the boy out there, and his old father and his mother. I suppose Edgar should go; but it's very hard, all the same, and I shall think of him off there alone a great many times. Tell him so, please, Captain Giles."

The lad's face brightened when he understood the message, and in the first home-sickness of the school-days he would be certain to remember it.

When Mrs. Giles learned that Edgar was going from home so soon, she first kissed him heartily, wiping away a tear, and then hurried out, returning directly, loaded with doughnuts, which she pressed upon every body, and which they all declined; but afterwards they each took one and ate it for good-fellowship's sake—the kind old captain chatting and making merry, to banish the shadow which had fallen upon his young visitors.



CHAPTER XII.

MIDGET'S MORNING CALL.

MARGARET had grown almost as moody and disturbed in heart as Alfred. In all America she had no kindred, and there were none nearer to her than half-forgotten uncles and cousins, even in the Old World; she sorely missed the ready sympathy of this sailor-farmer, who had certainly shown her, time and again, that she was in all his thoughts, till her waiting heart had gone out to him as to a haven of rest. "Was it all over? What had he intended to say that morning? and was it too late now to heal the past?"

Mrs. Warner's requirement of exceeding nicety of details in all household matters had always been foreign to Margaret's nature, and a wholesome trial of temper. Hitherto she had borne the test triumphantly, but now little things often came dropping upon her like so many small live coals, each with its separate little sting and smart, till she was ready to cry with vexation.

"Margaret, you forget every day to wipe the glasses in my room, and they are never looking nicely. I wish you would keep a towel on purpose, and try not to forget to do it," said Mrs. Warner one day, in a grieved, long-suffering tone, for she had rested badly, and woke with a headache.

"I'll do it this minute, then, before it is forgotten," said Margaret, good-naturedly.

"Do, Margaret, and do try to put every thing straight. These bottles on the shelf stand in and out like a rail-fence, and the stand-cover hangs a good deal over on this side. Even the counterpane is a little awry. Don't you see how the figure is over on one side?"

Margaret went on righting every thing as its shortcomings were brought to light, her face calm and forbearing; but the old brightness was wanting, and the pleasant repartee, which always abundantly repaid Mrs. Warner for any small omissions or commissions, seemed to fail her utterly.

"Now, Margaret," continued the lady, still more plaintively, "you are *not* going to take on

the air of a martyr because I happen to notice these little things. You know they always will annoy me if I am not well."

"Oh dear! Yes, ma'am, I know," said the girl, with ready compunction. "I didn't mean any thing of the kind. I am not a bit troubled at your speaking; but this shabby little room seems so scanty every way, that I am like the poor old woman who kept twitching first at one corner of her table-cloth and then at the other, but she never could get it quite straight and make it cover the whole table at once. It's all in the room, Mrs. Warner. You and I are much the same as we have been for these eight years."

"So we are, Margaret," answered the lady, kindly, "though I am afraid you are getting over-worked here. Don't do that, child, but let me know if ever there is too much to do."

"So I will, Mrs. Warner, but sometimes there is nothing in particular to be-done for an hour together, and I am not over-worked."

"I hope not, child."

But this was not the Margaret of the last eight years. That one was as cheerful as the song of birds, and as fresh and strong as the sea-breezes; this one was heart-sick, like a child that has been kept fretting too long after something it wants. The old Margaret had been a strong staff for a feeble household; now the staff itself was bending under a weight of its own, and if the household leaned too heavily upon it, failure was inevitable. Frank saw the change, half divining its cause, and he warded off many a trial, proving himself a staunch and valuable every-day friend. The children, instinctively feeling that Margaret was troubled, in a thousand loving, childish ways brought her comfort.

"Margaret, Margaret, have you forgotten my broth?" would be called impatiently, perhaps fifteen minutes before the time, by the invalid who sipped lambs and chickens by the painful, verily believing that he should otherwise have died long ago.

Margaret, struggling to put a bright face upon it, and to think of something pleasant to say, knowing that cheerfulness is better than broth, and more highly prized, would find the little tray caught out of her hands by Anne, and her burden lightened by loving eyes and childish ways, which brought back the sunshine without an effort of her own.

One day Margaret went down stairs earlier than usual, but, early as it was, there was a suspicious and unusual redness about her eyes; but as the whole family were still asleep, she felt a comfortable assurance that there would be "nobody there to see." She had scarcely lighted the fire, when a ringing tap sounded at the door, and Captain Giles stood on the threshold, his hat in one hand and a little seven-years-old girl in the other.

"Good-morning," he said, in a hesitating tone. "I hope we have not called too early; I never thought of that."

"Oh no, Captain Giles, you are never out of season here. They will all be down soon."

The child he had brought was a woolly-headed little thing, with large light-gray eyes, which went roaming curiously over the room. Dropping her grandfather's hand, she stepped quietly up to Margaret, looking alternately at her and at the stove.

"Do you light the fire?"

"Yes, miss."

"And is it you that fills the tea-kettle and cooks the dinner?"

"Yes, but the little ladies help me. Couldn't you do something, too, if you lived with us?"

"Does the stove smoke?" asked the child, as if understanding that Margaret's question hardly called for an answer, her eyes looking up at Margaret's red lids with a penetrating intentness.

"It did this morning," answered Margaret, smiling, and wholly forgetting herself in her enjoyment of the quaint ways of the little questioner.

"Well, I should like to live here, and have a nice swing made on those great hooks," pointing up to the ceiling, where the square of iron spikes was fixed firmly in the timbers of the house; "and I should like that cupboard for mine."

Here Margaret and the old captain, who had both been standing like two supernumeraries waiting for the chief actor, burst into a simultaneous laugh. The grandfather, picking up the child, tossed her up on to his shoulder, stepping inside the door to avoid bumping heads, and found breath to do his errand.

"My two granddaughters came yesterday—this Midget and another about as tall as you are—and we are going fishing to-day with Capt. Percy. We shall go out in the sloop, and anchor off the point of rocks yonder. I came to ask the young capt. and the children to go along, and you too, Margaret, if you can be spared, for I suppose Mrs. Warner and Capt. Percy are too poorly to enjoy it."

"I am afraid they are; but I'll go and see." She was glad to escape into the next room; her heart began suddenly thumping and crowding off the hot blood into every vein, for Captain Percy and his sloop suggested Alfred.

Captain Giles looked after her—a new light coming tenderly into his face. "Bless me," he thought, "what a color! There's hot blood there tumbling along like the thug and splutter when you pour out a full keg of beer. Don't quite understand it; but it must be *that*. Hum-m."

"Wouldn't the fairies like to keep house in just such a funny cupboard, grandfather?" called the child from her perch, giving his gray hair a little twitch, and pointing to the queer old dresser, full of small shelves and pigeon-holes. "If grandma had one like it, I should ask her to lend it to me for a doll's house; and we'd pick up shells for dishes, wouldn't we, grandpa? and fill it as full as a corn-crib."

"Yes, we would, Midget; and I shouldn't wonder if we could hunt up something at home that will do as well. Grandma has got a good many old traps."

"I've seen every thing, grandpa, and there's nothing half so good," said the child, gravely; "but I don't mind. Don't you think the little girl that lives here ought to have had her breakfast an hour ago, as we did, if she's going fishing too?"

"Ah! here she comes," said grandpa, depositing Midget on the floor. "Good-morning, Miss Fannie. This is my granddaughter Helen. I call her Midget." Fannie tripped forward smiling, her whole heart offered in her hand without reserve; but Midget reached hers out mechanically, while her eyes went wandering over Fannie as if she were making a cool mental estimate of her qualities.

"She's taller than I am, and I'm glad of that," she said, with a relieved sigh.

"Why, Midget?"

"Because little bits of girls can't understand, and it's just like playing with doll-babies."

"I am nine years old," said Fannie, triumphantly, not very well knowing what else to say.

"Well, I am seven; and if you go fishing

with us we can get acquainted nicely, and tell stories together in one end of the boat."

As usual, Frank and the children were only too ready to join in any excursion, but the elders preferred home and its comforts. Margaret sent her heart with one parry, and kept her hands for the other. Thoughts are said to be free; but hers, for the first half-hour after the fishing-party set out, were in bondage to perpetual question and answer. The mood for details and suggestions had come upon Mrs. Warner to a most unusual degree, and she went on scattering advice as plentifully as though it had not fallen upon Margaret like a sprinkling of salt-and-pepper upon wounded flesh.

"What meat have we in the house to-day, Margaret?"

"A nice little leg of mutton, and part of a chicken."

"Plenty of vegetables?"

"Squashes, green corn, and the lovely new potatoes."

"Well, Margaret, try to have the squash pressed very dry, and *don't* let the corn get spoiled in boiling, will you? There are blackberries enough for a pudding, I suppose?"

"We've enough to feed a regiment of blue-coats, ma'am, and the Mininsha woman is coming to-day to bring more."

"Then make a bread-crum pudding with them for dinner, and put rather more butter than you did before. Bake it in the largest yellow dish, child, for they'll all come home with fishermen's appetites; and don't you think vanilla might give it a new, pleasant flavor?"

"It's worth a trial, ma'am; and we can see if it's liked."

"And you understand about the lunch, Margaret?"

"Yes, I think so." Her eyes floated off through the open window to the sloop cutting her way smoothly through the water, which lay under the morning clouds in long green and purplish strata, pleasantly shading the more distant gray.

Perhaps Mrs. Warner noticed this, for she said presently: "Little Molly will be round this afternoon to help you, Margaret. Can't you arrange to let her wash the vegetables and the dishes? It would save you a great deal. I like Molly—she is as bright as a glass bead; and if you will take pains to teach her, perhaps she will soon do all that nicely enough. If she stays here through the day, and is helpful, you can go out oftener with the children."

"Yes," said Margaret, trying not to give ex-

pression to the feeling of perfect indifference with which she was only half attending.

"I don't like to have the little girls wandering about so much alone, and Frank is beginning to protest against my 'pinning them quite so much to his summer-coat tails.' He says 'The old linen is getting too thin to bear it much longer.'"

"Just like Frank," laughed Margaret, almost in the old bright tone. "Well, if little Molly can be hitched to the broth-kettle, the darlings may be tied fast to my checked apron and welcome."

"It will do you good yourself, child. You really are looking a little thin. Don't you think so?"

"It's only the contrast. All the others are so fond of blackberries and fresh fish," said Margaret, but speaking a little sharply, and glancing out of the window again, where the sloop was now anchored off in the blue distance. "The children are all looking like brown squirrels carrying forage in both cheeks. It has been like turning a family of lean rabbits into a thrifty cabbage-garden."

"I believe they are all thriving admirably, Margaret; this is a capital place for them. Well, tidy up every thing as nicely as Mr. Warner likes it, and be sure and make the sitting-room look as attractive as you can. We are going out to walk."

Mr. Warner was already stationed in his rocking-chair outside of the house, enjoying the cloudy morning, which was all the more charming for its endless variety of shifting pageants. "The light and shade are magnificent," he said, as his wife and Margaret came to him. "I excessively like these fishing-parties carried on at a distance, by proxy. If they would go coasting about here every day it would be a great improvement, for the one defect of this view is that there is usually so little active life in it. A few more sails would add a wonderful charm; I wish we could borrow one section of the Vineyard Sound."

"So you can, dear. Just look yonder, through the opening of the hills. There's a magnificent three-master in sight now; and from the other side of the house you will be in range of a whole fleet."

"Yes, but I don't care to strain my neck by looking backward at any thing so far off."

"I think you may be pretty well satisfied to-day with a straightforward view."

"So I am—so I am! I have enjoyed it very much."

"When you are ready for your constitutional,

should you prefer walking on the hill, or on the shore, Henry?"

"On the hill, I think, dear. We get a wider view, and it is too fine to-day to lose any of it."

"Is it cool enough for shawls, Margaret?"

"Not for walking, I think, Mrs. Warner. I'll take them up to you when you sit down. I suppose you will have the chairs carried up on the hill, sir?"

"Yes. Yes, do, Margaret, and bring the lunch up to us there. Shan't she, dear? The sunshine won't annoy us to-day."

"I think so, if we don't find it tiresome waiting there so long. And won't you carry this book up for me, Margaret?"

"Of course; I'll take the mail up to you, if it comes, Mr. Warner?"

"Yes. Yes, do, Margaret," answered the invalid, turning back, and speaking over his shoulder, leaning heavily on his cane.

So they walked to and fro, this ailing husband and wife, each resting for a little while on the arm of the other, and then changing positions, with willing and good-natured love; and so up and down, and down and up, they wandered slowly for a whole hour, not talking a great deal, but both comfortable and contented; and then they sat down in two rocking-chairs on the hill, wrapped in warm shawls, with stones, covered with mats, comfortably placed for footstools. Mrs. Warner read her book, which was a very readable story; Mr. Warner puffed a little at his cigar, taking in both the sea-air and the sea-view at the same time, with a relish and a sense of undefinable benefit resulting therefrom; and each loved the other all the better for this mutual sharing of interests. When Margaret came with the mail—a packet of letters and yesterday's morning papers—the *Boston Commonwealth* and the *New York Tribune*—the day was not at all wanting in occupation.

CHAPTER XIII.

LOOKING THROUGH TELESCOPES.

MARGARET in the house alone, was Margaret busy in thought with her own affairs; yet she was rather benefited all the same by the miscellaneous details of housework, which claimed just enough of her attention to prevent brooding too intently on one uncomfortable theme. She felt quite sure that Alfred had gone with the fishing-party, and just now would willingly have little Molly Maybough installed in the kitchen in her place; but perhaps she could gather from Frank or the children something which would help her to understand the event which had chilled her so unexpectedly.

Angry, was she? Let us peep freely into her innermost thoughts.

"Poor boy, his cousins are not half as much to him as these children are to me. If he was happy, I shouldn't mind; but he's cut to the heart, as I am. His looks show that, let him try to carry it off as proudly as he will. I can bear any thing."

The poor child, forgetting all the work about her, leaned against the casement, looking out over the water at the sloop—at first trying in vain to distinguish his figure among the mere specks of color just distinguishable above the deck, and then falling off into a reverie—such as young women are wont to indulge in, whether in kitchens or parlors. "Ah, I have it!"

starting up with sudden animation—"the telescope!"

Half the families on the island are the possessors of a marine telescope; and Mr. Frank had rented one for the season. Margaret went to his room, and, having adjusted the glass, she knelt down, resting it against the window-sill. She was freely privileged to do this, and welcome; but the consciousness of why she was doing it made her get up again and first lock the door. Her own window looked away from the sea, so she knelt down again, blushing like a red peony, and put her eye to the glass. She was a long time in getting it pointed to her satisfaction; but suddenly the clear grave face of Alfred came distinctly into view, and then her hand shook so much that it as suddenly disappeared again. Her eye lighted, and she drew a long breath. He was there, then; so much was settled—and the children would talk about him when they returned.

But, of course, Margaret looked again. This time she was able to mark the relative positions of the whole party. The two captains were evidently hobnobbing at the stern. Frank and Alfred were nearer the bow; and encircled by these male outposts were sitting two girls, in bright shawls and deep hats which shaded their faces. One was certainly Anne; and the other



MARGARET'S DISCOVERY.

must be the old captain's grandchild, Mary, alias Totum, as her grandfather usually called her. The little ones had doubtless stowed themselves away somewhere below in the small cabin.

Frank and Anne were every-day affairs, to be looked at at any time; but Margaret's glass went to and fro, from Totum to Alfred, and from Alfred to Totum, till a strange, new sensation almost stifled her. This Totum Giles was certainly a pretty girl enough, with her full, fresh, laughing face, as Margaret caught glimpses of it now and then. She had thought of her as a child—the old captain always represented her so; but this was not a child, but a sensible-looking person of at least seventeen; and Alfred and Frank were both bending towards her as if listening to merry chat, which seemed to occupy them all much more than fishing. Why had every one always spoken of her as a child? Was all that unintentional?—and Margaret's

hand grew unsteady again, till the glass swung round, and she was looking far out over the desolate waste of waters.

She pressed her left hand tightly against her side, and drew a long breath, closing her eyes; and then she passed her fingers upon the lids, sweeping her hand down over the lashes, as if she would brush away something which troubled her. Then, smiling a little scornfully, she resolutely brought the glass back again to the old field, where she found them all sitting just as before.

In a moment there was an unusual stir and excitement. Every body rose up or leaned forward; and Alfred, bending over near Totum Giles, was helping her draw a large fish into the boat. Margaret even caught a gleam of the fine bass as he came into Alfred's hands; and she saw him afterwards busied in putting new bait upon Totum's fortunate hook. Then she looked no more. It was lunch-time; and, be-

sides, she had seen enough. So, leaving Margaret on her way up the hill, carrying a large tray, we will go over and join the fishing-party.

"Now, Totum, try again; another bass like that will certainly carry the prize," said the delighted grandfather, who would have given the child a hug if she had been near enough.

"It's the best fish we have taken yet, Miss Giles!" cried Frank, approvingly—"a thirty-pounder, I should say."

"When every body has caught one fish apiece, we are all to be called by our every-day names; that's always the rule with fishing-parties. Totum sounds much more sensible to me than Miss Giles—that's what I call my wife; but this child is nothing but Totum—or Teetotum, if you and Alfred want to be very polite," said the old captain, merrily.

Every body laughed; but as neither of the young men had quite the courage yet to call her Totum, after that she was in danger of not getting any name at all for the rest of the excursion.

"If a fish bites my hook, don't let him pull me over, Frank," whispered Anne, a little nervously. "That one was so large, and he jerked about so, I'm getting afraid of 'em."

"Shan't I nail you down, Nannie?" laughing; "there's a hammer and some huge nails down there in the cabin."

"We should be sure to catch hold of you if there was any danger," said Alfred, kindly.

"But that was a monstrous fish; and he gave such very sudden twitches, Mr. Alfred," said the child, a little ashamed of her fears.

"So he did; but it would take a tremendous pull to really tumble you overboard; and, besides, if you did once go over, I should save you. I could swim about in this sea for an hour, so you needn't be afraid; but I'll tie the end of your line to this stake, and then, if there comes a great pull, you can let go, and I'll draw him in for you."

Alfred smiled encouragement to the grateful little girl, and then turned away busied with his own hook. He was not generally given to much talking, and had not proved himself on this occasion to be the merriest or most sociable of the party; yet he had borne himself creditably, and there was less bitterness in his heart now than when he had first joined the excursion, because, belonging to the Constance, he could not easily avoid doing so when the little sloop herself was on duty. He had not listened to Frank's boyish chat and laughter for half an hour before his anger towards him softened, and now it had fairly melted away; for it is not in human na-

ture to bear malice against any one so overflowing with fresh animal spirits, and whose ill-will towards himself was certainly a myth—if looks and tones meant any thing.

Frank, bubbling over with the determination to have a good time, was hail-fellow-well-met with both the captains; and he and Totum had been close friends for an hour past, though he remained still a little shy and deferential towards Alfred, but evidently seeking conciliation and friendliness. The womanly little Anne had pleased the young sailor from the first. She had never stung him with any suggestions of differences of class or breeding, and had always manifested a flattering interest in his practical skill and knowledge on land and sea. Then here was this Totum, Captain Giles's granddaughter, it was true, but town-bred and educated in city schools—yet just as ready to chat with him as with Frank Warner; and, by putting herself on an entire equality with both, making them practically the social equals of each other, at least for the occasion.

Evidently Totum had come to the sea-side entirely for the sake of enjoying it, and she meant to do so in calm or in storm, on sea or on land, and her darling old grandfather was cordially ready to second her in this praiseworthy determination. They had planned a dozen excursions and general frolics already, fully intent on realizing them every one; and all the rest of the company were quite welcome, and even very desirable as accessories. Totum, who had been bored almost to death of late by too much sitting still, was turning over a new leaf with a delighted relish; yet she had the good sense to propose associating grandpapa in all her plans, and was pretty certain not to shock any body, even with her excessive love of fun.

All this gradually made itself felt by Alfred, and did much towards smoothing down the sharp and rough edges of feeling which had cut and rasped him for the last month; but he was not ready to surrender at discretion. It wasn't Totum he cared for, it was Margaret. Totum was a descendant of the dear sea-girt island, where social distinctions were almost unknown; "but Margaret," he thought to himself, in bitter contrast—"Margaret is an ingrained toady, and that is something which I most heartily despise!" He verily believed her, at that moment, to be an adept in that species of servile humility which it most chafed him even to witness; and yet, somehow, she had qualities also which had taken a firm grip upon his heart, wringing it with anguish. It lowered his own self-respect; so, turning away from

them all, he occupied himself with his fish-line, and sent his brooding discontent down into the fathomless depths below.

For half an hour fish and merriment both seemed to abound with all the others, but not a bite had come to himself; yet at the first indication that Anne had caught her dreaded big fish, he turned quickly with the promised help, assisting the delighted child to draw it into the boat, his face beaming, as hers did, with unfeigned pleasure. This excitement over, he turned again to his solitary perch on the prow, and relapsed into his old musing.

Why couldn't he rid himself of this bitter unrest, and have done with it at once? he asked himself. Was it impossible to forget one for whom he certainly felt an unmeasured contempt? He resolved to do it, with a resolution as firm as he had ever made in his life. He would do it; wasn't he master of himself? And yet, in the midst of this resolve, out of the unrest of his thoughts, tossing more than the waves below him, there came rising up two such brave, honest eyes, looking into his, first with a tear and then with a smile, that his heart thrilled as he looked; and when he saw the dear head, with its broad forehead and its plainly-banded masses of brown hair, which pleased him, the womanly face alive with a blended homely sense and a quick sympathy, but with no line or touch of cringing or servility, his judgment was stupefied.

The senses had taken the mastery. Margaret was before him like a visible bodily presence. He saw her as she threw off her shawl and stood up just there, on the deck of the sloop, in that closely-fitting green dress with its embroidered skirt and sleeves, a full and rounded womanly form, with a shapely enough bare hand, grasping the oar to shove them off the sands. Her whole air and manner was that of a woman entirely forgetting herself in her helpfulness for others; and he yearned unutterably to clasp her to his heart, ignoring every thing which he had dreamed against her.

The Constance and all its present occupants passed out of his cognizance. He was on the sands. The two little girls came running up to him, Fannie with her own and Margaret's hat in her hand, the two bright childish faces ruddy and brown with the sea-breezes; and here was Margaret just behind them—all their hair tossing in the wind, and all laughing together. Margaret's blush and smile, and shy, startled look, met his, which just now was not shy, but full of something which overflowed from his heart, making it glow and throb as it

had never done before. All this came to him, as it would come again and again; and that look of Margaret's, different from any thing which he had ever known or hoped for before, seized and held him now like a sweet delirium.

"Mr. Alfred! Alfred Brand! what in the world are you thinking of?" called a pleasant woman's voice. "You have sat there this half-hour with your back to us all, staring into the water, and I expected to see you tumble in bodily any moment."

The poor fellow, thus wrenched back again into the world, faced about manfully, and, tossing back his hair with a laugh, rose to his feet.

"I am not a talking man, Miss Totum; only a fisherman. I was simply fishing."

"I am sure you were gone off to the pearl-fisheries then, and going down in a diving-bell after the largest pearl," glancing into his face with a little feminine curiosity, and ending with the least bit of pleasant malice in her half-smile.

"That's a kind of fishery which would give me a new experience, and I think I shall really try it some time." He turned aside under pretense of looking after his line, but with a feeling, as he glanced off towards the shore, that it was almost a pity, while his feet were hanging over so near the water, not to have gone down there with his delicious dream rather than this bitter awakening into reality.

This girl might tease him; it would be only the buzz of a merry fly; but she had recalled him to himself. She had drawn him back to a sullen demon, who had held him so long that it really was almost like a possession. Perhaps it was better to run a tilt even with a tormenting girl than to be left again with his own thoughts, so he called up all his energies for the occasion.

But this girl had no wish to tease him. He was nothing to her but a possible holiday playmate, and she had bravely resolved that morning, as she sat facing those two so different types of young manhood, that, whatever summer amusements might fall to her lot, certainly neither flirting nor love-making should be added to her list. She was ready to romp and play as she might have done at seven instead of seventeen; but if no one else would accept her simply on that plane, her grandfather could. As she looked now into Alfred's face she read a few lines of some struggle, with which if she had but little to do, she was bound at least to respect it. The motherly instinct—which comes sometimes even to a young girl—made her wish to guard this conflict, whatever had caused it, and to hide it from the eyes of all the others.

She turned suddenly to Frank. "Why, you look quite like a native fisherman, too. How many weeks has it taken you to get acclimated, Frank?" laughing, as she pronounced his name. "We've all caught grandfather's fish apiece, haven't we?"

"Yes," said the boy, delighted that she herself had first broken over the barrier of etiquette. "I've been here more than five weeks already, Miss Totum."

"No—Totum, and nothing else. You can't miss it; for I'm not going to be any thing else in the world this summer but a spinning-top. That's grandfather's name; and it's a great deal better here than any other. Do you remember that too, Alfred."

"But what is your real name, Totum?"

"Mary—the sea—there is enough of that here, at any rate—suggesting tears, besides; and they wouldn't do at all for a laughing holiday."

"No."

"Don't you see, Frank, the eye of every wave here has a sparkle in it whenever its head is lifted high enough to look fairly at us?"

"They would all laugh outright, then, in the sunshine," said Frank; who caught every body's mood of the moment, as a good social barometer should.

"Yes; and so shall we, shan't we?" nodding over at Alfred.

"I am not having a holiday, remember. All this, to me, is in the direct line of business. I am an islander altogether, for better or for worse; so it's not a necessity for me to be merry."

"You shall put in the shadows, then, and welcome. I dare say we are in danger of too much light; and the dark days are often the pleasantest to remember afterwards."

Alfred turned off without a reply; but he and Totum were on good terms from henceforward.

And now every one's attention was called to a little fleet of distant sails scarcely larger than so many white birds.

"Sword fishermen!" said Captain Giles, laconically.

"Coming this way," added Captain Percy.

"We shall see more of 'em."

"Two, four, six, eight, nine," counted Frank.

"Ten, eleven," said Totum, pointing a little to the right.

"Yes, eleven. Now, then, for jolly company! the more the merrier; especially if there are plenty of fish on the way too."

"Pretty, pretty!" said Anne, quietly to her-

self, her little serious face brightening up wonderfully as she gazed.

Totum looked at the child, and patted her cheek approvingly. "You and I will learn to be sailors this summer, Annie. We'll row grandfather's boat on Squipnocket, and we'll learn to swim. Will you?"

"Oh! I should like it, Miss Giles."

"Call me Totum, then, like the rest, and it's a bargain—if your mamma consents."

"Mamma will consent if Margaret may come too. We have surf-bathing; but she wants me to learn to swim."

"Who is Margaret?"

"There now, children, stop chatting, and look again. Your white clouds, no bigger than a man's hand, are covering the whole sea already. That's something like, now, Anne; they're sailing almost ahead of the wind," cried Captain Giles, with the hearty admiration of an enthusiastic old sailor.

"Is it too late to use the glass, Totum?" Alfred reached it over to her hesitatingly; but with a look which expressed a sense of obligation which he would like to repay.

He had taken advantage of the general diversion to step down into the minute cabin, where he found Midget and Fannie both perched on the top of his berth, their little heads slightly bent as they sat, to avoid hitting the ceiling. Midget was delightfully occupied in telling a weird story of a mermaid which a bad boy had caught on a hook by her long hair, when he was trying to catch a bass; and as the bad boy wouldn't give up the mermaid, and the mermaid wouldn't give up her hair, they both went down into the sea together, and lived in a great shell, with mother-of-pearl windows. Fannie was still more delightfully engaged in listening.

"I shall stop telling while you stay, Alfred; but if you want any thing here, I can hand it to you; but we can't get down for any body, because Fannie is the king, and I am the queen, and this is our throne. You don't mind, do you?"

"Oh no, I don't mind. I shall sleep like a porpoise the next time I get possession of the throne, after this honor has come to it."

"I'm telling stories to the king, to keep him from going to sleep; and all these jugs, and baskets, and things, are little princes—and they are listening, too, all about the throne."

"Oh, are they? Is that spy-glass a princess, too? Won't you let her go out with me for a morning ride, Queen Midget? I'll bring her back safely."

"Yes, certainly, she may, Alfred."

"You see, I know Alfred, Fannie. I was here last winter, and I helped him split wood. I always knew him; but Totum don't know him at all, because she wasn't here in a great while—only when he was gone off to sea."

"I think he's nice," said Fannie—"nice, I mean, for a sailor in a red shirt, and such a brown, freckled face and red hair."

The little queen nodded, and went on with her story.

The sailor with the red shirt, freckles, and red hair, took the glass again after every one else had done with it. Slipping off his boots, and rolling his trowsers half-leg high, he sat down at the prow, and hung his bare feet over the water. The wind was rising, and occasionally the spray dashed up over his hairy, brown legs. Certainly he was not quite the figure for an aristocrat, nor altogether a person one might expect to make a stand on such a subject as class or caste; but while every one else was occupied with the sword-fishers, who were still approaching, some of them already casting anchor here and there in the distance, Alfred took occasion to let his glass sweep the shore, and linger upon the Warner hill-side.

There were the lady and gentleman in their rocking-chairs, and before them, on the bench, a luncheon-tray; while Margaret, with bare head and arms, was standing in an attitude of waiting, holding in her hand a little salver with pitcher and glasses. It was a pretty picture enough, as seen at a distance, under the gray sky; but he turned from it with a scowl and a thought of the pearl-fisheries.

The next moment, as the restless fascination drew his eye again, he saw Margaret going down the hill, bearing the large tray in her arms, and her face was seaward. If these two could have seen now eye to eye! But that was not to be. Margaret was thinking of that unknown Totum and her too successful fishing,

and Alfred dashed away the glass with a passing fancy for hurling it into the sea. "Now she'll go down and eat their crumbs gratefully. It's too mean for any thing!" Just then a luckless bass caught himself upon the hook, and Alfred pulled him in with a vengeance, for he was glad of a chance to have a good pull at any thing; but he was just taking him into his hands, when the scaly fellow flounced over and fell triumphantly back into the water.

"Let him go!" was all he said; and no one wondered that his voice sounded snappishly.

He was reminded that it was lunch-time for the fishing-party, and he and Totum spread out the repast in the most inviting manner, assisted by their little majesties from below, who, on such a summons, were quite ready to leave the throne, and abandon the various princesses to their fate. Every body enjoyed the feast, and the fishes were delighted with their crumbs; in return, they caught the fishes, and would eat them by-and-by.

Alfred was vaguely musing to this effect, when he heard Totum's question repeated.

"Now, Anne, who is Margaret?"

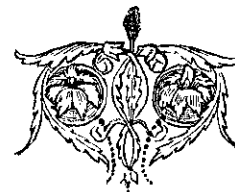
"She was our nurse, and she has taken care of us ever since we were babies. Now she does every thing we ask her, and she's the very best and kindest person in the world."

"Oh yes, I know," carelessly turning off to dip her plump hand into the water.

"May she learn to row and swim with us, Totum?"

"Yes, certainly."

Anne was a little disappointed at the indifference of the reply; but she quietly reflected, "Totum don't know Margaret yet!" happily leaving every thing to settle itself in time. Alfred didn't reflect—he was in no proper state for that; but somehow he added another count against Margaret, and so proved himself to be about as consistent in his high notions of justice and equality as all the rest of us.





CHAPTER XIV.

OFF THE COAST.

"My dear, can that vessel out yonder be on fire? Such a volume of smoke is issuing from her, that I have become excessively nervous in looking on. One is so entirely unable to help."

"Certainly, it does look rather alarming. How long has she been there?"

"Nearly an hour, I should think—a whole century, if you are to judge by the dreadful strain upon one's sympathies. I didn't like to wake you; and there has been no one here excepting Fannie, who has been just ready to cry for the last half-hour. We have both been so distressed, and I was just on the point of coming to you."

"Yes, papa, and I am sure she is on fire. She tried to sail about at first, but she couldn't go after a while, and she stopped. What can we do, papa?" The pitiful little eyes overflowed at last—the poor child sobbing with excitement. "I wanted to run and tell Captain Giles, or somebody; but there are people over yonder, and mamma thought perhaps she wasn't on fire after all. But I'm sure she is, for the smoke is pouring out all over her."

"So it is, dear," said the father, soothingly; "but I am not sure she's on fire. She lies very low in the water, and the smoke falls around her, but it may come from the chimneys, perhaps. You see, dear, there is some fishing-craft anchored off there on the other side. They must see what is going on, and yet they don't hurry to the aid of this one."

"It is that which has made me doubtful," said Mrs. Warner.

"Yes, I see, love. We certainly need not distress ourselves, Fannie; for if any thing was really amiss, some of the men who are looking on would certainly go to her assistance—if any thing—was—really—amiss."

"But I can't bear to look at her, papa. I feel all over that she is really burning up."

"We won't see it any longer," said the moth-

er, still anxiously. "We had better go round to the other side of the house. There is shade there, and a cool breeze. We have been making ourselves ill over a mere fancy, I dare say." They both moved their chairs to the other side of the building, quite away from the sea, though the child ran back two or three times for a last anxious peep, before they settled into their places.

"I'll join you soon," said Mr. Warner. He stood still, fascinated and horrified by the appalling possibility, in nearly as much doubt and anxiety as Mrs. Warner had been previously. She seemed to be a low-lying, small vessel, with a single chimney-stack; but though the smoke issued from that in a huge black volume, it was certainly pouring out from elsewhere also, till sometimes the whole vessel was almost wrapped out of sight by the dense black cloud.

"I fear we may be distressing ourselves quite to no purpose," he said, nervously, coming around to the others, and wiping away the perspiration which was streaming from his face; "but if Fannie will run up and get the glass, I'll look through that and see if any thing more can be discovered."

Fannie ran away at once to bring it, while her father sank exhausted into his chair. When she came back, he seemed for a few minutes to have lost the strength to rise.

When they returned seaward, the smoking vessel was nowhere to be seen. Farther away on the horizon a large vessel was approaching.

"Gone down!" said Mr. Warner, gloomily. "She has undoubtedly burned and sunk; the larger steamer was probably hastening to the rescue."

"It really seems so," said the lady; "yet it is very remarkable! I can hardly credit the evidence of my own eyes."

"Undoubtedly it is so, my dear; not a shadow of doubt left. We didn't actually see her

sink, but there can be no other explanation possible. She was snuffed out like a candle—all in an instant" (shuddering). "Ah! that black water is a dreadful extinguisher."

They both sank into chairs, and tried vainly to forget the fate of the unhappy crew.

"Poor people! we couldn't have helped them; but our very inaction has a sting in it which is more than regret, as if it was just a little poisoned with a sense of guilt, till it rankles in every vein. I would give a great deal not to have witnessed it—not to have undergone all this suffering. It will make me ill for a week; and I shudder to think what the effect may be upon your health, husband."

"It is dreadful, very dreadful; but I find the shock only arouses me to the height of a solemn occasion. I am wound up with sympathy and commiseration—as one must be when he looks through any sudden and tragical opening into the future."

"I only hope there will not come a reaction," thought the wife, looking upon the invalid with tenderest apprehension.

Little Fannie sank upon the grass, with her face hidden in her mother's dress, trying to conceal her sobs.

At this moment Anne and Frank came hurrying up in a blithesome mood, wholly at variance with the feelings of the others. It was as if two spinning-tops should suddenly begin buzzing and gyrating at a funeral. Mrs. Warner instinctively shut her eyes and put her hands up to her ears. There was a heedless, pleasurable excitement in both their flushed, delighted faces, and the child's eager words outran her feet:

"Oh, mamma! papa! There is a great long, dark, queer vessel off the coast, and she is behaving in a very funny way. Every body wonders, and thinks she has lost something, and is beating about for it, for she must be quite out of her course, and has no business at all about here."

"Hush, my dear," said the mother, with a gesture as if warding off a blow.

"She is a curious craft," broke in Frank, with a startling, strong voice. "Nobody can quite make her out, but she has been seen for some hours now, and evidently she has laid to, to think about it. The people are all talking about her, but no one comes to any conclusion."

"My son," said the father, reprovingly, "didn't you see the poor thing that was burned?"

"Burned! where?"

"A ship was burned up, Frank; and sank just over there," cried Fannie, eagerly, starting up and pointing off to the place.

"Shoo, Fan, that's gammon! My eyes have been glued to that spot for the last hour, watching the manœuvring of the queer ship, and nothing has burned up there as big as a row-boat!"

"My son," said the father, sternly, "go to your room! We are not in a mood to be trifled with. We saw her burn—all of us."

Frank and Anne looked at each other with wide-open eyes, but neither said any thing, and the young gentleman walked into the house, with a shrug of his shoulders, and a flushed, indignant face.

"My dear, I think there must be some mistake," Mrs. Warner began, very mildly, after a pause.

"No, dear, no mistake. I can credit my own eyesight."

The two little girls stole away together, and began a whispered consultation.

"Didn't she burn, Anne? It was such a dreadful smoke."

"No, Fannie; they were only letting off the steam."

"But that was a little ship, and this is an immense long one."

"You only saw the end then, and now she has turned round, and you see the whole side. Frank and I were looking at her all the time, and so were Captain Giles and Totum; and the captain said she had either lost something, or else she had come here on a mysterious errand—perhaps to wait for somebody. He thinks she is a foreigner, and most likely is on some business of her own that don't concern any of us. 'We live in political perils, you know, Mr. Frank,' he said, winking his eyes very funnily. 'Filibustering is fashionable on the main-land, isn't it?' 'Fenians?' suggested Frank. 'Can't tell,' said he; 'but things aren't going on in the Irish fashion over there. Looks more like downright business.' 'Pears to me, they've lost something,' said Captain Maybough, coming to us. 'I think likely they're waiting for something,' answered Captain Giles; and then he laughed in such a queer way that I knew he didn't believe any thing was really lost overboard; and, Fannie, I think it's Cubans, because, you know, so many people want to help Cuba. No one said any thing about that, though; so you mustn't either, Fannie; for it would be against the law to help the Cubans, you know."

