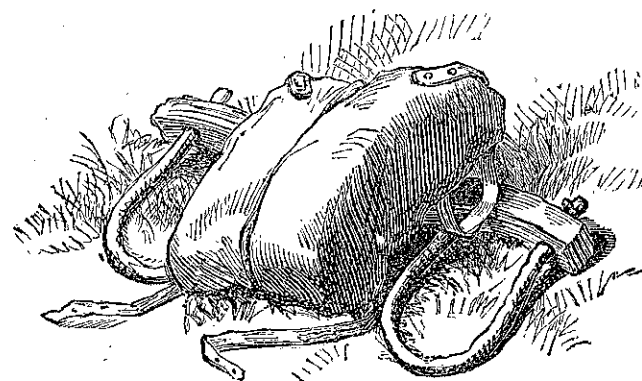


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THE
YOKE AND BURDEN.



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TO THE
FAIR MAIDENS OF ROCKLAND COUNTY,

THIS BOOK

IS LOVINGLY DEDICATED

BY THEIR FRIEND

THE AUTHOR.

FAIR READER :

The design of this simple story is to call your attention to that close living, of which a mere profession is but the semblance. That this, which is more than seeming—this of which the world knows nothing—can be attained by all the converted, is inferred from many passages of Scripture, among which are the sweet “Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy-laden,” also, “Take my yoke upon you.” So there must be a taking and toiling amid all the compensations of the way. And if, in perusing this book, woven out of old memories of loved ones gone before—aside from the whiling of a tedious moment—your heart should be drawn to the higher life, if you should learn where to cast down your sorrows, if you should be led to truer reflections, then the task of writing it will make glad the heart of

THE AUTHOR.

SPRING VALLEY, N. Y. -

November, 1868.

THE YOKE AND BURDEN.

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CHAPTER I.

A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver.—*Bible.*

FRETTERED, restive, prancing as a highly-mettled steed, lay the steamboat Arrow on the waters of the Hudson. Her upper deck was crowded. Handsome, dashing beaux, and laughing, bright-eyed girls, had met, thence to go forth for the enjoyment of a summer's day. As they stood in groups, an observer might have noticed the insipidity of tone and manner so natural to flattered beauty when most anxious to please. A tall, dark-eyed girl is leaning fondly on the arm of her lover, and laughingly remarks on her right to be perfectly happy.

"Indeed, I hold a charmed life; so your hint, Mr. Dumont, is quite timely."

"Ah, Miss Bell, good people say that life is transitory, and delusive."

"Yes," responded Miss Ellen Rutledge, "and fleeting, and sinful, and sublunary, until one be-

comes weary of such gloomy reminders. For my part, I abjure good folks."

The pouting prettiness with which the remark was accompanied, is generally admired by the world.

"What say you, Miss Mary?"

The question was asked by Ethelstane Tremont, of a very young girl, whose simple attire contrasted widely with that worn by the other ladies of the party.

—Digressing. The organs that denote superiority of intellect are ever at variance with that which is generally termed beauty; yet there was that in the face of little Mary Rutledge very pleasant to the beholder. One turns again to meet the glance of such deep, speaking eyes, and an attractiveness lurks about such faces that stands well in the stead of prettiness.

Mary blushed, at the direct appeal of Mr. Tremont, as she said,

"Excuse me, I did not quite understand your question."

"Our topic was a singular one for a party of pleasure-seekers. We were discussing the deceitfulness of life."

"And Mr. Tremont asked what were your thoughts about it," said Carrie Hall.

"If I am to answer from experience," said Mary, "I should pronounce life a very joyful thing. There is happiness in mere existence on such a morning as this."

"There!" said Carrie, "I was waiting for something out of Noah's ark."

The kindling eye and earnest manner, so free from self-seeking, at once attracted the notice of Tremont, who immediately seated himself beside her in the hope of continuing the discourse, but a call from Miss Ellen disappointed him; the elder had no idea of being outdone by the younger sister. To tell the name of a vessel lying out in the stream accomplished her object in winning to her side the handsome Tremont. Mary, quite unconscious, and equally indifferent to her sister's motive, leaned on the bulwark of the boat as she gazed musingly on the water.

"What a wonderful element thus to bear up this great boat and us; yet how weak it seems, if I take a little in my hand."

Then her mind ran on queer, unanswered questions, which led to reflections so absorbing that Mary had forgotten self and others until her notice was attracted to the shadow of a person close beside her. Glancing up quickly, she met the gaze of eyes full of benignity and sweetness; she saw the figure of a tall, erect man, with a brightness of expression that made the white and flowing locks surrounding his temples like a halo seem strangely out of place.

The stranger, till now unnoticed, had stood, with folded arms, an interested listener to the foregone remarks of the gay talkers. Mary's quiet manner

seemed most to have attracted him, for he bowed, and addressed her in a slightly foreign accent.

"These are bright, hopeful voyagers, quite unwilling to believe in the uncertain nature of all earthly happiness. And yet, how natural! Alas! they will believe it too soon."

Touched with pity, and scarce knowing what to say, Mary asked,

"Has the voyage been a rough one to you, sir?"

"It has had its calms and heavy storms, daughter: the storms have reconciled me to the brevity of life; the calm has drawn my heart to a place of perfect rest. The bright sunshine, with which I began life, would have made me as unwilling to trust the shadow as are your companions."

"You do not seem to be unhappy, sir."

"I am not, my daughter. This life is a mere probationary state, in which a divine Father has been pleased to mix joy and sorrow, and kindly permitted the path of life to be one on which thorns and flowers alternate, that we may not be too weary of the one, or too much amused by the other."

"And you are thankful for the thorns?"

"Yes."

"Having met but with the flowers, I am inclined to dispense with the others."

And Mary suppressed a smile at the possibility of any other choice; but the stranger continued:

"Suppose the adverse scenes of life, the thorns,

would better fit you for heaven: would you then prefer the flowers, that fade so soon and so surely?"

"I have always sought to avoid the things that would fail to conduce to my own immediate comfort," said Mary.

"That was natural, my daughter; but is it not well to be prepared for afflictions, which never come with our consent? Suppose they should come to you?"

"I do not deserve them," quickly interrupted Mary, with all the impetuosity of her nature.