"But I can tell mother, can't I?"

"Yes, tell her; and say I am going down to the shore, and want Frank to come there and walk with me; and say it just as kindly as you can, Fannie. I am so sorry they thought the

ship was burned; for I am afraid it will make them both sick."

When the children went away, Mr. Warner suddenly became intently occupied with his paper; but, as Fannie was seen returning, he said, without looking up, "That boy must learn more respect for his parents, my dear; but if he has any plans for the afternoon, he had better carry them out;" and Mrs. Warner sought her son at once.

"All right, mother," said Frank, who had had time to conquer himself, meeting her with a smile. "Never mind explaining. Of course, if I had supposed either of you felt it a serious matter, I should have spoken more carefully. I am so sorry you and father have been distressed. The vessel *did* look as though she was on fire at one time. Now kiss, forgive, and forget, won't we?" The young man put his arms tenderly about his mother, and kissed her half a dozen times.

"Father should learn to understand, though, under any circumstances, that I am not exactly a little boy any longer," he said, with more difficulty, while a great mingling of emotions evidently struggled together in his heart, for his voice betrayed him. "Never mind, though," he added, more steadily and tenderly, "I'll always be your boy, mother, and father's, too, if that will be any comfort."

He gave her another great boyish hug, and went away with a laugh in his voice and a tear in his eye.

"Isn't Frank a darling, mamma?" whispered Fannie, who had joined them.

She wanted to cry outright in sympathy with the mother, who struggled to control her emotions. But the little woman felt the great importance of the news which she had to communicate; and once reminded of that, she told it eagerly, and then ran away, knowing very well that mamma would like to be alone. Poor mamma! She felt as though she had been tossed up by a series of whirlwinds, and then

suddenly dumped down in the dust without a breath of air. And to have suffered all this for nothing; she was too utterly vexed and weary even to cry.

After a little while Fannie came back to her father, and, sitting down on a low stool, rested her head ever so little against his knee, and quietly read her book. The father's hand strayed caressingly to the comforting little head, and he thought shamefacedly to himself, "I was overhasty to the dear boy, and mistaken in my conclusion altogether;" but of course he never said so.

Is there any difference between masculine and feminine human nature in this matter of making frank and honorable confession? There are some women who know intuitively that a sincere apology is sometimes morally proper; but are there any such men? Mr. Warner preferred to retire into the silence of his personal and paternal dignity, contenting himself with budding out unexpectedly on various side-branches into leaves and blossoms of unusual kindness and consideration towards the family in general, and his son in particular. The family generally, and Frank especially, gratefully accepted this as all-sufficient. Every young man should be emulous to get himself thoroughly ingrafted upon the ancient Cyclopean stock, and be always conveniently blind in one eye.

For three days the unknown ship lay at anchor off the island, holding no communication whatever with the shore; but every eye and every spy-glass far and near was turned towards her many times and oft; and finally word came that a young relative of Captain Giles's, who had been engaged to take a party of fishermen off to the ship, on attempting to do so, had been arrested, with all his passengers, by the Government, for supposed violation of the neutrality laws.

The mysterious ship was a Cuban recruiting-vessel.



CHAPTER XV.

THE STRANDED WHALE-SHIP.

HAVE you been to see the whale-ship aground over on Long Beach, Captain Giles?"

"No; but my children want to pay her a visit. Totum hinted to me this morning that it is always considered polite to call upon a stranger coming among us; and I've always a warm side myself towards a genuine whaler, especially if she's been unfortunate. I never like to turn my back upon the past; and so I'm always facing about and squinting off into the old times. It kinder makes me believe I'm a young man again, you know."

"I should think it would, captain."

"Yes; the sight of a whale-ship now is a good deal like seeing an old sweetheart again. Have you and your sisters a mind to get acquainted with this one, Mr. Frank? Mary Percy will be glad to go with us; so, if you like, we'll sail across the pond, and walk out to her along the shore."

"Thank you, sir. We shall all be on hand, I've no doubt. I speak for one, at any rate."

"Wind and weather are favorable to-day. Suppose, then, we try it this afternoon. When the grass is ready and the sun shining, better make your hay at once, you know."

"Yes, sir. I always go in for *your* hay-makings, with pitchfork and shirt-sleeves, generally reinforced by the children and their wooden rakes. All your harvesting festivals are delightful."

So they set out, sailing across the little perch-pond—all in charming, chatty humor, and crazy for new adventures. Mary Percy couldn't keep herself from just a suspicion of flirting and coquetry, while so eligible a young gentleman was managing the sail near at hand; but Totum treated Frank, Fannie, and her grandfather all with the same impartial fraternizing; coaxing herself and every one about her into perpetual enjoyment. Anne was quietly happy, and the two young ones too entirely content themselves

to get in the way of any body else. Frank secretly realized that, as the only young gentleman, he was rather the figure-head of the occasion, and Captain Giles openly compared himself to a withered old last year's apple; but he was absorbing new freshness from all the springing, vigorous life about him.

Certainly his dear old heart was happier than it probably would have been with any company of octogenarians, or even with the very best set of grown-up people, laden with the manifold cares of even so much as twenty-five or thirty years. There are some old persons who know just how to enjoy the freshness of early dew-drops and the tender down of the peach, without the first wish in their whole hearts to brush them aside contemptuously. Indeed, the old captain was recognized as the one genuine flint of the party, against which all the privileged young people dared to hammer without ceremony whenever they wished to strike up a new flash of sociability.

Less than an hour brought them to the other side of the pond, where they moored the little boat, and set out over sand-hills, over a desolate sand-valley, where sweeping winds had blown away the grass, leaving here and there a stunted hummock of shrubs, or the few stray boulders drifted down from the North by ancient glaciers; then up over more sand-knolls, dragging shoes heavy with sand, or bounding on with rejoicing bare feet; and here they are upon the ocean-shore, pattering over a firm, wide beach. Here, also, to their surprise, only a little way off the coast, is the dark-faced Cuban ship, slowly steaming up towards the Painted Cliffs. She, too, waking up from her three days' nap, has rounded the point and come over on the other side of the island. Now what will she do? Has she held any communication with the shore? And does she know that many of her expected passengers have been



arrested, and are already in prison? What a wealth of mystery clusters about her—exciting all those young people to fresh wonder, as she sails on before them almost as slowly as they walk.

"Maybe she is hiding now, or going to run away. Wouldn't they capture the ship, too, if they could, grandpapa?" asks Midget.

"I think not, dear; she isn't breaking our laws, and we have nothing to do with her—at least, so long as she seems to be quietly minding her own business. I don't go over to cuff the ears of the little Mayboughs, even when they are naughty, Midget. Every family must whip its own children."

"No, but you set me up on the table in a dunce's cap, and pin three different colored rags on my back and shoulders when I steal your sweetmeat strawberries," laughed the child gleefully, in memory of a "bit of fun" which had taken place yesterday. "He's a real Turk, Fannie."

"And if I do any thing with Midget, I always catch a Tartar, Fannie. Did you ever find out that she has bird's claws for nails?"

"No, sir!" said Fannie, simply, but with just enough of a dimple over the little face which was almost exactly a smaller and softer type of Frank's, to show that she understood him.

"Grandpapa!" cried the irrepressible Midget, "I should just like to shout out loud enough to make the men on board the ship hear me. I'd tell them that Cousin John is put in prison, and all the soldiers he was going to take out to the vessel, wouldn't you?" shaking her little fist defiantly at what she considered a most unjustifiable outrage upon Cousin John.

"Oh no, Midget. It isn't worth while for any one to crack his throat by shouting to no purpose. They will hear it soon enough, and Cousin John is free long before this, I dare say. He wasn't going to Cuba. He had only engaged to row a party of fishermen out to a fishing-vessel; and all that is lawful, you know. When he gets time to explain, he'll be at liberty again." But Captain Giles's eye glimmered as he spoke like a bit of the flashing wave which came tumbling up at his feet; and every pair of eyes round about eddied and flashed also.

I am afraid none of these young Americans felt very law-abiding just at that moment. There were a good many remarks and comments, but the sentiment of many of them was not very unlike that expressed in the shaking of Midget's indignant little fist. It is possible that every one of the party—even the gray-haired old captain—would willingly have ac-

cepted a good deal of throat-ache for the privilege of shouting loud enough to be heard by the men on the Cuban, "Hurrah for independence from Spain! and hurrah for the downfall of Cuban slavery!" Very possibly Frank might have been tempted to add, "Hurrah for Cuban annexation!" But no one did shout that or any thing else—not even Midget; and our neutrality laws were as much respected by the little company, both in word and deed, as though every bolder along shore had been a government official waiting to report treason jealously at head-quarters.

After a time the Cuban vessel stopped moving, and apparently went to sleep again, but with one eye, and probably one ear, open; for now a little skiff put out somewhere from shore, and leisurely sailed around her, it appeared, without stopping. Then, just as leisurely, the little craft sailed away again, and our excursionists saw her no more; but the larger vessel rode still at anchor, and may have slept now with both eyes and both ears, for there was no further sign of life on board.

Meantime our party had approached the stranded whale-ship, which lay high and dry upon the beach, with her sharp prow jutting far up above their heads, pointing satirically landward. Her two or three whale-tooth-pointed boats lay basking upon the sands idly and contentedly, as though, conscious of having done their duty bravely in the past, they meant now to profit by it, and get a little rest while they could. Great casks of whale-oil were ranged like regiments of soldiers higher up along the shore; and the heedless, penance-doing ship was deserted by all but two of her crew, who were keeping watch and ward till they received further orders from her owners. On a foggy night, when even the great and famous Fresnel lamp at the light-house could send out its beams only a little way through the murky air, this ship, returning from Southern seas, heavily laden with spoils, suddenly opened her ears at the unexpected sound of breakers already swashing about her feet, and the next moment she stood almost dry-shod upon the gently shelving beach. The vessel was but little injured by the catastrophe, but it was found necessary to lighten her of every thing before she could be got off from the sands, for she had come gallantly up in high tide.

Midget and Fanny climbed into two boats standing side by side, and sat there, trying to fancy themselves, harpoons in hand, each in active pursuit of a monstrous whale; the old captain swung himself up to the deck of the

ship by a rope which hung over the prow of the vessel, and then Frank followed, kicking and struggling his way up as he went. He peeped down directly, very red-faced, but triumphant, at the girls who stood looking up at him from below.

"Good-bye all of you young ladies down there. I'm off for the North Pole."

"Good-bye, Captain Bragg. I'll steer for the South Pole then," Totum answered, as his laughing face disappeared. "Climbing ropes must be hereditary, like every thing else, I should think. Let us see."

Totum, seizing the rope, went up with a good deal less fuss and struggle than Frank had done; and, once on deck, she besought the others to follow her. "It's easy to do, if you will only think so; and there is almost no one on board. Grandpapa said that before we came. Come, I'll help you. Frank needs to be put down, and this will help to do it nicely, for he thinks it a wonderful feat. Do come, won't you?"

But Miss Mary was too young-ladyish to attempt rope-climbing. Anne tried it; but she had no sooner hung for a single moment by her poor little hands, than she let go again, rubbing away briskly at the tingling palms.

"I can't do it, Totum. It would cut my fingers off, and I should certainly get a tumble."

"Oh, I wouldn't go any farther, Totum. Come back again, please do!" entreated Mary.

"Thank you, Mary; but after you have made your fingers bleed with the rough bur, you may just as well have the comfort of the nice chestnut."

"But they will think it so hoydenish, I'm afraid."

"If they means grandpapa, I'll take the risk of that; but if they means any body else, then let them think what they like. It don't matter."

"But it does matter, I think; and I know it does."

"Perhaps it may; but I'm going to hunt up grandfather."

Totum did hunt up grandfather, who patted her head, and called her a "smart girl."

"Only a sailor's granddaughter," she replied, looking ever so little ashamed as Frank and the two seamen stared at her incredulously, hardly able to believe their eyes.

"How did you get here?" asked Frank, in astonishment.

"Flew up, of course. Your rope spread out into a pair of gauze wings, and I borrowed 'em."

"Young things all have a right to be free sometimes, in my opinion," said Captain Giles, giving a little pinch to the red cheek of his grandchild, and smiling on every body with cordial good-will. "If a healthy colt that has been tied up in the stable all winter don't frisk about when it's turned into the pasture, it's only because it thinks it's got the old head-stall on all the same. I'm glad you've come, child. It seems almost like my old quarters all about here."

"I dare say it does, capt'ing," said their host, who was mate of the vessel, and who evidently approved of his lady visitor. "You have done very well to come up, young lady. We were out less than four months, sir," turning to Captain Giles, "and had a very successful cruise. If we hadn't run aground here, our luck would have been hard to beat; but I count it something to have seen a young lady who isn't afraid to swing herself up on board my ship as your granddaughter has done."

"She's a strand from the old rope—as I suppose we ought to say on shipboard. On land it would be a 'chip of the old block;' but in either case it's warranted tough-fibred, and sound as a knot. Thank you, though," said the old man, turning away, and leading his grandchild.

Her eyes looked up affectionately into his, grateful that even the dear old grandfather entirely approved of her rather hoydenish enterprise. He went all over the ship, explaining every thing to her, followed by Frank and the two sailors, who all seemed only too glad to slip in a word edgewise now and then, for the sake of coming out occasionally from the background where they all found themselves placed rather unexpectedly.

"Here are a few odd things, miss, to put you in mind of your visit to the stranded whale-ship, if you will accept them," said their host, when the inspection of his vessel had ended. He gave her a pair of very rosily-lined great conch-shells, and some ivory-nuts. "These all came from the West Indies."

"Thank you, sir. I shall prize all these things, and keep them in memory of a pleasant day. But, grandpapa, how am I ever to swing down again?" laughed the young lady, by way of reassuring herself. "I am not certain that feat will be quite as easy as the other; but perhaps I can take a leap into the sand, if necessary, without getting any broken bones."

"Never fear, child; try the rope, and I'll help you."

"We can give you a ladder," began the polite sailor; but Totum, seconded by her grand-

father, made the descent very creditably, and without waiting.

Midget and Fannie having meantime dispatched half a dozen whales "in Spain," and the others being rather unamused by their idle waiting upon the sands, were heartily glad to bid adieu to the shadow of the overhanging ship, and all went forward again towards the Painted Cliffs. Their hearts were set upon finding some "before-the-flood wood," as Midget called it, and cutting it out for themselves from the ancient cliff where it was imbedded.

The remainder of the walk along the beach was very charming. It was a cool, shaded day, with a comforting sea-breeze; and the waves, dashing in upon the shore, were suggestive of a triumphal march, as they passed along. Frank and Totum, each carrying a great shell, ran backward half of the time in advance of the others, now and then playing trumpeters; Frank, by whistling into his conch, and Totum giving an accompaniment upon a side-comb, which she covered with a bit of thin paper and laid across the opening of her shell.

At the Painted Cliffs, a party of Indian men and women were digging clay for a Boston pottery. These red people had become so far influenced by civilization and its customs, that the women stopped working when the visitors appeared, looking rather shy and ashamed of their occupation, while the men went steadily forward with their task, as men should, but as wild savages would be pretty sure not to do.

In one excavation in the bank, at a depth of some hundred and fifty feet from the surface, our party found plenty of fine lignite, which had evidently once been the solid body of a tree. Some of the bark and fibre were entirely perfect, looking very like modern charred wood, yet really belonging to the ancient world, and an almost fabulous era. Every member of the party, down to Fannie and Midget, insisted on chipping out one or more special bits of this "before-the-flood wood" with a small hatchet brought for the purpose—trophies of the day and place.

Afterwards, all began searching in the strata of green sand for fossils. Midget discovered a shining bit of black something, which, on closer examination, her grandfather pronounced to be a fragment of an ancient crab; and Anne had the good-fortune to stumble upon an unmistakable and perfectly-preserved tooth of a mammoth shark. It was more than three inches

long; so that if the monster that used it was proportioned like our modern species, he must have been a most formidable creature.

This discovery was like unexpectedly finding a huge nugget of gold by some lucky man in a company of tired California miners. Every body was at once intoxicated with a renewed zest; and a search of unparalleled vigor was commenced, with no sense of weariness. They improvised stone shovels and pickaxes, borrowed fresh tools from the Indians, and tumbled the green sand hither and thither, breaking up every lump, and peering into it with hope and expectation, sanguine and intent enough to accomplish almost any thing, except the one impossible task of creating the fossils of which they were in search.

The old wine of the past had got into all their young heads, and set them to burrowing into the earth blindly, like so many crazy moles; while the good-natured old captain helped one and another unceasingly, rejoicing in their expectations, and sharing their disappointments. But Providence continued as serenely impartial as it often does under similar circumstances; though some of them were inclined to believe that a charge of favoritism might very justly be preferred; and that their own zeal, which had somewhat exceeded their discretion, deserved to be amply rewarded.

Nothing more of importance, however, was discovered, and at last the party, disgusted with their unproductive toil, and a little appalled at the thought of another long walk, turned their faces homeward with a good deal less enthusiasm than when they came.

The compassionate sea-breezes kissed away their disappointments, and cooled the hot faces by slow degrees, while Frank still heroically tooted into his conch, and Totum played her music-shell whenever any one especially wearied was found lagging behind. So they bade good-bye to the Painted Cliffs, the Cuban re-cruiter, and the whale-ship, and were glad enough to find themselves all packed away in Captain Giles's staunch little boat at the perch-pond. The last crimson of the sunset was just fading from the sky, and it was dark before they reached home; but there were warm suppers waiting the appetites enlarged to match them, and every one straightway forgot all the toil, and remembered only the pleasures of this unusually free and easy excursion.



CHAPTER XVI.

THE ECLIPSE.

"Now, Margaret, hurry up the washing of the glass, and I will undertake the smoking, for my part."

"Coming, Mr. Frank, with plenty of soap and water, and the driers."

Margaret came smilingly into the room with both sleeves rolled above her elbows. Two or three immense towels were hanging upon one bare arm, and the other supported a huge tin basin very full of soapy water, which she balanced with the utmost nicety, coming carefully along on tip-toe. Frank was seated on the dining-table, dangling his legs, and kicking out one foot a little impatiently as he waited, his face all alight with interest, and shaking back his rather curly hair as a restless horse tosses his head when he has been tied too long at the door-post, and is anxious to be dashing along the road. He was in his shirt-sleeves with the wristbands rolled back, and both hands filled with broken panes of window-glass, which he was eyeing with looks of the most lively affection.

"Here's a royal lot of pieces, isn't there? Two or three for each of us, if we like; and sometimes it's very well to hold them up double. When the eclipse is just coming on or going off, it's altogether too bright if you don't look through a pretty heavy shade," said Frank, with oracular importance. "I wish every thing was ready!"

"I shall be as quick as I can. The lamp is here to be lighted; and there! here are two or three pieces nicely washed already; so you can begin to smoke them at once, Mr. Frank."

"We'll make a quick beginning, then," cried the young gentleman, drawing a match vigorously across the bottom of his boot. It spluttered and flamed up with a sickly white flicker under the full glare of sunshine, and then went out angrily as suddenly as it had come, leaving a blackened point sticking up forlornly in Frank's astonished fingers.

"Whew! what did that? It has spit out its

own flame. That's just like a wet soap-bubble snapping itself open with a sputter. Well, we'll try again."

"Don't hurry so, and hold the end down a moment. You see, your impatience is catching. A match must always be mated to something, and this one has patterned its doings after your own hasty."

"At any rate, it has left me in an eclipse, Margaret."

"But the sun is shining still, and it will be two hours yet before *that* eclipse will begin. We have plenty of time, to get every thing ready without the least hurry."

"Well, that's lighted. You see, I've grown as careful all at once as the sedatest broad-brim; and you have changed characters, Margaret. You have broken that glass in two by just wiping it."

"Yes, and cut my finger besides."

"Take care, then. Don't stain the glass, or we shall have to report wonderful crimson spots on the sun. What is any body's finger to a square of nicely-smoked glass, with a famous eclipse like this one just on hand?"

"Nicely cracked glass, don't you mean?" retorted Margaret, as a mysterious clicking was heard going on over the hot flame of the lamp. "We shall have wonderful rents clear across the sun, at that rate."

"Looks like it. I do wish some of us had had the sense to bring pieces of stained glass with us when we came here. That would have saved all this mess and worry, besides two or three future black noses into the bargain, I've no doubt."

"It wouldn't have been half as country-like, though. That's what your ma enjoys."

"Much comfort may she get, then, out of the near prospect of sooty faces, for this lamp makes the glasses awfully smutty," holding them up with a comical, wry face, and a feint of wiping one on Margaret's clean gown.

"There, don't do that. But if you are tired, I have plenty of time to smoke them all, and I'll do my best with 'em."

"Thank you, all the same; but I rather like it. These pieces are pretty well done, I think, though, don't you?"

"Splendidly done, I think."

So they worked on merrily, till the glass-smoking was all nicely accomplished; and by this time, Totum and Anne had joined them, ready to take a share in the interesting operation. Molly had peeped in through the kitchen door-way half a dozen times, with a curious, pleased, shy face, hoping every time that she would be invited to assist, but not venturing to say any thing; and the others were too busy to notice her. The prepared glasses were all laid "right side up with care," in waiting for the important moment, and the young people went outside to look about them, impatiently wishing "the time had come."

"Isn't there a most unusual glow covering the whole landscape already?" asked Mrs. Warner, who stood looking thoughtfully out upon the attractive scene. "It seems to me that the whole sea is softening down its hard blue and green, and getting deeply dyed here and there with a wonderful brilliancy of color. It can hardly be imagination. Did you ever see a display at all like this, Miss Giles, when you have been here before?"

"I am sure I never did," answered Totum.

"There is always a great play of lights and shades before every eclipse, I understand, mother," said Frank, who suddenly remembered some hint of this which he had seen in a newspaper. "Shall I speak to father? He will be vexed to lose this."

When Mr. Warner came every body enjoyed his enjoyment; for he stood like one transfixed and glorified—like the landscape before him. The whole sky, and earth, and sea was one shifting mass of lovely hues—one stratum of glory piled over another, and often mingling with it in great drifts of passing color, each shade more beautiful than the others. It lighted the faces of all present till they must have shone something like the faces of those who came down from the mount of celestial visions in the olden times.

They all stood silently a few moments, and then Mr. Warner suggested, "Let us go down to the shore. It will be even finer from there."

"Shall we take the glasses, father, and stay there for the whole eclipse?"

"I think we had better do so, my son."

"Sea to the right of us, land to the left of

us, and sun and moon shaking hands overhead," said Mrs. Warner, with a smile.

"Isn't it enough to make us all blossom out into poetry; but please don't get a smutty face, mother dear," said Frank, handing her a pair of rather sooty-looking pieces of glass. "Keep them turned that side up, and you are all safe. Two pieces to slide one over the other may be very desirable in the beginning, if the crimson cloud up yonder will keep at a respectful distance from the sun."

Thus doubly armed, every body set out for the shore; but little Molly Maybough stood forgotten, looking wistfully from the kitchen door.

"Come with us, child. You will see a sight which you will remember for a lifetime," said Mr. Warner, turning towards her kindly. "My son, provide little Molly with a smoked glass." The child flushed rosily, under this permission, and ran pattering on with her brown, bare feet behind the others, a fountain of gratitude bubbling up in her heart towards Mr. Warner, which lasted bravely through all the little whims and tempers of the whole season; and, from that time, the master and the little serving-maid became fast allies.

The whole party, increased now by the addition of Fannie and Midget, were assembled upon the shore. The wide landscape was still brightening and blushing, in anticipation of the expected pageant, and then the first black line began to dim the brightness of the sun just upon the outer edge. A glass went up between every pair of eyes and the overpowering splendor, and then a second glass covered the first, and all watched the progress of the black band, growing broader and longer every moment, as if instinct with living movement.

"Pity we can't have total darkness in this latitude just for once in our lives," sighed Mrs. Warner.

"We may well be thankful, though, for favors like this," said her husband. "I feel like the tiniest summer fly when I look up at this triumphant march of worlds. It is the very majesty of motion illustrated."

The same sentiment crept over all the others, as they sat in almost breathless stillness, while the great murmur of the ocean sent up its ever-pulsing monotone of appreciation.

"It becomes almost too impressive after a time," said Mrs. Warner, glad to turn away for the moment to other objects; and the children found it a relief to do the same. The little ones whispered and giggled among themselves, finding this a natural and healthy outlet to their emotions. Midget pulled Molly away

by the sleeve, and beckoned Fannie to follow, telling them privately that she just wanted to turn one somersault in the sand over behind the great rock, and then she could go back again and sit still. She did her very best to accomplish this feat, but couldn't, as she had never learned the mystery of "how to do it." But she tumbled about till she was rested, and the others had laughed themselves into the same happy frame of body and mind, when they all returned with new zest to the smoked glasses.

"There are your father and mother, Molly," whispered Anne, pointing them out to her.

Mrs. Maybough, with her strong, free step, was walking slowly, to accommodate the limping halt of her husband, while the youngest boy danced on before them, throwing up his cap in greeting towards the very funny looking sun. They also were going down to the shore, but a little distance away, for an hour's holiday. Mrs. Maybough had put on a clean apron, and the captain, who was usually seen in his shirt-sleeves for six days in the week, had dressed himself in his linen coat, and brushed his hair, in honor of the eclipse.

"I'll carry them a smoked glass, if you like, Mr. Frank," said Margaret.

"Do, please; and here's a second one also. I brought several extra pieces, with a generally expansive feeling that somebody would want them."

Margaret hastened away, rather glad of something to do, and was followed shortly after by Molly.

"Thank you," said the sad-eyed woman, with a bright, grateful smile, which lighted all her face except the eyes. "It was very kind of you, Margaret, to think of us. I ought to have done something like this myself, but it never occurred to me. We have been looking without a glass till all our eyes ache. It will be a great comfort to look through these." She held up one of the glasses, gazing through it with smiling, parted lips; and Margaret's heart was a little comforted also.

"It would be a thousand pities to blind one's self, perhaps for life, even for any thing so fine as this, Mrs. Maybough."

"Certainly, it would; but the temptation is so great you forget its danger. It is not an every-day sight, and this boy of mine has been staring like an eagle, till I had to cover his eyes with my hand. Now he may look with less danger."

"There's a glass for him, mother. I've got two," cried Molly, eager and breathless with her hasty run. Mr. Frank made them all over a

lamp, and every body is so kind to me! I like to live there!"

The mother gathered her child into her arms, kissing her with a full heart, without speaking; and then, turning to Margaret, she said, with a choking voice, "I am afraid I am not half thankful enough! That family has been a good back for me and mine all summer; and we were so worn out before, with nothing but the hardest stones and wooden benches for a support. Every body else about here is strong enough to stand alone, and they are all too forehanded to need any thing from us. Your coming here is right from the hand of Providence. I have wanted to say this for a good while, and I can say it better to you than to any one else. You see, we didn't want charity," she said, in a lower voice, "and there was nobody here to give us work enough. Now we are forehanded again for a year at least."

She reached out her hand to Margaret, and stopped speaking as abruptly as she began, turning her face upward again towards the sun.

"They are very kind," answered Margaret, slowly, "to me as well as to you;" and after a little she went back to the others, leaving the family to the closer fellowship of each other's society. But on the way her heart sank to one of the lowest depths to which it was wont to fall. Was she grateful enough? What were the benefits received by this woman compared with those which had been done for her! They had smoothed her pillow with kindly hands for these eight years, yet she felt it a thorny one all the same, and was growing bitterly suspicious even of their best kindness. There was a steadily-darkening eclipse stealing over her life, and blotting out all its sunshine.

Poor Margaret! She was struggling to conquer herself, and the task was not easy. Nature is as strong in the spring-time of the human heart as it is in all the fibres of a vigorous tree that has been torn up again and again, root and branch, and replanted in sour, unfriendly soil. Leaves will spring out sometimes from a bare pole which has been cut away from all its fellows, if it can only bathe its head in the sunshine and plant its feet in the moist earth. Instinct made Margaret feel that a drop of poison was mingled with all the sweets of her daily food; and yet, with all the best impulses of her own womanhood, she fought daily to repel the suggestion. Her best intuitions made her cling to her foolish lover with an ever-renewed and forgiving trust; yet her strong will condemned him, and struggled to thrust him entirely out of her heart.

Off in the distance lay the field of beautiful green corn which he had planted and nurtured, and which returned all his care with usury; and when Margaret looked over there, her feet were planted firmly on his good faith. Time would make all clear, for he, as well as herself, was certainly the victim of some mischance. But then, what demon of suspicion could have taken possession of him? and would it set him free again before it was too late? He had gone now, and would be away indefinitely; so there could be no present chance for an explanation.

Brooding thus, but hiding it all in her heart, she came back to her friends with a clear brow, and tried to feel their absorbing interest in the great phenomenon going on all the time so steadily entirely over her head. She had hardly reached them before two immense loads of hay came slowly along in file over the sandy shore road, and as they halted for rest, the party of men and boys fell at once into the universal attitude of sky-gazers.

"I declare, I must give them a glass too," said Frank. "It's the postmaster and his boys, and it will give me a chance to return favors. It's well I made so many of these." He lifted his daily-increasing length slowly and lazily up from the sand, where he had thrown himself, for he found his position exceedingly comfortable as it was.

"Let me go, if Margaret will go with me. You are tired, Frank, with your long walk in the morning, and I should like to give it to them," cried Anne, anxious to do her part of something kindly to somebody; "only I am afraid Margaret don't care to go."

"Yes; but I do, dear. I always like to oblige you, child, because I am always in your debt."

They set off directly, and both felt well repaid by the hearty thanks and satisfaction which this little attention had so evidently given to the good-natured, neighborly hay-makers. The Boston family were already well known to every one living in this part of the island, and all the young people were always glad of an opportunity to show themselves civil and friendly.

Margaret and Anne were hastening back with refreshed spirits; but as the child made her way through the coarse shore-grass, she suddenly cried out, feeling a sharp sting on her ankle; and Margaret was just in time to see a snake glide swiftly away, under cover of the grass.

"He bit me, Margaret," said the little girl quietly, but very piteously. "I stepped on him first. Do you think he is a poison one?"

"It's almost sure he is not, darling. I don't

think there are any such about here; but we'll go quickly back to the house, and put some alcohol on, and then I'll call mamma. No need to be frightened, for it's sure to pass off in half an hour."

Margaret placed the child in an easy-chair at the door, with her glass in hand, "to watch the eclipse, like a darling;" and then she hastily bathed the bite, which was red and swollen, and bound it up wet in alcohol.

"Now don't fret, dear," she said, with motherly tenderness, wiping away a tear or two which came stealing down the little anxious face. "Look up bravely, and see what a sight is all the while going on overhead, for I think the eclipse is just at its fullest. Don't you see how queer and lovely it looks all about, just as though every thing had put on the sweetest thin gauze veil to please us? And now I'll bring your mamma; and you must keep quiet, and not give her a fright."

"I won't make any fuss," said the child, though her lip quivered.

"I know you won't. You never do."

"But it does sting, Margaret, and it feels queer. You know it *might* be poisonous. I could bear it, but I wish I knew."

"Not one chance in a thousand that it is. It don't look at all like it. It swelled because it was bit just on the cord, and you had to walk on it; but now you can sit still, and you need never think of it again, for it will go down after a little, just about like a bee-sting."

"Will it?"

"Now you won't fret, dear, while I am gone, and meet your ma with nasty red eyes?"

"No; you may be sure I won't."

The little one really was comforted by Margaret's hopefulness, though the bite was still swollen and felt "queer;" but she had a resolute steadiness of purpose which was bound to conquer any outward tokens of misgiving.

The whole party returned to the house on hearing of the mishap, and Margaret bestirred herself to provide seats out-of-doors, and to make every one forget that the accident might possibly prove to be a serious one. The swelling had not increased; and as Anne made no complaint, and kept her glass raised skyward, compelling herself to be absorbed in the pageant up above, almost every one soon settled into comfort again, and the children stopped peering curiously every moment into the little patient, heroic face, which would look just a little thinner and more touching than usual in spite of its best endeavors.

Margaret soon found that Mrs. Warner was

ill at ease and anxious, though she said nothing; but she occasionally glanced anxiously towards her child, and had lost her interest in the eclipse. She herself was confident from the first that it was only a trifling matter, the effects of which would very soon pass away; but her assertion to this effect was not quite sufficient to comfort the mother.

Margaret suddenly broke in upon the quiet tones of the others by exclaiming, with unusual zest, "There! Mr. Frank told us so! We might count now, and find how many black noses, and foreheads marked with beauty-spots, there are in the company."

Every body looked into the face of every body else, and there was a general laugh. The untoward event had caused a unanimous forgetting of "right side up with care." Sooty fingers and sooty faces were universal. Mr. Warner had an "elegant black tip" added to his nose. Mrs. Warner looked as though she had doctored an ailing face with patches of black court-plaster. Frank wore the badge of the day very bravely upon his forehead. Totum, Midget, and Molly had two or three badges apiece, and poor little Fannie's face and hands were quite as much black as white. The larger

half, perhaps, was a mulattoish tint, compounded of both; for the child had shed a few tears when she peeped at the swollen ankle, and had dabbled them up hastily with her dingy hands, leaving a pretty general thin smearing of darkish color. Anne and Margaret had been more fortunate; yet neither of them were quite clear of the charge of stained fingers.

"This is the very best fun of all," declared Midget, admiringly, but most of the others were rather doubtful.

However, there was a lightening of several faces and hearts, and before the merriment had subsided the shadow had passed quite over to the other side, and was fairly swept off from the whole face of the sun. It was passing rapidly away, also, from them all; for the swelling and queer feeling were going rapidly out of the ankle, and it was apparent that Anne would soon be as well again as ever.

Midget and Fannie had a wonderful time with soap and water; and there were aprons and dresses extra that week for Mrs. Maybough's wash-tub and for good-natured grandmamas; but Midget helped wash in that household, and she believed she had made it all right by her valuable assistance.

CHAPTER XVII.

ALONG THE SHORE.

CAPTAIN GILES and his grandchildren were out early upon the beach, now wandering hand in hand chatting sociably, or contentedly silent—breathing the luxury of sea-air. Then Midget or Totum, breaking suddenly away, would dance off somewhere in chase of the waves, or in search of some bright bit of sea-weed; the tide plashing lazily up would bubble its approval, and the grandfather's old heart rebounded with the play of all this endless exuberance.

Totum had gathered a large basketful of the many-colored Irish moss, or rock-weed, which had drifted up abundantly into a cove-like basin, and came floating in with every wave. The more delicate, flower-like, fragile things were put in a little separate division of the basket, to be afterwards prepared by Totum for a sea-herbarium, and for wreaths and sea-weed pictures, which she knew how to arrange beautifully upon Bristol board.

"Now, grandfather, let us sit down comfortably on our old rock while I arrange my Irish-moss bouquets. I mean to make one for grand-

mamma, and the other to be sent home to mamma; and if you will put it under a glass, you can keep it nicely till next year."

"So I will, Totum, if it's only to prompt me to remember all this summer's play-day; but don't forget the best pieces for blanc-mange."

"I shall keep those in mind, especially for grandmamma, who can have nice cream accompaniments. Real cream is almost past hope in the city; and moss farinas and things without cream are as different from with it, as I suppose a Bourbon must be with or without his crown."

"Or a Bonaparte either, if we may be allowed to fancy that his crown can ever tumble off again," suggested grandfather, reaching over and carefully tickling Midget's ear with a spray of sea-weed, as she sat on the other side of the stone, absorbed in her own affairs.

She had established herself satisfactorily on the favorite pudding-stone boulder, with her apron full of the more substantial sea-treasures, such as shells and pebbles; for the little one scorned any thing so fragile and "messy" as



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sea-weed. She put out her hand mechanically to brush away the annoying something, and went on arranging her bright little stones in odd figures upon the back of her wooden sand-shovel. Grandfather swept the sea-weed a second time lightly across her cheek, but she only brushed at it again and again, and went on with her occupation. At last the child looked round as she brushed, catching him in the very act of mischief, his loving old eyes shining with propitiative fun and good-will.

The child, in her present mood infinitely the graver of the two, remonstrated very simply. "Now don't play, please, grandfather; I'm too busy! I'm making such nice funny figures with these things, and I don't want to be interrupted."

Grandpapa, thoroughly delighted, didn't interrupt any more, but gave his attention to Totum, who could make her moss bouquets and entertain him at the same time without inconvenience.

"Midget occupied is Midget older than grandmother," laughed Totum.

"And grandfather unoccupied is grandfather younger than Midget at play," added Captain Giles, rubbing his veiny, withered old hands a little together, expressive of genuine satisfaction. "I feel about five years old this morning."

"Do you, grandpapa? I never mean to grow a day older either—not if I live to be a hundred," said Totum, in a very convinced and positive tone. "What is the use of stiffening up every thing you do with corn-starch and rye flour?"

"Not a grain o' use, Totum; and don't you ever do it as long as you live. Every body will like you a great deal better without; and your own comfort will be as much greater as the difference between a man in shirt-sleeves and in a dreadfully stiff choker in dog-days. Besides, if the stiffening ever gets into your heart, it will be hard then to keep it from spreading out to the fingers' ends. So don't let it in there, child! It isn't natural for either you or me."

"Not I, grandfather! Now isn't this pretty?"

holding up a showy mass of many-colored brightness, symmetrically arranged through every gradation of shade—from a brilliant crimson centre to a vivid green circumference.

"As pretty as any hot-house bouquet of real flowers, my dear; and I don't believe any one flower ever had so many colors as this wonderful sea-moss, or Irish moss, as you call it, or 'Iceland moss,' or whatever else its proper name may be. It's a host in itself, it seems; but I never supposed it could be put together like that. It shall have the glass shade I promised it, without fail."

"Thanks! Then I must try to exchange for another still prettier."

"Don't think you can, Totum." The old captain held up the glowing prize admiringly, turning it round and round, and eying it with a pleased and loving surprise. The tangled sunshine and sea-breezes played on about this happy little group till they were joined by the Warner family, who had come down also to the beach—the elders for their daily constitutional, and the juvenile members, including Margaret and little Molly Maybough, who was now quite domesticated in the family—for a morning bath.

"Cleanliness is akin to godliness, and to a general family appetite," decreed Mr. Warner; "so let Molly get her surf-bath twice a week with the others;" and Molly was here accordingly, quite to her own satisfaction and steady personal benefit.

"Why, my child, what a charming bouquet you have contrived to make from that stiff, rather ugly sea-weed!" exclaimed Mr. Warner, graciously and admiringly. "That is really a stroke of genius."

"It certainly is very lovely," said the lady. "You have arranged it so prettily, Miss Giles."

"We have been out all the morning gathering the moss, and I have made several of them. Shall I let Molly carry one up for you, Mrs. Warner, when she returns to the house?"

"If you please! Thank you. It is very pretty indeed."

Mr. and Mrs. Warner passed on slowly, a crowd of dark shadows slipping into the place of the bright colors in the lady's thought. "Who would have supposed that we should find serious snares and pitfalls for the young people spread here in the desert? And they will be the more likely to run into them, because quite off their guard."

"Why, what do you mean, my dear?" asked the husband in unfeigned surprise.

"I mean, there's Margaret in a state I never saw her before, and I believe it has something

to do with that red-haired sailor. Indeed, I am entirely convinced of it, since I detected a sudden start and blush one day at the unexpected mention of his name; and now, here is this girl, with really enough refinement to make her shockingly dangerous. Those bouquets are beautiful; and she herself is quite engaging, even with her turned-up nose. She is more dangerous to a boy like Frank, when off guard here in the country, just because she is such a complete little hoyden. Your ill-health has kept him very much out of society; and he has been so closely confined to business, never caring to mingle much with young men of his own age, that he is just as simple-hearted as either of the little girls."

"Well, that's an advantage, surely."

"Of course it is; but, you see, he'll never dream of getting up a mere flirtation. It will be either nothing at all with him, or something really serious."

"But there's Mary Percy, my dear, he sees nearly as much of her as of this one."

"I wish he did. He doesn't fancy Mary at all, and calls her 'school-missish'; but he has never made any comment about this girl which he might not have made about that queer little Midget. I don't like his silence, for he certainly is not wholly indifferent."

"What can we do about it?" asked Mr. Warner, beginning to feel rather alarmed.

"I don't know, except to be as cautious and observing as we can; and, if there comes any real danger, perhaps even shorten our visit. We are all doing so exceedingly well here otherwise; it is too provoking! When we allowed Frank to cultivate the old captain, we never dreamed of his having such an accompaniment."

"I think you exaggerate, my dear. Our son is not likely to really offer himself to any one greatly his inferior."

"I hope so; but look, now, they are all just going into the sea."

"Well, dear! Her bathing-dress is really picturesque, it must be confessed."

"Of course it is, Mr. Warner." This was spoken more snappishly than we have ever heard Mrs. Warner speak before. "I am perfectly ready to believe that she is a beautiful little tiger-cat, who is only sheathing her dangerous claws," continued the lady in the same tone. "As she stands there in the water holding her old grandfather's hand, I am in danger myself of either getting to love her or to hate her."

"Don't do either, my dear; it's undignified."

"I know it is."

"The old captain stands by them, at any rate, like a staunch body-guard."

"Yes; but who knows whether he hasn't designs of his own all the time?"

"Yes. Yes;" meditatively.

"We thought Frank had got his growth long ago; yet he has really taken a new start here, and has undoubtedly grown taller since we came. That is all very well in itself, but it may indicate a good deal of mental waking up, also. It is altogether uncomfortable."

"Can't we arrange the bathing differently?"

"I don't see how; but, my dear, if you will excuse my walk on bathing-days at this hour, I shall take a bath myself after this."

"Of course I must, then; but you are not fond of bathing."

"Then I shall grow fond of it. We must manage independent excursions as often as we can, and I shall often occupy Frank in various ways."

"I have it, my dear—that is, if we see any necessity for it. I'll send Frank off for a trip to Maine on business. You know we should like that matter we were speaking of attended to. If we discover any dangerous first symptoms, he shall set out next week."

"In that case, husband, don't let us make suggestions, or put any thing into his head unnecessarily. They play together now like two children, though Frank certainly is a little fascinated."

"As for that sailor, I'll cane him if he is seen about here again!" snapped the husband, with vindictiveness of tone sufficient for the utmost robust health. "I thought I had settled that matter once for all; and I don't see now how Margaret was to know any thing about it, or how it is that she has seen him at all since then, and hardly beforehand. It's quite unaccountable."

"I don't know about that, but I am pretty certain that, whether she has seen him or not, there are some days when she has hardly thought about any thing else."

"But I tell you I won't have it; and she must learn to understand that."

"And yet I am sure, dearest, that it would never do to interfere openly. You must remember that she says nothing, and that it is all merely surmise on my part."

"Well, let it go. No use, I suppose, to go on striking out into the dark." The invalid gentleman crushed the sand and pebbles impatiently under his feet, and threw out his hand as though he were tossing away something with suppressed disgust.

What a world of ineffectual worry we elders are always falling into over the love affairs of the young people, for whom we choose to consider ourselves responsible. We can snap off the thread of an alliance as blindly as either of the Fates does her snipping of the threads of life; and half the time, a month afterwards, we would be willing to move heaven and earth to get the sundered cord tied again by the firmest of wedding-knots. And then, after all our fuming and self-compromise, in nine cases out of ten, we are outgeneraled.

Gravitation is not more effective in keeping things relatively in their places, than social attraction is in regulating social relations, if left unimpeded in its action; but we interpose non-conductors to cut off the proper play of the natural currents. We set up counter-influences, and disturb the whole social equipoise, till our badgered young folks, like fishes gasping out of water, can find nothing better to do than to jump from the frying-pan into the fire below, while we fold our hands with the mocking consolation that we have done all we could to prevent it. The egotism of experience is very often intolerable. Nature believes in compounds; and she has given to every element its own specific laws of alliance.

The bathers all this time, Margaret perhaps excepted, were in that enjoying "take-no-thought-of-the-morrow" mood, which has nothing further to ask for—saturated at once with sea-water and absolute content.

"Now," said Captain Giles, "the little ones have had enough of it; they must run away and dress. We young people will have our swimming-lesson. Frank, do you take care of your sister. Mind and keep near her all the time. Totum and Margaret may both come with me out beyond the breakers, about as far as it is safe to walk. You can dress the little ones, can't you, Molly? and all of you help each other, like good children; and then I shall run a race afterwards with Midget and Fannie."

"Yes, sir." "Yes, grandpapa!" cried the ringing childish voices, and the three little dripping things, looking like so many limp, animated, bright scarecrows, went rushing up with shouting and laughter to the bathing-house.

"It's a shame for any human being to live and not learn to swim!" cried the captain.

"Come, Margaret and Totum. Your still-water swimming is only child's play. Now then!"

Away they all went, resolutely; the girls had been practising a little, and had already gained confidence in the water. "That was very well

all round. Now try it once more, and then that will be enough for to-day."

"They are all coming on bravely, captain," cried Frank, with enthusiasm.

"Anne here will outswim me in another month."

They had come out into the edge of the waves, standing a moment to get breath. They turned now, walking back into deeper water again, and beginning as before—first swimming about a little, and then heading towards land.

"Really, that Captain Giles is a good swimming-master," said the mother on shore, looking on with admiration at the progress of her children.

"He is a capital play-master generally," commented Mr. Warner, with a touch of genuine warmth in his voice. "Pity people will fall in love!"

"Before the proper time, you mean, dear," hinted Mrs. Warner, caressing his hand, and beaming with a wifely smile.

"Yes. Yes, certainly, my child. When the time comes and the proper person—all right, then, dear."

Little Molly came out from the bathing-house in her bare feet, but as bright and fresh as a yellow-bird who has been combing and smoothing himself for half an hour, settling all his plumes to his own satisfaction after his morning bath. Molly went cheerfully home to her work.

Midget and Fannie ran the promised race with Captain Giles; and then all the young folks went off on a "pooling-party," except Margaret, who manufactured half a set of sand easy-chairs. She gathered up old barrel-staves, which the waves had drifted on shore, thrusting them into the sand mounds which she had erected, for chair-backs, and her easy-chairs were remarkably comfortable. Mr. and Mrs. Warner took possession of theirs at once; but the old captain laughingly declined any thing so artificial. He stretched himself at length along the sands, Midget's wooden spade in hand; and while the others conversed or sat silent as they chose, he built sand fortifications with a will and skill that delighted the young ones immensely on their return.

"Now, Margaret, go to the children," said Mrs. Warner, when all was made comfortable.

"Make them be prudent and not venture too far out, where the waves may catch them. Remember that yours will be the only wise head of the party."

"Not one there, ma'am, that is not really wiser than mine. I am certain of it," answered

ed the girl cheerfully, hurrying after "the children."

If a cloud came down and brooded over her as she walked, no one was any the wiser therefor. She found the whole party scattered about the little pools left by the tide in the midst of a stony shore; for they had chosen a rocky point quite unlike the sandy slope where they went in to bathe. They were all dabbling contentedly in the water in search of "curiosities." Frank soon tossed down his pole in disdain, seating himself on a rock to watch the others, and to look dreamily out to the far-off rocks, where a couple of wild sea-fowl sat contentedly bobbing up and down upon the waters.

"Oh! what a beautiful shell I have found," cried Fannie. "It is so white, and almost like a little watch. Did any one ever see any thing so pretty?"

"It is beautiful! Such a handsome embroidered star on it," said Anne. "We have none of us found any thing like it before!"

"There are not generally a great many of them about here, but sometimes I have found a good many. It is almost like a watch, Fannie; and when the little fish was inside, I suppose he made it go," said Totum. "This one is hollow inside, and I never saw one when it was alive."

This attractive new specimen of sea-treasures broke up the "pooling," for this was found on the sand. When they examined further, to the surprise of all, the whole beach had a waving line of minute shells of many varieties, extending just along the outer edge of the high-tide waves. Their numbers seemed almost infinite; and the delicate colors and shapes were so charming that every body was half wild with delight. Besides these, there were the lace-work shells of the white embroidered sea-urchins, large and small; and others still with the prickly green spines all in perfect order, and the little tenants often still alive inside. The heavier shells lay stranded farther up on the shore, for the kindly tidal wave which had brought these had been too fastidious to meddle with any but the most delicate varieties.

This endless change of a favorable sea-beach is something wonderful. In addition to the eternally-shifting sands, where new hills and valleys are carved out by the waves at their own fitful will; one day an outer rim of sand is heaped up with great pebbles, another day it is real boulders, tossed up by the deeper waves; or, perhaps, the whole beach is strewn with heaps of stones, still bright and shining with the dripping sea-water; another time there is a shim-

mering of round little masses, like soft pearls, all along a series of curved lines at the water's edge; and, again, like to-day, a multitude of curious shells suddenly appear—many of them of varieties which have not been seen before for the whole season.

"These are the dearest, tiniest, prettiest shells in the world!" exclaimed Fannie. "Nothing can be prettier, and I guess there are twenty different kinds."

"We must hurry and pick them up while they stay here," said Totum; "for they may not be here again in such quantities for the whole season."

Every feminine member of the party was already down on her knees, with eyes less than half a foot from the sands, indicating that Totum's injunction to improve the shining hour was rather superfluous. In his heart Frank was really desirous to join them, but was a little ashamed to do so, in consideration of his gentlemanly dignity. So, after kneeling down before a little rift of shells, in quizzical admiration, and selecting half a dozen for Midget, he stretched his long length upward again, yawning and disconsolate.

"I'm afraid it's rather too much girl's play for me. I should look more like a hop-toad down there than any of you. Good-bye." He

sauntered leisurely back to the grown-up party, taking unscrupulous possession of Margaret's sand-chair, still left vacant by the old captain, busy with his fortifications.

The anxious parents felt a sense of immediate relief, first exchanging significant glances, with congratulations in them that it was not likely to be necessary speedily to banish the dear boy, and get him transported down East; and then beginning at once most graciously to admire the captain's wonderful towers and forts. Frank's attention once called to these, he was down on his knees here in a trice, vigorously outdoing even the captain in his marvellous and fantastic achievements.

But dinner-hour came on apace for the country family, and lunch-time for the city people; so sand-works and shell-gathering were alike necessarily suspended.

Alas! as Totum prophesied, the very next tide, which came hungrily up even while both families were yet feasting, swept nearly all those lovely little shell-treasures back again into the sea. Diligent search was made almost every day afterwards, but during the whole season there was never again such another gathering of the pretty little cast-off houses of these very small nomads of the sea.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A BACHELOR'S COLD COMFORT.

WHEN the fishing excursion was over, and the guests had all gone, leaving the Constance to the care of master and mate, Alfred Brand at once expressed his willingness to start off on a trading excursion, which had been proposed by Captain Percy, as soon as the necessary arrangements could be effected. They were to go to New Bedford, thence to Boston, and possibly elsewhere before their return. When they separated for the night, it was definitely arranged, if wind and weather were favorable, to weigh anchor next day.

There was but small leave-taking anywhere except in Captain Percy's family. The boy Edgar was to accompany his father, and probably would not return again, but would go directly to school. It was a touching farewell between the little mute and his mother, who clung to each other in silent, regretful fondness till the last moment; and then, with one long embrace, and one spoken "God bless you, my son!" falling on sealed ears, but heard gratefully by the

dim eyes which looked up to her so tenderly, they parted—not certain whether it would be only for a week or for months. The only child, and a desolate little one, stricken of God from his birth, he had nestled his way, guarded by almost infinite tenderness, into the very soul of his mother; and both felt now how pitiful it was to be cast out so early into the cold. Yet no tears were shed. Perhaps the slight uncertainty as to the time of his absence was just enough to stay the impending shower, nerving each heart with hope which is closely allied to purpose.

"I am almost sure, Maria, that he will come back with me for a week before he goes for good," said the captain, consolingly, forgetting that it was wrong to tell fibs even for love. However, by an unexpected turn of events, the boy did really come back to her to undergo the doubtful good of a second parting; and in that home-interval some things occurred of which we shall hear more hereafter.

Alfred Brand took with him on the voyage a few of his books and a school-boy slate, which had travelled with him almost round the world; and over which in later days he had scrawled geometrical diagrams and abstruse problems in the higher mathematics, which it would have puzzled many a college graduate to solve for him. He understood that in this long, slow sail, there would probably be a good deal of enforced leisure which he should be glad to fill up with some absorbing occupation. He had with him, also, a pretty light-colored agate, which he had found only a few days previously upon the shore. It was already smoothed and rounded into a general symmetry by the waves, which had been dashing it to and fro upon the beach perhaps for years; but on one side some of its outer covering needed to be ground away in order to expose the delicate layers of color. Underneath it was still imbedded in a water-worn mass of grayish stone, the softer portions of which had been worn away, leaving the whole somewhat irregular and unsightly.

Alfred proposed to employ his more unstudious leisure in rubbing away the superfluous surfaces upon a large smooth flint, which he had brought for the purpose, polishing the agate into new lustre, evenness, and beauty. Poor Alfred! he felt that he must keep head and hands busy until the little process of healing which he was trying to inaugurate in his heart should have time to get itself healthily and permanently established. Yesterday's dish of reveries had nauseated him with that style of harmful delicacies, and he wisely resolved for the future that there should be no further indulgences in that line. Margaret's character had been weighed in the balance of his best judgment; and, as he had found her wanting, his will was thoroughly aroused, and resolute to thrust her entirely out once and forever from all his thoughts and interests.

He had taken a lingering look at some of his many beautiful shells, which had somehow grown wonderfully into his love and appreciation with all the pleasant, if anxious, time which he had spent over them, and he was half inclined to take with him two or three of those which still needed his care, feeling that there would be some solace to him in patiently bringing out one and another of their various latent perfections; but he reflected that all these were now too closely associated with Margaret. Her eyes would look out at him from every bit of color which brightened under his touch, and his lost hopes would perhaps start up anew, confronting him at every turn. No; that wouldn't

do. He put them all away, shut the lid of his strong box, and locked them firmly in.

Here the party are now, making good headway along the trackless ocean—captain, mate, and the little mute, all alike silent, and one, at least, intent on nothing so much as absolute forgetting. He is glad to have left the island behind him. He has not only shaken off the sand from his feet, but he has also cast off his shoes, and sits with his toes over the edge of the boat, scrubbing away at them with the salt-water as though he would wash off the last vestige of native soil, which has been so invaded and pervaded by the usurping stranger. He silently resolves that he will not come back again for at least six weeks; and by that time the foreign family and all its adjuncts will have gone again, he hopes, leaving but few effects behind them. Edgar, having nothing else to do, is glad to help him with his few duties; the breeze is fresh, but gentle and manageable; they have thrown out long, hooked lines, tying them fast to the vessel, and are trolling for blue-fish, and each of the three, sailing so lazily on in familiar waters, would be only too grateful for almost any diversion. Every craft, far and near, is scanned with a curious interest; yet, all told, it makes but a poor little diminutive number, while the shifting clouds overhead and the endless surging of water underneath are more sleep-wooding than exhilarating.

At this stage of the journey, without exciting surprise, and quite with the sympathy of Captain Percy, who re-lighted his pipe and began drumming with his fingers over the side of the sloop, like a school-girl thrumming an imaginary piano, Alfred began to rub away at his convenient agate. With the broad flint placed like a lapstone upon his knees, first explaining to Edgar in sign language what he intended to do, he began to grind, grind, and grind—illustrating a patience which seemed utterly inexhaustible, and entirely at variance with the temperament of a red-haired man like himself. Edgar's eyes were fairly wearied with watching the endless shove, shove, shove, to and fro, to and fro; and his simple stock of expectation was quite exhausted by finding that after all so little came of it—as they found when they examined the results.

But Alfred was not at all disheartened. His work would last him for a long time. All the better! The motion suited him, and absorbed thought. If at any time he found it becoming too mechanical, and his mind wandering into forbidden grounds, he only called the more muscle into play, rubbing with an all-conquering energy, which made every thing else suc-

cumb to it—which sent the blood tingling through his arm and down to his toes, but left the head free.

Every now and then he reached over to moisten the agate with sea-water, or to wash away the whitish, troublesome stone-dust from his lapstone; or he paused to attend to some necessary duty, often exchanging questions and remarks casually with Captain Percy, or talking by gestures and fingers to the affectionate boy, who, finding him more versatile and entertaining than his father, habitually clung to him on all their voyages almost as inseparably as his own shadow. He was a racy, new flavor in the child's experience, and the poor little fellow never tired of its varying pungency. Always a prisoner in his own voiceless world, any one who had kindly eyes, and a changing expression of continued sympathy for himself, was a priceless treasure; and Alfred's homely, mobile face, to this little deaf mute, had always seemed angelic.

To-day, when the first home-sickness fastened its un pitying fangs in the poor, aching, childish heart, Edgar went over and sat down by his father, taking hold of him with a clinging movement, as though this was nearest to clasping the dear mother; and then after a little came back again to his friend. This he repeated again and again, with a feverish sadness which they both pitied, and kindly sought to alleviate. Alfred even stopped rubbing his stones to entertain the child by making hobgoblins on his slate, and he spent an hour trying to amuse him by playing the game of "shooting French and English."

Thus day after day passed. They had discharged one cargo and taken on another, and, having doubled Cape Cod, were sailing northward, with a favorable wind. Alfred's thumb and one or two fingers had become cramped and stiffened by the continued exercise of these generally unused muscles, till they began to trouble him even at his ordinary work. Sometimes, at night, a sharp pain shot through the swollen thumb, like a stab, warning him to desist; but the agate was rounding into new beauty, and this pleased him. A clear red band, at first visible only on one side, went all around it now; and several delicate layers of wavy color were revealed, of which he had no suspicion before, but which smiled back at him radiantly whenever he dipped them into the salt-water. This was some comfort; but behind all was that perpetual negative consolation of stifled thought—the feeling that some silent process of healing must be steadily going on in the wound-

ed spirit, thrust away somewhere into the background, wrapped up in a poultice of opiates.

Poor fellow! he had killed five days and nights already, and the name of Margaret probably had not flashed through his memory more than five hundred times in that interval; but then he had not suffered himself to dwell upon it for five minutes consecutively, and that was something. He had fallen into no reveries, hopes, or possibilities pertaining to her, keeping all the nerve and strength of his manhood for his own sore needs. This was much to have attained, and he was forced to be content. But would he never dare again to look forward into a future where there could be new sunshine?

This perverse agate, after all his care, would glow and brighten for him only when it was still wet with sea-water, but after a drought of five minutes it suddenly parched into a rubbed and dingy indistinctness which was truly discouraging. No amount of washing could remove this tendency; it was clear that there must be some process of polishing and permanently bringing out the various shades of color, which was at present quite unknown to him. Besides, his thumb was so stiff and swollen by this time that little Edgar's questioning eyes began to be often turned towards it with distressing sympathy; so Alfred put away the agate with a sullen feeling at his heart, and sat down with folded hands, a book lying at his side, upon which his eyes fell now and then unceasingly.

Wishing that he had the heart to study, wishing for a storm, for almost any thing which should compel him to the necessity of downright present exertion, he quietly talked politics and gossip with Captain Percy, who thought him unusually good company on this particular "cruise." Alfred looked longingly off to the land on one side of them, or, with a still more vague and boundless yearning, his eyes wandered over the sea stretching away into mist on the other side. Nothing to do, not daring even to think.

Memory, groping among the embers of a desolate past, may unbury live coals which fall upon the shrinking soul with new torture; but *Hope* can not go forward into a veiled and guarded future to bring from it herbs of healing. She must have some glimmer of light on her pathway before she can gather either balm or flowers; and Alfred, who was afraid to let a ray of sunshine stream through the darkened chambers, could only shut himself outside and wait.

Then he got out his slate and pencil and

made pictures for Edgar—caricatures of any thing and every thing which fancy dictated, all to the boy's intense delight, and some little reflex satisfaction to himself. Edgar, child-like, had brightened as the days went by, pleased with every novelty, till his mood had become almost as sunny as ever.

When the eclipse came they were still sailing northward; but even the lovely diffused rainbow which fell about them, shivered and broke against the apathy of Alfred's present temper without very much lightening it, though it made him feel to his very finger-tips that the world was really beautiful in spite of all.

When the dark shadow began to creep slowly over the sun, the sense of an Infinite Might above, and of his own utter powerlessness, became almost cruelly oppressive. He felt like a helpless insect which had been impaled upon a pin's point, thrust out to him by the hand of Providence. Captain Percy and the boy Edgar were both so entirely pleased, excited only with the liveliest admiration, that, shut up as he was in that little floating world of three, he felt more than ever like an outcast, and he began to question himself of his own worthiness. Was he merely a thoughtless gnat who had been content to live by his sting, thriving, perhaps, by the robbery of another? What definite plan had he ever made for the direct benefit of any one besides himself? Certainly he had never leaned much towards philanthropy; his own pathway had always been a rough one, requiring most of his energy to clear the way before him as he went; but had he not always willingly lent a helping hand to every one who happened to be near him and in need?

Suddenly, in this mood of questioning, Margaret came before him with a look of wholly unexpected reproach. Was there bitterness, then, in her cup as well as in his own? Had he ruthlessly pressed out the wormwood which she was to drink with him? Up to this moment he had never once thought of the matter in that light. He had been absorbed in his own broken hopes and riotous disappointments—mastered by all the instincts and impulses of a long suppressed young manhood which had risen into sudden revolt.

Their mutual relations had always been looked at by him almost wholly from a subjective point of view. How Margaret herself had been affected all this time by his fitful and turbulent love-making, or by his sudden and wholly unexplained desertion, had hardly occurred to him before. Now many surprised and questioning looks and words of hers came over to him almost from the earliest days of their acquaintance, and he could not fail to comprehend that she must often have thought his course exceedingly strange and unjustifiable. Formerly he had fully settled it with himself that she had only been trifling with him from the first, but, finding him in earnest, had finally thrown him off willingly, really putting her long servile attachment to her employers, with its attendant luxuries, before all the poor love and fortune which he had to offer her. Now he began to doubt even that. It was hardly in her nature to be simply a coquette; and there were looks, and ways, and answers, capable of an entirely different construction.

Margaret's interest in this matter, rising up thus unexpectedly to confront him, put a new face upon the whole question. Her treatment of himself and her demeanor towards her employers might both require further consideration, possibly even some new interpretation.

Where, then, was his own consistency? Was all that weary ordeal of palsied thought and feeling to lose even its negative consolations?

Should he still persist in his six weeks of banishment from the island, or was there a chivalrous duty imposed on him of thinking in the interest of another?

For the moment he was capable of but one distinct feeling, and that was a hearty rejoicing to see the spires of Boston looming up in the distance with their promise of temporary relief, of ever so short a respite from the maze of questioning in which he found himself so unexpectedly and hopelessly replunged.

His week of unreasoning self-absorption had fairly dawned into a Sunday of conscientiousness, in which he felt himself religiously bound to settle the question of Margaret's legitimate rights and interests in their mutual relations, and from a fairly impartial stand-point.





CHAPTER XIX.

ON THE ROAD.

ABOUT twenty miles away, at the extreme opposite side of the island, is the famous camp-ground, where for these twenty years or more they have held the great annual camp-meeting. Some of the original well-grown oak timber is still standing in this neighborhood, and it is under the shade of an oak-grove that the ministers' platform and an amphitheatre of audience-benches have taken their stand, protected still further from rain or August sunshines by a canvass awning, under which the inspiring sea-breezes play about divinely at their own sweet but rather fitful will.

It is a most delightful location for a summer conventicle, and the people have evidently found it so; for the camp-ground has become the nucleus of a charming, unique watering-place, thronged with summer visitors of every grade, from the simplest pious yeoman to the wealthiest, most fashionable, and sometimes even the gayest, lovers of pleasure. The great "societys" still cluster immediately about the central, visible symbols of religion; but outside of these there has sprung up a village of bright, pretty dwellings, as graceful in form and as radiant in color as though Methodists had never been akin to Quakers in their love of straight lines and quiet drab. All honor to the democratic watering-place, patronized so religiously by itinerant ministers and their devout parishioners, and with so much worldly wisdom by merchants and millionaires who aspire to be eminent pillars of trade, society, or state.

"This is camp-meeting week, you know, Mr. Frank," said Captain Giles. "Totum and I think of going over to-morrow; but Midget and her grandmother both decline, thinking there is no place like home; and if it wasn't for Totum I should be pretty much persuaded that they are about right. Our brown bread is sweeter than the best sponge-cake I have ever found at a camp-meeting restaurant; and I have found

the ride something of a trial to an old back that is a little cranky in the joints. But what I want to say is, that Totum would like to have your Anne ride with us, and so should I. You'll drive over some of the others yourself, won't you? Wouldn't do, after all, young gentleman, to leave this island without visiting the camp-grounds. Why that place is just the one star in our crown; all the rest are nothing but sea-shore pebbles. Wouldn't answer to give it a slight."

"Of course not. Yes, I am going. We youngsters are all getting as hungry as Robinson Crusoe was for a fresh taste of 'society;' but father and mother cling to the desert end of the island, thanking Providence that the worldly camp-ground is at least twenty miles away. But I don't understand about Midget. It's a wonderful thing if she don't believe in the philosophy of change."

"Midget's one of a thousand; and she has in hand the building of a wonderful play-house with the mammoth clam-shells we found in the Indian mound over towards the shore at Squipnocket. She really don't care to go. It's one thing at a time with her."

"I think Margaret would like to go, and my mother wishes her to do so. If Anne would not inconvenience you, captain, I could take Margaret with me, putting in a footstool for our Fannie, who is just crazy for a little dissipation."

"Anne is the nicest child in the world; and I should take her willingly, even if I had to carry her all the way on my back," answered the gallant old captain.

Thus satisfactorily arranged, the two carriages set out in file one gray August morning—nobody strongly impressed religiously, as it appeared; but all intent upon getting the utmost possible good out of the camp-meeting and its accessories. Frank took the lead; and after a six

or eight miles' drive, they reached the almost interminable scrubby-oak wood, or bush, which covers the central portion of the island for many miles in every direction; and through which run the narrow unfenced roads, just wide enough for a single conveyance, but not of sufficient width to allow two carriages to meet and pass each other without one of them plunging into the bushes and waiting there for the other to pass on.

This morning, however, they met no one except a produce-peddler returning from the camp-ground, where he had disposed of his chickens and sundries at prices which would seem fabulous even in New York.

Fat poultry and fresh vegetables for this extemporized August city is fast becoming the most available source of revenue to enterprising islanders. This is the ordained process of alchemy, by which sea-weed can be transmuted into gold.

"Am I on the right road to the camp-ground?" called Frank to the obliging, smiling peddler, whose establishment had plunged into the appalling thicket on his approach, and was standing there respectfully, half covered up in a not unpicturesque green setting.

"All right! Go straight ahead five or six miles, and when you come to the forks, you'll see a board out there in the woods pointing you on towards the camp-ground."

"Thank you!"

"Welcome!"

"It's a relief to meet a human being anywhere here, I am sure," said Margaret. "Such a stretch of monotonous green scrubs would make me almost welcome Robin Hood himself. I don't wonder the man was smiling."

"At any rate, it's a comfort to know we are right, though, to be sure, I don't see any chance of going wrong." Frank flourished his whip with the pride of a driver who gets less than half a dozen independent carriage-rides in a year, when he is at home; but, grinding through the sand half-ankle deep as they were, pony gave but little heed to his suggestions.

On they went, on, and on, but certainly not five or six miles; yet here were "the forks," but no guide-board.

"Now which is right?" was the query. "Which is straight ahead?"

"I think we should take the left hand; it is more travelled than the other," suggested Margaret.

"Why don't we wait till Captain Giles comes up?" asked Fannie, afraid of being lost in the woods.

Frank received advice and suggestion graciously enough; but like any real boy under twenty, he felt it incumbent on him to take the only third course open to them.

"That road is certainly the most straight ahead," he decided dogmatically, and plunged into it accordingly with a freshly stimulated zest for adventure.

It was much like the other; but perhaps the red-tipped oak boughs reached over a little more familiarly to brush the sand from the spokes of the wheels; yet they went on with good heart for a quarter of a mile, when they came suddenly upon two other "forks."

"Which now?" coming to an abrupt standstill.

Fannie, who had been all the way quaking inwardly, broke into a sudden explosion, "You are a naughty, bad boy, Frank, and we shall all be lost."

"I think it might be safer to go back to where the roads branch off, and wait for Captain Giles," said Margaret. "We can be there now before he will, if we return at once."

Frank looked dubiously. "There's the guide-board!" he exclaimed, suddenly espying a rough board nailed to a bush, and half-covered up by the growing leaves. "You see I was right, after all."

Up to the guide-board they went, but the inscription was not legible from the carriage. Frank sprang out with alacrity, eager to decipher the oracle.

Reading with great deliberation, "*Not a public road.*" "Whew! here's a pretty pass!" and he went round on the other side, where there proved to be nothing written at all. "So, then, we are to take the back track, I reckon."

"Well, Fannie, you and I may jump out," said Margaret, with a grimace, which went to hide a laugh. She had felt sure they were wrong all the time, though she wisely forbore to say so both then and now. "I shouldn't like to turn in the midst of these bushes, should you?"

"No," said the child, a little undecided as to whether it wasn't best to cry, since she really felt like it.

"But you needn't fret, darling. That won't mend our ways. We'll just face about, and be all right again in five minutes."

"Be a little woman, Fan, and don't whine!" said Frank, with a touch of brotherly concern for her genuine trouble, and a look of feeling decidedly "taken down" himself.

"Every new experience is worth at least a quarter of a mile," laughed Margaret. "Shall

"I help you lift round the buggy, Mr. Frank?" Laying hold of it at the back, she switched off the light carriage from the track, landing it sheer over in the midst of the brush, and Frank, leading his horse promptly across the triangle of six-foot-high bushes which bent under this onset like reeds, had really faced about with a great deal less trouble than Fanny had thought possible.

"Jump in there! We'll whirl back in a trice; and don't either of you tell Captain Giles we went wrong, unless you want me to land you both on the top of a scrub-oak," said Frank, laughing and whistling to make the best of it.

"We need only tell Totum, need we, Margaret?" The child brightened like a fire-fly suddenly-spreading her wings.

"That would do, I think; but here's the loveliest gray moss hanging from all the trees, some of it nearly a foot long. If you will give us time to gather some of it, we will be as quiet as mice, Mr. Frank."

The moss was gathered, and the party retraced its steps; but only just in time to face Captain Giles at "the forks;" who merrily spurred up his horse and took the lead. "Beware of side-cuts, young people!" he cried, looking back, his wrinkled old face all aglow with pleasant laughter.

"We only took a little independent excursion, to pass away the time while we were waiting for you!" retorted Frank.

Half a dozen miles farther on, the captain plunged horse and carriage into the thicket, under an unusually tall tree, and came to a halt. "This is an eligible way-side inn, children, where they have the best refreshments for man and beast. If Mr. Frank will drive in under the green shed there, we'll see what can be done for you all."

"Oh, won't it be charming?" was sung and echoed by delighted voices.

"And plenty of huckleberries all along the road. I engage these for dessert. Come, girls, here are famous green leaves for baskets, and we'll see who'll gather the most." Totum sprang eagerly from the carriage at the risk of a torn dress or a sprained ankle, and Fannie tumbled after her as promptly as a second blob from a frisky uncorked bottle follows the first.

Margaret and Anne were not less willing, but more deliberate, and the four girls flitted here and there in search of berries, like butterflies hovering over the sweets of a clover-field.

"Our horses first, Frank! We'll provide the oats for roast-beef, and they may help themselves to green leaves afterwards for their des-

sert; then I'll spread the luncheon, and you may gather berries with the girls."

These trees, which Captain Giles had selected, were grown-up ones, something of the camp-meeting style; for the excursionists were approaching the amiable side of the island, where the winds are all tempered a little to the needs of the growing buds. You could catch the gleaming of the sea through the green boughs, and the air, which had been sleeping lazily all along the wood for the last hour or two, now became brisk and stirring. There is a wonderful difference in oaks, even of the same varieties, planted in the same common sand-bed. Pleasant groves cared for by civilization, where all the trees have spreading, round, compact heads, may be grown from the dwarfs of the desert. What is wanting in height is made up in width, each head throwing out its broad, strong antlers, which rub kindly together in the wind; for every thing on the island, whether single or banded together with its fellows, must have its own share of battling with the storms; and if it is destined to thrive, it is forced to accept old Captain Giles's favorite advice, and "take hold of life right-handed." One of these low-lying oak groves may be developed into a symmetry which makes it look at a distance as if it was first-cousin to a thrifty old apple-orchard—a sight always for *sair een*. But the tall trees about which our friends gathered for their picnic were simply two or three shanghaes among a great brood of little bantams.

Captain Giles pressed down the willing saplings and taller bushes growing in a well-shaded niche, till they were all nearly on a level, and then he spread his table-cloth over them, pinning it down firmly at the corners.

An ample repast had been provided by the housewives at home, and this he transferred from the baskets to the rather unsteady table, with as much care to make every thing balance, helping to support both itself and its neighbors, as would be requisite in transposing the terms of a most intricate equation. When all was completed, their table was raised to nearly the ordinary height, and delightfully shaded with the green canopy overhead; while a few tasseled bushes stood respectfully on either side, like servants in livery.

"Now take your places, young people," said Captain Giles. "Here's enough and to spare; so take hold of life right-handed, every one of you!"

"All ready, grandpapa!"

"You see, if you don't get strengthened now while you can, young ones, your twenty-mile

THE LUNCHEON IN THE GROVE.



ride will be a heavy dry pole in your hands all the rest of the day; but if you do your duty now, it will blossom out like Aaron's rod at the end, and you can enjoy yourselves under the shade of it."

"How about the cranky knots in your back, Captain Giles?"

"All pretty well-behaved and comfortable, thank you," answered Captain Giles, giving a little admonitory thump and rub rather low down on his spine, as though there might be just one or two refractory members in there somewhere.

These young pupils of his, under favorable tuition, had all learned by this time how to make right-hand work of a frolic, so that merriment and good-will abounded on all sides—brisk jokes and repartee flying backward and forward as incessantly as the lights and shades which were all the time playing bo-peep overhead; and every right hand kept time with its fellows, all swinging like so many pendulums between the mouths and the table-spread. When somebody disturbed the equilibrium of Captain Giles's equation by taking up a heavy loaf of plum-bread to slice off from, a volcano of small frosted cakes began to discharge itself over the head of poor little Fannie, who was sitting unconcernedly down in the green valley below; but the child, who was not quite overwhelmed by the goodies, rather liked it; and all the rest laughed in chorus.