"The Lord loves whom He chastens. Would you gain the whole world, and lose your soul?" said the stranger.

"Must it always be by sorrow and affliction that we are to become righteous? I think I worship the Deity."

"How, daughter?"

"In His beautiful creation," said Mary.

"Ah! a sort of unknown god."

"Yes, a vast, mysterious beauty and grandeur, quite indescribable."

"And when you chance to get among the commonplaces of life, the quarrelsome, the wicked poor, the sick, how does the thought of this vast beauty appear to you?"

"That never happens."

"If it should?"

"Then I would be very unhappy—so much so as to cause me to hurry away to pleasant scenes."

"Your own happiness the first consideration! How natural, and yet how different the teaching of Him who spake as never man spake. Jesus said, 'I came not into the world to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me.' How incomprehensible such disinterestedness!"

Mary, as she looked up tearfully, said, in an apologetic way,

"I wish I could comprehend it; 'tis all so new and strange to me. To be happy in my own way has been the whole aim of my life."

"Have you found happiness in the gay assembly, my child?"

"Not as surely, sir, as in engrossing study."

"You are young," said the stranger. "Have you studied much?"

"Yes, from choice; by study I forgot the pain of the only sorrow that I ever knew."

Mary and the stranger had now taken seats, mutually pleased with each other. After a pause,

"What was that only sorrow of which you spoke?"

"The death of my mother. My father died when I was an infant, I am told."

"An orphan," said the stranger, thoughtfully; then, after a pause,

"I am going to exact a promise of you."

"Nothing unreasonable," came smilingly through her tears; for she began to see a real kindness in the manner of the stranger.

"No; 'tis this: that you will not leave the Bible out of your future studies. In it seek the Lord your God. Grief falls lightly on the heart used to contemplate the sufferings of a dying Lord. This will teach you to bear prosperity and endure adversity. You promise?"

"I do," came solemnly.

"And should we ever meet again you may return this, the Bible of a dear relative." So saying, he drew from his pocket a much-thumbed Bible, placed it in her hand, and e'er she could thank him he had gone to the end of the boat.

For a long time Mary sat pondering his strange words, and asking herself,

"Who is the Lord, and how may I seek Him?"

Poor child! she had never so much as heard of a Saviour. From her home the subject of religion had been carefully excluded. With a sigh, she sat devising ways and means of keeping her promise, when a stir among the passengers aroused her. They were making way for a band of musicians. All was bustle for a moment, as the Arrow shot out from the wharf. "Hail Columbia," that soul-stirring air, rang out, greeting the passing boats and causing many to wish to join our gay group. Mary gazed on the bustling city, from which they were fast receding, now

broad awake for trade, commerce, money-changing, and all the heartburnings of competition. Her old, mature reflections were interrupted by the presence of young Tremont.

"Miss Rutledge, may I ask the name of that very gentlemanly person with whom you conversed?"

"I am not in possession of it. The words of the gentleman I shall not soon forget; they were so solemn and powerful in their import. See what he gave me!" and Mary handed the small Bible.

"An old English edition," said Tremont as he turned over the pages; and Mary, espying written lines, asked,

"What is that on the fly-leaf?"

Tremont turned back the pages.

"Ah! a couplet, and in an old-fashioned hand; and a name—Marcious."

Mary took the book and read:

"This has to do with things eternal and divine;
All else I count but dross for me and mine."

As nearly as she could recall it, Mary repeated to her friend the conversation that had passed between herself and the stranger; then, after pondering, she said,

"'Tis all so new to me. I cannot forget his words; they have affected me strangely."

"The subject is not new to me, though 'tis a long time since I have heard it spoken of so familiarly.

There was a young person who had some control of me when a child—whether kindred, friend, or hireling, I know not—who used to talk of another land, and at night would sing me to sleep in the sweetest tones I ever heard."

"Where is she now?" asked Mary.

"I do not know, nor how we came to be separated; 'tis all as a dream to me. I used to call her Hester; and now, after so long a time, she has not ceased to form my beau-ideal of a perfectly beautiful being in person and mind; and yet, should I meet her now, it might prove only the exaggerated notion of a child. Miss Rutledge, she could not have been older than than your are now."

"And yet not careless, as I have been—not living only for herself."

"I often think of those days, and of her," continued Tremont, "Where had she learned the trick of being so motherly and careful? how came she by such refinement of manners if she were a mere hireling? are questions that will obtrude on and puzzle my mind."

"Is not refinement inborn—a sort of intuitive perception of the most perfect way? and may it not be found where education is lacking, Mr. Tremont?"

"One must believe so. There was with Hester such elegance of taste, that, as I recall different scenes, and her different modes of acting, I think it scarcely possible she could have been so young."

"What age, Mr. Tremont?"

"Fifteen—and I ten—when we parted."

Thus Mary and her friend conversed, while merry feet kept time to the enlivening music of the band. At times a runaway from the dance rallied them as old folks; but a good-natured retort sent him back in time to meet the requirements of the figure.

At noon the Arrow lay moored at one of those beautiful inlets which mark the banks of the Hudson. The spot chosen for the day's rendezvous gave signs of that which has been tritely said to begin in folly and end in matrimony—a modern pic-nic. A spring, a temporary oven, a rude table constructed of boards, bonnets and capes suspended from branches, all help to tell the errand of our party. The stroll in the deep wood is tempting, and the call and merry song resound away off from those who are less romantic, and choose to spread the repast for anticipated appetites; among whom are Carrie Hall, and her aids, Clara and Jane Wheaton, with whom an hour of pleasant gossip had passed ere the table-setting began. Carrie, declaring she had a natural taste for that kind of employment, and announcing her decided approbation of the fact that the useless ones were out of the way, laughed merrily as she ran about.

"I cannot work with a dozen eyes on me," said Carrie.

"Nor can I," said Jane.

"Clara, do you remember how anxious you used to be to get to housekeeping?"

"And what you used to say about being married, just to have a house of your own?" added Jane.

"Yes; and I was then just twelve years old," laughed Clara, as the three girls set about unpacking the well-filled baskets; and the gossip that comes so readily and runs to personalities so surely was not wanting in that small circle.

"Now I suppose you would not get Ellen Rutledge to do any thing of this kind; no, not for the world," said Carrie, as she hurried from place to place, with sleeves rolled up, and a great matronly apron completely covering the front of her dress.