It was altogether a most successful occasion, as such entertainments generally are. Thoreau says that the wild apples which grow up and take care of themselves in out-of-the-way pastures have an untamed flavor which harmonizes exactly with a long botanical ramble and its sharpened, barbaric appetite. No garden fruit could be half as good. But my experience proves that tasteless huckleberries and tame bread-and-butter can take on the spicy flavor of even the most pungent or outlandish surroundings, and that pickles and sweet-cake can be

alike readily transformed into the veritable quails and manna of the original wilderness. Even black-and-blue stains on lips and fingers, rather annoying for a moment, get transformed afterwards into rosy tints of the daintiest morning freshness. Little Fannie's torn dress got pinned up and made the best of; and if Frank's glossy boots were a good deal less shiny than when he left home, his face was a good deal more so; while Captain Giles's spinal column, which was wont to be "a little cranky in the joints," took on twenty years of renewed youth in a single hour.

After this episode, our party all went on their way again, and arrived in due time at the campground.

What a plunge from the wilderness into the heart of a bustling, populous town—but certainly a town somewhere in fairy-land—for surely there is no duplicate of a place like this upon the prosaic earth! One looks about him at the ambiguous character of the scene a good deal doubtful at first as to whether he has been transported a little unusually near to the gates of heaven, or rather uncommonly close to the ancient domain where they held Vanity Fair.

On the one hand, a great congregation stand together under the trees, reverently singing a hymn; and on the other, gay throngs of people, in bright costumes and holiday faces, are trooping hither and thither on the brilliant streets, or sitting in picturesque groups in pretty drawing-rooms open to the street, or on little front porches, or bias of garden-plot, all chatting as merrily as a chime of marriage-bells. The houses nearly all seem to be not quite grown up—bright cottages—and the door-yards just such as children build in their six-inch-square mimic villages, even to the extemporized shell and rustic-work flower-gardens, with fresh blossoms stuck in here and there every morning, and old ones thrown away for the brighter daily effect.

It is all very odd, and exceedingly charming!





CHAPTER XX.

AN UNEXPECTED MEETING.

CAPTAIN GILES and his young people drove through the wider thoroughfares of the inclosed grounds, where the sidewalks were overflowing with people in city-like manners and apparel, and afterwards they walked along the greener and quieter by-ways, greatly enjoying the simplicity and freshness of every thing they saw. The more aristocratic suburb, where the dwellings are as much larger and finer than their progenitors as the leaves of a thrifty young sapling are usually larger and more assuming than the foliage of the parent tree, was also a feast of novelty to their ruralized vision, which had hardly seen two buildings standing together since time out of mind.

From here they strolled up along the bluffs to the sea-side, and thence down to the little landing, where crowds of people were hastening at the approach of the *steamboat*. The little harbor was quite alive with miscellaneous specimens of smaller craft, moving or at anchor. A government school-ship stood a little off from shore, and one of her boats, with the boys in uniform, was now approaching the wharf, the long double series of oars gleaming in the sunshine as it came, making the boat and its occupants look like some curious and beautiful centipede; and over a jutting promontory at the left were visible, in the distance, the masts of ships and the spires of the churches of Old Town. This was a scene wholly different from the long stretch of waters—broken a little on either side by outstanding rocks—which spread out to the horizon from their own pleasant beach. There every fishing-smack is a novelty; every child who strolls along the shore, and every farmer who drives down to a little off-lying cove to gather sea-weed, becomes a pleasant and noteworthy acquaintance. Here multitudes of people were coming and going at the landing of every steamboat, as restlessly as bees flit in and out from their hives in time of clover-blossoms.

Our party seated themselves upon one of the long benches which overhang the sea, a little

outside of the crowd, all thoroughly prepared for enjoyment.

"Every thing here looks just like a celebration-day," said Anne; "but I like it ever so much."

"Of course, we all do," said Frank; "but it isn't so much better or different from old Boston after all, or it wouldn't be if every man there didn't have 'business, business,' basted on to both his coat-tails. If all Boston would go in for a general play-day some time, it would be nearly as jolly as this."

"I think it's all so nice, isn't it, Totum?" cried Fannie, half wild with delight. "I wish we lived here—don't you?"

"I should like it for a week and a day, but I don't know about all summer, Fannie. I like a long holiday where there isn't any need of having too much starch in your dresses."

"Dear me! Well, I don't, then. It's ever so much pleasanter here than on our side of the island. Don't you think so, Captain Giles?"

"The old squirrel liked his own hole in the old tree, you remember, puss," he answered, smiling, and patting the little hand which she held out to him; "it was only the young one who was crazy for a change. But I expect most people would agree with you. You see they do, fifty to one."

All this time Margaret's color was coming and going in a fever of excitement, for among the various vessels coming into port she had just recognized the *Constance*. This was so wholly unexpected that it had almost taken away her breath, yet she sat looking in entire silence. The steamboat came and went, and then the *Constance* drew up to the landing.

"Heigh-ho! If there isn't Captain Percy and his sloop! I thought he was off on a long cruise. So he was, too, but I suppose he has changed his mind, and come down here in the way of trade or passengers," said Captain Giles.

"There are people on board, some of them just coming up from the little cabin, and others

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making ready to step on shore," said Frank, looking intently. "There! there are two Boston men. I know them both in the way of business."

"Yes, that's it; they are his freight. He has shot off down here in a tangent, and, I dare say, made a good thing by it. Likely they preferred a sail with him to the steamboat; and I am glad to see the old fellow; for his sloop is good for a night's lodging, if I can't find a better."

After the passengers and their baggage had landed, Captain Percy and Edgar came on shore, and were immediately waylaid by Captain Giles and the children, who were all glad to see the little mute; for they had bid him good-bye, not expecting to meet him again. They all went together to the camp-ground; but Alfred, who remained on board the sloop, to put both her and himself in holiday order, had not yet discovered the presence of the home-party. Every tongue that could talk was ready to do so; but Margaret's found very little to say. She smiled kindly upon the boy Edgar, both for his own sake, and with a feeling that he had just come like a messenger of good-will from the presence of another who loved him. Her thoughts were arrested and held, every now and then, by something going on about her; but they flew back every moment to the *Constance*, like a troop of carrier-pigeons longing for their first dove-cote.

Early in the evening, when the lamps at the camp-ground were brilliantly lighted in-doors and out, the lights and shadows playing hide-and-seek around the houses and among the trees beguiled hundreds of people into a maze of sympathetic, busy idleness. They were everywhere promenading the streets, in full enjoyment of the cool, delightful evening. The voice of prayer and the singing of hymns began around the speaker's stand where the meetings were held; and there was lighter music and social singing here and there in cottages farther away.

In one cheery little drawing-room a lady sat playing on a melodeon, and around her were grouped several gentlemen and ladies singing sweet and stirring ballads, which so moved the hearts of passers-by that a crowd gathered outside the door to listen. A whisper passed to and fro among the people, "It is the Hutchinsons! Some of them are the Hutchinsons!" and so the listeners increased in number. The hospitable door was thrown wide open, the outside throng looking and listening, apparently both a welcome and an appreciative audience.

Frank, Totum, Margaret, and the children

were all here; and as Margaret turned a little to make room for a passer-by, her eyes fell upon Alfred Brand standing there in the shadow of the house, and evidently wrapped up in the melody. Her heart thumped so wildly for a moment it seemed to her it was louder than the music, and might be heard by others besides herself. With a strong effort she stilled its beating, and her resolution was quickly taken. She would ask an interview, and try to reach some explanation of a course which seemed to her so wholly unaccountable. All the afternoon she had been thinking of this, and hoping the opportunity would come to her.

"Stay with the others, Fannie; I'll be back again soon," she whispered, loosening the child's hand from her own, and quickly losing herself in the crowd, without, however, taking her eyes from her lover, lest he should suddenly disappear. Very quietly she came up in the opposite direction, till they stood face to face and eye to eye—hers mutely asking, "Will you let me speak with you?" but the question lingered upon her lips—his piercing her at first with a start of surprise, and then with a flash like anger or disapproval.

Instantly he turned and was gone, while she stood silent, humiliated.

"So, then, it really is all over. Well, I can bear it! I will bear it! I was not asking for his good-will, but for an explanation." And now her thoughts grew hot and indignant. "He is unjust—unworthy of me! Yes, it is over. I'll no more of him."

She walked on blindly and rapidly; and it seemed to her that she was literally tearing a great burden of hopeless doubt and passion out of her heart and casting it from her forever.

After a little, summoning all her pride and strong will to conquer herself, she came back to Fannie and took the child's hand again into her own. "I think it is time to go to the meeting. Shall we go, Mr. Frank?"

"Come, Totum, and all of you, we are going to the meeting!" echoed the child, giving every body a pull and a shake. Yes, it was time. The others took the lead, and Margaret and the little girl followed.

"Oh, isn't it nice? Don't you feel so happy here, Margaret?" asked the child, with irrepressible excitement.

"Don't I seem so, darling? and let's try to be good, too. You must listen to all that is said by the minister, Fannie. You know we come to the camp-meeting to learn how to grow better, just as we go to church on Sundays."

"Do we?" The child seemed to think a mo-

ment, and then she added, "It is not at all like going to church!"

"I think it is a great deal more solemn to sit under the trees, when you are thinking about God and heaven, than to be in a meeting-house."

"Is it? Then I'll try to think so, and sit still."

Poor Margaret felt that there was a world of music and light outside of herself, but it was almost hopeless for her ever to try to climb into it. She must look up to the higher world for her only comfort. She only longed now to cover herself with the deepest shade she could find. She seated herself as best she could in the midst of the great, restless, motley congregation, and bowed her head in an agony of present suffering, and importunate prayer for a noble and final self-conquest.

A great stillness and exaltation gradually found its way into her heart; and when her face was raised again and the light fell upon it, it was the face of a strong woman who was content.

All this time Alfred Brand was standing not far off, hiding in a shadow deeper than any that had ever fallen upon Margaret. He had been watching her with a sense of mingled guilt and anguish. When she came to him he had flung himself off impulsively into the darkness; but the next moment he retraced his steps and began groping about for her everywhere; bitterly regretting his own folly in not helping her to an interview, which they both so earnestly desired. He had walked hurriedly about in every direction, but had not found her till just as she returned to Fannie; then he had pressed after her as she walked, overhearing the most of her conversation with the child; but he could not gain courage to speak with her, surrounded as she was by all the others.

Up to the moment of her coming to him, Alfred had not once thought of the possibility of Margaret's being upon the camp-ground. It was not suggested to him as probable by any thing which he knew of her habits or of her position in Mr. Warner's family. That he would meet home acquaintances here he supposed very likely; and knowing the limited accommodations of the place for the wants of, perhaps, ten—exaggeration said even fifteen—thousand people, he had proposed to Captain Percy to offer his berth in the *Constance* to any friend whom he might find in need of it, while he himself would sleep on deck wrapped up in a blanket. But he had himself purposely avoided every one; and had but just returned from a lonely walk

along the beach, where he had brooded over their affairs to his heart's ever-growing discontent.

On the downward trip, the presence of several passengers had prevented many thoughts; and, besides, he was more than willing to push the whole troubled question farther back into the future. His thoughts at the sea-side had but one outcome—he must see Margaret again, and arrive at some final and full explanation, both for her sake and for his own; yet when she stood before him, her troubled look asking for the same thing, some perverse demon of contradiction suddenly possessed him. The next instant he had sought her with bitter self-condemnation; and while he had watched her sitting with bowed head among the congregation, her whole frame shaken now and then with the silent struggle of emotion, his wayward heart melted towards her, and went out to her again with sudden, inexpressible yearning to give her comfort.

All the wrong came home to himself. The solemnity of the occasion, the voice of prayer and preaching, surrounded her with an atmosphere which seemed immeasurably removed from many of his past thoughts of her. There was no vestige here of a cringing, servile spirit; or one that could delight in an unworthy, girlish teasing of a sincere heart which offered her its best treasure. All that was a cruel mistake. Now at last he fully recognized and admitted to himself that hers was an upright, unselfish character, and that the unworthy qualities which he had attributed to her were delusions of his own morbid vision. When the light fell upon her serene, wide forehead as she lifted it up, it seemed to him to be lighting up the brow of an angel. He could have fallen at her feet in humility—confessing his own guilt, and offering the only tribute left to offer, a steadfast, manly love and worship; but she was surrounded now by impassable barriers.

It was impossible to remain inactive. He sat down, and rose up, and went out into the night, walking to and fro in a fever of hope, self-reproach, and a terrible fear lest he had himself put the cup of happiness behind him forever. All the shyness and *gaucherie* of his nature and of his ungente breeding, came to taunt and molest him.

When the meeting broke up, he summoned all his manliness to the rescue; but Margaret was surrounded by her phalanx of young people and the two captains; and though he went closely after them, struggling with his burden of passionate feeling, he had not the courage to

make his presence known till he saw them entering one of the hospitable, cottages not far away. Now it was too late; but in the morning—in the earliest morning—he would seek her.

The four girls had found accommodations in this cottage; Captain Giles would occupy Alfred's berth in the *Constance*; and Frank, in the crowded condition of the place, finding no better accommodations open to him, had decided to try one of the Society tents, where lodging was to be had at two dimes per night, upon a straw shakedown, in a large inclosure, divided about midway by a canvas curtain—men and boys occupying one division, and women and girls the other. Frank thought he should enjoy the fun of the thing mightily.

When the party separated—the two captains and the boy Edgar bound for the sloop, and Frank going his way alone—Alfred stood afar off, and afterwards went marching up and down like a sentinel before the cottage, whose friendly, open door still gave him a glimpse of Margaret sitting in the background.

Then came the hour of general shutting up. Every house-door was closed, the curtains of every tent dropped, and the singing of hymns burst out simultaneously on every hand, followed by stiller subdued voices engaged in prayer. It was the common hour when almost every household and separate little community offered up its evening worship. Alfred still wandered to and fro, feeling shut out from the place of all his hopes—at last standing reverently, and with bowed head, before the white muslin curtain where Margaret's kneeling shadow was falling with all the others; but when there was a sound

of rising from within, he took his way out of the inclosure to the sea-side, wandering off for miles along the shore. All the darkened chambers of his soul were thrown open now to the light; but it was only the hazy moonlight which could find its way in there as yet. Hour after hour he roamed over the sands, forgetful of time, forgetful of every thing but the one hope of making a generous reparation for all his injustice to Margaret, and of securing the now-coveted boon of her forgiveness and love.

At last he found himself upon the deck of his little vessel; but here every thing around him quickened memory, raising within him a new fever of hope and unrest which kept heart and brain both throbbing long after he lay wrapped up in his blanket, with a roll of something under his head for a pillow; and not till morning began to lighten the horizon in the east did he finally fall asleep.

Memory is a canvas on which real things are painted in sober colors; but Hope is a looking-glass in which fancies stalk about like personified rainbows. When a human soul can look steadfastly neither at the one nor the other, but is fascinated with each by turns, in the burning focus of this double vision there is no more rest for it than for one of Milton's shadows of limbo. All its thoughts are vanity.

"A violent cross-wind from either coast
Blows them transverse, ten thousand leagues away
Into the devious air."

Even in sleep, its vain imaginings,

"Up-whirled aloft
Fly o'er the back side of the world far off."

Poor Alfred!

CHAPTER XXI.

AT CAMP-MEETING.

MEANTIME Frank was equally sleepless upon his straw shakedown in one of the Society's tents. Surrounded by half a hundred sleepers, more or less, most of them fully intent upon getting their money's worth of solid rest, he tossed to and fro, quarrelling with the one chronic nuisance of the island generally—the wicked flea, who every man pursueth.

The sonorous breathing of the multitude seemed to be carried on in almost every key, and with the most entertaining variety of time. One man bursts into sleepy snatches of song, and another of laughter; while a third, half

waking, pompously commands silence, pleasantly unconscious that he is spending his own breath superfluously, like one laying down the law to the idle wind, which "bloweth where it listeth." When the great knitting-machine of a common dormitory is looping up the dropped stitches and knotting the broken ends of the many fretted cares of the whole sleeping multitude at once, any sleepless one in the midst is certain to find himself getting hopelessly tangled up in the mysterious social web. He begins to realize that no man sleepeth to himself, and that he is personally interested in every breath

which is drawn so unconsciously all about him.

In the evening, while the bloom of novelty still rested upon every thing, our young gentleman found every incident, even the most trivial, only vastly entertaining. Every soul about him a stranger, he felt entirely free to keep up an internal laugh impartially at any body's expense. Young men gossiped and old men moralized, alike to his unlimited edification.

"Did ye see Mary Parson's pink parasol, eh, John?" whispered one red-cheeked youth, with his lip close to his companion's ear, both their heads nestled together on the same rolled-up coverlet.

"Yes; pretty as a rainbow; but Tom Philip seemed to get caught with it, any how. He couldn't keep his eyes off it—or else, off her. It's worth while, I tell ye, Bill, to hang out a bright rag to catch eyes on."

"Speak small, can't ye, John Cox? I hear her tittering on the other side the curtain; and if we can hear them, they can hear us—unless you can manage to fire softly."

"Course! That's just what I'm doing. I just heard something about ruffled pillow-slips and furbelows. There's half a dozen girls there together, right on the other side, all buzzing like mosquitoes; and they are about as long in getting settled. They won't hear us. You might as well expect a drove of blackbirds to stop twittering long enough to hear any voices except their own."

"Only 'twon't do to be too sure about it. I've heard things said on the other side of the curtain before to-night."

"Yes, sir," said one elderly gentleman to another, in a sonorous, sub-nasal tone, that every body was welcome to hear who liked; "we all need an annuol shower of refreshing. The camp-ground is the Lord's own vineyard—call it watering-place or what you like. Nobody comes up here but gets benefited if he will."

"That's so; the Saviour's always here, and if all don't meet him, it's their own fault."

"Certain it is; and, besides, a good many seem compelled to meet him, whether they will or no."

"I must have my laudanum!" muttered a thin-faced, whining man, starting up desperately from his restless bunk, and making his way over a billowy sea of heads and legs towards the canvas division between the male and female domains. "Sara, Sara, I can't sleep! Hand me through my laudanum, Sara. I want my laudanum!"

General cheers and laughter, and a jubilant

bobbing up of heads, miscellaneously ornamented with straw or night-caps.

"I ain't making fun. I'm in earnest; I can't sleep."

Another voice. "Hand me out the demijohn. I can't sleep."

"Nor I neither. I wan't some of Mrs. Winslow's soothing sirup." More laughter; and elderly-voiced cries of, "For shame, boys! Be quiet, can't you!"

Tap! tap! tap! outside of the tent. This is the rap of the policeman, taking his rounds, and alert for duty. "Quiet inside! Keep order there, I say"—followed by juvenile male echoes, commanding "Order, order," and a general feminine titter of "hushes" and suppressed laughter.

"I tell you, I ain't a-joking. I can't sleep, and I must have my laudanum. Do you hear, Sara? It's in your bag in there, rolled up in a paper."

"If I had to take *that*, I'd stay at home and do it there," muttered a woman's voice; but whether poor Sarah's or not didn't appear.

"So would I!" in sonorous, masculine response.

"I tell you I must have it!"

"Do be quiet, father, I'm getting it!" in an unmistakably distressed tone which brought a lull of genuine sympathy.

Sarah was evidently stumbling her way over difficulties, guided by the dim light; and after a delay long enough for sleepy people to doze off comfortably, Sarah's hand was thrust under the canvas and the laudanum was forthcoming. What was done with it in the darkness Frank was unable to discover; but the poor old man dropped into his own place again and subsided.

Every one who could sleep slept at last, all the more heavily it seemed for the stifling atmosphere which kept the wakeful ones tossing frantically, to the discomfort of the half a dozen sleepers packed like sardines on every side of them. As though the atmosphere was not stifling enough already for the most lethargic rest, men here and there wrapped up their ears and mouths in handkerchiefs and bed-quilts, at the imminent risk of sleeping themselves into apoplexy, probably actuated by the same principle which incites the Irish mother to smother her baby under a mountain of bed-clothes—"It jist slapes the longer for it, ye see!"

Frank noted all these things with a merry eye and some graver mental comments, keenly enjoying all the new shades of his experience as only a fresh boyish nature can. But he was fast verging into a manliness where thought predominates over amusement. He became grave

—even depressed, at last—both in body and soul. He would fain have slept now; but if his eyelids had been propped open with needles, the luxury of sleep could hardly have been farther removed from him. So he tossed and pondered; anathematized human stupidity, and felt desperately inclined to poke a hole somewhere through the canvas roof of this hermetically-sealed canvas prison. In the visions of his head upon his bed he even meditated speaking out next day in meeting and giving a public lecture on ventilation; but at the first day-dawning he found that his courage needed the goad of darkness to prick it into action. In the night he had felt an acute fellow-sympathy with all his sleeping compatriots; but in the morning it was so much easier to slough out of the hot bed into which he had unwarily fallen than to try to let in air and comfort upon his fellow-sufferers, that he only tumbled himself into the open day, shaking the last night's straw out of his hair, and washing the memory of last night's experience off his face. It is immensely human to turn one's back upon evils which it is a great deal easier to forget than to remedy.

Though Frank rose early, yet with characteristic camp-meeting energy, the village was already astir. A stalwart, red-checked countryman had preceded him at the perennial fountain which had been persuaded to bubble up to the surface by boring a few feet into the sand. He was still there rubbing vigorously with a crash towel, and his abundant, hearty cheeriness straightway flowed over into Frank's ready sympathies.

"I've been here at these meetings now for these twenty years, ever since I was a shaver that high, and there's been an amazing change here since then, I can tell ye. It's changed faster in the last year or two than ever before. You see it used to be nothing but tents, and we all come with staves in our hands in those days—a lot of real dusty pilgrims. Now we live principally in ceiled houses, but the greater part have been built within three or four years."

"It's rather more of a watering-place now than a camp-meeting, isn't it?"

"Well, no, there's a powerful amount of good done, and a great many conversions every year. Some of our people think it would be better to sell out here and go farther back into the country for the camp-ground; but if the world is ready to come to us, we ought not to run off out of the world, I think; and that sentiment is pretty strong yet."

"The land must be getting very valuable now?"

"Yes, it is. It's a standing evidence that if we are ready to work for the Lord he is ready to pay us for it. This property is a great help now to the denomination."

"I suppose so, and will be more and more every year."

"Yes, it will. There's every thing to make us faithful, if only we don't get vain-glorious." The man's ruddy face beamed with a genuine satisfaction, which, if the earth had helped to give, Heaven also had some share in.

"The police regulations here seem excellent," said Frank, glad to read the glow of simple pleasure in the man's face; it helped to brighten his own heart. "The streets are perfectly clean and tidy, and must be under the best supervision."

"That's so. No nuisance is allowed here, and every thing is looked after with a sharp eye. Now at this time of the morning, you see, it is a *leetle* mussy," pointing to the littered-up condition of the little door-yards and streets, where withered flowers and sundries had been cast out, but where brooms were already active. "In another hour it'll be all right, you see."

"I see. The village is making up its beds, inside and out." Frank pointed to a gentleman who was sticking fresh China-asters into his little flower-garden for the day; while the withered ones of yesterday lay in a faded mass at his feet.

"Just so. You and I had to wash up when morning came, and the whole place does the same. But it gets up its clean face pretty early, and it keeps it afterwards all day. Daily spiritual renewing is just about as necessary, I take it. I hope you'll be at the meetings."

So they parted, Frank indulging in a little private wonder as to whether this man had slept in one of the great tents, or in a more homelike, if less hospitable, family dwelling. If twenty years of tent experience came out so jovially, there must be a great deal, after all, in getting used to it. Frank's spirits had revived with fresh air and conversation; but by the time he had wandered over the inclosed grounds and out along the shore, he stood looking idly off upon the ocean, with a homesick feeling for their own quiet beach.

"I have really had enough of it," he said aloud, in a tone of sudden weariness; "and if Margaret is willing, we'll start for home this morning."

Margaret was willing. The camp-ground, haunted as it was now by the frowning face of Alfred Brand, was not attractive to her.

"It is going to be a very hot day," Frank had

represented; "and if we are to drive home at all to-day, we should start at once."

"I'm quite ready, Mr. Frank," was Margaret's cheerful reply; "but there may be need of a little coaxing to persuade Miss Fannie."

"I'll promise her a new jackknife. She has been wanting one to whittle with because Midget has one. That will satisfy her; and if she don't cut off every one of her nine digits in using it, we may be glad, I suppose."

So after coffee, beefsteak, and an ice-cream at a restaurant, while it was yet so early that Alfred was still debating within himself whether or not he might venture to call, Frank, Margaret, and Fannie turned their faces homeward. The others remained at the camp-ground till the close of the meeting.

Starting in the morning, as they did, of course our homeward-bound party met half the islanders en route for camp-meeting, often with lumbering vehicles heavily loaded; and Frank, with his light carriage, was forced to dash pell-mell into the scraggy oak bushes something like forty times before he had the good-fortune to leave the long, single-track, wooded island road behind him. The sun beat down on them pitilessly, the sea-air couldn't get into the thicket to relieve them, and the good-temper of the whole party was in a very melted state, indeed, before they reached home.

"This is paying for pleasure at a dollar a peck for small potatoes, I take it," said Frank, trying to laugh.

"It's a gold dollar, then, at the highest war value, I think," said Margaret.

"Fannie has earned her jackknife, at any rate. I'll stop on our way through New Town and buy it. Here's a good stick to begin upon, Fan. I'll break it off now before we leave the woods, and you can begin to whittle away at once, for diversion. A hack or two into your fingers will be so much the more lively, eh, chick?"

"If I am a chick, I'm as tired as the old mother-hen was after she had been sitting on her eggs for three weeks," said the child, yawning wearily. "I never want to go to camp-meeting again."

"Oh, you'll forget all about this tiresome ride an hour after we are at home," said Margaret, comfortingly; "but you'll remember all the pleasant things at the camp-ground as long as you live; and your mamma will like to hear about it."

"A comfortable theory, Margaret," said Frank, snapping his whip and his fingers at the same time.

"Yes, and a true one. Pleasure always has a sunshine in it which prints a pleasant daguerreotype on the mind; but pain fades away like a shadow, till the little trace that is left of it is pleasant also."

"I believe you are half right."

"Oh yes, so do I! I've got over so much to tell Mamma, haven't I?" said the child with sudden animation; "and Midget will almost wish she had come too."

"Well, for one, while we stay in these parts, I shall stick to our end of the island with the grip of a lobster. I've taken enough of change and society at a single dose to last me till we go back to Boston."

"I too. I shouldn't be sorry, Mr. Frank, if we all went to-morrow." Margaret said this wearily; and her face had a pallid, saddened look, which spoke more forcibly than her words.

"You!" cried Frank, with a sudden, questioning look. "What's happened now? I thought you liked it here."

Margaret's face grew a double-dyed red, as she answered: "A baking ride at midday has happened, I suppose. Just at present, that seems to me to be about enough."

"Well, I am bound to say, though, that this is the first hot ride we have had this summer, Margaret. There's always a cool breeze around the home hills. Hurrah for our Quitzee, forever! Now we are out of the desert, let us take courage."

"Margaret will like her daguerreotypes when we get home, as well as any one of us, won't she?"

"Of course. Almost every story is just a tangle of perplexities, up to the last end of it; and then it generally gets unravelled, and comes out straight," said Frank, with a blundering idea that something was wrong, and he would like to hint that it was possible to get it righted. Then he drove on, silently taxing his heated brains, to no purpose, to imagine what it could be; and finally he gave it up altogether.

They purchased the jackknife, and reached home with hungry appetites, to the immense satisfaction of the parents, who had been diligently planting forebodings of very undesirable civilities on the part of their only son, which withered and perished utterly under the sunshine of his re-appearance two days before he was expected. Totum, left behind on the camp-ground, began to be a very pleasant and pretty girl, in their genial thoughts.

The real Totum and her party, who were well housed and cheerfully entertained where

they were, enjoyed all the charming variety which befell them to the end; and even came home again on the next cool Monday evening with a little unsatisfied longing for more change and novelty. The religious services were considered to be highly satisfactory, and the general cheerfulness of all the attending circumstances pre-eminently so.

"A single hill of corn won't always do well in a garden all by itself," was the captain's genial comment; "it wants a whole corn-field round about it sometimes, just for sociability's sake. I find that old blood and young blood both begin to race through the veins a little more briskly for coming into company where every body is alive."

In the evening the voice of cheerful singing was again heard in the streets at the camp-ground, and a crowd of people were once more drawn to the melody, as inevitably as a packet of steel needles will run up and cluster about a powerful neighboring magnet. Alfred Brand was here with the others. He had been sitting all day alone in his sloop, steeped to the eyelids in the wormwood of regret. At night he ventured out, under cover of the darkness, only

to be drawn, moth-like, to a light and harmony which left him more scathed and blackened, in his own esteem, than ever before. He was forced to remain at the camp-ground, much against his will, to convey their passengers back again to Boston. In any event, more than a week must elapse before he could see Margaret and confess his folly. The one hope of her final forgiveness had a good deal of sustaining force in it; but his exacting nature still found itself in a perpetual warfare with a host of tormenting doubts. The music, sweet and penetrating as it was, had a sting in it for him, which no one else in the whole gay throng could in the least appreciate.

The singers, grouped this evening in front of a handsome building, were serenading a distinguished guest whom the people of the camp-grounds and of the nation alike delight to honor. Every one, therefore, became even more eager to see than to hear. A fine-looking, tall man, still scarcely past the prime of life, stepped out into the balcony, in acknowledgment of the courtesy, and was greeted with deep and wide-spread murmurs of satisfaction.

It was the Chief-Justice of the United States.

CHAPTER XXII.

FRANK AND MR. DENNIS ON THE RAMPAGE.

"Put me up a luncheon, Margaret—quick, please! I don't care what it is, but enough for two. I shall be out all day, and I expect we shall have to dine in another of Captain Giles's Greenwood hotels."

Frank was hurrying here and there for his hat, his handkerchief, and his thin coat, glancing out of every window, as he passed it, at Mr. Dennis, who sat outside, mounted on horseback, and patiently waiting for him.

"The man don't look as though you need hurry yourself, my son. Why didn't he appoint an hour for starting?"

"Because he wasn't certain what time he could get off, mother, and so he agreed to come for me as he has."

"But why do you engage to go with such a man at all? Your father and I are both annoyed at your falling into such company."

"Why, mother, he is the most entertaining man on the island—next to Captain Giles. Besides, is it quite worth while to trouble about it, when you know we shall all be away for good in another fortnight or two?"

"But I don't understand, Frank, how you can possibly endure the society of such a person, even once, for a whole day together. He always looks so outlandish, and too shiftless even to move like other people. He is a perfect figure of fun as he sits there on horseback."

"Well, it's the fun I'm after, if that's worth any thing," said Frank, bursting into a laugh, and kissing her. "Good-bye, mother dear. It's all right."

"I do wonder that Frank can court the society of such a person," said Mrs. Warner, turning to her husband as her son left her.

"Yes. Yes. After all, my dear, it strikes me that there may be rather less danger in it than in excursionizing with some other perhaps more objectionable parties. He seems to be a queer fellow, divided up about equally into fisherman, farmer, and ne'er-do-weel; but there never is a great deal of harm in that sty's of man, and I suppose the boy finds him a novelty."

"Fish, flesh, and fowl, all in a general hash," suggested Margaret. "If Mr. Frank likes the

flavor of it, I shouldn't say it was unwholesome, Mrs. Warner."

The mother accepted their suggestions with a smile of consolation, wisely reflecting that every thing in life has its compensations.

All this time Mr. Dennis sat outside the window on his horse, lounging forward upon the neck of the animal with the most easy and unhurried complacency. He really did look like a picket-guard of the corn-field proposing to join the cavalry service, and his high-boned nag was every way worthy of his rider.

Frank sprang upon his own horse with a flourish, and sat very upright as he rode out of the yard, taking the lead at the right of his lopsided confrère. "Fairly out for a day's sport, eh, Mr. Dennis?"

"Bound first to climb up to the highest point on the island, where we can study the original fashions of things, and then down to the workshops, where they turn out the artificers," answered Mr. Dennis. "Sport! Ought to be the primest school, to any man who ain't a fool."

"But you don't object to the jollity thrown in, I suppose?"

"Bless you, no; let's live as we go."

Frank, taking him at his word, went careering about Mr. Dennis and his astonished old plodder two or three times on a jaunty trot, by way of a first expenditure of some of the bottled-up energy of both himself and his horse. "It is not necessary to keep step, I suppose?"

"Not a bit of it. Of course not. Frisk about at your ease, whenever you please."

"Cough, laugh, or sneeze, eat bread and cheese, or outroar the breeze with such rhymes as these," echoed Frank, bringing up suddenly, when horse and rider were both out of breath.

"Give your orange a squeeze, I'll suck mine at my ease," quietly moralized the inveterate rhymster, patting the neck of his staid animal with approval.

"Do you expect to live and die on this island, Mr. Dennis?"

"I don't calculate on any thing else, young man. I'm not one to desert an old friend. Naked came I out of this sand-pit, and naked shall I return to it again, beyond a doubt." The philosopher took hold of his thinnest of old linen coats with a shake, and kicked out his wide, lank trowsers with a chuckle, indicating that he was but one degree removed from that primitive condition already. "I couldn't learn to breathe without plenty of salt and moisture mingled together in every breath of air."

"No, I don't believe you ever could!" laughed Frank; and so they went on their way, taking merry and wise counsel together.

The fenced road was soon left behind; and, entering grassy fields through gate-ways and bars, they wandered along the by-paths, where sheep-pastures, blackberries, or hazel-nuts line the road-sides, and finally off over roadless farms, with heavy open-work stone necklaces hanging like massive ornaments upon the comely broad shoulders of almost every hill—on and up till they are upon the top of breezy Mount Prospect.

"Considerable of a hill in the *mounting*, but nothing to speak of as a *mountain*!" was Mr. Dennis's comment; but he sat very upright on his horse, and looked out from under his slouched hat, with a lighting up of the face, which made another man of him, for a moment, in Frank's eyes, who looked at him with even more interest than at the wide and pleasant landscape.

The view would have paid for three times as much climbing as they had been troubled with. It widened out on all sides over a rolling green surface, edged with silver, which spread, unequal in width, nearly around the whole horizon, sometimes winding in and out among little islands and peninsulas, and varied here and there with a rich embroidery of masts and sails. Even where there was no water visible, ships were seen reaching up over the hills, their tall rigging relieved against the calmer blue of the sky. Neither Frank nor Mr. Dennis were ready to leave till their eyes were reddened by the wind and half blinded with sunshine, though both their horses sniffed the air disdainfully, pricking up their ears, switching their tails, and dancing a four-footed duet together in continual protest.

"Evidently horses don't care about getting very near to heaven," was Frank's comment as they rode down on the side towards the shore, where the quiet waters of the bay were invitingly suggestive of pleasant swimming.

"Now, if I had my wishes, we should both turn into fishes," was Mr. Dennis's rather ambiguous remark, emphasized by pointing out towards the tempting water.

"Agreed!" said Frank, laconically. "But what's to become of the horses?"

"Let them *stay* horses here in the clover."

"But will they *stay*?"

"Certain."

"There's nothing here to tie them to—not so much as a stone."

"Tie their heads to their feet; the grass

is always sweet; let them walk about and eat."

"That's one way of cribbing a lunch, especially as we haven't brought *them* any in our pockets."

"It's all accordin' to the laws and customs of the island. A horse here is always welcome to his bite; I suppose, because it takes a good while to get it in places where grass is one half strawberry-vines and t'other half huckleberries."

They dismounted, and, after fettering their horses, went on towards the shore.

A bath on a warm day is delightful to every one; but it is only a good swimmer who knows how to enjoy it as an utmost luxury. Frank had been at home in the water from his childhood; but his proficiency in swimming, compared with the superb acquirements of Mr. Dennis, was like the walking of an ordinary good pedestrian to the hundred-mile capabilities of Mr. Weston. No sooner did this easy-going hanger-on upon the energy of Providence once dip his sprawling, lank body into the water, than he was clothed upon with a garment of strength and personal endeavor. The man was a swimmer wholly and simply upon his own responsibility. All his awkwardness was transformed to ease and grace of movement. He struck out with a freedom and vigor which astonished his admiring spectator, while his own enthusiasm seemed unflagging and unwearied. Long after Frank found himself completely exhausted, Mr. Dennis still swam to and fro, as if he were merely resting and refreshing himself in his own native element.

"How did you learn to do it so well?" asked Frank, with an involuntary new respect in the very tones of his voice.

"Brought up in the water, you know. There's a capital pond just back of our house."

"You like it, too. One can see that it suits you."

"Certain. Things never go criss-cross or get knotted up in a tangle that I feel I've no business to untie, that I don't jump into the water and swim clean away from the whole of it. I tell you, I have washed off a great many troubles in my day, and, generally, they sink down under me as if I'd taken 'em into the water with millstones about their necks."

"But why do you think you have no business to untie any tangle, however knotty it is?"

"Well, you see, I look at it in this way. I've no cause to murmur because this is rather a hot day, have I?"

"No."

"And it's best to take in jest as much of this stiff little breeze, that God sends to refresh us, as ever I can cleverly without overdoing it?"

"Yes."

"Well, that's about the whole of it. I don't make things. I just take 'em, good and bad together. When the dust is blowing in my face, I shut my eyes and don't breathe hard till it goes over; but I don't feel any call to fret, and strive, and try to blow the dust away; for I can't do it if I would. I always *have* believed, on the whole, that it was best to follow the lead of Providence—not to push against it."

"But you jump into the water and swim away from trouble."

"Well, yes; but that's not exactly the way to put it. What I am really swimming away from such times is jest nothing but myself—the stirred up part of me, you know. I leave that behind to settle, while I go off into clear water."

"You really do go off, though, of your own free will, don't you?"

"I'm afraid I do—in the water, you know; but not much on land. You see there's a kind of baptism in it that makes me feel new-born every time; but it's only water-baptism, and don't last. I'm generally pretty reconciled, and ready enough to be led, on dry land."

A sly glimmer in the half-shut eye of the lazy philosopher brought Frank to a sudden stand-still in his inquiries. He was not disposed to be quizzed; and he comprehended that he was getting somewhere into the border-land between fun and earnest, where Mr. Dennis most habitually abode.

Mr. Dennis was lying at full length upon the sand, tossing pebbles with his left hand. "Life is but dust. Meekly, in trust, let us drift as we must," he remarked; turning over upon the other side, and tossing pebbles with his right hand, all the time looking across the bay, where the little wave-crests were rising, and the tide was just turning also.

The water came eddying up among the multitude of clean, shining pebbles along its edge, with a soothing, musical gurgle, which made it very easy to be reconciled to lunch and "idle set"—possibly, even, to a noon-day nap, in a place so altogether comfortable; for some good-natured clouds had floated near, and were holding their light-brown umbrellas over the heads of the contented idlers.

Mr. Dennis, after his vigorous experience in the water, was as limp and paradisiacal in mood as a man who has just come from a genuine Turkish bath, and equally disposed to indulge in the pipe of peace and reverie. He brought

out a meerschaum, curious and home-made like himself—the bowl, a handsome and well-turned “boat-shell,” and the stem a stout, hollow reed, which he had prepared for the purpose. He had found the shell lying upon the shore, a hole already worn in the closed end of it, and had at once accepted its suggestion of availability. It answered its design famously; light, puffy wreaths of smoke were now lifting themselves slowly upward every moment, and floating out to sea on the wings of each wandering zephyr.

“Life is a puff, of smoky, light stuff; it’s the vapor of snuff,” drawled Frank, after watching the interesting operation attentively, and spending a few moments in getting his rhymes nicely fitted.

“Young man, you’re a trump!” observed Mr. Dennis, rising up on his elbow, and looking appreciatively into the face of his companion.

“I’m a good deal too sleepy to be that,” said Frank, sinking back leisurely upon a sand-pillow which he had been patting up to convenient height, indifferent as to its softness; and they both subsided into meditations, or dream-land, as the case might be.

Whether Mr. Dennis would have gone on smoking there contentedly till night, it is impossible to say, for Frank was an inciting providence, pointing out to him that there was a brick-yard and a paint-mill yet to be visited that afternoon.

“I’m quite ready,” was his prompt answer.

A little less briskly he propped himself up—first with his hands and afterwards with his legs—till at the third move he stood upright and in walking order.

The tethered horses were conveniently in waiting, and much refreshed, like their masters; for, apparently, they had not only dined, but, having no tobacco-pipes to console them, had slept also in the three hours’ interval of rest.

“First to the brick-kiln, then to the paint-mill! Charge, Warner, charge! Down the nearest hill;” and away they went, neck and neck, in pell-mell haste, to atone for lost time—Mr. Dennis clucking like a mother-hen, slapping the bridle, and kicking at the sides of his beast in an unwonted excitement which the horse found to be highly contagious.

A brick-yard, with its huge utilitarian piles of red baked clay, all squared, lengthened, and shortened to one pattern, till they are as much alike as an even row of peas grown in the same pod, is by no means a picturesque visiting-ground; yet when you study the orderly process of manufacture—when you look into the long, low brick tunnel glowing with fervent heat, and

sending up its potent influences through a thousand curiously-devised crevices to the topmost brick in the structure, you are at a loss whether to admire most the clear prevision of mind, or the blind urgency of might. It was all new and entertaining to a young man who had been business-bound from his childhood; and Frank was also glad to meet the fair-spoken, white-bearded, city-bred youth who superintended affairs here, and who seemed even more pleased with the visit and the fresh reminder which it brought with it of half-forgotten young people at home. “Youth is aye blithe to look in the face of its equal.”

The paint-mill, a mile or two farther on, is interesting also in its way, grinding as it does the various shades of ochreous earth; interesting, moreover, from the self-written history of its raw material, so closely associated with the whole pre-historic ages. This modest island makes a very good magazine and workshop for the bustling world from which it is exiled.

But in this neighborhood were quiet, lawn-like, exceedingly picturesque grounds, varied in surface, shaded with many handsome varieties of trees, and beautiful with the effect of closely-shaven grass. Here, looking down “the woodland aisles,” might be seen the gleam or water whose great sheet lay spread out gloriously upon one side of you; and yet all this is the result of Nature’s own untaught landscape-gardening, very little improved in any way by the cultivation of man. This was a surprise greater and pleasanter than any other to Frank, who had hitherto supposed beauty of shrubbery to be among the *lost arts* of the dwarfed old Dame Nature who presides over the well-being of this outlaid small fraction of the world. “This is the best thing on the island, Mr. Dennis,” he said, emphatically.

They were both inclined to linger here, until Prudence was become imperative in her suggestions of the necessity for returning without delay. Mr. Dennis’s horse was immeasurably astonished, on the return trip, at the exceeding urgency of his master, which infected him to an extent wholly without precedent in his whole equine experience. In reality, the brother was unwilling to disturb the cheerfulness of the pending evening meal by any unusual delay. He knew that his tea was always made at a given time, and its flavor would not improve by standing, and neither would his punctual sister’s equanimity.

“Come home with me and take supper. I want you to see my better half; for my sister



AWAY THEY WENT, NECK AND NECK.

is as much that to me as any other man’s wife is to him. We’re like a double cherry that grew on the same stem; but my half would have dried up long ago, if she didn’t keep hers always plump and fresh. I go without dinner quite generally; but when supper-time comes, if I’m not there, she can’t enjoy her own meal; and that wears on me more than fasting. So I always calculate to be on hand, and punctual, you see, at least once in twenty-four hours. Every thing will be ready at the minute, and we can make time yet to meet it, if we’re tolerable spry.”

This was Mr. Dennis’s invitation, and Frank concluded to accept it. His sister was the perpetual home providence which kept every thing moving; and the brother appreciated her accordingly.

“She’s the eye of the needle, and I am the point that’s pushed forward,” he said, in speaking of her afterwards. “She carries the thread,

and keeps every thing in general about the house stitched together, and in good repair—done principally by means of pushing me on at the right time; for, you see, I guess she’s the thimble too, and the power behind the thimble. You’ll see for yourself how it is.”

Miss Jedida Dennis proved to be a pleasant, home-like little body of fifty-five, trim, bright, and thrifty from top to toe, and in all her surroundings—her only brother excepted. They met her coming out of the house, with a plate and knife in her hand, on her way to the cellar, which was entered from the outside by a double lean-to door, reclining against the side of the house in an inclined plane. She received them cordially, turning back to see them seated in her tidy kitchen, where the tea-table was already spread in the cool corner by the open door, and, after a few inquiries after the events of the day, she went on with her almost completed supper-arrangements.

She had not anticipated a visitor. There were two covers upon the table, two easy-chairs sat facing each other in readiness for their occupants, and two little tea-pots were standing side by side upon the small stove. Jedida liked her green tea, and couldn't do without it; Job preferred a tea which didn't look like dish-water, however it tasted. In two opposite open windows were two cats, each perched upon her own window-sill sleepily, and peacefully dozing on her own account. As Frank noticed the funny little duplicate arrangement of every thing, his eye lighted with an involuntary smile.

"You see, every thing is married in this house except Jedida and I," said Mr. Dennis, with an appreciative nod; and as his sister returned at the moment, his face immediately elongated to a dignity which he knew she would consider appropriate to him as master of the house. Mr. Dennis at home was apparently a good deal less eccentric than Mr. Dennis at large.

They had a social, quiet little supper, each of the three apparently enjoying it thoroughly. It dwelt in Frank's memory afterwards as the shaded green evening of an unusually sunny and green day.

CHAPTER XXIII.

MISCHIEF.

WHEN all the mornings are beautiful, it is almost invidious to make distinctions in favor of one which is pre-eminently lovely; yet such a morning there was at the sea-side, charming beyond all of its predecessors—a new day worthy to have been sent down fresh from Paradise to gladden the children of men. It would hardly be possible to tell why this morning was noteworthy above all that had preceded it, though it had a wonderful transparency of atmosphere. Can any one say why the tender green of spring is more delightful than the withered brown of late autumn? why there is beauty in a strain of music? or even why honey is pleasanter to us than wormwood?

This was a day which brought every thing into closer relations than ever before, as though space itself had been literally annihilated; it tinted sea, earth, and sky with a fresh coloring, and it made the human pulse beat a little faster, and the heart throb with a new vigor and happiness; but it also stirred up the latent fun and mischief sleeping somewhere in the demure spirit of a young girl who had been for a long time now upon her good behavior.

Totum and Midget had gone out together very early to the shore, and when they had frolicked with the waves, tossing pebbles back into the sea with laughter and hand-clapping, there was still effervescence enough for something more. Midget went dancing off, midge-like, hardly certain herself whether she was on the sands or in the air; but Totum sat and pondered, her face dimpling with smiles, and her eye turned cliff-ward. Directly she clambered

up nearly to the top of the bank, a strong little sand-spade in hand, and set vigorously to work undermining the brow of the cliff, her face flushed, and her eye gleaming with anticipated satisfaction.

This was the point where Frank Warner generally came down upon the sands. Young man like, he scorned the more beaten path; and as no one else was generally in the mood for risking a broken neck by a descent at an angle of forty-five degrees, he had appropriated the place to himself, and established a private pathway of his own. Of course, Totum was intent upon digging an innocent pitfall for his unwary feet.

The cliff just here was unusually loose and sandy, yet it was packed sufficiently to allow a large cavity to be judiciously dug out from below, in such a way as to be quite concealed to the eye, looking down from above. Totum worked with a will for a good half-hour, her cheeks glowing beautifully with the unwonted exertion, and every pulse responsive to the wholesome exercise. The great sea-fan was always wafting her coolness and courage, and she worked on thinking of nothing but the meriment there would be in seeing Frank's surprised tumble into the nice sand-heap which she was preparing for him below, and in hearing his naïve comments as to how it could possibly have happened. Every now and then Midget came back, as heavily laden with treasures as a honey-bee when the clover-fields are all in blossom, and a little colloquy would ensue.

"What are you doing, Totum?"

"Digging."

"What for?"

"Making a nice little cave up here in the cliff."

"What are you going to do with it?"

"I should like to get the sand-martins to come and build in here. Wouldn't it be nice?"

"But they won't come, Totum. You aren't making it a bit like a sand-martin bank! No little animal would ever go into such a great ugly hole as that."

"Never mind! You'll see."

Then Midget would sit off again on another foraging expedition, Totum working on with a little laugh alternated with snatches of song. Her gay voice might have been heard a good way off anywhere except upon the sea-shore, where old Ocean himself has an almost undisputed monopoly of sound. There it is generally quite safe to be noisy, and, if you can, light-hearted. Sometimes a little rivulet of loosened sand from above would come flowing down of its own accord, helping or hindering Totum's work, as the case might be; and at last, when she was afraid that the whole roof to her grotto would come tumbling down on her head, she desisted from her employment, seating herself upon a great stone on the beach, to wait for the result.

"Is it all done now, Totum?" asked Midget, coming back to her sister with an immense slab of porous water-soaked cork, which she had found washed up on the shore. "See, I have found this! Fannie and I can whittle all sorts of things out of it, that will be ever so nice, can't we?"

"Yes."

"Yes what? about the digging up there, or about this nice piece of cork to whittle things out of?"

"Both."

"What did you dig it for really, then, Totum?"

"For exercise and—fun," lingering with a slow conscientious earnestness upon the last reason, which the little eager questioner drew out from her in spite of herself.

"Frank Warner comes down there sometimes."

"Does he?"

"Frank Warner is the very sand-martin you were trying to catch, Totum Giles!" said Midget, leaning her precious cork against the side of the rock where her sister was seated; and, resting her two little empty hands comfortably upon her hips, like a shrewd little old woman,

she faced Totum, with a steady, penetrating stare.

The young lady laughed, and turned off with affected carelessness.

"Do you want to get Frank for your bean, Totum?" Midget asked, suddenly, with the innocent directness of her seven-year's experience.

"Of course I don't!" answered Totum, indignantly, reddening more than ever, down to the tips of all her fingers and toes. "What has that to do with digging a hole in the sand, I should like to know?"

"I don't think he will get hurt, if it does cave in when he is coming down there," continued Midget, as if thinking aloud; looking off towards the bank now, with her great, questioning eyes; "but, if you don't want him for a bean, then I don't see what you do it for."

Totum startled the child by bursting into a merry but vexed laugh. "What has that to do with it, you dear little gosling? I don't see any connection between wanting to have a little fun and wanting—wanting—any thing else." She stammered, suddenly ashamed in her own heart, lest the two things might possibly be connected together in the mind of some one else. Midget looked at her more steadily than ever, till the young lady felt that the sharp little eyes were like two probes.

"There's Fanny coming, Midget; and Molly."

"Oh, I am so glad! Where's the cork." The little face was shining now with great glee, and the mistress of the jackknife scampered off in haste to join her friends.

It was concluded, as Molly was here to play, that the others would forego the pleasure of whittling for the present, and indulge first in a game of hide-and-seek. The three children might have been seen for the next fifteen minutes alternately subsiding and rushing about in a wild frenzy—now crouching behind a great boulder, or hiding in some cleft of the bank, and then flying in hot haste along the beach with their faces turned backward half the time, to see if the others were looking; while every other moment a fine little treble whoop rang out from some niche or cranny, making itself heard above the monotone of the ocean—as a flute would call attention to itself in the midst of a dozen heavy bass drums.

But Totum neither saw nor heard. I don't know what she was thinking about while she sat there, motionless, the red heat slowly cooling off in her pleasant face, and with it, the mirth and mischief both dying out also from her look; but in the midst of it all, she kept a

general, half-conscious watch of the bank where she had dug her pitfall.

Suddenly she started up in dismay. Molly had found the tempting excavation, and was hiding there; and just at the same moment, Mr. and Mrs. Warner, finding themselves unusually buoyant with the invigorating atmosphere, had concluded to shorten the way to the shore, by making the descent together along Frank's foot-path.

Totum shouted, and threw up her hands with a distressed cry; but the gentleman and lady had already stepped out upon the brink; the treacherous mass crumbled under their feet, and they suddenly found themselves clinging together, terrified, half buried in a sand-heap several feet lower down.

But where was Molly? Totum, with a face as white as the sea-foam behind her, rushed wildly up the bank, and began digging frantically into the debris, trying in vain to utter a sound, for her voice had failed her entirely. Another moment, and the sands themselves seemed to be helping. The sturdy little prisoner underneath was struggling to free herself; thrusting out so vigorously towards the open air, that Totum, lifted suddenly from her feet, was sent rolling helplessly down the cliff, never stopping till she had tumbled out upon the hard beach a long way below. Molly's head emerged, gasping for breath; and Frank and Captain Giles, who had been following slowly in the footsteps of Mr. and Mrs. Warner, came up just in time to look down upon the scene below.

There was Totum at the base, hastily picking herself up—as red now as she had been white a moment since; but looking immensely relieved when she glared up at little Molly, who was shaking the sand from her hair, and spitting it out of her mouth still with desperate energy. Mr. and Mrs. Warner were sitting together half-way down the cliff, each half buried in the sand, and both apparently unable or afraid to move.

"How did it all happen?" asked Captain Giles, dragging Molly out from the hill in which she was standing, still nearly buried.

Frank sprang to the aid of his father and mother. Every body was soon landed upon the smooth level below; Molly, who had been dreadfully frightened and half stifled, rapidly recovering. She had been hiding, rolled up on her hands and knees like a ball, and the main body of the little avalanche, carrying Mr. and Mrs. Warner, had slid past her and fallen down below, so that she was neither bruised nor seri-

ously injured; and no one else had suffered, except the little mischief-maker herself, who was much too wise to complain to the others of the multitude of ugly bumps with which she was battered from top to toe.

The captain's question was unanswered.

"How did it happen, father?" echoed Frank, when they had stood looking into each other's faces for another minute.

"I don't know, my son. Your mother and I were walking down the bank exactly as I have seen you do a hundred times, when it all gave way suddenly; but how little Molly got buried up in there, entirely above us as we fell, I can't imagine."

"There was a great hole, and I only went in there to hide," explained Molly, half crying.

"A great hole!" exclaimed several voices in various tones of surprise; and the children were seen running up with eager curiosity to learn what it was all about. Totum was desperate.

"Oh! I had just been digging in the bank for the benefit of the sand-martins," she said, innocently. "I suppose the earth must have been disturbed, and loosened up a little." She avoided Frank's eye; but he understood the whole matter at once, and his quick laugh rang out for a moment with delightful clearness.

"Let's see! is this the first of April, or September? Which is it? It is the first of something, I am sure," he said, gleefully.

"If it is the first practical joke, my son, then I think it will do very well for a beginning," said Mr. Warner, good-naturedly. He laid his aristocratic hand upon Totum's shoulder, with a little approving caress. As no one was hurt very much, he could afford to be pleasant over it, and the pretty, blushing girl, who had been punished enough already for her intended mischief, had really almost won his heart.

He had lifted an immense weight from Totum—one which had seemed to her, a moment before, to be heavier than the whole sand-cliff. She had fully expected to meet his intense displeasure; and, indeed, every one else was agreeably surprised that he accepted the incident kindly, apparently without any sense of ruffled dignity. That, also, was one of the virtues to be attributed to the unparalleled excellence of the fine day, stimulating every body to unwonted good-nature. Two months before, it is presumed that Totum would have been crossed out of his book of remembrance with very little ceremony indeed, if she had been guilty of any thing resulting so untowardly to himself, though without intending it. The wholesome tonic, sea-air,

had strengthened the nerves of his equanimity very much indeed meantime.

Gentle Mrs. Warner felt much more dissatisfaction than her husband. Somehow all this aroused the old feeling of maternal solicitude for her boy. Midget's association of ideas crept into her head also. "If this young lady was not planning a hidden metaphorical snare for the young man who had already escaped a tumble only because his own father and mother had providentially stepped in as the scape-goat for the occasion, then what had she done it for?"

The indignant lady seated herself moodily a little way off, with thoughts more unquiet than the eternal toss and surge of the waters at her feet—looking calmly out at sea, but heartily wishing they were all safely out of the island, with its increasingly dangerous pitfalls. Little by little her husband was infected by the same thought, and the two sat talking it over in low tones.

But all the others, after a good laugh, had gone down into the sea, and well-nigh washed away all thought of the morning's adventure altogether, unless it might be supposed to bubble up now and then to the surface in joke and merriment, its influence remaining as the perpetual nucleus for merry gibes, pushes, and pinches, with intent to upset and startle somebody among the children, and in a good-natured, cheerful banter among all the young people and the old captain. There certainly was a sudden budding out of a new spirit of teasing, with which all the young folks seemed to be simultaneously inoculated.

Frank and Totum never went back again quite to the old, even level of placid, kindly fellowship. Henceforth there was always a "merry thought" to be broken between them, and a greatly quickened sparring of wit, though Totum thought it very hard that all this should be the result of one innocent, girlish prank, which really meant exactly nothing at all, but to which every one seemed determined to attach some mysterious import.

Presently the attention of the whole party was drawn towards Anne and Margaret, who were standing upon the high banks in the distance, looking down towards the party below. There was also a large flock of sheep quietly feeding up there, every one of them standing out distinctly against the sky, and making altogether a very pleasant pastoral tableau.

Anne drew out her handkerchief, and began waving it towards her friends. The sheep stopped grazing, and looked intently. Then an old bell-wether made a sudden dash for-

ward; in a moment he stood on the brow of the cliff, and every body uttered a suppressed cry; but down he came, threading his way along a foot-path which evidently he had trodden before, followed by the whole flock at a rapid run, one behind another, looking like an impetuous winding stream filled with white boulders, which were suddenly coming down in a torrent from the heights above. Then the whole troop were seen scattered along the broad beach in the distance, walking about as serenely undisturbed as though nothing at all unusual had happened to them.

"The most wonderful thing I ever saw in my life!" exclaimed Mr. Warner, speaking with the rapid pleasurable excitement which they all felt. "They are equal to any mountain-goats. Hereafter I shall eat my mutton with the feeling that it has all turned to venison under the good influence of sea-air. It is really wonderful! I thought they would all tumble headlong and perish."

Anne and Margaret were evidently frightened at the thought of the possible mischief which they had caused so undesignedly, for they were seen hurrying along, stopping now and then to look down incredulously upon the innocent sheep below, as though they were not at all certain that they were all safe, or could possibly ever get back again over the same path, into the pasture above.

But soon there appeared other actors upon the scene. Two men were observed driving down to the shore in a farm-wagon, creeping slowly along one of the beaten tracks through a rift in the sand-knolls, and coming out upon the shore midway between our party of friends and the sheep in the distance. On they went along the packed sand, two wheels almost always in the water, and the others wet every now and then by the splash of the waves, the wise, elderly horses evidently enjoying their pleasant foot-bath in the sea with all the relish which they must have felt in their more eager youth. Finally, halting at a point where there was an accumulation of sea-weed, the men began to gather this into the cart.

The sheep had all stood looking at them with great deliberation for some minutes. Now the sturdy old leader turned about with some little show of indignation, and then quietly began his ascent, winding up and up along the jagged face of the cliff, as he had come down, more slowly to be sure, but with equal spirit and determination. All the rest followed with discreet order, the reversed stream of boulders, or possibly masses of rounded white foam, ap-

parently flowing upward in defiance of all the laws of gravity, producing even a more novel effect than before.

When the last one stood out triumphantly again upon the carpet of green herbage, Frank sprang forward flourishing his hat, and calling

for three cheers; and the three cheers were given with a will, making the workmen turn round with open mouths, and wonder what in the world was going forward among that do-nothing party of idlers to cause this sudden outburst of rejoicing.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE CAPTAIN'S DINNER-PARTY.

"Don't you think, Miss Giles, it would be civil to ask the whole Boston family over here to dinner some day? It would be a pleasant thing, too, for both our children."

"I think so; but it wouldn't quite do as you plan it, capting, because we take tea at just their dinner-hour, and I couldn't fix up any thing hearty enough; but our dinner might be made about equal to their lunch, if we choose to send 'em an invitation to that."

"I expect it might, Miss Giles. You don't calculate I shall give in that your cookery isn't about equal to any body's, I hope. But I guess your plan is best, and I'll get one of the Indian girls over here to help for a week."

"Not a bit of need of that. I can do it all easily; and Totum has a knack at most things, and is willing to help."

"I know; but let the child have a real play-day. And I don't want to add an ounce to your shoulders; seems to me you would get to stoop a little if I did." The captain, with one of his twinkles of satisfaction, glanced at the trim, upright little figure of his wife, who stood polishing window-panes with a piece of chamois leather. "Besides, I spoke to Carline Dakin yesterday, and she said she could come any time. You see I wasn't going to propose the plan to you till I could see my way clear through it."

"Just like you, capting; first asking advice about the mowing, and then owning up that you've got the hay all cut and dried, and want me to help you draw it in; but I'm pretty well used to your ways after sixty years. When is it to be?"

"I'll go this morning to look for grouse and ducks. They'll do famously, won't they? and be island produce to be proud of, with our vegetables. If the grouse turn up, we'll ask 'em right away."

"It's pretty early for young heath-fowl, ain't it, capting?"

"Rather, I expect. The chicks must be pret-

ty much grown and plump, after all; and if I have luck, it can be done. I know their quartering-ground pretty well. I shall go alone, and likely bring down one old cock or so. You could make him tender, I guess?"

"Yes, easy enough. I'll bile him first, and then roast—the ducks too, if you get any."

"There are two or three of them fishing off on the water every day. They are easy shot. I could go out in the boat, if necessary, and pick 'em up from the water-pond."

The captain shouldered his gun, and mounted his horse, riding away into a back-hill neighborhood, where heath-fowl most do congregate; and then, leaving the horse tied by a long tether to a stone, not too heavy to be dragged along slowly as he grazed, the captain stole warily along on foot, and in less than two hours he had shot as many grouse as he desired.

"Well, here's the backbone of a dinner, ducks or no ducks," meditated Captain Giles, eying his string of birds admiringly as he turned back to hunt up his nibbling steed, who stood with cocked ears, complacently waiting his approach.

The horse, evidently, would have met the man half-way, except for the insulting stone against which his dignity bound him to protest. "Now, pony," said the captain, speaking to the animal confidentially, by way of reparation for any wrong, "I'll just invite Capting Hezekiah and his wife, and their Mary, for there'll be enough for all. It will be strange if I don't find a duck or two before night, somehow, by hook or by crook. So trot on, pony—no time to lose;" and pony, satisfied and forgiving, trotted away nimbly, a proud and sensible horse.

The dinner came off duly at one o'clock of the third day, the invited guests being all present, Margaret excepted. Margaret often ate with the family at home on an occasion, but she had insight enough to understand that this, as a habit, would be trenching upon the family privacy in a way which would be felt by some of

the members, who yet were not disposed to banish her merely as an inferior. In the country, also, they needed her services as waiting-girl; but to serve at home, and be served abroad, struck her at once as incongruous. It would be awkward either to sit at the first table or to wait for the second, so she promptly declined going; and perhaps every one was, on the whole, rather better satisfied with her and her decision than they otherwise might have been. Kindly Mrs. Giles, who had rather dubiously hoped Margaret would enjoy herself if she came, and not be put out by any one, brightened decidedly when she found that she would be at liberty to send a pair of fine heath-chicks, steaming hot, to Margaret and Molly at home. This question of rank and social position, in this country, where the lines are never closely drawn, is often more really troublesome and annoying than in the Old World, with its more clearly-cut social distinctions.

Captain Giles had secured his brace of ducks, so that there was a superabundance of dainty wild meats. Every thing else was the best of its kind, even to the unusually amiable spirits of all the guests; for the mood of the eaters is even more important than the viands eaten, in determining the success of an entertainment.

Carline Dakin had inherited some of the best gifts of a cook as an heir-loom from her African ancestry, and her Indian blood allied her sympathies with the wild game, which, as Captain Giles said, was the backbone of the dinner. She proved, therefore, a most efficient auxiliary in the kitchen. As Carline was wonted to the house, often coming to lend a hand on sundry occasions, it is a question whether or not this dinner-party, with the extra washing of its best dishes and its modern silver spoons, did really add an ounce of care to the superintending dame. It certainly gave her many ounces of genuine, motherly satisfaction, and her quiet days were as much burnished up by it as were those of her quaint, aged coffee-urn, which never even saw the light except on high days and holidays; then it always underwent a beautifying with white powder, as many passed young ladies do before a presentation to company.

But perhaps we have already lingered too long with the meats; we turn at once, with apology, to the *meeters*, as one after another they are duly assembled. Captain Hezekiah and his family came first, and soon fell into ready converse—the two captains, the two matrons, and the two maidens entertaining each other in pairs, while Midget tried to cultivate ears acute

enough to follow three separate conversations at once; but failing in this, she gave her attention to the gentlemen, and we follow her example.

"You see, poor Mr. Warner, with all his bad health, just takes hold of every thing in a kind of left-handed way, and it makes him seem as limp as a tow-string. I don't think he was originally slack-twisted, but you see, one way and another, he has become a good deal frayed out. It's something the same with Mrs. Warner, for she always tries to keep step with her husband, and that's very wearing for any body."

"Do they improve in health by their stay here?" asked Captain Hezekiah, who had just returned from a two months' absence from the island.

"I think they do; but Mr. Warner don't seem to know it, if he is any stronger."

At this moment the visitors were seen approaching the door. Captain Giles went to meet them, and Captain Hezekiah stood up and pulled down his waistcoat, which already fell over his rounded chest as smoothly as a pigeon's feather jacket is fitted to his skin. He had debated within his soul whether or not to keep on his gloves for the present, but had thought better of it, and didn't. However, his hands were as presentable as a gentleman's should be, and not in the least toil-stained like his cousin's.

Mr. Warner was much pleased with Captain Hezekiah, and the two held pleasant converse together.

"I have sometimes thought life in a city would be richer and more ample than here," said Captain Hezekiah; "but it is not easy to break up old associations, and I love the house where I was born. It has merely been remodelled since I came into possession."

"Ah, well; surely there is much more interest in one's ancestral homestead than in all the dozen houses which most city men have lived in during a lifetime. I am tempted to envy any man who is owner of his birth-place."

So, in all sincerity, these two gentlemen exchanged compliments, which were as mutually flattering and well received as are the polite sayings of any two fine ladies who are trying to be agreeable from the stand-point of a really amiable mood.

Captain Giles realized for once that his grown-up guests were to be his first consideration, though the young ones were not wholly forgotten; and his whole bearing, on this occasion, was that of a proper, well-mannered, elderly gentleman; though he still wore his old-fashioned best summer-coat. He was steadily po-

lite, but grave, merry, and genial by turns; so that the whole Warner family looked on with surprise, quite won by it; for to them it was the old captain in a new light. Dear little Mrs. Giles, also, who always cooked and washed in the every-day dress and manners of her girlhood, took on the tone of modern society—as she had seen it chiefly in the houses of her children—with the same gentle acquiescence with which she had adopted the new cap and dress which Totum had brought her from the city. Her ducks were no longer “biled,” but “boiled,” the diphthong slipping out from orthodox tunnelled lips; yet adopted with as much grandmotherly simplicity as the new cap was, and equally pleasing in its effect upon all her guests. There are simple-hearted people who rise and fall with the social atmosphere about them like delicate thermometers, yet without the least affectation.

“Our girls will be swimming like dolphins in another month, Captain Giles,” said Mrs. Warner.

“Yes, madam; Totum should have been a boy and a sailor. Your little Anne is too good to be a midshipman; yet I am almost in favor of getting her the appointment, if you don’t object.”

“Thank you,” said the lady, smiling. “I appreciate your kind intentions, and will think of it.”

“Mother would hardly wish them transferred to me, though!” cried Frank. “I was crazy to be a middy once, and she buttoned me into a huge stuffed rocking-chair, and set me to working perforated card-board. She intended me to produce a wreath, with green leaves and red roses; but the leaves turned out to be blue, and the roses black. So we gave that up, and took to millinery in the paper-doll line. I have no doubt I could astonish Midget to-day in scissors-craft, of the General Tom Thumb and Mrs. Tom Thumb variety.”

“Do give us a specimen, please,” said Miss Mary, reaching over paper and scissors with a dainty hand.

“Where is Midget?” he asked, taking the materials, with a laugh and blush.

“She and Fannie slipped out a moment since,” said Totum. “I heard Midget whispering, ‘I’m King Solomon and you are Queen Elizabeth, you know. It is time to meet the Empress Catherine.’ And so they went.”

“When children play kings, they are kings, in feeling, down to the tips of their toes,” said Mr. Warner. “I don’t know how the rest of you feel, but it tempts me to envy.”

The conversation and the doll’s millinery were both interrupted at this point by a summons to dinner, where the heath-fowl appeared in all their glory.

“Massachusetts laws were very strict at one time against shooting grouse on this island,” said the sonorous voice of Captain Hezekiah, as soon as the carving began. “They were not known at that time to be found anywhere else than here in the whole country, and in the interest of science it was desirable to save the species from becoming extinct. That seemed not easy to do, for heath-fowl were esteemed the greatest delicacy, and would bring almost any price in the Boston market.”

“Indeed! are they so rare a bird as that?” said Mr. Warner. The intelligence had whetted his appetite wonderfully, giving it a keen edge for the breast and wing of a tender heath-chick. He glanced with satisfaction at the progress of the skillful carving, and at the abundance of the present supply.

“It was supposed so, sir, at that time. Since then they have discovered the same bird on the Western Prairies, and they send them to the Eastern markets now in such quantities that they really bring less per pound than a turkey.”

“Ah! but they are a delicacy! I think I have certainly eaten them, and they were excellent.”

“So they are, sir—so they are; but if diamonds were as common as quartz crystals, kings and queens wouldn’t much care any longer to possess them.”

“No, no! I see. They would cease to be prized as crown jewels; but they would always have the same wonderful play of light, however, sir.” The invalid rubbed his hands and moved a little excitedly in his chair, for the flash of the diamond had a beauty in itself which he loved, independent of all moneyed estimates. Moreover, he was anxious to prove to himself that heath-fowl were a delicacy, for this would help to strengthen his capricious appetite. His wife, who had it in her heart at that moment to annihilate all the heath-fowl of the prairies, or at least to wipe out her husband’s knowledge of them as a hindrance to the supremest relish of his dinner, was relieved to see that the diamond comparison had consoled him. The next moment he was ready for the practical test, and shortly after sent up his plate to be helped a second time; so in that quarter the dinner was eminently successful; and it proved favorable even to digestion, and to a subsequent estimate of Captain and Mrs. Giles, who never fell back

again in his appreciation to exactly the plebeian level to which he had previously assigned them.

But Midget and Fanny had forgotten even their dinners, and were nowhere to be found. Carlina Darkin was dispatched in search of them, taking the heath-fowl to Margaret on her way; but the children had not been there. Molly had seen them going towards the shore, carrying a large box, and there they were found. The box was immediately covered by Midget, who informed Carlina and Molly that it contained a royal menagerie, but it couldn’t be seen till it was first exhibited at court. Afterwards they should both have a peep at all the curious wild beasts. Carlina carried the menagerie on her shoulder, the children whispering to each other that she was a monstrous great elephant carrying his load; but they were careful not to let the good-natured Indian girl hear them, and went home to dinner like good children.

Finding places waiting them, and plates already filled, they both replied in monosyllables to all questions, leaving Carlina to explain that she had found them at the sea-side; but when the first course had satisfied more imperative claims, Midget announced that a wonderful menagerie was to be exhibited after dinner. It was a Noah’s Ark, and all the animals were in pairs; but it was an ark for sea-animals to live in on land—not an ark to keep land people from drowning.

“Could fishes live forty days and forty nights in your new ark, Midget?” asked Frank.

“Oh yes, I am sure they could. They are all as happy as the spiders on our wall up stairs, whenever I can coax Totum to let ‘em stay there.”

“Somebody has given us a splendid wide-necked bottle, and we have made a pretty little aquarium, I imagine,” said Mr. Warner, looking pleasantly across at the children, whose eyes were shining with irrepressible delight.

“Oh no, sir; it isn’t that. I’ve seen those, and they are beautiful; and I have seen gold-fishes in such lovely glass balls; but this is a great deal funnier.”

“What can it be?” wondered every body; for they had all good-naturedly concluded to regard this as “the children’s hour.” Midget and Fannie could hardly eat the nice custard-pie, and the pudding with raisins, so jubilant were they; and the elders seemed to them excessively wanting in enthusiasm; yet, in the end, even they were abundantly satisfied with the sensation made by their sea-ark.

It was a wooden grocer’s-box, plentifully sprinkled on the bottom with damp sand, and

apparently it contained about two dozen shell-fish on legs, scrambling about in all directions in a most lively and entertaining manner.

“Walking fishes, as I’m alive!” cried Frank, in unfeigned astonishment. “Well, that is funny,” and he actually went down on his knees, bending over them with the most animated curiosity. “They are real shell-fishes, and walking about on real feet.”

“That’s because Fannie and Midget are two real fairies,” said Captain Giles, giving both children a good hug in his ample arms.

“It does look like something uncanny,” said Mr. Warner. “I really don’t understand it.” He, too, peered over curiously at the odd varieties of unknown creatures.

“Was it you who got it up, Captain Giles?” asked Mrs. Warner.

“Not I,” laughed the captain, giving the children another hug. “It’s all these fairies.”

“It is very wonderful, however it was done,” mused the lady. “There are eight or ten different kinds of shells at least, and they are nearly all behaving in exactly the same way.”

“Yes, and here are two land-snails, mother, with legs like all the rest. These don’t belong to the sea at all. You see, they are all made-up things. Now, what hocus-pocus did it do?” asked Frank, only to be greeted with a tumultuous laugh on the part of all the initiated. “I think I’ve seen some of these things before tumbling about in the little pools; but I can’t be sure,” he added, a little crest-fallen.

“No, don’t be too sure of any thing, my boy,” said Captain Giles, oracularly.

“They’ve managed it splendidly, at any rate,” remarked Captain Hezekiah. “I’ve lived on the shore all my life; but I really shouldn’t have supposed it could be done so handsomely—with such variety of shells and colors.”

All this time the little ones were dancing about, both of them—the impersonation of glee and satisfaction; and the shell-fish scrambled and tumbled about in the sand, and up the sides of the box, in sympathy. There were two delicate salmon-colored young pyrulas, nearly a dozen white, gray, drab, and moss-grown wheelks, colored in pairs, and matched in size, a number of the larger sea-snails, the pair of land-snails, and various bright-colored little periwinkles.

“Anne knows about it,” said Frank.

“I guess you would know a little something about it, too,” retorted the child, mischievously, “if you hadn’t thought it too girlish to go *pooling* with us. I know what they are, but I

didn't know any thing about this Noah's Ark; and I don't see how they found so many kinds, and so well matched, in the little while they were away looking for them."

"Oh, we didn't do that," explained Midget. "We made a pond for them by walling up one of the little pools with more pebbles. Fannie and I have been getting them together for a long time, and we staked the pond in with barrel-staves, so that they kept in through all the high tides. When grandpapa said we were going to have a party, and I must help entertain the visitors, then we planned the Noah's Ark."

"Well, you have entertained us very effectively, little one," said Mr. Warner, patting her, approvingly, on the head. "We shan't forget grandpapa's grouse and your Noah's Ark in many a day."

"But what are they, at any rate?" persisted Frank, appealing to Anne, as the most likely person to heed his question.