"And yet she is no better than we are," said Jane.

"Convince her of that if you can."

"I do dislike that girl!" said Clara.

"Mamma will not allow me to say so in her presence, and I suppose I should not do so now; but one cannot like every body."

"Indeed! Does your mamma like her?"

"No, she pities her, and says I must make allowance for the force of education. You see, their grand-mamma will not allow them to do a hand's-turn, and while it troubles Mary it just suits Ellen, who is as proud as Haman."

"Well, mamma says I shall know how work should be done, whether I am required to do it or not," said Jane.

"I have heard Mary regret her inability to do housework. Poor girl! she is not satisfied to be treated as a puppet."

"She is such a nice little thing, too," said Carrie; "not a bit proud, though the Rutledges are among the most wealthy families in the city."

"They are immensely rich," said Jane.

"My father is a rich man, and I was taught to make bread and cook all kinds of meats, three years ago," said Clara.

"Your ma does not mean you to be dependent on your servant for information—thereby giving her an opportunity to be superior. And she is just right. Why! I would—"

But here Carrie's remark was cut short by a shriek from Jane, followed by mingled laughter, which caused her to put the question,

"Goodness me! What is the matter?"

"The bad man had nearly stepped in my nice pie," said Jane.

"Brother!" exclaimed Carrie, in vain suppressing a laugh.

"This is not honorable, Mr. Hall," said Jane.

"Only a bit of fun, ladies. Dempster, you and Omsted may come forth in the enjoyment of the fact that Miss Ellen Rutledge is a lazy creature, and her angel-sister an unwilling victim of too much wealth."

"Girls, what have we said?" asked Carrie.

"Only using up the richest family in the city—pleasant news for Omsted," said Hall.

"Why didn't you wait your turn, Mr. Charles?" said Clara.

"Just to think of woman's propensity to gossip! Not an hour alone, but some angelic creature must suffer."

"Miss Ellen, for example," laughed Dempster.

"Pray do not betray us," said Jane, coaxingly.

"I am not at all uncomfortable," said Carrie, "since the thing guards itself. If we are a little too talkative, they are inclined to the ungentlemanly fault of eavesdropping."

"We shall only tell some half-dozen, in the strictest confidence, as the ladies do," said Hall, as he strolled away, quite unconscious that he carried off a towel that Carrie had adroitly pinned to his coat, his companions following laughingly.

Again alone, the three returned to the repast, where the steaming coffee sent up its aroma, vieing with the fragrant lemonade.

"Now all is ready, girls," said Carrie, as she fanned herself violently.

"We should have sent Charles as a scout, it will be so long before they will arrive," said Jane.

"I have mother's tea-bell; it has called many a party together;" and Carrie raised it, when her attention was suddenly arrested. "Who is that man?" she asked quickly.

"I don't know. He has been watching us closely for quite a while," said Jane.

"How long?"

"A good while, it seemed to me. I dared not attract his notice by speaking to you. I am afraid—very much so;" and the lip spoke tremblingly.

"I wish your brother had stayed," whispered Clara.

"Pshaw!" laughed Carrie. "The poor man is hungry. I mean to offer him a sandwich."

"Pray do not!" said Jane.

"Who's afraid?" said Carrie.

"I am."

"And I too," said Clara.

"If he is not civil I will hit him with my ladle," chuckled Carrie.

In pleading undertones Jane and Clara urged Carrie to take no notice of the man; but in vain.

"Girls, it is too late to run; and I tell you, the good-will of a dog is better than the ill-will. You see, we are too far from the others to reach them, and I am not much afraid." And, advancing, Carrie offered the sandwich, which was politely declined with such a pleasant smile, that she returned declaring him to be positively beautiful, and herself divested of all fear.

"Bad men are never handsome—poison-things never have fragrance; so, girls, put away fear, I tell you."

"Oh, Carrie! how imprudent of you to laugh so. Do let us run—do!"

Clara assented; but Carrie, planting herself against the rude table, declared it would be tempting the man too sorely to leave him alone with such delicious viands, announcing that such fine teeth were less reliable among her nice biscuit than a more common set, and that, for her part, she preferred to stay and watch him. As the girls were about to leave the incorrigible Carrie, the hallooing and merry chime of voices were heard, and the party came in sight; the foremost soon being made acquainted with the cause of alarm.

"Take no notice of them; there are two others hanging about. I saw the three about an hour ago; they will not disturb us," said Dempster; but the other two spoken of soon came up, and a close conference ensued as the three eyed the ladies sharply from the broad fronts of their slouched hats. Meanwhile Carrie rang her bell, chiming in with the assurance that every thing was getting cold; but it was of no avail. The attention of the gentlemen was attracted to the strange men, who seemed to court rather than elude notice, and had now aroused our party to anger.

"The ladies can dine without us," said Hall.

"They will refuse to do so," said Dempster.

"Can we send these fellows off first?"

"Why notice them at all, as long as they are quiet?" said Tremont.

"They annoy us by their scrutiny," said Dumont.

"They may be hoisted down yonder bank sooner than they are aware of," said Hall.

"Suppose we request them to leave this part of the grounds," suggested Omsted; and, walking toward the intruders, he began with,

"Gentlemen, you will oblige by withdrawing from this part of the wood."

"That would not answer our purpose," was the calm reply.

"If your purpose concerns us, we warn you to withdraw."

"My friend, the soil of Tarrytown is as free to us as to you—just as free to one idler as to another. You have nothing to do with our being here."

"Have you business with any of our party?" was then asked.

"As you are not the one, give yourself no uneasiness," was the reply.

Tremont, who had stood silently by during this colloquy, now ventured,

"We ask you, gentlemen, as peaceable men, to offer no insults, or, by this right arm, you suffer for it."

"We have offered no insults to your party, sir; yet we would be understood, threats will not alarm nor deter us from our object in coming here to-day."

"Your presence on the ground which we have selected is not agreeable; and certainly your coming here is not gentlemanly. You are strangers to us," said Omsted.

"We shall not stay long," the stranger murmured, as Tremont and Omsted rejoined the others.

The undertoned consultation that now ensued, awoke the suspicions of the ladies; alarm and confusion followed on their part, while surprise took the place of every other emotion on the part of the men, who suddenly found themselves overmatched in numbers. Some fifteen stalwart, dark-visaged men stood confronting our city-bred youths. Having climbed, unnoticed, the steep bank of the river, they now, in single file, followed the first intruder, who seemed to be the leader. Closely huddled together, the poor trembling girls stood looking at the strange intruders, who seemed, to their affrighted minds, to have sprung from the ground by an invisible wand.

"Such horrid-looking creatures!" whispered Bell.

"Girls, this is too dreadful!" said Clara.

"What can it mean?" said Mary.

"You do not seem afraid, Carrie," said Jane. "Can this be a mere trick played on us by the gentlemen?"

"If I thought so I would not be frightened for the world; I would not gratify them so much," said Carrie.

"Could it be, Carrie?" said Mary.

"No; I believe they are bad men."

The paleness of Carrie's face showed her fear, and alarmed Miss Ellen Rutledge more than if all the others had been afraid.

"Do cease looking at them," she said; "they might kill us all in a moment."

This intelligence seemed particularly startling to Kitty Lee, who now burst into tears—a sight so touching to Carrie, Kitty being her bosom-friend, as to arouse her indignation.

“Make horrid faces at them,” she cried; and, suiting the action to the word, called out,

“You are not wanted here, Misters! your room is better than your company. I wish my brother James were here; he’d make you quit coming to spoil our nice pic-nic.”

Then, seeing a smile on the face of the first intruder, and quite regardless of the handsome teeth, she added, angrily,

“Yes, you can laugh; I guess that is about all you know.”

“You awful girl!” exclaimed Ellen Rutledge, as she seized Carrie by the arm. “You will be the means of our death if you aggravate them.”

“Let me be, Miss Lady-Bug. Just try that on your own arm, will you?” And Carrie, appealing to the others, who stood clustered together, said,

“You do not know how she has hurt me, girls.”

And the pouting girl drew a mouth at Miss Ellen, who, in her turn indignant, tossed back an angry look.

The young men of the party had grouped together.

“With the musicians, we number thirteen,” said Dumont. “Can we not compete with them?”

Then, addressing the German band, he asked,

“Will you stand by us, boys?”

“To a man,” was the prompt response.

“Gentlemen,” said Hall, “we cannot, having ladies in charge, as you see, allow you to disturb us in this way. You must leave.”

“The soil is free,” said one.

“By precedence, it has become ours for the day,” said Tremont.

“Our motive is misconstrued entirely,” said the handsome leader of the belligerents. “We do not mean to harm the ladies.”

“Not a bit of it,” responded another. “Boys, three cheers for the ladies!” And a burst enough to shake all Tarrytown broke on the ear.

“Three cheers again, boys!” And fifteen hats whirled in the air.

“Waive the odds!” said Dempster.

“Done!” responded a half-dozen voices.

“Forcibly, if we must,” said Tremont.

“Omsted, accompany the ladies to the nearest farm-house, and return quickly.”

The ladies arose *en masse*, glad to go, and yet afraid to take so small an escort. The movement, however, seemed to disappoint the intruders, for their leader arose quickly, and, putting back from his fine forehead a cluster of jetty hair, said very calmly,

“Gentlemen, the ladies need not leave. I assure them that no rudeness is intended. The honor of our club, our sense of propriety, our self-respect—not fear,

I assure you—will keep us from combat, however much you may desire it. The fact is, gentlemen, we have a word—just a word—with one of the ladies of your party.”

The speaker's glance was keenly directed at Bell Gray, who had started forward, and now stood in blank surprise gazing at him, with an expression of any thing but fear or displeasure. Dumont hurried to her side, with a lover's privilege passing his arm protectingly about her waist.

Our party now seemed as eager as they had been reluctant for combat, and significant looks were quickly interchanged—when lo! surprise takes the place of every other emotion. Bell Gray has walked calmly over to the opposite party, and now, bowing her graceful form to catch the lowly-spoken word of the handsome stranger, seems lost to every thing in the joy of its import. A few more brief words, replies as brief, and she stands confidingly by his side, her dark eyes beaming with saucy mirth. Not so Dumont, who is frowning darkly on the stranger, who, in the confusion, has been speaking unheard.

“I repeat, let not the ladies judge us harshly. Our club which is here to-day stands for the defence of the fair. Our presence among you is by constraint, not choice, gentlemen. And now we wish you a very good morning. See,” he said, consulting a massive gold repeater, and casting a mischievous glance at Carrie, “we have not detained you long. 'Tis just

two.” And, bowing profoundly, he walked away deliberately, his companions following, all bowing politely to Bell as they passed.

The peaceable denouement of that which had seemed a catastrophe, gave rise to much merriment on the part of the girls. The jesting expressions of admiration for the handsome stranger had somewhat to do with the moody silence of the gentlemen; while Bell seemed in a fair way to become the heroine of the day. Her persevering silence on the exciting event just past was a marvel to the gentlemen and a source of some little annoyance to the ladies. In vain Emma Green declared herself decidedly in love. Clara Kelsey did not wonder, in consideration of such beautiful eyes and teeth. Carrie wished he had stayed, and made a guest at the table. To all which Bell only gave a happy smile.

“Do introduce me to your pirate. I always fancy such ruffianly persons,” said Ellen Rutledge.

“You ought, Miss Gray, if he is a man that cares for good housekeeping,” suggested Carrie, mischievously, as she rose up to apply the bell to the ear of each one. Nor, till gathered around the table, did good-nature dawn. Appetite found its edge; the ample loaf, the *à la modes*, and poultry with dainties of all kinds, vanished before the hungry knife; but where is the urbanity that ever marks the manners of Walter Dumont? And why has Bell asked in vain for an orange from the basket beside him?

The slight is intentional, and Bell is very determined not to notice it. Tremont has found a place beside his new friend, Mary Rutledge.

"That was a strange affair, wasn't it?"

"An innocent stratagem of Miss Gray, I think," said Mary.

"It was most unexpected to me," said Bell, arising suddenly, and strolling away.

"She was too much alarmed to have been a participator in the scheme."

"Were not all, even the gentlemen, just a little fearful?" and Mary added,

"Were not you, Mr. Tremont?"

Tremont smiled, as he replied by asserting that her manner demanded a candid reply.