"Only little hermit-crabs," said the child, simply. "They haven't any shells of their own, and so they take an empty one that happens to suit them, and live in it, Captain Giles told us; and I've watched them. We pulled one out of his house one day; but it seemed almost like pulling him to pieces, for he clung so. See!" she exclaimed suddenly, pointing towards a little crab, which, on the instant, seemed to be coming out of his own shell, and sliding into another. "Do see!"

A dozen pairs of eyes, half of them in spectacles, followed the direction of her finger with eager interest. Fannie's love of color and repose had made her select several shells without tenants. There were whelks, and a "single helix" prettily shaded with dark bands, put in to match the handsome house of one lively crab who was among the prettiest of the small adventurers.

The restless little hermit had halted at one of these deserted castles, and, dissatisfied with his own house, evidently proposed to himself to investigate the other. He still kept his hind

feet upon his own shell, but he went into the other, remaining there several minutes. Then he came out, and, going into his own shell again, started once more upon his travels, carrying his old house with him as he journeyed.

He soon came up to a second empty whelk, and went into that in the same way as before, still keeping a firm hold upon his own house with his feet; but he remained here even less time than before, for it was a smaller shell, and evidently not ample enough for his needs. Away he went the second time, straggling about among his fellows, and almost losing himself in the general scramble of excited little soldiers; but, as he was the observed of all observers, he was easily noted as stopping again by the empty helix and sallying out once more to reconnoitre this other possible domicile. The little fellow went in and out once and again, but at last he drew away his feet from his own homestead, attaching himself exclusively to the spacious new house, and in a minute more he was trotting about with it, evidently immensely satisfied with his bettered fortune.

The enthusiastic cheers with which he was greeted seemed to disturb the whole menagerie, which was apparently getting more and more excited with the unusual state of things. Midget, seeing this, and thinking that every body had looked long enough, suddenly dropped the lid of her box, announcing that all the animals were going now to their water pasture. She and Fannie marched off to the sea-shore, carrying the box between them; taking Margaret and Molly on their way.

The poor little hermits were as glad to get back again into their pool as so many tigers would be to get out of their cages into the old familiar jungle again. Midget had provided herself with fragments of the grouse and other odibles, which she scattered liberally among them. The crabs enjoyed the feast rather more voraciously than their predecessors had done an hour earlier, and every body slept that night happily content with the day's entertainment.



CHAPTER XXV.

OVER THE DOWNS.

It was a cheerful party that set out one morning, in strong shoes, carrying a bristling array of pretty little baskets, lunch-laden on the outward-bound cruise, but destined to be filled with miscellaneous land and sea treasures on the return trip. There were Captain Giles and his granddaughters, Frank and his sisters, Mary Percy and Margaret. The patriarch of the party, judging from the perpetual sunshine that came pouring from his eyes, which were like two illuminated windows in the front of a battered old fort, lighting up every thing around it, was in a delightful state of internal glow and scintillation. Midget and Fanny were on either side of him—one little round, soft hand of each covered up in his, which were wrapped about their "mites of puds" like great wrinkled brown leather gloves; but evidently very nice and comforting on the inside to each little wearer, who laughed and chatted to the equal content of their own hearts and his.

"I should like to go off on a whaling voyage with you, grandpa," said Midget, after the first effervescence of the morning had subsided. "We would have just such a nice company as we've got here now, with grandmamma along too, to cook, and four or five other people that we like, to do things and enjoy it—not any common sailors or strangers, you know, but all of 'em our real friends, like Alfred Brand, and Captain Percy, and Edgar."

"That would be the most delightful whaling crew I ever heard of!" said the grandfather, warmly.

"Wouldn't it, grandpa? and shouldn't you enjoy it all so much?"

"I am entirely sure I should, Midget."

"Don't you think we really could do it, then?"

"I'll think about it. We must ask grandmamma."

"You see it would be so nice, Fannie, because it would be so long that we should have time to enjoy it, and nobody to come at all and

disturb us! I always do so dread people who will come and interrupt!"

"But perhaps we might get home-sick before it was over, or else dreadfully sea-sick in the storms."

"Oh, that wouldn't matter! Couldn't girls get over that, just as boys do?"

"Certain, Midget," said grandpapa, giving her little puff of a hand an approving squeeze, while all the wrinkles in his old face were covered over with young sunshine.

"I am afraid I shouldn't like it!" said Fannie, apprehensively.

"Shouldn't you?" Midget slipped out of her grandfather's hand, and, stepping in front of them, stared incredulously into Fannie's face, so that they were all brought to a sudden standstill. "Do you really mean so, Fannie?"

"I don't quite know," she answered, blushing, and wavering in her opinion.

"Well, *I do!*" said Midget, sturdily; and with a touch of scorn, "I wish grandpapa would do it, and *I* would!"

"We'll think about it, puss; but don't you see we're falling behind? You must sail on and talk at the same time. I haven't a grain of doubt but you could learn to run up the rigging and harpoon whales."

"Oh yes, I should like to climb ropes; and we would fix a real sky-parlor up there somewhere, as uncle Nat has in his great walnut-tree, to look out from and watch." The child was still standing facing them; but when her grandfather wheeled her about, she went on, mechanically, keeping pace with the others. "I don't know about spearing the whales, for I don't want to kill any thing, and Fanny don't. The grown-up people could do that, you know; and the children could play a good deal; and all the grown-up ones, too, when there were no whales in sight; and we could tell stories in the evenings."

"You think we could make some of the best

and funniest sailors' yarns that ever were spun in all the world, I suppose?"

"I am sure we could, grandpa; and the ship would be ever so much better than a desert island, because we could keep going to different places and see things."

"I would rather all go to Europe, though, and see London and Paris," suggested Fannie.

"Why, that would just spoil every thing," said Midget, in a vexed, positive tone. "I want it to be all to ourselves, and that wouldn't be. Mine is just as different as walking in Boston, where there are ladies and beggars and all such things, and walking here alone, with nothing in the world to see us except grass and sheep and hop-toads. Don't you think it is, grandpa?"

"Perhaps; but I guess most people would like Fannie's plan the best. Besides, there is something here worse than sheep and hop-toads. Don't you see, children, there's a robber!" nodding up into the sky at a majestic fish-hawk which went sailing over them with a large fish in his talons.

"Oh!" cried Fannie; "poor fish, it's too bad! But isn't he beautiful, though?"

The attention of the whole party being called to it, they all stopped and stood looking together.

"The gray old pirate! he is outsailing the wind as though he thought a just judgment was after him," said Margaret.

"What a handsome, strong fellow he is, though! It would prick my conscience to shoot him, if I had a gun here."

"If you could hit him, Frank," suggested Totum. Frank laughed and bowed his adoption of her remark, with a little curl of the upper lip.

"He looks as pretty and soft as a dove now, sailing so far off there in the sky, doesn't he, Miss Mary?" said Anne.

"Yes."

"Yes, Anne, and Captain Kidd will be a hero by the time you are grown up," added her brother.

"Looked at through your spectacles, then, Frank," put in that irritating Totum once more.

"What a time over it! A hawk is *nothing but a fisherman*," said Midget, vexed at being interrupted in her castle-building. "I am glad he is dropping into his nest now, where he can give his children something to eat;" and every body—even grandpa—seemed to be suddenly put under an extinguisher.

"Midget must have been at least as high up

as the moon, and didn't like to come down," quietly remarked Totum, taking Mary Percy's arm, and walking on, followed by the others.

"Grandpa, wouldn't you like to be captain, and take us all down there across the equator?"

"I'll think about it in sober earnest, and let you know, little mate. If I do go, I shall choose you for second mate, Midget. Grandma must be first mate, you know."

"Now you are making fun, and I shan't tell any more! Let's run on, Fannie, and then you and I can talk all to ourselves. Good-bye, grandpa!" suddenly turning back to him good-naturedly. "I don't like so many to hear, you see," she explained, when they had got a little way in advance; and the complaisant little Fannie, who was always fascinated by all the imaginings of her little friend, was as ready as herself to plunge back again into the dream of a delightful floating colony of dear friends.

The others soon halted again, for they were up now upon the high downs, and half intoxicated with the delicious air, the charming landscape, which was principally "water-scape," to say nothing of the sky over head, which was almost cloudless, with no living thing to be seen upon it since the fish-hawk had disappeared; but with an opaque whiteness about it, just a little burnished by sunshine, which was refreshing for the eye to rest upon. Midsommer days tempered with sea-breezes are a luxury unknown inland—a kind of mixed condiment the flavor of which can only be appreciated by actual experience.

"This island is a jewel in the rough," said Margaret; "and for one I hope they never will spoil it by any grinding-down, polishing process."

"I'm with you there, Margaret," said Frank, heartily. "I never want to come here again, if this end of the island becomes a fashionable watering-place. It would be like changing a nice little live country girl into a fashion-plate."

"We are any thing but that at present, I think," said Captain Giles. "Girls, will you all shoot at a target, if I get up a set of bows and arrows?"

"Of course we will; or we'll try our hands at hawks and heath-hens, if you like that better, grandpapa."

"I had better get shot-guns, then."

"Just as you please; we are ready for any thing that isn't wicked, as Midget always says."

"I should propose horseback-riding, and challenge you all to a race; only there are not six horses on the island that could be got to go faster than a jog-trot."

"Oh no, Frank, let us all have a whole set of bows and arrows, and we'll practise every day. There is time enough for that yet before we go home." The quiet little sister's eyes sparkled coaxingly at the thought.

"Archery is better than grammar, isn't it, Annie?" said Totum, whose heart always warmed towards the child whenever she came out from the thin crust of her little womanly staidness. "You and I may find ourselves walking on stilts yet before our country merry-making is all over. I should not at all mind having a private balloon to float about in over the heads of the natives, if Captain Giles wouldn't care."

"Up like a rocket, and down like a stick," quoted Captain Giles, giving the laughing girl a redder cheek than ever, after a loving nip with his thumb and finger. "Take a good right-handed hold upon the frolics of the earth, and you may venture to leave the flying to butterflies and grasshoppers. I always regard it as nothing but a daring vanity to try to fly up to heaven at the tail-end of a bag of gas."

"Captain Giles among the conservatives! What will come next, Totum?" asked Frank.

"Fishing."

"Do you and Mary intend to fish?"

"Mary declines. I shall try it; but think I shall resign very soon to Margaret, because I have other fish to fry."

They had all seated themselves here and there on little knolls, to rest and enjoy the scene; but Margaret had drawn a little apart, absorbed in her own thoughts. She was older than the other girls; but it was not this which had spread the great gulf between them, spanned by a swaying bridge, which none of them often found it easy to pass over. It was pleasant for Margaret to enjoy the society of the kind old captain, and she had grown into a cordial friendship for the family with whom she resided; but these two girls were as far away from her as America is from Ireland. Always respectful and considerate, they hardly knew how to entertain her; and she rarely ever directly addressed either of them. This was not Totum's fault, for Margaret had repelled her at first with an almost unconscious jealousy, which had crept into her own manner unawares, and the first early icicles of their acquaintance had received no sunshine yet to thaw them. Miss Mary found it hard to forget that Margaret was cook and waiting-maid. Certainly, she was not an ordinary servant; but then she was a servant.

Of late Mrs. Warner had insisted on Margaret's joining most of the excursions, and she

was not averse to doing so; and yet much of the time she was just a little outside of the pith of all their merry-making. Totum attached Anne very much to herself, leaving Margaret more alone than she otherwise would have been; and now, as she sat there, she was absorbed with her own thoughts.

"It will be much better for me to leave them altogether, and begin life once more upon a new platform. Here, I can rise no higher than I am. I can be nothing but a servant to them or to any one else—not even to myself. That was well enough in the past, but it grows every day more and more distasteful to me, and it is my duty to find something else to do. It shall be type-setting or a telegraph office. I think it must be type-setting—that opens a broader field; and if I can find a situation, I am bound to find one! It's a blessing that I have saved money enough to go upon for a good while. Ugh! I dread it, though—starting off alone! I'd as soon take a voyage among the Greenland ice-bergs if it would answer as well, but it won't. Yes, I'll really do it at once, directly we are settled again in Boston."

It would be difficult to say how much heroism entered into this resolution to leave the home where she had found kindness and shelter for so many years, and take up a new calling. Respectable American women were beginning to learn type-setting, and she knew herself to be the equal of these. To her, the new work would be a rise in the social scale, and would give her a more independent, self-sustaining position; yet they would all oppose it, and her own heart would be shrinking and traitorous to her best interests. If it were not for her suspicions of their entire good faith towards her—"the worm in the bud" of all her trust in them—the resolve must have cost her still more.

"It would be hard for them, at first, to spare her, yet it would be best even for them, and certainly desirable for herself," and then her thoughts turned again to Alfred Brand. "His love, and a home with him! once that had seemed possible; and what a brave, good, and noble woman she could have become if once planted in that sunny soil! But all that was past. Ah! how every thing pleasant was sipped up before her eyes; like the first sparkling dew-drops, by some envious fate. He would be sure not to come home again while she staid here, and she couldn't even wish that he should come." Her look wandered across the water to a lonely fisherman's island—her thoughts wandering off to wastes still more desolate.

While there is a little tender hope left as leaven to one's bread, one doesn't mind eating the very coarsest meal; but take that away, and it is all as heavy as lead. A rise in life, and a broader field to work in, are very good things in themselves; but they must get a deeper hold on the sympathies than the mere consent of the intellect, before they can lighten any heart of its burdens.

"A penny for your thoughts, Margaret," called Captain Giles, cheerfully; but with a touch of sympathy in his voice. He had been watching her, and felt that it would be kind to call her back to the merry company, for he was half prepared to see her burst into sobs or tears.

"I was just saying to myself, captain, that it is necessary to take a good deal of exercise in order to keep a good digestion, and if no one has any objection, I propose to keep moving on."

"That's sensible, and I second the motion."

Margaret glanced sharply across at Captain Giles, to see if he had read her thoughts; then laughed at herself for her suspicion, and her face brightened for them all as she went skipping on before in apparent, bounding happiness. Captain Giles wondered whether he was mistaken, and rather hoped he was.

On they went, on and on to the sea-shore, stopping to rest far out on the stony beach, every body perched on a great rock; for here boulders of all sizes had fallen out from the land, quite filling the middle ground between the sea and the cliffs. Farther along a party of fishermen had put up a small house upon the upland, and below they had thrown out wide, heavy planks, fastened to the rocks with great iron pins, and extending out above the water even at high tide. Each line of plank had a fixed seat near the end, where a fisherman may sit comfortably, looking down into the sea below, and throw out his line, dragging in his splendid bass from the little rocky shallows, at almost all hours of the day; but at high tide, or in a storm, the water sometimes foams over these wooden bridges, hissing among the great boulders, and lashing the whole sea round about into frenzy. These fishermen proprietors were away at present; and having given Captain Giles the key to their house, and the free use of their bridges and fishing-rods, our party had come over the downs to-day chiefly for the fishing; but there were only three bridges, and the majority of the young people had an independent programme of their own. A rocky sea-shore is never stale or unprofitable to any human being who is alive himself.

CHAPTER XXVI.

FISHING.

TOTUM and the two gentlemen at once took possession of the bridges, while the others strayed here and there, finding no lack of amusement. Star-fishes, which had not been abundant on the coast near home, were stranded here in numbers, many still living in the little basins where they had been left by the retreating tide; and others, helpless upon the dry sands, excited the pity of the children, who were straightway busy in lifting them tenderly back into the water, Midget looking very pitiful, and Fannie fairly shedding tears over one poor little star, who had to be sent back into the sea with a sadly maimed limb. Young crabs were sidling about in some of the water-pits among the stones, pretty little bright-colored winkles were lifting out their heads, and soft fringy things were waving from the sides of every rock in great multitudes; so that the little prospecting parties were in a continued state of varied but ecstatic delight. There also were innumerable

small shining pebbles, garnered up and polished by the beauty-loving ocean; sparkling bits of quartz, and even scales of mica, were clinging to fragments of iron conglomerate; and pretty little iron cups could be found for the searching, almost as easily as oak-saucers can be gathered under an oak-tree.

After a while, Totum, who had no success in fishing, returned to the shore, begging Margaret to try her luck upon the bridge; and Margaret, willing for a time to hear nothing but the voice of the waves and her own thoughts, was soon seated, fishing-rod in hand; yet but very little mindful of the possible bass. It was an extremely novel sensation to look down into the rocky deeps of the ocean below her, where the olive sea-weeds were waving their dotted leaves to and fro, fast anchored upon the solid stones. Now, at last, she had found an opportunity to indulge in fast-coming, moody reveries, entirely without stint.

The captain and Frank were on either side of her, hardly twenty rods away; but neither could well outroar the ocean to address her; and as she had tied her broad hat firmly down at the sides of her face, she was practically alone in the eye of the great wide sea before her. She was not tempted to look off into the watery distance, where there was nothing new; but down below her everywhere there was a wonderful fascination, furnishing endless analogies for her brooding discontent.

"See how every little stem of sea-kelp has gnawed its way into the hardest granite, hiding its want of living rootlets closely in its stony cup. Every plant is eating up the rock it clings to; oh! so slowly it may be, but every grain of the rock is only an extended fibre of its own. Some time in the far-off ages all these stones will be changed into yellow-green kelp, writhing and tossing in the angry waters. They seem at rest now; but they will be as restless then as the panting sea. Every thing is tumult, unrest—tumult, even when it seems as still as death. There is no quiet anywhere this side of the grave."

Margaret shut her eyes to hide the desolate vision from herself; but the eternal roar went on in her ears, and she heard in it such an undertone of unutterable, irrevocable doom, that she was glad to open them again in haste, and look about her for diversion with a sharpened eyesight.

"What a rich bed of green and purple seaweed there is over there; and here is gold, crimson, and almost every blended shade of wonderful beauty. They are all nestling down now in the pleasant silvery water; but in another hour the rough tide will roll in and cover them all a fathom deep. Yes; children's hearts are all rainbows, while mine is as sombre as that tossing mass of old tangled weeds.

"Ah! there's a little floating ball of something which looks as mottled and soft as a child's worsted tisty-tosty. What's that, I wonder? animal or vegetable? And is it really afloat, or has it some mooring down below? It rolls in and out with every wave; but is it really anchored or not? and is any thing fast anchored in all the earth?"

"How the water boils in here now, dashing up towards me as though it were always hungry! It really does behave like a live creature, ravenous and desperate!" She rose up nervously, looking about her for reassurance as to the safety of her position.

Glittering wreaths of spray dashed over the very end of her platform with every beat of the

incoming tide, which began to lash the foundation rocks, and send spirited jets of water very freely over her little, frail bridge. Was it safe? Frank was just disentangling a mass of long green tangled streamers from his line, his boyish face bright with happiness, and his rather curly hair floating in the wind like a perpetual ripple of satisfaction. Margaret smiled as she looked, seating herself again, reassured and comforted.

Turning towards Captain Giles, his almost worn-out old face betrayed so keen an interest in life and its occupations, that she at once covered herself with reproaches for indulging in morbid fantasies. Then she commenced to moralize more cheerfully over a great crab near the shore, who was making haste backward to the full extent of his limited powers; but just then the captain's position changed, his face grew flushed and eager, and he half stood up, carefully drawing in his line and letting it out again as he gave play to a large bass which he had just hooked. This sent the crab away before the moral was quite firmly tacked to him; and when the splendid fish was landed, Margaret's eye and Captain Giles's exchanged a perfect fusillade of cheerful congratulations. She smilingly drew in her own line, and with it a long, green ribbon, attached to its whitish glutinous rope of a stem, almost as tough as India rubber. The double-bladed, sword-like green leaf was exquisitely soft and smooth; and its beauty quickened a sense of the ingratitude of her short-sighted repining. In many places, the thick, green, velvety surface was most beautifully embroidered in white raised figures, produced by minute insects.

"Parasites," mused Margaret, "and yet they have done their work very charmingly. What am I better than they? In the Warner family I am only an oak-gall among the natural leaves; and they will grow all the better when I am plucked off from the branch. Well, that phase of life shall come to an end, at any rate!" Her foot tapped the answering plank beneath it. So far, at least, she was resolute and in earnest, sustained by an unexpected courage.

Then she thought again.

"The Alfred Brand I cared for was only made of dreams and sunshine! I will cast that away from me as I send this shining thing back again into the sea, and all of life shall begin again. Why not? It almost seems easy just now."

It is hard to be consistently "a blighted being" under twenty-five; and if Margaret arranged her bait and threw off her line with real

enjoyment and a hope of success—which seemed almost to be typical of her possible future—this argued nothing against her woman's constancy. The sea-breeze was deliciously stimulating. A magnificent swell and surge of breakers was like nothing which can be experienced either from the shore or from mid-ocean—a grand roll and turmoil of the elements beneath her, of which she seems almost to be part and parcel, but over which she has no possible control; and whose power over herself is just enough within the bound of possibility to stimulate a daring play of emotions while the judgment remains impassive.

After a while, Margaret stood up like one intoxicated, equally forgetting all about both herself and her fishing in her absorbing watch of the increasingly grand procession of the waves. Captain Giles and Frank, each on his little perch above the rising sea, were wholly intent upon catching fish—the more eager to make the most of it since time and tide were both leagued against them. All the others had strolled a good way off along the beach; yet one pair of eyes, surmounted by a shock of tumbled red hair, were anxiously watching Margaret.

Alfred Brand, returning home from his cruise, saw the party crossing the downs while he was on his way to his cousin's. He had followed them at the earliest convenient moment, hoping to find the long-delayed opportunity of confessing his sins to Margaret alone; and he stood now for a moment upon the shore, vacillating and undecided whether or not to go to her at once as she stood upon the bridge; but with a growing presentiment, as he noted her absorbed mood, that his presence there was a special providence.

The girl stood carelessly holding her rod, at the very end of the platform, looking down into the boiling depths below.

"I must go to her!" said Alfred, starting forward with a hasty step. "It is not safe!"

But the first bass that had fancied the little fish which was upon her hook to-day, suddenly seized it now, and, finding himself caught, flounced violently out into deeper water, jerking the unconscious Margaret headlong into the gulf below. The next moment—hatless, coatless, and barefooted—Alfred sprang upon the quivering planks, and, throwing himself upon his face, reached over with an extended arm, waiting breathlessly for her reappearance.

Frank had turned just in time to see her hidden beneath the water; but the captain fished on, entirely unconscious of the enacting tragedy, till aroused by their startling cries.

"Break off your hooks and hold fast to the end of your lines!" said Alfred, as they both hurried to his assistance. "She can not be reached from here."

He seized the two fishing-rods, winding the strong cord around one arm, and, swinging himself down from the planks, hung suspended there a moment, till Margaret was a second time driven in among the cruel rocks; then, throwing himself into the water at the same instant, he seized her by the dress and wedged his long rods between the sustaining rocks. But it seemed in vain to struggle with the angry ocean, which dashed them both mercilessly to and fro. The others did their best to draw in the lines, till one of them snapped asunder, and the result seemed almost hopeless.

"Don't draw, but hold on firmly, Frank," cried Captain Giles.

Rushing to the nearest plank, with a superhuman force he tore out the iron fastening from the rock, and, lifting the end by main strength, he pried out the other fastenings with a great wrench, and in another instant one end of the heavy plank was in the hands of Alfred. It was finally drawn in to the shore, and the two young people both lay dripping and insensible among the pitying dry pebbles.

The sands were not only drinking up the seawater, but the blood which was flowing freely from a wound in Alfred's head; and Margaret was apparently lifeless. Totum and Mary had joined them, and Margaret was carried at once into the little fisherman's hotel, while Alfred was cared for and his wounds bound up tenderly.

In time Margaret breathed again, and would recover, though much bruised and battered among the remorseless rocks, in addition to the drowning from which she had so narrowly escaped. Alfred soon regained consciousness, though he at first sat up, staring about him with a bewildered look.

"It is all right! Margaret is alive, and will soon be well again. You have saved her!" and Frank grasped his hand with a grateful clasp.

The dull eye lighted at once, and Alfred was soon able to rise, proposing to set off with Frank in search of a conveyance home for the rest of the party. Nothing would deter him from this plan, and, without seeing Margaret, they started as soon as he was sufficiently recovered.

"Who fished me out of the water?" asked Margaret of the girls, who were bending anxiously over her, when she found herself able to speak.

"Somebody who cares for you!" whispered Annie, putting her lips close down to Margaret's ear.

"Alfred Brand jumped in himself to save you; but grandfather and Frank both helped him," answered Totum, rubbing away vigorously at her patient's feet with a strip of Midget's little plaid shawl, which they had torn up for the occasion. We all came running as fast as we could, but they had just drawn you both out of the water together."

Margaret closed her eyes again.

"Somebody who cares for you!" "Alfred Brand jumped in himself to save you!" rang like a chime of Christmas bells through her confused brain, and she heard and cared for nothing more.

All that night and the next, whether she waked or slept, there returned to her this never-wearying duet, "Somebody who cares for me! Alfred Brand jumped in himself to save me! Somebody who surely cares for me!"

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE EXPERIENCES OF A CONVALESCENT.

ONCE at home, and the first excitement over, Alfred found that the wound on his head, and the general battering which he had received among the sharp-edged stones, had been much more serious than he supposed. A night of tossing and dreams, which continued sleeping or waking; and he found himself an invalid, entirely confined to the house for several days afterward.

Margaret was in all his thoughts. He had saved her life; he should yet win her acknowledged love. But meantime, to think of nothing else day after day, for the whole twenty-four hours, was rather exhausting; and his good sense made him feel the necessity of fixing his attention upon something less absorbing in its interest.

His resources were rather limited. He had done up all conversational topics with his cousin's family the first evening, and if a neighbor called, every feasible theme seemed to be exhausted after a session of about ten minutes. He had actually broken the back of his dear old slate, which had journeyed with him half round the world, by tossing it hastily down from sheer vexation; and books affected him as opiates do a patient, who is irritated rather than stupefied by their influence. In this dilemma, he went back afresh to his old interest in the manifold treasures so carefully locked away in his sailor's chest.

He studied foreign seeds, curious slips of wood and bark from outlandish countries, and dived into the comparison of likenesses and differences among his never-failing shells, examining every thing with a minuteness of attention to the objects before him which would have been quite creditable to any pupil of Agassiz, or even to that eminent naturalist himself.

But in his present state he was soon weary even of this.

One pretty little shell, something more than an inch in length, which seemed to be a species of snail, was firmly cemented to a small stone, and he began to examine with some interest the nature and strength of this cement, finally dipping the whole into water, and smiling as the colors deepened, coming out with added beauty under the influence of the fresh bath. The upper whorls of this shell were rose-colored, and the others, which increased rapidly in size, brown, mottled in stripes with a yellow-white. Alfred remembered distinctly just where he had picked this up on the African coast, during his last voyage, nearly two years before. He was walking on the beach, and carelessly kicked aside the little stone which lay in the midst of two or three others, when this shell came to light; but whether it properly belonged to the land or the sea, he was quite unable to determine.

He hesitated whether or not to break it from the stone, but at a little wrench which he gave it was suddenly detached. A parchment-like substance still sealed up the whole mouth of the shell like an operculum. He was examining it with a languid interest, wishing that there was no such thing in the world as aches and weariness, when his cousin's wife, knocking at the door, came bustling in without waiting to be bidden, bringing him hot wilted cabbage-leaves, which she kindly offered to bind about his aching head. She was occupied with her baking, and Alfred assured her that he was quite able to do this for himself. When she had gone, the warm day, and the strong odor of the hot leaves combined, proved too much for him, and, actuated by some sense of quiet hu-

mor, he carefully bound up the little Bulimus in the damp cabbage-leaves instead of his own head, and laid it down upon the top of his sea-chest.

He had been sitting there in an ancient splint-bottomed rocking-chair, long since bereft of paint and varnish—the usual garments with which rocking-chairs are wont to be clothed and protected—and in consequence of this exposure, perhaps, the chair had become a good deal palsied and rheumatic. It trembled and moaned faintly at every movement, as he rocked to and fro, yet the very monotony of its ceaseless plaint had something of the effect of a lullaby. Looking dreamily from the window, hardly thinking or feeling any thing distinctly, but vaguely longing both for Margaret and for cooler weather, he fell into a drowse.

Meantime the cabbage-leaf ball, which had been simply crushed together, began gradually to unroll itself, the broad leaves acting as though they were voluntarily stretching and spreading themselves into a more normal position; and, strange to relate, the shell began to move also. It tilted a little, the parchment-like cement cracked asunder along its face, and two long fleshy horns, with eyes in them, began slowly to protrude from under the shell; and gradually a great slug-like creature spread himself out from beneath, till the shell seemed to be mounted upon him like an immense spiral cupola upon a flat, irregular foundation.

The new-comer apparently looked about him, wagging his four-horned head; he moved a little, as if re-testing his long-disused powers; and finally ended by eating voraciously from the least wilted portion of the succulent cabbage-leaf.

At this stage of the proceedings, Alfred opened his eyes and stared at the creature in unfeigned astonishment; evidently believing, at first, that he was only a rather queer supplement to one of the dreams which had been haunting him persistently as he slept.

But he was awake; he rubbed his eyes, and then got up and went closer to the little mollusk, peering at him in doubt and perplexity; and ended by poking him about in the firm belief that somehow he had come out of the cabbage-leaf and taken possession of his convenient shell. But the animal slipped into his house again in resentment, and when Alfred took it up in his hand, he found that the cement had been broken away from the face, and that there was really a living creature, evidently entirely at home, inside. Alfred looked at him with growing wonder, compelled him to come a lit-

tle way out of his shell, and examined him with engrossing attention; finally coming to the conclusion that the animal must have been sleeping quietly in his snug house for almost two years, and had now suddenly waked up from his state of peaceful hibernation.

Having settled this point, he treated his guest to a fresh cabbage-leaf just from the garden, which was evidently appreciated. The creature ate away at it with obvious thankfulness, and no wonder, after its long fast.

This novel incident did more towards the young man's speedy recovery than any thing else. It gave him something to do, and that night he slept almost as peacefully as little Bulimus had been doing for two years before. Next day he was bright and hopeful.

In the morning Mr. Warner called to offer the aggregate family gratitude for the valued life which Alfred had so heroically and opportunely saved for them, and to congratulate him upon his own escape from the perils of the sea. Frank had already called on him twice; but this was the first time Mr. Warner had seen or spoken with him since they had parted upon the door-step on that memorable evening when Margaret herself had been the chief subject of their conversation.

It was rather an awkward interview, and began stiffly enough, though Mr. Warner's thanks were dignified and profuse, and his congratulations most thoroughly sincere. He closed up the ordeal to which he had doomed himself by a roundabout, uneasy explanation to the young deliverer; informing him that though he had done them all a favor which was fully appreciated, and would never be forgotten; and though Margaret herself was especially thankful for it, yet, of course, it could in no sense change the previously existing relations of the parties.

"Of course not—not in the least!" Alfred had replied, with a little scorn in his voice, and the suspicion of a mocking smile in his eye.

"Any casual event, whatever its issue, certainly could not be expected to change the whole previously established current of all the affairs of life," pursued the gentleman.

"Certainly not." It was fully understood by Alfred that all the relations of the parties of course remained entirely unchanged.

That his present view of these relations was taken from a standpoint entirely different from his visitor's, Alfred didn't see fit to explain; but he looked extremely serene and contented. The new life which had unexpectedly revived his rose-tipped, sepulchred Bulimus, was infecting him with a fresh hope, which could afford

to be as courteous and crushing in politeness as the thank-offering which was tendered himself.

Mr. Warner stood up, clothed from head to foot in deportment; yet he held his hat un- easily.

His gratitude and good-will to the young man were both unfeigned. He would gladly have given him money if he had been a step or two lower down on the social ladder; and he had been for two days trying to devise some means of doing him a favor without giving offense. Moreover, Mr. Warner sincerely believed that he was seeking Margaret's best good by sending off unworthy lovers, even without her knowledge or consent, and thus his very despotic benevolence was partially justified at least to himself. He was a genuine autocrat, and Margaret one of the beloved subjects whose interests were confided to his angust keeping.

Yet it was useless to assure even himself that his course was either wholly disinterested or quite justifiable. "Conscience makes cowards of us all." It erects its own guide-boards, which glimmer frightfully in the moonlight of its distorted fancy.

"I hope," said Mr. Warner, "that you are rapidly recovering from the injuries which you received."

"Oh yes, sir! They were only trifling. They merely gave me occasion for a little needed rest, and time to consider and rearrange my plans for the future."

"Ah! yes; yes, I dare say." He spoke nervously and doubtfully.

Alfred's plans for the future loomed up before Mr. Warner with a threatening significance, which was only increased by the cool and placid nature of the young man's unwonted bearing. Was this, perhaps, a taunt? some species of scabarded, double-edged threat—offered in mock civility? Alfred was smiling, certainly; but wasn't there something cynical or malicious in it, hinting at the memory of past provocation? He girded himself anew by taking the benefit of the doubt, and began again.

"I hope you understand that we all sincerely feel that you have laid us under heavy obligations which we can never repay; but we shall be glad to reciprocate your kindness at any possible opportunity."

"Obligations are necessarily mutual, Mr. Warner," said Alfred, with increasing courtesy. "One must be rather happier, I think, in knowing that he has done a good thing himself, than in the simple knowledge that some one else has done it. I regard myself as entirely the favored party in this matter."

"Possibly, possibly!" responded the gentleman, preparing to bow himself out without more delay. "That is looking at it in a very favorable light, certainly; but I think you are right."

He was feeling more and more nonplused; and in haste to slip out of his dilemma by turning his back upon it.

"I have something to show you, sir, which is very curious indeed," interposed Alfred, suddenly arresting him by a change of topic. He produced his little African prodigy, and began to recount its history with detailed, excruciating minuteness.

The tone of quiet triumph and assurance pervading his voice and manner became overwhelmingly puzzling to his listener. That this little creature, after being for two years smothered in a closely-locked sea-chest, was now suddenly alive and prospering, seemed perfectly incredible to Mr. Warner. The young sailor, whose eyes were flashing now with fire and energy enough to hide the deformities of red hair, freckled skin, and brusque manners, was undoubtedly taking this very unusual mode of revenging an injury. It was a cruel practical joke—a species of illustrated sailor's yarn—and he was the victim. It was all the more excessively embarrassing, because there was just enough doubt and uncertainty hanging about it to compel him to remain wholly at fault.

At last the poor man got himself out of doors, and took his leave, dripping with moisture from head to foot, like the outside of a pitcher that has been suddenly filled up with ice-water on a hot day.

"If I only knew certainly that it was an insult, I would go back again and cane the fellow soundly," he muttered as he walked away, soaking his fine linen handkerchief through and through by a perpetual wiping of his porous face, and then hanging it out to dry in the sunshine, one corner held gingerly between his thumb and finger, as if after all he was compelled to offer it to his tormentor as a flag of truce.

Alfred Brand sat watching him from his window, and laughing till his own handkerchief was wet with the tears which bubbled over from his eyes in sympathy with his heart. He understood the case exactly, and had done so from the beginning of the interview; but there was so uncommonly rare a flavor in this amiable species of vindictiveness, that he couldn't resist the temptation of enjoying it to the utmost.

Now they were even; and Alfred, who had found it hard, an hour ago, to take the blandly-

offered hand of his guest, could have shaken it heartily at this moment with the utmost goodwill. It had all come about so unexpectedly, and was a revenge worthy of the gods. He was entirely satisfied.

He was strongly inclined to get on his hat and boots, and go at once to Margaret, but she was still an invalid confined to her room. He would compel himself to wait, which he could easily afford to do, as his heart was hopeful. He was a well man again from that hour. Sundry wounds and bruises yet remained to be healed, but they were quite outside of himself, his restored self-respect and general mental healthfulness.

He did think of Margaret, and wonder wheth-

er a speedy explanation would be a great comfort to her or otherwise; but he settled it in his own mind that of course now she would come to understand the real nature of his sentiments towards her, and could wait hopefully for a convenient opportunity of meeting. He had no wish, either, to beard the lion in his den, or to administer any further retribution to an already worsted antagonist. The Warners must lose Margaret, and their loss would be his gain. Here the balances were so clearly in his own favor, that he was willing to take the whole family into his affectionate sympathy.

A good often thrives best, and blossoms most beautifully, when it is found growing in the midst of the ashes of a burned-up evil.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

SOME OF MARGARET'S TRIALS.

As Margaret recovered, the burden of her reveries gradually changed. "Some one who cares for me!" became to her rather a profound desire than a conviction. Alfred Brand had saved her life, it was true; but he would probably have done as much for any man, woman, or child upon the island under similar circumstances. She had seen him last scowling viciously, and turning from her in hot haste; and she tried most conscientiously to push him, and all his doings, good or bad, entirely out of her thoughts.

But this was more easily proposed than realized. He haunted her. When she woke up suddenly his face was looking down at her from a little brown stain on the ceiling. She saw him hanging up among the shawls and dresses upon the rusty nails at the side of the room; and one day when a little mouse came peeping out from a hole in the floor, and stood looking at her with his bright, wicked eyes, his face slowly changed into Alfred's face, and his soft dove-colored hair flamed into a defiant red, and was sadly in need both of cutting and combing.

This state of things was alarming. She kept somebody almost constantly at her bedside chatting to her, to charm away the apparition; and she had just command of mind enough not to speak about it to any one, whether asleep or awake.

At the earliest possible moment she sat up and was dressed; for she felt that this gave her a more complete command of herself, and she

took to cutting out and sewing with a zeal worthy of the contented seamstress, who hopes that dress-making may be providentially assigned to her as a permanent occupation, even in heaven. Margaret's will was a strong medicine which effected a rapid cure. She was soon creeping about the house, with a gait between a limp and a hobble, but apparently a little softer in temper, and altogether more socially inclined than ever before.