"I confess," he said, "that a fight, such as I anticipated but now, I have always dreaded, so much so that I might have made concessions had I alone been offended; but the ladies, they must be defended from insult. Little as I care to be beaten by rough hands, I meant to fight manfully for them. Now do not write me out of your books for a cowardly fellow, if I say that I only found my courage when my indignation arose high—so high that it made me quite regardless of self."

"Oh, no! for I think—I questioned only."

Mary hesitated and was silent.

"What did you think, Miss Mary? Come, I have been very candid."

"Whether a person who fights willingly, is as brave as one who does so from a conviction of duty; and whether the latter would not be likely to be most victorious—having a sense of right on his side."

"The Quaker would tell us, that a fight is never to be palliated. Driven to the extreme, pushing is preferred."

"What a singular battle array that mode would present," laughed Mary.

"And what of those belted champions, who batter and mangle the face without even a sense of wrong—who meet as friends, and only become angry as each in turn becomes the vanquished?"

"That is too dreadful to think of," said Mary, with an involuntary shudder. "That practice must have grown out of a brutal thirst for blood, incited by intoxicating drink and a low ambition—a thing that an enlightened, and increasingly religious people will soon put down."

Tremont, who had been sounding the mind of Mary, whom he had noticed among the classes where he had formerly taught, smiled to find on what a strange and disagreeable topic he had fallen; and, fearing to have lost by the acquaintance, lingered beside her, making bad worse by that want of tact so common to the most intelligent men—a want little known to the simplest of womankind.

Meanwhile, busy hands had been removing the basketfuls that remained to a suitable place for safe-

keeping. Carrie had not forgotten that tea-time would come by and by, nor that they would not always feel as complacent as just now. She recalled the dinner-basket of her school-days, seeming so needless at morning, so necessary at noon.

And now, free from all care, she is the merriest of the merry ones. The swing is flying back and forth, music is on the air, and all are happy but one. In vain Walter Dumont seeks to hide the change, in his regard for Bell Gray. A something in the event of the morning troubles him. Why can she not tell him, at least, what claim that stranger had to her notice? Then, there was a boldness about her part in the scene quite incompatible with female timidity; and so, rather than betray his sullenness, Walter has strolled off alone far in the depth of the wood, a prey to most unenviable feelings, of which he is, in truth, now half ashamed. Long after, when the day had worn away, and the boat-hand was giving his last warning ring, he had dropped beside Carrie, as the one least likely to have missed him. The boat is off for home, night closes in, and the stars come out to greet their shadows in the blue waters of the Hudson, the band is playing merrily for tired dancers. Carrie is sleeping soundly on the shoulder of Jane. Too soon for her the Arrow has sped to New York. She is aroused, to fall in the line of march and the "good-night" sounds, as one and another turn off at different streets for home, at one of which Miss Ellen Rutledge announces her de-

termination to go home with Bell, as she is too tired to walk farther. Alas, for Walter's last hope of an explanation! The habit of staying a night or two, as convenience or fancy dictates, is common to persons of ill-regulated habits. It was usual with Ellen Rutledge.

Sleep, that comes readily to the weary, has not visited Mary Rutledge. Long after midnight she sits, her thoughts not on the pleasures of the past day, nor on the friend whose preference had been so tacitly given; she is reading page after page in the new, strange volume, from which the following passages are selected after the first reading.

"I will sing of the mercies of the Lord forever; with my mouth will I make known Thy faithfulness to all generations."

"How little I have thought of the Lord," said Mary. And she read on.

But "who in the heavens can be compared unto the Lord? Who among the sons of the mighty can be likened unto the Lord?"

A strange fear had fallen on the mind of the young girl. Looking around her room, as if to assure herself of being quite alone, she knelt by her bed's side, and, for the first in her lifetime, gave utterance to prayer. The petition was simple, earnest, and broken; it sped up to the courts of heaven, to make angels rejoice: for when was praying breath ever spent in vain?

And so the day, that had been set apart as one of amusement, proved an epoch in Mary's life. The first warning to arise and seek a better rest had been sounded. And who shall count among trifles the work of turning from the world to God?—the setting a man at variance with his household—the taking of a cross—the silent penitential tear shed for past forgetfulness—the cry of “God be merciful to me a sinner!” Nor is this work always wrought by the same instrumentality. God, in the exercise of His supreme sovereignty, often makes use of means seemingly simple. An old thumbed Bible proved, in after months, to Mary that the entrance of God's word giveth light. For many weeks she went about with a strange sense of the utter uselessness of all her former employments; even from her studies she turned with a thought of their inutility;—and so the innocent pleasures and engagements of life are, until we have sought first the kingdom of God and His righteousness. At last, when she resolved to tell all to the faithful old housekeeper, Mrs. Grant, the great adversary of souls whispered the insidious question:

“What can one mind know of the workings of another? She will laugh at you.”

With a sad heart, she was one morning greeted with,

“Mary, child, a note for you.”

“From whom, grandma?”

“Now, there is a question! Do I open the *billets-doux* of others?”

“Oh, no, grandma; and yet you might, as I have nothing to conceal from you.”

“’Tis addressed to the Misses Rutledge, my child.”

“Then I dare not open it.”

“That is just what I mean you to do, to cure her of a most overbearing mood in which she has arisen this morning.”

Mary obeyed, and found an invitation for Ellen and herself to attend another excursion up the Hudson.

“Another!” sighed Mary.

Mrs. Grant noticed the weary look of her pet child, as she termed Mary, and asked,

“Is it not late for an out-door party?”

“It is differently arranged, aunty,” said Mary. “Mr. Tremont says here, that we need not fear taking cold.”

“You do not seem much pleased. Do you not wish to go?” asked Mrs. Rutledge.

“I can go, if it is your wish.”

The reply was so full of sadness, that the lady laughed merrily as she called Mary a queer little girl; then, raising her eyeglass, she remarked to the housekeeper,

“Granty, she looks very poorly. See, now! one would think she had received an invitation to a funeral. We must get her off from her books; they make one so old-looking. Why, the child looks full twenty. Do you not see?—pale and worn-looking.”

“I do, ma’am.”

"She must go out often." And patting the young girl's cheek, she continued: "I never was for restricting the young. I am glad our winter parties are at hand; they give ease to the manners. By the way, who is this Tremont?"

"I do not know, ma'am."

"Who is he, child?"

"A merchant, I think," said Mary.

"Wealthy?"

"I think not; for I have heard Ellen regretting a something in his circumstances, that gave me the impression that he is poor."

"Ah! I took him for a gentleman of fortune; he has the courtly grace of an English nobleman."

"He is talented, and much interested in schools. He examined our class in Latin and algebra, and so I first knew him; but Ellie has known him a long while."

"'Talents' is something in this country, standing well in place of family name. I was about to say, that his acquaintance, just as you are to make your debut, is quite timely."

"May Heaven keep her from the temptations of the world," murmured Mrs. Grant, as she slowly left the room. There was a fund of what may be called wicked mischief lurking in the eye of Mrs. Rutledge, as she sat in her great rocking-chair, holding the rose-colored note daintily as she heard the approaching steps of Ellen.

"A note for the Misses Rutledge," she said, twirling it at Ellen.

"How came the seal broken?"

"Ask your sister, miss."

And then, what a tide of vituperations, cutting, sarcastic, and bitter, set in, while Mrs. Rutledge laughed slyly at the storm she had raised. The entrance of Mrs. Grant for a moment silenced the angry girl, at which Mrs. Rutledge remarked,

"There has been quite a storm, Granty."

The housekeeper glanced at the window incredulously.

"Aye, a tempest, I might say."

The solution was found in Miss Ellen's frowning face.

"Granty, can't you see some clouds in the atmosphere yet? These squalls come so suddenly nowadays."

Ever grieved at the discord which her mistress rather liked, since it chased away *ennui*, the housekeeper sighed a mere "Yes, ma'am," as she left the room.

The excursion, that was taken a week after this time, was pronounced by all to be dull, since it lacked an incident. The absence of Bell caused a disappointment to Walter, who, despite the lively companion he had invited, was himself moodily silent. Tremont was puzzled for a cause of Mary's unusual seriousness. Ellen, as usual, was by turns trifling and sullen. The

cry of an awakened conscience kept Mary in a silent mood. She could see in the gay assemblage only a company of immortals, hurrying, with herself, to a day of final account. Could she have looked out of self to the atoning Lamb, how soon the thirst of an awakened conscience might have been allayed.

CHAPTER II.

How easy 'tis, when destiny proves kind,
With full-spread sails to run before the wind;
But those that 'gainst stiff winds careering go,
Must be at once resolved, and skilful too.—DRYDEN.

THE home of Bertha Rutledge is a fit emblem of herself—as proudly cold as wealth can make it. Living for the applause of the gay world, she has ever been the acknowledged leader of the *ton*. What wonder, if, on discovering the cause of Mary's sadness, the gay woman is deeply irritated? That Mary should take to such an old-fashioned book as the Bible, calls forth all the bitterness of sarcasm. Disappointment in her cherished scheme of shedding her mantle on the two fair girls—of seeing herself reviving in them—has ruffled her temper, and now the good Ellis Grant is had up for questioning.

“Explain this vagary, if you please. A young creature—a child, I may say—taking to religion; and you the cause!”

The voice of Mrs. Grant came quietly, and contrasted with the sharp tones of the lady.

“I did not cause it, ma'am; it came from a higher power than I possess.”

The retort came in a higher key.

"And you encourage it? Superstitious old woman!"

The housekeeper silently wiped plate after plate, caring less for the anger of her mistress than that she should only now have learned the cause of Mary's gloom. Blaming herself for neglect, she had nearly forgotten the angry reproof, to which she had been so long familiar, when she was aroused by the question,

"Did you, or did you not, bring this new notion to the child's mind?"

"I did not, ma'am."

"Get her off from it, then."

"I could not."

"You can. Grant, you know you have influence with the child; now do, for my sake, use it, to check this horrid delusion. You cannot realize how much it has annoyed me. You know she is, in mind, superior to Ellie."

"She is, ma'am."

"Prettier, too—is she not?"

The sudden change from the supercilious to a mild tone alarmed Mrs. Grant. Had she seemed to comply? Then, summoning all her courage, she said, in a tone deeply earnest,

"My good mistress, no mortal can prevent the influence of the Spirit. I cannot resist the arm of the Almighty; I would not dare. There might come a reckoning-time between myself and the Holy One,

should I try to raise my poor objection to His will. Who can withstand the day of His coming?"

The housekeeper was moving toward the door, as her mistress said, in a pleading tone,

"You are not usually so timid. I urge you to get her off from that horrid book. You know you have a strange influence over her; see, Granty, that you do not abuse it."

With lifted hands, and eyes that looked in those of her mistress, the faithful woman exclaimed,

"That wonderful Book! Therein are the words of eternal life! Oh, that you would consider it! Do not call me bold, when I beg you to reflect on the shortness of life, the certainty of death, but most on the goodness of the Lord. You are no longer young, ma'am."

This last was unfortunate. A petulant stamp of the foot cut short the remark, so full of well-meant kindness. Mary's entrance "turned the tide," as we say.

"I am just speaking of you, Miss. I am telling Grant that this must be stopped. A child to set up in opposition to me, closeting herself like a nun, pouting and gloomy because, forsooth, we are not good enough to dwell with."

"Oh, no, grandma—no, indeed!" was all Mary could utter ere she burst in tears.

"You refuse to attend balls, and hold to fanatical notions imbibed from a book long since discarded by

the enlightened of other countries, and only read in this by the ignorant and puritanical."

As Mary sat meekly under this shower of words, there came a troublesome aching in her throat—a something, too, which she tried in vain to put away by swallowing. Could she but speak an excusing word—something in her own defence. It was all in vain to try. Casting her eyes on her old and tried friend, the housekeeper, and mistaking her look of sorrow for disapprobation, and supposing that all were against her, poor Mary covered her face with both hands, and wept bitterly. At this crisis the door was flung wide open, and Ellen, dressed for morning calls, came sweeping in to announce her perfect readiness.

"Dear me," she drawled out, "what is all this about? What a time, you cry-baby! As if he couldn't call again!"

"I doubt that he will, after waiting an hour in vain, last evening," said Mrs. Rutledge.

Mary felt how completely she was misunderstood by all; and, humbled at her own weakness, tried in vain to check the grief that was shaking her frame.