One morning, when most of the family were out on the beach, she ventured down into the lower rooms in the comfortable shoeless condition in which she had been sitting in her own chamber.

"Why Margaret! bare feet?" exclaimed Mrs. Warner, alarmed at the thought of her taking cold. "How could you possibly do any thing so careless?"

"Oh, of course, for the good of my *sole*, Mrs. Warner," she answered, laughingly; but red-denying directly under the eye of Totum Giles, who stood at the outer door, bringing in a covered dish.

Margaret was annoyed at her coming at that moment; but Totum hastily unveiled her treasures, displaying half a dozen nicely browned and rounded somethings, which had towered up ambitiously from the basis of so many small tea-cups into puffy little mountains of bread.

"Grandmamma has sent you over some of her nice coffee-cakes, Mrs. Warner. They are just fresh from the oven, and she hopes that

perhaps Margaret may find one of them rather improving to her appetite."

"Thank you, Miss Giles; but ought Margaret to eat warm cake?" asked Mrs. Warner, rather dubiously, and a little ungraciously.

"Oh, they are neither sweet nor rich," answered Totum, with a complacent sense of doing a good deed, whether or not it was likely to be appreciated. "We think them very wholesome."

"Sponge-cake without the sugar, Mrs. Warner," said Margaret, breaking off a crumb and eating it with relish and recovered good-humor.

The lady also nibbled approvingly; and as it was about Margaret's lunch-time, she began directly to more fully test the merits of Mrs. Giles's dainty offering; but her appetite was too capricious to be largely tempted.

"Do you know, Margaret," said Totum, cheerfully, "you remind me of the little child of a nice Quaker lady I am acquainted with."

"Please tell me about it," suggested Margaret, with a willing interest.

"The little one had a sore finger, and didn't wish to go to school; and under this complication of ailments, she lost her relish for breakfast. 'But, my child,' said the mother, 'thou has made a little mistake; does thee know it? A sore finger doesn't take away the appetite.' 'Doesn't it, mother?' said the little girl, looking as innocent as she could, with a very bright color spreading over her whole face. 'Then, if thee pleases, mother, I'll take another pancake and some molasses.' Now, I think, Margaret, thee has made a mistake also. A magnificent surf-bath shouldn't take away the appetite, surely! Hadn't thee better eat the rest of grandmamma's coffee-cake?"

"I think I will try to eat it," answered Margaret, laughing. The sunshine which dimpled both their faces lighted a window through which each peeped a little farther than ever before into the other's heart, and the two girls began to understand and like each other. Indeed, Totum, with her abounding good-nature, proved to be a rather efficient auxiliary in laying a great many unwelcome thoughts.

One day Margaret ventured to the sea-shore for the first time since the accident. She enjoyed the change, and sat there taking long draughts of the soft fresh breezes, with a grateful sense of returning health and happiness.

The gentlemen of the fishing-club desired to secure the services of the *Constance* and her owners for a few days; and though Alfred was extremely reluctant to leave home again without first seeing Margaret, yet business appar-

ently demanded this sacrifice of inclination, and he consented. He was on his way to join them, accompanied by a young man who had only yesterday arrived from New York, when they came very unexpectedly upon Margaret.

She was still unconscious of their approach, and Alfred was trying to still the thumping of his heart enough to speak collectedly, begging the stranger to walk on alone for a few moments while he waited to speak with a friend, when the young man suddenly started forward, with an exclamation of pleasure and surprise. He seized Margaret eagerly by the hand, shaking it enthusiastically, and with all the delightful familiarity of an old friend.

"Why, Margaret, I am so glad to see you, though it is entirely unexpected. When did you come from Boston?"

"More than two months ago. I am very glad to meet you again, Henry."

Margaret's face also was glowing, and her eyes shining with a pleased and satisfactory surprise.

"But why didn't you answer my letter?"

"I never received a letter from you."

"Didn't? Why I gave it myself to Mr. Warner to hand to you, the day I left Boston."

"Then I suppose it is quietly stowed away in some forgotten dark corner of one of Mr. Warner's old last year's pockets," replied Margaret, trying to laugh; but staggering and steadying herself with resolute will to keep from dropping helplessly upon the sands.

She had caught sight of Alfred, standing there also, silent and amazed.

"Here is some one whom I have to thank for saving my life not long ago," she said, turning to Alfred and trying to look at him; but conscious only of a confused, dark blur, which whirled and whirled before her dizzy eyes.

"Don't thank me for that," said a deep, impassive voice. "It was no more than I should have done for any one else upon the island."

"I know it was not; but my life was of some value to me all the same."

Poor Margaret strove to retain command of herself in Alfred's actual presence, with a desperation and heart-sinking which had never been demanded of her by the mocking face which had haunted her in her room for a week past. Alfred's words were only echoing her own thoughts, yet they chilled her to the heart.

Her old lover came to the rescue; for this was no other than the young carpenter, whose early passion was all kindled anew by this unexpected meeting.

"Your life is of some value to me also, dear

Margaret," he exclaimed impetuously, not only seizing her hand, but throwing his arm about her as a support. He saw that she was still weak and suffering from too much excitement. "I thank Mr. Brand also in your behalf. I had heard of the occurrence, but had no thought that it was you, dearest, whose life was saved. I can never tell either of you how thankful I am. Now, Margaret, will you answer the one question which was the burden of my letter? Will you be my wife?"

But Margaret was past answering—was even past fully comprehending the question; but she had some confused idea of its import, and she knew that the two young men stood there both looking at her, and both waiting for the words which it was impossible to utter.

"Can she care for him?" Alfred had hastily asked himself. "Which was it that she thought of and was renouncing in her struggle and agony of that evening? At any rate, she shall have the privilege of a free choice;" and over-

whelmed as he was with emotion, he mastered it, and spoke to them both calmly.

Margaret knew that he was saying something which she strove in vain to understand. She only gathered from it that he wished to see her and talk with her again before she left the island; but the young carpenter knew that he had a rival, and one who would generously leave him to press his suit without a witness, and abide the decision. Then Alfred went forward, and Margaret found herself so entirely helpless that she could only beg her old friend to help her to a seat upon the rock not far away.

He talked on, warmly urging his suit; but her thoughts now had gone with the lover who had left her, and she was wholly deaf to the one who remained. But after a moment she compelled herself to listen, and to answer as kindly and as pityingly as she could; and then this one too went away, and she was at liberty to shed tears as bitter and briny as the waters of the ocean at her feet.

CHAPTER XXIX.

DRAWING THE SEINE.

MARGARET, left to herself, summoned back all her courage. With a great sob of disappointment and heart-break she tried to crush back all feeling, and, most of all, to thrust aside that perpetually teasing suggestion, "It might have been," occupying her thoughts heroically with any thing and every thing else than the events which had so lately transpired.

Her task was not an easier one than Alfred's had been when he sailed away from the island determined to ignore the existence of every thing connected with it for the next six weeks at least; yet Margaret's success, for a time at any rate, was rather more decided than his. She dreamed again of childhood, and the dear ones who loved her in the little thatched cabin at home; and when the dream grew up, as she herself had done, threatening every moment to merge itself in the present, she shrank away instinctively from the danger before she had reached it, switching herself skillfully on to another track, and steaming off backward upon some diverging line.

After she had made half a dozen trips to and fro between a very early past and another still a good way off—never once from any outlook catching a glimpse of the future, or even coming near enough to take a single dreaded glance into the present—she began to find the process

too wearisome to be continued indefinitely. Then, arming herself with a strong broad pecten, she went down on her knees before the tossing waves, mutely beseeching them to help her to forgetfulness by flowing in to the moats with which she hastily surrounded a mimic sand fort, imploring them to batter down the whole stronghold, if possible, even at the imminent risk of a good wetting to herself.

Hand and eye were both on the alert, for it was necessary to look steadily into the face of every incoming wave; and if there was a vicious sparkle in its eye, and its head was lifted ever so little higher than its fellows, she had to fall back at once before its superior might, and inevitably suffer the loss of some of her outworks, or, possibly, to see the whole fort swept smoothly away at a stroke. Then the vigorous and absorbing skirmish all began with fresh zest, till, in the end, both were successful.

Unconquerable Ocean always upheld his own rights, and maintained the ancient privilege of levelling his own beach with his own great rollers; and Margaret had balanced weariness of mind with a bodily fatigue which was a very good preparation for supper and sleep, and the best possible antidote both of retrospection and anticipation. She ate her supper in peace, and

would readily have slept the sleep of a good conscience except that a new disturbing element unexpectedly supervened.

A little knot of men were seen gathering upon the beach in the early dusk. They had a small row-boat, and an immense fish-net was seen dragging over the side, half in the boat and half on shore.

"The seine! The seine! They are going to drag the seine to-night!" shouted two treble voices in concert; and then Frank's rang out in a sounding tenor: "Tell mother I'm off for the shore, girls!" He was off for the shore, as an arrow flies from the bent bow of a keen huntsman at sight of a bird on the wing.

Then every body else was moved to follow him, though a little more decorously—every body except Margaret. She staid behind, but her thoughts would not stay. They went off to the shore with the rest, for there was Alfred Brand in the midst of this little group of fishermen; most of them in bare feet, their trowsers rolled well up the leg, and all looking very much alike—in the distance, at least—to any casual observer.

Alfred was perhaps a little conspicuous, from his unusually flaming red shirt; but if he had been clad in a suit of literal flames, he could hardly have filled Margaret's eye with more glare and warmth than he now did. She absorbed so much of the influence that it seemed to be burning into her very soul, and yet she could not turn away. Her resolution had been only just strong enough to enable her to stop thinking about this inexplicable Alfred. Now that he was there before her, quite outside of her own volition, how could she help seeing him! There was nothing in all her heart to restrain her from looking; but, on the contrary, her whole being had flown into her eyes.

She was under the spell of a fascination; but she could no more have told whether the sensation was most of pleasure or pain, than the little bird could tell you what it feels when it is fluttering under the magnetism of the relentless serpent. The young man certainly felt any thing but serpent-like towards Margaret as he stood on the shore wishing that she would come down there with the others; but of course she didn't know that.

Mr. and Mrs. Warner were seated with the children upon the bank above, looking down upon the picturesque group on the beach, and Frank had become one of the principal actors of the evening—the most eager helper, probably, of the whole party. There were four or five men of various ages—a gray-haired father, his stalwart

sons and grandchildren, his neighbors, and a little independent party of "shavers," both boys and girls—the youngest of the group hardly too old yet to have worn dresses like his sister.

Every thing was ready. Two of the young men sprang into the boat, crowding off shore with their oars, others running knee-deep into the water to give them a push. Rowing away from land, they began paying out the seine as they went, till they had made a pretty large circuit, spreading their treacherous snare; then returning, and dividing into two parties at the two extremities of the seine, they all began to drag it slowly in, with intent to scoop up the unwary fishes and draw them in also.

The element of haphazard in the occupation is always thoroughly exciting; it is doubtful if even the oldest fisherman can look on with indifference just at the moment when they are hauling the great bagging residue of the net finally out from the mysterious water. Will it be a good haul? What is there in that great dark mass, only dimly seen in the cloudy twilight? It is a joint raffle, into which they are all tempted by the beckoning sea; but then she makes no guaranty to them that they shall certainly win the prize.

After much toil, the great drag was gathered in. Up it came from the water, and was drawn safely out upon the sands. It was not at all too heavy; it could hardly be that, under any circumstances—at least so they all thought at the moment. Every body clustered about eagerly to note the contents—one with a lantern in hand—and every body bent over, looking closely and curiously. Then there went up a general shout of laughter, very good-natured in the main, but with a slightly cynical under-tone in one or two voices of men rather more intent upon business than amusement. Out from the midst of a large, loose bundle of sea-weed and riffraff, jumped one patriarchal crab; followed by four frantic silvery fishes—none of them longer than the hands of the little children which were reached out eagerly to seize them.

"Well, well! It's the mountain and the mouse undergoing a salt-water christening, ain't it?" said Mr. Dennis, shambling up just in time to witness the denouement. "The whole sea can spawn us one crab and these four scaly shiners—can't it? Ha, ha, ha! That's luck, now, just about equal to mine generally."

"Never mind, Job! better luck next time!" said one of the young men, giving Mr. Dennis a sounding slap upon the shoulder.

"Certain! I always feel that."

"You'll be here to pull, you know."

"Not long! I'm a man of business, and can't stop above twenty minutes to watch other folk's failures."

"Stay and help two hours, and I promise you a pair of flounders, Job—one apiece for your breakfast and Jedidah's—besides a famous tautaug for dinner, and six bass—if we catch 'em."

"Couldn't, Jim, not by any possibility."

"Come, now, where's the hurry?"

"It's waiting over there, and a dead secret. I ain't a-going to be married, you may guess any thing else; but it's a call of Providence that I'm attending to."

"What ul you bet, Job? Ninety pounds of fish solid at the next haul, eh?" said another.

"Not it," said Mr. Dennis, sitting down deliberately, ready to see it done.

"Do you take me up?"

"No, I don't."

"Why, I wonder?"

"I never bet against a chance that has a hand in it stronger than yourn or mine," said Mr. Dennis, "though I don't expect, either, that He would turn over so much as his little finger to give either of us a rap, if I did; but if you do get ninety pounds, Zephaniah—tell you what—I'll eat 'em, only give me a chance."

"Come, come! don't stand gabbing with Job," cried Captain Pater-familias. "It's time to be off. The hull of us won't deserve nine pounds, at this rate, for the full night's work, and to-morrow's added, to boot. Heave off, now!"

They did heave off with a will. Nothing daunted by a bad beginning, the fishermen all returned to the matter in hand with fresh vigor; and the whole process of drawing the seine was repeated, except that this time it was pulled in more and more slowly at the close, and with a kind of tender, solicitous care as though there was felt to be a good deal at stake. It was evident, even to an inexperienced looker-on, that they were all working with a better heart than when they drew it up before. They stepped about like people with an expectation and a certainty of not meeting with disappointment.

The mass that came up out of the water this time was not a great deal larger than before, but it was certainly harder hauling, and the men drew it higher up along the shore. Unmistakably, it was all alive. There was a wonderful flopping to and fro and up and down, and great shining, scaly things were gleaming in the lamp-light everywhere among the tangled mesh-

es. Even the juvenile moon, looking down from the sky over the Western sand-hills, was so full of a kindred sympathy with the fishermen, that she couldn't resist the temptation to look suddenly out from behind her cloud, for the first time that evening. Possibly her sympathy may have been with the fishes, for she lighted them all up with a beauty which they could hardly have worn even in their more prosperous days.

"You've done it, Zephaniah!" bawled Mr. Dennis, still sitting off upon the sands, or, rather, lying all along shore, resting upon one elbow. "There's ninety pounds good."

"Eat um, will ye, Job?" said Zephaniah, snapping the fingers of his left hand in the face of Mr. Dennis, as they came near, while he still tugged manfully with his right hand. "There's provender for a cruise to Greenland, and not a bite comes between your teeth, old feller, to pay for lying there."

"Don't matter," answered Mr. Dennis, placidly, rolling himself a little out of the way when one of the other youngsters made a feint of throwing the seine over him. "If enough is as good as a feast, then more team to that load wouldn't be any work of mercy. I never calculate to spend my strength for nothing. 'Taint good economy, you see, boys."

"No more 'taint. I'll be economical, you'll see, Job!"

"Do! That's one of my hobbies, and I'm very fond of pitching it on to the toes of all young people."

Every body crowded round now, and words were as plentiful as fish—too abundant to attempt to gather them up in our haste, while the poor fish are waiting attention. There are as many as twenty beautiful creatures of half a dozen different varieties, and not one of them very patiently bearing the burden of suffering which has been so suddenly laid upon them. Anne and Fannie, who at last have drawn near with the rest, are looking on with mingled pity and admiration, and the other children are either more chary of manifesting feeling, or really more indifferent; but one little fellow, who is laughing and peering over curiously, comes very near paying dearly for his thoughtlessness. The fish are still floundering about, and one large black fellow, in his desperation, leaps suddenly up into the very face of the boy, almost knocking him over. He is sent reeling backward in a fright, and with much more haste than is at all agreeable. Hapless tautaug! Even his last despairing protest is of no avail. He falls back upon the sands, gasping like the

others, which are all lifting up their gills spasmodically and flopping about more and more feebly as life ebbs slowly away.

"Now boys, lively there! You must catch your fish now as you would drive full tilt after a gray rabbit on the run—if you want to find 'em plenty, and no mistake."

"Yes, capting, ready!"

"There, then, don't tangle the seine!"

"No, it's all straight."

"Push off!"

They had made very short work of it, tossing out their booty upon the beach in careless haste, after the first moment of curious, delighted inspection, and were already casting off the seine again with vigorous hands and jubilant hearts.

"What a difference it does make which foot you put the shoe on, don't it?" remarked Mr. Dennis to the audience, principally children, who were still standing about him. "These fish, now, haven't any feet, to be sure, and they can't wear shoes, tight or loose; but I expect it makes all the odds to them, all the same, whether it's they that go fishing themselves, or whether they get fished. 'Taint easy breathing now, to any of these."

"No," said Anne, very sorrowfully.

Some of the others laughed at "old Job's funny talk," as usual. Frank, seeing that there was some speechifying to be done, came back to listen; and the other men, who had nothing to do till the boat returned, gathered about also. The audience thus reinforced, the speaker himself was stimulated to proceed.

"You see these big fish can eat the little ones, and no conscience about it; and we all know there's a mighty host of sharp-jawed monsters out in that sea, who could eat up these here fine fellows—your ten and twenty pounders—at a mouthful, or two at most. It would be only a kind of little lunch coming in between breakfast and tea, likely. I expect they don't have any kind of regular meals—the savages—out there in the middle of the ocean; anyhow, boys, that's my notion. Fishes are fishes; never dainty as to dishes; but they all have an appetite, keen every hour to snatch a bite."

"Right, too, Job. Don't you say so?"

"Well, yes. I judge so; since it's likely that they all follow pretty closely to the leadings of the nature that's give them. I must approve, you know, provided they haven't mind enough to work out any better way by experience. I don't quarrel with a thistle for being a thistle. Such scaly fellows couldn't very well contrive to hand down their knowledge to posterity, even if they did gain it—could they, now?

It appears they would have to invent some way of writing it down—some process that wouldn't get washed away in the water, eh?"

"Did you ever hear about Mr. Darwin's famous theory of natural selection, Mr. Dennis?" asked Frank, a gleam of satisfaction lighting up his boyish eyes, expressive of a sentiment kindred to one uttered by a young fisherman to another, *sotto voce*. "Golly! Job's getting up on his high horse, ain't he?"

"Well, yes, young man. I've read a little about that in the newspapers, and so on. I always take the *Weekly Tribune*; and I've read a good many things, first and last, in different houses here on the island, where they take papers of other sorts. I read in winter-time, you know, when there's no great call to be busy; so I have heard of that scheme for manefactoring men, and elephants, and rattlesnakes all out of fishes—going off on different tacks to do it—three spokes growing out of the same hub at the centre, and other spokes running all round, you know."

"Well?" said Frank, with a stimulative emphasis, as the man came to a sudden pause.

"Believe it?" asked a young sailor, still more eagerly.

"No."

"Why not, Job?"

"I don't think much of that scheme—not for any thing that can be handed down intellectooly. Course, inherited traits would give a bent to a man, and quicken what's already there, and in him, once for all. You see they do in a family, and in a nation; and that theory's good for bringing out a bull-dog, or a poodle, or a King Charles's spaniel. Wherever any thing gets a start, it keeps it, most likely. That's nature. But Nature don't make an inkstand out of a cow's horn. That's man's work. No more does Nature make a live creetur out of a stone, nor yet one live creetur out of another. I never heard of the old lady's mixing up things in that way—anywhere else. Her fire is al-lus fire, and her water's water; and if you go a leetle deeper, her carbon's allus carbon, and her hydrogen, hydrogen—and all that. She don't change this for that—never—to a certainty—so far as I've heard."

"That's so! I believe you," said one.

"Don't know, it's all pretty far off to me," said another.

"Go on, Job," said Captain Pater-familias; lifting a warning finger to the boys to guard against further interruption. "Have it out! Quick, now! They're coming back."

"Well, capting," resumed Mr. Dennis, with

the coolest deliberation, eying the returning boat closely to calculate just how much time he really had to himself; "there aint any outward-bound train that I could ever ride out on with my eyes both open—starting out from sea-wigglers of any sort, big or little—taking 'em, if you will, not a grain more alive and form-like than that splash of white jelly there, just coming up here on the back of that wave—" Mr. Dennis here lifted himself up on his feet and hands, and hopped out briskly, making a dive at the jelly-fish, which he brought up triumphantly in his hand, standing upright—"there aint a starting-point like this now, and any hair-splitting line of possibility running out from it, when I've followed it to the end, that I ever could persuade myself brought us up at a shoal of whales here, a tribe of alligators there, and a great nest of fat clams in another place."

"I should say so."

"Well, so should I; and it takes a very learned man, you know, to say any other ways. What puzzles me to decide, is whether every thing is alive, or whether nothing is alive, really, you know; but only jerky-like, and made to get up a kind of feeling that it is alive under some right set of circumstances, you know. If life is any thing worth having, I guess Providence mebbe took as much pains to make a musquito a musquito, and an elephant an elephant—to say nothing of making a man a man—once for all—as he did to make a chunk of gold, gold—no matter whether it's big or little; and iron, allus iron, no matter what use you put it to, or how many shapes you contrive to bring it out in. I've no notion of believing that one of these here fishes will ever be laying down the law, or even trying to, to a lot of curious-thinking beings like us—not if he lives to all eternity—as I think he will—what's more."

"What, Job! are you in earnest now?"

"Certain, my boy."

"Well, heave ahead."

"This is the long and short of it, then, and I've done. It appears to me that a fish is a fish—himself, and nobody else—and will stay so, likely, now and forever. I don't want to kill any of these fellows off—not fairly, even in this world, if I could manage cleverly to get on without; but when I see it is ordained we shall eat and be eaten, all round, I do it with a clear conscience, though I do get a little squeamish about it at times. I'd allus rather go out fair and square, with hook and line, instead of going at it wholesale, as we do to-night. The other kinder gives the fish a chance to come up or not of his own free-will like—at least I judge that

he is about as free as we are, according to his lights, and that must be made to do, you know. Any way, I don't want to kill him for good and all, and clean take away his whole chance of being comfortable."

"But you do, Job."

"No, I don't, boy, I calculate. It stands to reason that all these here will wake up fishes in some better sea, and, likely, float about there in endless contentment. There's room enough, to be sure, somewhere—must be!"

"There, Job, that will do. Now, boys!" Every body sprang hastily to his post.

"Well, now, I'm off, for certain," said Mr. Dennis, gathering himself into walking order.

"Here's a fish, Job, for the preachment," said one of the sons of Pater-familias, tossing one of the largest bass after him as he went.

"No, I never take pay for the gift of gab, and I won't have it!"

"But you must!" called several voices.

"Can't carry it, and don't want it, neither. I'm going out myself to try *my* luck, first good chance," called back the man from over his shoulder as he went loping off.

"That Job's a cute fellow, after all," said Zephaniah to Alfred.

"He's worth his weight in fresh codfish any day," answered Alfred; who had stood listening with a flashing eye, and a pleased, wondering look, as though all this opened a new line of thought to him. Then every body gave undivided attention to the drawing in of the seine; but Job went on his way, making a congé as he passed Mr. and Mrs. Warner, and thinking about waving his hand to Margaret, who sat perched farther away on the top of a stone fence near the house. He concluded that she was too far off, and didn't do it; but his thoughts went floating away instead into rather misty speculations as to womankind generally; and he rather assented to himself that he would like to have known just such a girl as Margaret when he was fifteen years younger. Now it was too late, of course.

The men had made another "good haul," and they began to throw out the seine again without loss of time—all wonderfully exhilarated.

Once more they were working diligently to draw it in, now for the fourth time. It seemed very full and heavy; they began to look in each other's faces, but without a word spoken. Would the net break, and the whole contents be turned loose again into the sea? "Careful, careful!" went round in a whisper; and the old fisherman shook his head, looking sternly into

the sea. Frank puzzled over the meaning of this odd expression of mingled regret and upbraiding, but could make nothing of it, and waited.

The strong net held together till the great floundering mass was drawn out of the water amidst short, dissatisfied growls from the elders, and little wondering screams of delight from the children. The men all stood looking with the coolest deliberation, yet without opening the seine.

"We've gone and done it!" said Jim, doggedly.

"What's wrong?" asked Frank.

"We'll see!" was the old man's slow and placid answer, beginning to open the net.

"Sharks!" muttered a large boy, jogging Frank's elbow.

"Sharks?" echoed Frank, as much astonished as he could have been if the boy had said alligators instead.

"Three, six, nine, thirteen. Thirteen white sharks, young man," said Pater-familias in the tones of an oracle. He looked into Frank's face now with a gleam of satisfaction. "We've got the fellows—so many of them, at any rate."

"Real sharks, captain?"

"Real sharks! can't you see them? White sharks, to be sure; but your folks must keep out of the water for a week to come, if you don't want a child's toe bit off, or worse, maybe. These critters don't do much harm, generally; but it won't do to trust 'em. They've come in here fishing like the rest of us. It's eat, or be eaten, from top to bottom, as Job says."

"But you don't eat these things?" said Frank, in excessive disgust.

"We don't direct, but we shall tuck 'em in under the corn, and some of us, most likely, 'll eat 'em second-hand next year. It comes to about the same, a little disguised."

"Do these things come here often, then?"

"Not very often—generally about this season. I s'pose they are swimming round farther out, most generally. It stops the seining for to-night; but we've no cause to complain as it is."

Human voices were mingling now in a general hum, hardly to be distinguished from the ceaseless protest of the sea itself. Every wave must have its own story; but talking all together, no one yet has been able to interpret the confused language of the waters. Frank saw that the fish were being assorted—the good on

the right hand, and the bad on the left—these sheep and goats of the sea—and there was some question as to the fair distribution of prizes.

Pater-familias finally divided them into shares, with which every body seemed satisfied, and Frank was not forgotten by him. "You've helped us with a will, and deserve a part of the booty," he said, handing them over.

"I had rather not, sir; they are entirely yours."

"But you must, you know," persisted the generous old man, putting them in a basket and handing them over again imperatively.

"Thank you, then, I will," said Frank, heartily, feeling at once that this was the right thing to do. "Only this large fellow must go back again into your pile, captain."

"No, I won't have it!" But Frank had tossed it over as he spoke; and now with a boyish laugh he ran out of reach, keeping himself good-humoredly aloof. Fifteen minutes later, when they were all trudging homeward, Frank no sooner entered his own door-yard than the big fish came tumbling after him headlong.

"Take that in, will you, young capt'ing?" called the old gentleman, with a cheeriness of tone worthy of Captain Giles himself. Indeed, Pater-familias was one of the hundred remote cousins of our old captain, and with a pretty marked vein of family likeness. The young gentleman picked up the scaly monster, rather proud, on the whole, to exhibit it as his own lawful prize; but not without a warm word of praise in favor of retired old sea-captains in general. At least, such as had fallen under his eye in this rural neighborhood were all very good models, he most implicitly believed.

What Margaret thought about all that evening, she never could tell you; and I certainly shall not make the attempt. When the rest came home, she was in bed—her eyes closed too securely to be disturbed by the children, who looked into her room, whispering one to the other, "She's fast asleep." But sleep, like silver and gold, is much too closely related to a great many other good things to be always found the moment it is sought after. Margaret didn't overtake it till the next day, with its clearer vision, began to look in upon her with wondering remonstrance. Then she slept till nearly noon, and was greatly refreshed.



CHAPTER XXX.

DROUGHT AND DRENCHING.

FRANK had perched himself upon a stone wall, and sat looking off over the sea, whistling, and rather wishing for something to do.

"Eh, young gentleman," said Mr. Dennis, lounging past with his fishing gear on his shoulder, "powerful hot, ain't it?"

"Hot, hotter, hottest of the season, at any rate."

"You might toast eggs anywhere in the sand I've just been walking over, I reckon. If I'd had 'em handy, I should have got dinner for myself, sir."

"Any fish to broil?"

"Well, no; can't say I have."

"How is that?"

"They say heat's a mode of motion; but I think it's a mode of stopping motion," said Mr. Dennis, ignoring Frank's question, and spreading himself at half-length, with the wall for a chair-back.

"Who rowed out with you this morning, Mr. Dennis?"

"I plucked little Maybough from his father's garden as I went along; but he was in a stew to get back to the potato digging. Strange! some boys are like beans and corn, and such things; there's only one point for them to grow from, and they must sprout out on just that side, or nowhere. I like a boy with ambition saved up in snug little parcels on all sides of him—every separate bundle ready to grow first chance—like all the eyes of a potato."

"But boys don't exactly have the privilege of making themselves, I suppose?"

"I 'spose not. And some start too early, and the shoots get rubbed off and go to loss, maybe. If I'd had the making of myself, I shouldn't have cared to put in more eyes to grow from, but I should have piled in the raw material enormously, so as to make the growth worth having. You see," he added, confidentially, "I can always put out a leaf or two most anywhere, but not one of the branches that seems to bear much fruitage. That's my style, I ex-

pect, and I don't worry—no use, you know! It's Providence that is the responsible party in that boat, and that's a comfort to fall back upon."

Mr. Dennis emphasized his conclusion by swaying round and falling back at full length along the wall, with his face turned resignedly heavenward. "I might kick against these heavy stones, but likely I should only end by upsetting them upon my flesh and bones to my cost. Better to lay alongside and make use of the narrow strip of shade they are kind enough to offer."

"Yes," said Frank, "I suppose so."

"Time fixed for going to Boston?" asked Mr. Dennis, with a sudden change of tone, following a grimace and a gesture, to indicate that the other topic was finally disposed of and laid on one side. He sat up now and looked inquiringly.

"Not exactly fixed yet, but I suppose in another week or two."

"It will be pleasant here for a month yet."

"I know it will, but we are already staying longer than we expected. I've got a substitute over there in the tread-mill, but it's about time for me to step into my own shoes and begin to plod on in the old track."

"Is, hey? Well, I shouldn't care to change with you; I'd rather trot on in my clod-hopper shoe."

"I sympathize with the sentiment, Mr. Dennis," laughed Frank, with a despairing shrug of the shoulders. "I've taken a good deal of the gypsy color on my face this summer; but that's nothing to the spirit of gypsying that has fairly taken possession of me. It's getting to be dangerous."

"I half think it is," said Mr. Dennis, with a grin; "but 'tain't an improvement to inoculate a tame olive with the wild vine. Duty is duty, I 'spose, the world over."

"I expect it is, but duty is black and blue quite as often as any other color, here in this world, isn't it?"

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"Very likely; but then it changes its complexion easily. That's a comfort. Changes are mostly good. Providence always keeps a string-stick to keep things moving with. This mud is pretty black in winter, and it's pretty brown and bare with all the drought we've had lately; but we see plenty of tallish changes once in a while, I can tell you; and we are going to see one now before we are twenty-four hours older."

"Are we? What kind?"

"Storm and bluster. If I'm a judge there's a famous rare drink brewing in the island teapot. Don't you smell it in the air? Don't you see the hot steam of it in the sky? Why the signs of it are folded up in the curl of every blade of dry grass."

Mr. Dennis clambered up and sat astride the stone fence, like one who has resolutely mounted his hobby and means to ride it.

"It's written out there all over the sea that there's coming one of the finest storms that you ever saw, young man. Every wave there is lying low just now, but like a tiger-cat, it is getting ready to spring; and to-morrow, at latest, they'll come roaring up on to the shore, fierce enough to tear down the highest cliffs."

"Will they?" Frank's eye went off over the sleeping waters, and then came back, fastening incredulously on the face of his companion.

"It's just certain they will. Sea, earth, and air are all too still. They'll wake at once with a frenzied will."

"Then I'll remember you as a prophet."

"Pshaw! Every thing is telling it. Them little water-birds over there, one minute sitting like mummies, and the next flapping about giddy, like a hen with her head cut off; they know it. Don't you see how every little cloud overhead curls up scornfully when the sun tries to bake 'em to a crisp? They all know that the sun will have his match before long. That's one reason why I got off the sea without too much waiting, for times are a little uncertain in such a case."

"Well, hurrah for the tempest. It's about time it came; but I don't see exactly what's to be done about it."

"Only just to set your house in order if there's any thing to be done. You ought to have every thing tight—your folks at home—and snug to hold water, for tubs, and cisterns, and such, are given to leak after a long dry spell."

"Whew! I hope not. Mother would be in despair if rain-water were to run away after it once got here."

"Of course; so would any woman. That's the nature of women."

"Is it?" said Frank, looking mystified. "Water enough has been our one want half the summer."

"So I expected. Better let me go up, then, and tighten the rain-hogshead; it looked shaky, kinder, the other day, and I've had it on my mind ever since."

Suiting the action to the word, he took up his fishing-traps and marched forward, followed by Frank, who came on making grimaces to himself, like a small boy dragged out of a very comfortable position rather against his own will. The next move, Mr. Dennis was hammering away vigorously at a huge water-butt standing under the eaves of the house, much to the surprise of Mrs. Warner, who began to telegraph from the open window to her son, but without being able to gain his attention.

"I tell you," said Mr. Dennis, "if this weather went on much longer *we should all fall into staves*. I've felt myself giving way this week past, and this 'ere hogshead's in just the same condition."

"Not a bad figure," thought Mrs. Warner, smiling, and seating herself behind the curtain to hear what next.

"Mother and Margaret will rain benedictions on your head then, I am sure, if you can manage to make it water-proof."

"I am afraid we should have to," thought Mrs. Warner, from the inside of the curtain, "if there really comes any rain to fill it."

"Certain," answered the long figure outside, pausing to speak with an uplifted mallet, and bringing it down afterwards by way of emphasis. "Just as I said; that's the nature of women. A woman is related to water more closely than any other being in existence, except a fish. How could ladies and children get on without white frocks? and every decent woman, if she's ever so poor, must have one garment at least washed as white as water can make it. Then they couldn't live without a cup of tea; and what's a cup of tea without water? There's nothing like water for every mother's daughter."

"Not bad, again," smiled Mrs. Warner. "I begin to see why Frank likes him."

Whang, whang, whang! bang, bang, bang! went the cooper outside, with speechless zeal; and then his speech began again while he rested.

"A man, now, could manage to do without water for a month together, and be comfortable. The outside don't matter much to him—unless he's a *young* gentleman just in the first stages of falling into love—and he *can* make do for

the inside with the strong waters that well-up from black bottles."

The pounding went on now without interruption till the work was done, and then the workman, first looking earnestly at Frank to arrest his attention, dropped his eyes, and said, in a low, steady tone,

"I drank pretty deep at that bottle-spring in my early days, young gentleman. It's all over now; but I s'pose that's why I'm a bachelor to this day."

"Indeed!" said Frank, rather embarrassed at the confession, respecting Mr. Dennis all the more for it, but not knowing exactly what to say. "I am glad that's well over."

"It's well over."

"But it's never too late, you know, Dennis, to make a final move in the direction of matrimony," recovering himself, and speaking cheerfully.

"Sometimes it is too early, though, young man, to make a move towards anything so final as that," said Mr. Dennis, peering good-naturedly into the lad's blushing face.

"Is it?"

"Yes; I've seen that proved a score of times. It takes the steady use of a good deal of sharp eyesight to become a good judge even of horses; and you want to see 'em working in the harness, as well as out in the pasture capering."

It may be well to say that Mr. Dennis thought Frank was getting a little fascinated with Mary Percy, and she was not his favorite. Mrs. Warner thought he referred to Totum, who was not her favorite, and she could willingly have shaken hands with Mr. Dennis very cordially, if a good opportunity had offered.

"Now, that tub is warranted to stand on its own bottom," said Mr. Dennis, "and I'll go about my own business again," shouldering his fishing-gear, and tramping off, chuckling to himself at the remembrance of the boy's peony-colored face.

"He's an honest, nice boy!" mused the man, thoughtfully, as he slouched on homeward, a little depressed in spirits as he thought of himself and his perpetual bachelorhood. "I wish him well, and a wife at last, whose ways are as good for his constitution as Jedida's are for mine. Better not marry at all than mated criss-cross. I'm well enough content."

Down came the rain, and a gust of wind sent him stumbling forward at a pace which broke up all his matrimonial reveries without more delay.

"I thought so!" ejaculated Mr. Dennis, in a

tone of triumph, and his long legs took him forward so rapidly, that he was soon at home.

"Whatever did make you just ten minutes too late, Job?" asked his sister, meeting him at the open door. "Stand there a little, and take off the wet coat and boots. In that state you would go dripping over the floor like a house-mop that hasn't been wrung out after it is dipped in the water-pail. Couldn't you have seen the signs of the weather, and contrived to make a little time in getting here?"

"Well, Jedida, perhaps I might. I was looking out for it, but it came of a sudden at the last end, as bad luck generally does. We won't cry for spilt water; but I'll read the paper loud, and we'll have a cozy afternoon. It won't stop raining for to-day."

Mrs. Warner, going in to her husband, who was enjoying the parlor-lounge, woke him up with a description of Mr. Dennis and his sayings; and both seemed unexpectedly edified.

"I suppose there is a good deal more under the rough outside of these country people than we have ever given them credit for," said Mr. Warner, thoughtfully.

When the wind and rain came battling down furiously, apparently on all sides of the house at once, dropping, as it seemed to them, like an unexpected good gift out of a dry, hot sky, the queer man, who seemed almost to have fore-ordered it, came somehow to be confusedly associated in their minds as a family benefactor; and subsequent events only fixed and deepened the impression.

The torrent of rain fell without interruption till the afternoon of the next day. Every window was soon beaded with shining large drops, as though each separate pane had been profusely ornamented with pearls. How the water contrived to penetrate where apparently there was no aperture was a mystery; yet there it was, oozing, dripping, and babbling from every casement on all the four sides of the house, to the no small wonderment and amusement both of the children and the grown people. Every one slept soundly that night through all the hurly-burly of the tempest; and next morning the waves were rolling inland, apparently higher than the cliffs, but breaking far out at sea, and so coming more modestly in-shore.

Towards evening the sky cleared with a display of rainbows, and then the whole family, and, indeed, almost the whole community, turned out *en masse*, seeking for the most eligible places along the shore, where they could best command the sea. The highest of the outlying rocks was covered with water; but

now and then it could be seen to peep through the churning spray, as though it, too, was curious to obtain a look-out upon the unusual scene. The waves covered the beach, and rolled half-way up the cliffs, foaming and tumbling gloriously—one mass of confused, surging, creamy foam. Farther out you could count six long lines of distant breakers, trooping in one behind another, and breaking all nearly at once. These six files of dashing white mountains, changing every moment, but keeping up the succession with wonderful regularity, were all that could be desired in that line. Occasionally the whole got chopped together in one white, boiling, tumultuous mass.

"It is worth a whole summer spent here to see just this!" said Mr. Warner, emphatically.

"I have never known the tide to rise higher in my whole life," said Captain Giles, coming up at the moment in his shirt sleeves, followed by a throng of men and boys. "We must look out for the boats; and the boat-houses even are in danger."

Away they all hurried, busy and excited.

The wind, which had been all day blowing inland, now suddenly changed, blowing directly out to sea, meeting every wave as it broke, and

filling the air with flying white foam glittering with sunshine.

"There is a large boat over yonder, broken, and drifting upside down. They are trying to secure it; but in another wave or two of such churning as it gets, it will be split into fragments," cried Frank, coming up, with shining eyes, and very red in the face. The water has dashed up quite around our bath-house once or twice. I expect that will go, mother; but it's worth it, if nobody is drowned."

"But is it certain that nobody is drowned. What kind of a boat is it?"

"A fisherman's; and there seems to be a net dragging after it. I'm off again! Good-bye."

The sun sank lower and lower in the west, till the arrows of golden sunshine were shot almost horizontally through the leaping mist and spray above the water; and gradually the whole scene was shrouded in a weird, phantom-like illusion of unreality. The darkness fell thick and heavy; yet excited voices were still heard shouting, here and there, in the distance, above the din of the ocean and the steady southing of the wind.

This was Totum's birthday; and she regarded the whole magnificent display as got up in special honor of that event.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE CHILDREN'S DAY.

THE changes along the coast, produced by the storm, were a source of perpetual interest for the next several days. One morning Midget and Edgar Percy invited Fannie to go with them to the Herring Creek. Mrs. Warner, who thought the gentle dumb boy would be a safe guide, readily gave her consent, and a few small cakes and sundries as an outfit for a shore "dinner-party;" and the children, who had permission to remain till about noon, discovering a country-wagon headed in the right direction, ran off in haste to secure the pleasure of a ride. They journeyed across the flats in high spirits, the girls chatting freely with the good-natured farmer who drove them; and when near the creek all three alighted, and walked down to the shore—the man continuing his way along the downs.

Herring Creek, which is a little outlet to the pond, had been recently cleared from obstructions; and, when last seen by the children, a bright little stream was running freely into the

sea, which they had found it difficult to cross in passing along the beach. To-day the opening was entirely choked up again with sand and pebbles, and all communication cut off for the present between pond and ocean. It was a disappointment.

"Isn't it too bad," said Fannie, sorrowfully; "it was such a nice little river, and I liked it."

"It isn't a bit pretty here any longer," said Midget, in a vexed and disappointed tone. "Let us go over to the point where the fence and the big rocks are, and have our tea-party there."

The little brown fingers were quickly busy in expressing her wishes to Edgar, who readily assented. Midget was his favorite, because she had learned to talk with him. Fannie could only express her sympathy and indicate her wishes by looks and gestures; but even she was learning to laboriously spell out the deaf and dumb alphabet with her right hand.

It was a cool day, with a rising wind, stirring in them all a spirit of adventure and feelings of

unusually vigorous enjoyment. Edgar, whose eyes were generally quick enough to atone for any want of hearing, clambered up the side of a cliff, and soon came down again, bringing with him two or three sparkling clusters of iron pyrites. This was something new. The rain having washed the bank, he saw them standing out like bright little balls in the midst of the clay.

"Oh, they are diamonds, maybe," suggested Midget.

"No, I have seen diamonds, and these are not a bit like them," said Fannie.

"Well, they are so bright, I do believe they are diamonds, or else something just as nice, perhaps," persisted Midget. "Let's find some more."

They all went to searching gleefully; clambering, slipping, and now and then getting a tumble or a bruise; but finding wonderful treasures just often enough to afford ample compensation.

"Here's a nice beautiful little fluted roll, lying right here at the foot of this mountain," shouted Fannie, excitedly.

When the others ran up to see, she held up in triumph one of the finest, though most irregular, of the specimens they had yet collected.

"Oh, it is beautiful!" echoed Midget, with a frank admiration, while her eyes ran longingly up the wonderful, treasure-bearing cliff. No pearl-diver ever peered through the deep waters with a more intent hope of finding a valuable prize.

They had been wandering on a good while now without finding any thing, and were nearly ready to give up the search in favor of treasures more easily obtained; but this new gem of beauty put all that out of the question.

"Oh, there's something!" Midget exclaimed suddenly; "something as bright as silver, sticking up there in the bank; and here are little shining silver things scattered all down below it. Only look! look!"

"Oh! oh! oh!" roared Fannie, clapping and jumping.

Edgar's eyes brightened, and grew twice their usual size. Then he clambered up and brought down the treasure with the utmost care. It had originally been a nearly round ball of radiated iron some two inches in diameter, the rays running out from a clayey nucleus; but about half of it had fallen asunder, scattering the broad steel-colored needles all down the face of the cliff. These they gathered with unabated ardor; for all the mines of Golconda could hardly have given either of the three any greater satisfaction.

When they reached the shore-fence and the large rocks for which they had originally started from the Herring Creek, they were all eager to go farther. Clambering over by mutual consent, they listened awhile to the peculiar adhesive click and slip of the tide as it rolled down from the steep bank of large pebbles and stones on the farther side; and then went on again, admiring the many-colored ochreous cliffs, which were all unusually bright after the late energetic scouring with sea-water.

The clays and sands which lie in thin, irregular strata, had been unevenly washed away by the storm, till the whole extent of cliff, running on for miles, was smoothly carved into curious fantastic lines and shapes. Here a cave or a basin was scooped out near the bottom, there another, higher up. Farther on was a long, broad cornice, many-hued, and almost as regular in its construction as though it had been planed and grooved by machinery; and again, there were ornamented columns rising up from the level beach, many feet above their heads, to the high-water mark of that stormy tide which had wrought out all these beautiful forms. Nothing at all like this was to be found near home; the shore-banks there, composed less of clay, had crumbled away with more of wreck and less of beauty than they found everywhere here. No wonder that the proposed tea-party and every thing absent was forgotten, while the children ran on with ever-increasing delight and admiration.

After a while they came to where there was a broad cave-like platform in the bank, about a third of the way up from the bottom. The waves had washed the lighter soil out from above, leaving a wide, ample ledge of hardened clay, half overhung by a projecting clayey roof.

Edgar, whose prudence began to wake up, pointed enthusiastically to this high platform, and indicated, that having seen that, it was enough. They should be content, and turn back at once.

"Why, that's a real dining-room," cried Fannie, dancing about with delight. "Do let's have our picnic up there, Midget. Won't it be splendid?"

"Won't it be splendid?" echoed Midget; "but let us get some more shells first, so as to have plenty of dishes for the dinner-party."

The boy was so delighted with their delight that all his newly-awakened prudence went to sleep again. They had come out to have a dinner-party, and of course they must have it.

"It's just the very place for it—isn't it, Ed-

gar?" Midget had said to him; and he smiled and nodded assent as cordially as Midget could wish.

The shell-dishes were speedily gathered by willing hands, and they all clambered up some jagged steps to the only accessible point from below, all in a state of steadily-increasing happiness.

"I never did have a dinner-party in such a beautiful dining-room before!" cried Midget, prancing over the smooth floor like a colt who has unexpectedly broken into a new pasture. "Here's every thing we want; and such beautiful ornaments and crimson colors on the walls."

"And the ocean all down there below us!" said Fannie. "Wouldn't papa like to take dinner here! It's magnificent."

"Let's play that there is a band of musicians down there making beautiful music for us while we are at the feast," suggested Midget. "It sounds so—doesn't it?"

It did sound so, certainly enough. The wind and the waters together were already making ominous music, which the children little heeded, and the tide was rising rapidly. Edgar was deaf, but they were all blind. While the little souls went on laying the table, carving ducks, heath-fowl, fish, and venison—all with equal facility from the same small sweet-cakes and crackers—and heaping up jellies, ice-creams, and dainties generally with a lavish hand, the incoming wavy line of water was creeping higher and higher along the sand; and by the time they were quite ready to begin the eating, the triumphant waters had already cut off the possibility of retreat. But they had no thought of retreat, no dream of going home yet, no suspicion that it was already nearly noon, and two miles at least away from home and safety.

They were hungry and happy, without a single shadow upon the brightness of the perfect present.

A strong clap of thunder, followed by light-



A STRONG CLAP OF THUNDER.....MADE THEM ALL RISE TO THEIR FEET.

ning and a sudden dash of rain, made them all rise to their feet, and stand awed and terrified—looking first out to sea, and then into each other's faces. There was no beach below them—nothing but one wild, foaming ocean of water.

Fannie threw herself sobbing upon the ground without speaking. Midget crept to Edgar's side and held his hand, with white, quivering lips, and a stifled moan; and the poor deaf boy, holding tightly to the little girl, closed his eyes and stood there as if so he could best shut the whole fearful scene out of his consciousness.

But the situation was too startling to be long shut out by a closed eyelid. He threw off Midget's hand, and, tossing up his arms in a frenzy, uttered one of those awful cries which can issue only from the throat of a deaf mute. Then he ran to and fro, from side to side, looking everywhere. Fannie started up with new terror, and little seven-years-old Midget, gathering them both in her arms like a mother, made them sit down on either side of her.

"We can't do any thing!" said the child, in that positive tone which always makes itself heeded. "We must sit still and wait."

Her looks and gestures were so emphatic that the boy understood her quite as well as the girl. He saw that there was nothing to be done, and passively clasped his hands, sitting like a white statue, and making no further demonstration.

"But we shall all be drowned, shan't we, Midget?" asked Fannie.

"I don't think we shall one bit, Fannie. Grandpa says the waves almost never get up as high as this except in the very big storms, and this is only a little storm."

"Oh, I do hope it will be so!" sobbed Fannie, trying hard to be heroic, but hiding her face with a shudder in Midget's little blue gingham apron.

The waves dashed higher and higher, till they washed over the ledge where the children were, almost wetting their feet as they clung together far back in the corner. Then Midget's eyes

opened with a wide, frightened look, and her little frame shook with suppressed emotion which appalled Fannie, who cried out with new terror,

"Midget! oh, Midget! we *shall* be drowned! I know we shall be drowned!"

"Let's just say our prayers, Fannie. That's every thing we can do," said Midget, struggling to speak calmly, "I'm saying mine all the time."

"Oh, mamma! mamma! papa! Frank!" roared Fannie. "Oh, somebody, do come and save us!"

"They can't help us!" said Midget, almost indignantly; "nobody can. Nobody in the whole world but just God and Jesus."

"But they are all looking for us," persisted Fannie. "I know they are all looking for us everywhere. Oh, Margaret! Margaret! Perhaps Margaret can find us!" cried the child, starting up, and shouting the name again and again wildly in her terror.

Midget gazed at her at first as if stupefied. "Yes, I suppose they are looking for us," she said at length thoughtfully, as if speaking to herself. "Perhaps we had better shout; that will be something to do, at any rate;" and getting up, she joined her voice to Fannie's in one long cry of "Grandpapa! grandpapa!" which echoed above the roar of the tempest.

The poor little mute could not even shout; but he rose up also, the tears rolling down his face, and he turned off to the wall to hide his grief from the others. After a while, Midget, who felt that he was more to be pitied than either Fannie or herself, drew out her mite of a handkerchief from her pocket, and after one long final shout, while she held it in her hands, coming up to Edgar, she put her arm about him and wiped away his tears—which flowed only the faster for all this—and tried to comfort him.

But the cruel sea had no pity. It dashed over them again and again, as they clung to the cave and to each other—too appalled now even to cry out, and altogether hopeless of any possible help from man.



CHAPTER XXXII.

OUT OF THE DEEP WATERS.

MEANTIME every body was looking for the little wanderers. At first, at Mr. Warner's, they had all been too much engaged with preparations for leaving on the second day from this, to give much thought either to them or to the approaching storm; but as noon and the tempest both came together, yet bringing no children, the whole household became alarmed. Margaret started with umbrellas for the shore, and Frank went over to Captain Giles's, hoping to find them there. Then the whole neighborhood was aroused, and looking for the lost children.

It was known that they had gone down to the beach, and now there was no beach—nothing but an ocean dashing madly against the echoing cliffs. Hope was dying rapidly out of all hearts.

Mr. Warner, wholly regardless of himself, went hastening everywhere in search of them without resting, clinging to the one hope that they had taken refuge somewhere inland.

Mrs. Warner, overcome with anguish, was alone when Totum Giles came in pale and weary. The mother, in her grief, was thinking only of her darling as perhaps already sleeping under the sullen sea, which half-maddened her with its hypocritical moaning. She started forward, and demanded bitterly,

"Miss Giles, what has that Midget done with my child?"

Poor Totum was inexpressibly shocked, but she looked steadily and pityingly at the almost frantic mother, and said, in a steady, low voice,

"Mrs. Warner, Midget was my sister."

Was—that dreadful past tense! It told all that Totum had felt; and Mrs. Warner, recovering herself, burst into tears, the first which she had shed that day, and gathered the young girl tenderly into her arms.

"Totum, forgive me!" she said, in a humble, heart-broken tone. "I was half-crazed. Can you forgive me, my child?" Totum clung to her, and wept with her till they were both much calmer.

"Now I will go and look for them again, Mrs. Warner. I can not rest while there is any hope," she said, returning the kiss of reconciliation. She went out again into the wet fields almost hopeless, but resolute to do something.

The rain had nearly ceased, but the wind was still loud and boisterous. Frank soon joined her, and they went on together without speaking, past the Herring Creek and over the heights along the edge of the cliff, looking often down fearfully into the sea as they walked.

"I hear their voices! Oh, Frank! Frank! They are certainly down there!" cried Totum, suddenly dragging him forward excitedly to the edge of the brink.

"Oh no, Totum dear," he answered, pityingly. "It can't be."

"But it is! There, that's Midget! Don't you hear now?"

"Take care, Totum, it is very slippery," cried Frank, holding her back with a shudder.

"I am afraid you are mistaken."

"I certainly hear them."

"I hear only the angry voices of that cruel sea, dear Totum. I feel sure that they are drowned," he added, in a low, awe-stricken voice.

"Oh, Frank, listen! Listen steadily!"

The pair stood peering anxiously over the cliff into the boiling water below, where nothing was to be seen except the wet, jagged clay reaching down to the very water's edge; and then they clung together in silent terror. There certainly were voices and childish sobs.

"Frank, what is it? Where can they be?" asked Totum, with faltering white lips. "Shall we call?"

"Call," whispered Frank—his face blanched even whiter than hers, and looking above and around him hopelessly. At this moment Job Dennis came striding towards them at a quick pace.

When Totum saw him, she sprang forward with new hope. "They are found, Job, they



are here somewhere; but they seem to be buried up in the cliff. Oh, I am so glad you have come!" pulling him towards the slippery brink in reckless haste. "Don't you hear them call?"

"I do hear them. Fact, they are down there somewhere, in some hole in the bank."

He slapped vigorously upon his knee in a state of perplexity, as if at a loss what to do next.

"There, catch hold of my coat-tails, hard now, both of you," he said, "and I'll hang over and look. Bless me, but I haven't got any coat-tails. Take each a hand, then, and grip now for dear life." He stretched his long arms behind him, and they each seized one with a will. "You see, I don't much fancy tumbling in there headlong," he explained, leaning out over the abyss till his footing seemed precarious enough.

"I can hold you, and I will," said Frank, who had recovered from the awful dread which had possessed him for a moment. "My feet have a firm footing. You shan't fall."

"Say, say! Any one down there?" called Job, outroaring all the din of the tempest. "Are you children down there anywhere in the bank?"

"Yes. Yes, here we are!" came up so distinctly that they all heard.

In a moment the eager face of little Edgar looked up from a sharp projecting ledge, and Mr. Dennis saw his little hand vainly clutching at the bank overhead to steady himself.

"There, that'll do, boy! Don't come out there, I say," cried the horrified spectator. "Put your head in again, boy!" and Mr. Dennis wrenched away one hand from Totum's tenacious grasp, at imminent personal peril, awing back the child with a fierce gesture. "Pull him in, I say, girls. That's right! Don't any of you come out again that way, and maybe tumble into the water. Do you hear, down there?"

"Yes, Mr. Dennis," sobbed Midget, "we'll all wait now!"

"Right again, Midget; I'll save the hull of you. Just be patient now, can't you, all you three buried chipmunks? Don't you stir till I come! Hear, hey?"

"Yes, sir," sobbed Fanny.

"Yes, sir; I won't let them stir again," called Midget, resolutely. Her little arms already grasped tightly about each of the others.

"I'm coming down there myself presently; but it may be a good while first, do the best I can; and don't speak a word more to us, one of you, but sit down close together, or I declare

I won't come after you a step. There, now, good-bye."

He drew back from the brink, puffing with excitement, and faced about indignantly.

"There, again, Totum Giles; you stop roaring, too! Don't let out another word, for your life. They mustn't be excited; and keep away from that bank, can't you?" giving her a push which sent her staggering backward so suddenly that she would have fallen if Frank had not prevented her. "Haven't you a grain o' sense, now, girl? Some of the pack of you will go sousing into that pond yet, just for the lack of brains; and I tell you it can't be permitted."

"No, it can't," said Frank, soothingly. "We won't speak or look again, Dennis; only say clearly what we are to do, and we'll do it."

"That's speaking like the man I took you for, young gentleman. You see, the storm is about over, and I'm most sure the water is falling. Likely we've just to wait a little, and we can bring them all off with a whistle, dry-shod along the beach; but if worse comes to worse, and the water goes on rising, you must bring men here to let down ropes, and haul 'em up that way. You two go and tell the news, and get the rigging all provided. I'm going down the side of this hill, just over thereabouts."

"Oh, don't attempt that; you will certainly slip, and it is better to wait," remonstrated Totum.

"It would only be folly to slip, and it shan't be done. I shall clamber into the hole where they are, somehow, if I can; which I don't much doubt. I'm wanted there. If you let the ropes down, I must tie the young ones fast; and at any rate you could hear from the sough in their voices that they're almost scared to death, poor little creatures! That dumb boy's awful white face, looking up like a ghost out of his grave, will haunt me, I expect, like a year of nightmares. You've no idea how scared and wistful it was."

"Poor little things!" murmured Totum, struggling with emotion.

"There, there; don't begin that now," said the man, roughly. "It won't do, you know. You see," he added, with a delighted and encouraging grin, "for once in my life, I shall be welcome somewhere, shan't I?"

Mr. Dennis had reached the chosen point of descent. He gave a new tuck to the overhauls, which were already inside of his boots, threw off his sailor's jacket, and treated himself to a general shake, by way of preparation. "Hum, hum, hum," he buzzed to himself, like a reflective bee.

"There," said he, "shake hands now, Miss Giles. If I do slip into the throat of that great boiling tea-pot down there by some mistake, remember, I didn't wish to treat you like a bear, but only to make you take good care of that slimy way that leads down to the bottomless pit. You've both had time now to get calm heads on your shoulders; but my advice is, don't go near those young ones again."

"Don't you try to go to them," pleaded Totum, clinging to the offered hand. "I really think it will be better that they should wait to see if the tide goes down."

"No danger, child. I have climbed here before in all weather, and I can see the lay of the land pretty well. My foot is set in slippery places though, eh?" he called out from his knees, upon which he had suddenly landed. "Shows I ought to say my prayers before starting. I have said 'em, but I expect not half hearty enough. Now I'm just a leetle siled; but can a man touch pitch and not be defiled?" He pointed with an extraordinary grimace to the clay patches on his overhauls with a laugh which was too infectious to be resisted, after the long strain upon their nerves. "That's good!" he added, cheerily. "Now keep up heart, and when I reach the youngsters, I'll roar back the news, and you can both go home."

A slow, toilsome, careful descent, and then his voice came ringing up to them cheerfully, "I'm down at the bottom, safe and sound." But a great wave tumbling in towards him as he landed, he dashed forward to the ledge where the children were with a wild leap, which left him sprawling in their midst. "Now I have got 'em; at a single bound," he shouted spasmodically to the excited listeners overhead. Then Dennis and the children all laughed and cried together.

"Are they all safe, Dennis?" called Frank.

"All safe—all sticking together like molasses-candy, and packed into as nice a box as you ever saw. If it wasn't just a little unsafe, you should see all our heads poking out in a bunch to look up at you; but it can't be done. Tide has turned, and the water is going down fast. We can see that plain enough from here, so you needn't bring any body unless the storm begins again, and there is new mischief to pay. Then keep a sharp look-out. Do you hear up there?"

"Yes; every word."

"Well, that's all. Now don't wait. The water is falling, so no more squalling and bawling. Put wings to your shoes, and fly off with the news."

"Good-bye, then, Midget; good-bye, Fannie

and Edgar. Don't be afraid; you'll see them all soon," cried Totum, from the bank above.

"Good-bye. Be quick about it, then; do, Totum!" squealed the imperative voice of little Midget in the highest excitable key, which made them both laugh nervously.

Then Frank and Totum hastened towards home, holding each other by the hand as they ran.

"What an escape! and what a wonderful summer this has been, Totum!" said Frank, in a husky voice. "Shall we ever forget it?"

"I imagine not. A day like this, for instance, will get fixed in the memory like the multiplication table, I suppose, Frank; because we shall go over it again and again, sleeping or waking."

"And because the trouble of to-day has been sharp enough to eat into every one of us like an acid, engraving its own history. I am in a state of effervescence at present that can't express itself in any thing quite extravagant enough to be satisfactory. We can't separate now, Totum, and then forget each other. We must be more than common friends as long as we live; for we have crowded a century of ordinary experience into this summer, and shared it together."

Frank's hand tightened its clasp, with a language in it which spoke more than his words had done.

"Oh, I don't know."

Totum answered in an indifferent tone, and managed to free herself, under pretense of stooping to pick something from the ground.

"Grandfather said yesterday that I have had only a slice of the island-summer, and just a little of the outside rind of the autumn. It is wonderful how soon the flavor of the very nicest dainty seems to pass away with the next bite."

"But the outside, autumn rind, at any rate, has been pungent enough to make you remember it. Totum, you must promise to correspond with me. You can do so much, at least."

"No, Frank, I can not. It wouldn't please your father and mother—nor me either," added the girl, pettishly, her eye wandering off over the sea.

Suddenly her whole manner changed.

"Look, Frank, there! That schooner will be wrecked!"

"Driving straight upon the rocks," he answered, both their hearts paralyzed with new horror. "It is the stone-barge from New Bedford. I saw them all the morning lying there, loading with stones from the shore."

At this moment Mr. Warner and Margaret, who had just met in their search for the lost

children, came out together within a near view of the doomed vessel. They stood for a moment, as if undecided, upon the height above; and then, forgetting every thing else in this fearful extremity, both ran hastily to the beach, where it spreads out towards the low land.

"There are your father and Margaret. Let us go too," said Totum; and, without another word, both hastened breathlessly to the scene of peril.

"What can we do for the poor men? Oh, what can we do for them, Mr. Warner?" cried Margaret, almost fainting with anxiety, as they stood helpless together upon the sands within only a few furlongs of the doomed craft.

"Rouse some one who will go out for them in the life-boat," was the prompt answer. "We are powerless, here, child; and it is terrible. Find Captain Giles or Tilson, Margaret. I'll go for Captain Smith. Something must be done!"

With the strong strides of a Titan, the excited man started on his errand.

"Here's the key to the life-boat house!" cried Alfred Brand, dashing past them at the instant. "Help me, Mr. Warner—help me, Margaret, to launch the boat. The men are all away in search of the children."

No other word was spoken while the three, with white, intent faces, hastened to the locked boat-house, and lifted out the life-boat with resolute strength, rolling it down to the shore.

"Now help me push her off. I may save them yet," said Alfred, springing into the boat.

"If I had learned to row, my boy, you should not go alone," said Mr. Warner, with one quick, nervous grasp of the sailor's hand. "Can I be of any service as it is?"

"I think not, sir. Shove her off."

"Let me go! I am sure I can help you!" and Margaret sprang also into the boat.

"Margaret, dear, brave Margaret!" said the sailor. His tones drowned all the din of the waves to her, and even to Mr. Warner. Alfred took her one moment in his arms, lifting her back to the shore. "You can help me, but not in this way. God willing, I will live to come back to you, my Margaret, my wife!"

With a strong arm he was shoving off from land, while both the others pressed forward to help him till the waves dashed over their shoulders, and they staggered and stood holding to each other to recover their balance. The little craft was launched, and flying over the water.

"See! they have lowered a boat from the schooner, and two men have already taken their places in her. There is a third poor fellow

clinging to the side of the vessel, but the boat has been driven off; he can not reach her. Good heavens! the schooner has parted! she is sinking! They have all gone down together!"

"No, father; look! the boat is afloat yet. She is heading in-shore."

It was Frank who spoke. He and Totum had come up and stood with the others, absorbed in the enacting tragedy.

"Yes, yes; she is afloat. They are saved, then!"

"And the children are safe too, father. We have found them."

"Thank God! But the poor man who has gone down—will they desert him, Frank?"

"Alfred will not, sir," said Margaret, proudly, pointing out to the advancing life-boat. "And, see, the others are turning back again also."

Mr. Warner drew his eyes from the sea as Margaret spoke, and a strange light filled them when they rested for a moment on her face, so unconscious of its expression of sublime trust in her lover; then slowly back again went his fearful gaze, riveted by the dreadful fascination of the scene before them. The whole party stood in silent awe for many moments, wrapped in intense, yearning solicitude, while the two boats beat about like cockle-shells amidst the white dashing foam in the distance, with rocks all about them.

"He has found him! he is drawing him in. The man is saved!"

"Yes; saved. God forgive me, Margaret. I have been living shut up in the clam-shell of my own sufferings and selfishness, and I tried to rob you of the love of that brave man."

Margaret looked up half incredulously to the humble, pitiful face at her side, and then her hand tightened upon the hand which grasped hers.

"It is all right now, Mr. Warner."

"Pray Heaven it be. I can only forgive myself if he comes unharmed out of this peril."

"He is coming, sir," pointing off triumphantly over the water.

"But what are boats like these pitted against the might of this dreadful sea?"

"Life-boats, sir."

The old, saucy smile came back a moment to her face, and was reflected by his. Then they stood again silent, and almost breathless. The darkness was rapidly gathering about them, for the sun had set long before.

"Which is it? one has sunk!"

This was sobbed out piteously, but none answered. The boat had sunk utterly—at least



BOTH THE OTHERS PRESSED FORWARD.

every eye had lost sight of her, and had grown dim with horror.

But she was there again, headed shoreward, and the sands began to be covered now with many people. In the midst of them stood Mr. Dennis, with the three lost children. He, too, had seen the vessel driven towards the fatal rock, and dashed against it. Then she had disappeared; but every thing which was going on for the rescue of the sufferers was hidden from them by the intervening cliffs; and the suspense became intolerable.

"I must do something!" said the man, in a fever of desperation.

His eye ran along the narrow strand, and calculated the chances.

"If you children will all run steadily and fast till you reach the point where the bank juts out farthest, just yonder, we can climb there to the top. Can you do it almost in a twinkling, if I lift you down one by one?"

"Yes. Oh yes, let us try!" were the awed responses of the girls, and both of Edgar's hands went eagerly up in quick assent.

With a recklessness that no cooler moment would have warranted, they set out, though the hungry waves snapped at them as they went on hugging the shore, filling their shoes again and again. But the goal was reached. They slowly toiled up the friendly sand-cliff, which had crumbled obligingly from the top to make way for them, and were safe upon the bight above.

The children, forgetting the peril and the agony which had clung to them so lately, pressed forward eagerly, thinking only of the fate of those who might perish any moment, until they stood with the others upon the shore—all hushed and waiting.

Many eyes turned to them, but hardly, it seemed, even with recognition; and every look went back again through the gathering darkness to fathom the awful mystery of the sea. Fan-

nie nestled silently at her father's side, and Midget was lifted up into the arms of her grandfather, who never even stooped to kiss her or to give her a second look. Edgar stood a moment clasping the hand of Mr. Dennis, and turning from one to another in search of father or mother, who were not present. Then, with a yearning for welcome from some one, he stole to the side of Captain Maybough, who laid his palsied hand caressingly on the boy's head without turning his eyes from the sea; and the grateful little mute, lifting both his own hands, pressed them over that of his friend, and stood there like the others—every faculty of his being looking out at his eyes.

At last the boats, one after the other, grated

upon the sands, and brawny arms were thrust out silently and quickly to draw them higher upon the beach.

The two stone-barge men, who arrived first, stepped lightly and thankfully upon the shore; but the poor fellow rescued from the sea at the moment of direst peril was wholly insensible. Alfred staggered with exhaustion as he tried to rise, and was lifted out of the boat by old sailors who were sobbing like children.

But a hand sought his in the darkness, and an arm came about him which was not a sailor's, and then his strength returned again magically. He drew Margaret to his heart with all the manly gratitude of a strong soul, satisfied with the fullest fruition.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

A LAST PEEP INTO THE OLD DOVE-COTE.

CAPTAIN GILES, in a new suit of handsome broadcloth, was embracing his old wife, dressed in a clean new calico; but with the sleeves still rolled back, just as she had worn them while busy at her work. They were standing on their own hearth-stone—both with smiling faces and dewy eyes; for the captain had just returned from Boston after a four days' absence.

The Warners had gone home at the time appointed; but this was less than a month afterwards; and Margaret had come back to the island that evening, a bride. She and Alfred Brand were to keep house together in the furnished cottage where she had spent the summer, while their own home was building higher up on the hills.

Captain Giles had just returned from the wedding. There had been much rejoicing and general good-will on the interesting occasion, and every thing had gone off pleasantly, with all the usual satisfactory accompaniments. This was what the captain had just been saying, and the old lady had almost sobbed with emotion, under the heavy burden of interest which she had felt in the whole matter. Totum and Frank had been brides-maid and groom; and Frank had looked to the sharp-eyed old grandfather as though he was wishing it was he who was holding Totum by the right hand, instead of being separated from her as he was by the absorbing presence of two people whose happiness so overshadowed his own. Strange to say,

neither father nor mother seemed to see in all this any serious cause of alarm.

"I tell you what, Miss Giles," said the old husband, seating himself in the old arm-chair that he used to rest in nearly sixty years ago, when he came back from his early voyages; "Capturing Warner has grown as bright and silky as a chestnut when it has dropped out of its prickly burr, after a little touch of the early frost."

The old wife rolled down her sleeves, hooking them carefully at the wristband, while she smiled delightedly. Then she wiped her eyes and sat down also, listening intently.

"The sick capturing had been getting strong all summer, in spite of himself; and that last shake-up is likely to make a man of him once more, in my opinion. Island air is a mighty powerful medicine, ain't it? and a shipwreck is as good as an electrical shock for some folks."

The old eyes of the speaker danced and twinkled with infinite satisfaction, and the eyes of the listener had to be rubbed again and again; and she put her spectacles on and off, and rubbed them also, by way of having something to do.

"To be sure, capturing, to be sure," was her answer, put in at each pause in a low voice, as an encouraging parenthesis.

"He seemed just like other folks, Miss Giles," continued old Captain Giles; "and he was as chipper as a spring swallow, even at the thought

of losing Margaret; and that is like cutting off his right hand, I expect, too, when it didn't offend him in the least; and I call that pretty nigh a miracle—don't you?"

"I've heard of moral miracles," answered the wife, with a droll smile, reflected from her husband's.

"Miss Warner will miss the girl; but if *he* learns to walk alone once more, she can do without Margaret, and get over the ground into the bargain, as easily as if she was lifted up on stilts. It is wonderful how wearing it is to be always dragging a dead weight, like a prisoner chained to a ball."

"Yes, capturing; but don't say any thing about *that* to any body else, you know. Be sure not to forget yourself sometime."

"Of course. I'm only talking now to the discreeter part of myself. That's safe, I take it, and orthodox."

Mrs. Giles answered by a smile that was as good as a kiss; and the captain got up and came round to give her a kiss, which was a punctuation-point to the smile.

"Who else do you think was at the wedding, Miss Giles?"

"Captain Percy, perhaps. Alfred would be sure to want him invited."

"No; he was invited, but he had to take the boy to school, and couldn't make it convenient."

"It couldn't be Captain Hezekiah or Mary, because I know they didn't go."

"No, no! I'm persuaded you'll never guess."

"Well, then, you had better tell me."

"Job Dennis—Mr. Dennis, they all call him; but it was the real Job done up handsomely in a new suit, and his manners had got a kind of new polish to match."

"That is surprising—the most wonderful of all!"

"He had a bran-new coat and hat that put mine entirely into the shade, and boots shining like a looking-glass; and, between you and me, I have good cause to think that the clothes were a present, out and out, from Mr. Warner. That shows gratitude, I take it, for what Job did when he found the children. They treated him as if he had been the first gentleman, and Job came out in a way that was really surprising. I didn't suppose it was in him; but there it was, and it came out, as the best things will if you give 'em a chance."

"I am sure I'm very glad. That will comfort Jedida, and you must tell her all about it."

"Well, what do you think *now* of the Warners?"

"I think, capturing, that if the best of silver is left too long in a damp place it will turn green, and perhaps be likely to get more rust and canker than the commonest pewter-ware."

"So do I, Miss Giles. And I really think that if the silver finally gets scoured up till it's bright again, it will be just as good as new. Don't you?"

"Just as good."

The smiling old lady reflected the captain's look and tone of hearty satisfaction a little more placidly, it may be, than he would have liked, as she folded her dumplingish old hands from the other side of the stove; but when she glanced out of the window towards the home of the new neighbors, her face brightened with a genuine motherly interest. She had nursed Alfred when he was a baby, and his mother before him had played with her children and eaten her dough-nuts and little turn-over pies, into which she had always put a spice of loving motherliness and good-will. Then she liked Margaret, and from the first she had always resented the thought that a sensible, bright girl like her was not entirely the social equal of any one and every one on the island. Now, at last, poetic justice was budding and blossoming to a beautiful realization. Moreover, her kind old heart was still fresh and womanly enough to be very tenderly stirred by the marriage of young people in whom she felt an active interest.

They had come to be her neighbors for the future, and she liked that. It woke up a fresh feeling of benevolence, to think of the aid and comfort which she could offer them, and it would be the next best thing to having some of her own children or grand-children settled near her. So she wished them happiness as she glanced out of her window to theirs, her whole face aglow with the warmth of a benediction.

"It helps to make the ways of Providence seem equal, don't it, Miss Giles?" responded the captain, who had read her heart in her face, as he had been in the habit of reading it for more than three-score years.

"So it does! After living as long as we two have, one ought to have faith in that."

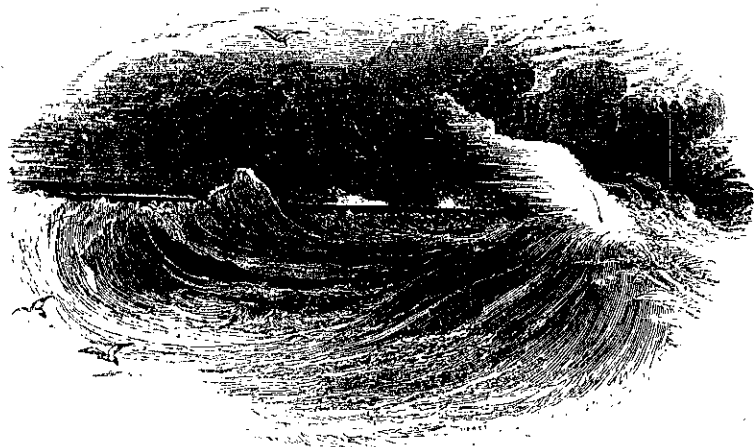
"Yes, most things come out about even in the long run. I believe I am getting hold of that fact by a kind of second sight," said Captain Giles, with a little outflashing laugh which she was half disposed to reprove as not serious enough, but she thought better of it and smiled also. Then the old lover gallantly quoted Milton:

"The fairest of her daughters, Eve;"

and the old dame, shaking her head at him, turned away and stroked the cat, which had been purring for some attention for the last half hour, and had just despaired of getting it.

The captain brought his chair around to the side of his wife, and, joining right hands again,

they fell to talking of the time when she too came home as a bride. It was all fresher to them now than last year's anecdotes; and it seemed to them both, while they chatted merrily together, as though it had all happened only yesterday.



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