To take Mary to her bosom, as she had often in the past, was the wish of Mrs. Grant; but the fear of increasing the displeasure of the family deterring, she left the room with a heart raised in silent prayer for her pet child.

Are not the answers of unspoken, untold prayers, a proof of the omniscience of Deity?

The family carriage had rolled away, bearing Ellen and Mrs. Rutledge to their round of morning calls, leaving Mary still weeping, her head bowed on her hands. Tears are not habitual to her, but the wound has been made harshly on a heart already bleeding; and now, as she sits thus, the door is softly opened.

Can one feel the glance of loving eyes, and know the scrutiny of a friend? Some think so. The hand on her shoulder, and the face laid lovingly to her own, requires, but how can she look up with such swollen eyelids?

"Mary," was spoken gently; and, without raising her head, she answered apologetically,

"I am acting very childish this morning."

"You are having a good cry, aren't you?"

"Yes," came meekly, for Mary could think of nothing else just then.

"And what is it all about?" came coaxingly from Bell Gray.

"I had the misfortune to offend grandma. I must try to be cheerful; I am not often so overcome."

Bell brought a chair close beside her friend, and, sitting down, said playfully,

"Now, you are not candid, for you have not told me all the cause of these tears."

Quite mistaking Bell's meaning, and cheered by her kindly manner, Mary raised her head, and, placing her hand in Bell's, told her all the dealings of the Lord

with her troubled soul. The news was strange to the gay girl.

"You must not give way to such thoughts," she said.

"I cannot help doing so, Miss Gray."

"As to your faults," said Bell, "I could put them all in a nut-shell. How came you to suppose yourself a sinner?"

"The conviction came unbidden, unsought by me."

"And has this paled your cheek and changed you so?"

Bell gazed in the bright fire with her mind puzzled at the problem; for Mary had asked,

"What shall I do to be saved?"

"Perhaps you mistake," she said, "in attributing these thoughts to a sacred influence. Certainly the path of religion is one of peace, and her ways are said to be pleasant. What if these are from an evil influence, after all?"

"Never! Would evil lead me to grieve because I am not good? Would it cause me to view the Lord as too pure to look on sin with the least allowance? Would it draw all my thoughts toward heaven? I have not been admitted to the path of peace; I am unworthy. I cannot make reparation for the past, even were I pardoned for all future errors. No, no; I am a lost creature!"

"Now, tell me, if you can," said Bell, "some of those terrible sins of which you have been guilty."

"I dare not own publicly that I would serve the Lord. I feel that He is angry with me for a whole life of neglect. Miss Gray, I never prayed till now. All my thoughts have been of myself. I have trifled away the time only lent to me to prepare for a better state of existence. I know I am a sinner."

"Well, dear," said Bell, "I have put away those convictions, as you term them, on the score of *ennui* or bodily ailment. Why, at the most unseasonable hour, in the dance, perhaps, in the street, the ever-unanswered question comes thus: 'Of what use?' or, 'What avails all this show, this mirth?' Again, I have awakened in the night with an amazed sense that this body of mine must die. Oh, that *must!*"

"And how did you answer the questions?" said Mary.

"Why, with an effort to forget, I have composed myself to sleep again. The next morning I have laughed at my fears, and the evening found me the gayest of the gay. I have conquered. I have no such annoyance now. Who dreams that such thoughts have ever visited the giddy Bell?"

Mary shuddered, as she said tremblingly,

"How could you trifle thus? Was it not the voice of the great Judge calling you to prepare to meet Him at a final day?"

"Well, my dear, what can I do? where turn, but to scenes of gayety?"

A tear glistened in the beautiful dark eyes of Bell, as she strove to resume her gayety.

"You and I," she said, "how different! You are good and gentle; I am proud and self-willed."

"It is not a sin here and there, Miss Gray, but the whole tenor of my life has been made up of forgetfulness of a Father who has been heaping continual blessings on me from my childhood. Oh, never call me good."

In vain Bell tried to cheer a heart that had been touched as with a coal from off the altar of the Lord.

"Come, get your bonnet and go home with me," said Bell, as she arose to depart.

Mary declined.

"Now I am glad that I stole on you, having imbibed an erroneous opinion from a remark of your sister—something about you having offended your beau. Ridiculous! was it not?"

"Yes; and it is so unpleasant to be misunderstood; but it is nothing in comparison to my self-condemning heart."

"Oh! you must not think so much about it, dear. That about being misunderstood by friends is true, indeed;" and Bell sighed heavily.

"Now, Miss Gray, see how unreasonable is a comparison on the subject, the good will of my friends! Why, what is it to the displeasure of the Maker of the universe? Oh, I could resign all—I could shut myself out from society—do any thing to feel that I am forgiven of Him. But, alas, I cannot blot out the past!"

"Your past has not been worse than mine."

"True, we have both been giddy enough."

"And I mean to be better at some future time—when I am an old lady, say."

"We may not live to be old."

"Oh, well, we all hope to."

"The Bible says, 'Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth.'"

"And I have made it a study to forget. That is terrible!"

"Oh, dear Bell—I must call you so, now that we have talked thus—do start with me for a better life; not a gloomy one, but one that acknowledges a heavenly Parent in each event. Let us consider more, and take heed to our ways. What if we should be left to fall into vices? Surely it is not for the asking that I have been kept hitherto."

"I would like to. I might, if I could be with you; but—"

Bell left the sentence unfinished, as she extended her hand. And so the two girls, who had met as mere acquaintances, parted in confidence of each other—the result of that heart-searching hour.

"Good-bye, dear Mary. Let it be 'Bell' and 'Mary,' and not 'Miss Gray;' that is so cold."

A hearty good-by response, and the friends parted. Bell is soon threading her way, not toward her home on Fifth avenue, but along by-streets.

"Yes," she murmured, "we do think more of the

opinion of our friends than of the approbation of our Lord. It is so unpleasant to be misunderstood. Dear Tice, your love has cost me a friend, one whom I cannot forget, try as I will."

Stopping, as if to decide which of two directions to choose, Bell was greeted by a young gentleman, who, after a few brief words, turned to walk beside her. There was evident constraint on both sides.

"Let me see," said Walter; "I think it is quite a while since I have seen you—not since the excursion to Tarrytown."

And Bell, who had counted a long seven weeks, replied lightly, and with well-assumed surprise,

"Indeed! not since? One is apt to forget, in such a whirl of parties. I have been a faithful devotee to soirees, quartettes, and the opera."

"Ah! have you enjoyed them?"

"That was my object in going, and I do not see why I shouldn't."

"I have ceased to enjoy those places," said Walter. "My taste is satiated. I have seen enough of their false glare."

There was a tone of sadness, so unusual to Walter, that it nearly toppled over all Bell's assumed indifference. However, she rallied, and remarked,

"You should either stay at home, or put your whole heart in them, since a martyr to the usages of fashionable life has not even the poor award of fame."

"Leaving them does not oblige me to remain at

home. That I know them to be most unprofitable, robs me of enjoyment, and yet I go, because, by discontinuance, I subject myself to idle questionings."

"So we all stoop to mere opinion."

Bell was yielding to the kindliness of past familiarity.

"Forgive me," she said, with a light laugh; "I did not mean to moralize; 'tis so out of my line altogether. Good-bye." And leaving Walter utterly surprised, she turned down a narrow street, and up the steps of a neat frame building. Her rap at the old brass knocker is quickly answered, and for a time we lose sight of her; while Walter soliloquizes indignantly. "The sooner this folly is over, the better for my future success. I have wasted too much time. 'Tis well that the packet is not off without me."

In the bustle of preparation for the long-contemplated journey to which Bell and Walter had looked with sadness, at times in hope that it might be dispensed with, scarcely could he realize that he was leaving her in coldness and suspicion.

And such is the course of true affection. So many part, and seek solace in other ties, perhaps to regret ever after—perhaps to grow into resignation, and say "It was just as well."

CHAPTER III.

Those hours are not lost that are spent in cementing affection.—*Tupper.*

LEFT alone, Mary aroused herself, determined to follow the advice of Miss Gray, and, if possible, think less on serious topics. For this purpose she applied herself to a book from the centre-table, which, failing to interest, was changed for another of a more amusing character. It was all in vain, this new task of trying to forget; the mind was too forcibly impressed; so Mary plied the needle, while tears fell one by one on the bright worsted flower which she was working.

"Oh, for some one to guide me in the ways of righteousness!" she murmured. "My mother! why could not you have been spared to me?"

Then she thought of that mother's early friend, the pious Mrs. Bentley. Would it be seemly to address one by whom she could be but faintly remembered? one who had made but a brief visit to Mrs. Rutledge a long while ago? There was a something half-remembered—a prayer or fervent exhortation to a servant then sick; a something, too, that gave the idea of

kindliness toward herself; and then the intimacy between that lady and her mother, of which Mrs. Grant had told her, serving to give courage, sent her to her writing-desk. A few moments after she had penned the following, never stopping to reperuse or correct, lest that courage might fail her:

"17 *Blank Place.*

"DEAR MADAM:—I am told that you were once the friend of my mother—indeed, that you were intimate companions, and this makes me bold in writing to you. Do not be offended at me; I am so much in need of a friend myself. I am so alone in my new thoughts about another and a better state of existence. There seem to be two motives impelling me to remember and take heed to my ways—to dislike the gayeties of a fashionable life, making me anxious to withdraw from a career, just begun, where one engagement follows another in the prospect of a lifetime thus devoted. Remembering my carelessness about the great Parent of all, the Father who has been constantly caring for me, I feel that I have no right to be gay and frivolous—oh, I have such a condemning sense of sinfulness! Dear Madam, what has wrought this change in my feelings? Why does a mode of life that once seemed innocent, now appear so wrong—so useless?

"All the future stands as a barren waste, on which the verdure and beauty have dropped sere and dead—but of motives, the first is, to please and be reconciled

to an offended God; the other to obey the mandate of a mother; for I find on a torn scrap this to her child.

“‘And next, live sensibly, rationally, my Mary, as becomes the daughter of a man whose wise deliberations aided in bringing about the glory of his native land.’

“The words, so dear to me, seemed to offend grand-mamma deeply; and, with the meaning unexplained, I only ask if I ought to obey one of the kindest and best of grandparents, while, in so doing, I am far, very far, from living sensibly, rationally, as becomes my descent. Or is this all a delusion? Ought the springtime of life to be thus clouded? You, who know so well, tell me if it is so; or is it the voice of a God calling me to follow my mother in a righteous life?

“I scarcely know what I am writing to you, dear Madam, for I am ashamed of my boldness; yet I hope your kind heart finds an apology in the unhappy state of my mind—most unhappy because, but a few moments ago, I tried to put away all concern about the future good. I had wickedly resolved to forget, but in vain. The words of a stranger, and the teachings of a Bible which he gave me, will never be erased from my mind. You see the trouble I am in, dear Madam; I must choose between pleasing grandmamma and obeying the Lord. I cannot do both.

“Will you take notice of my letter? Will you

advise me how I ought to comport myself under the circumstances? I should consider it an honor conferred on yours,

“Most respectfully,

“MARY G. RUTLEDGE.”

Mary returned to the parlor, and, after placing her letter among others for the next morning's post, with a mind somewhat relieved, took her Bible and read until the early dusk of the shaded room forbade her; and, being puzzled at some passages, she went out in search of the housekeeper, whom she found sitting beside a basket of newly-ironed clothes.

Mrs. Grant's room contrasted widely with the parlor which she had just left. The bright rays of the setting sun lit up the faded gilt on the old Bible, and tipped the polished stand and carved chairs. The bed, with its snowy counterpane, gave to the room a look of comfort, as a place of rest for mind and body. As Mary sat down beside her aged friend, she asked if she might not assist in the mending.

“I have nearly finished, my dear, though I am glad of your company; it will speed the little that is left.”

“Just that little tear, aunty. Do let me feel that I have earned my salt to-day.”

“Now! what in the world has put such a thought in your mind? Your salt, indeed!—Well, you may darn this little break, and, in the meantime, tell me

what you learn from that." And Mrs. Grant touched the corner of the small Bible that protruded from the pocket of Mary's dress.

"I learn slowly, Aunt Ellis. I suppose you have it all by heart."

"Well, dear, I have a head-knowledge of it. I get but little time to read in the only book that is worth caring for," sighed Mrs. Grant.

"Let me read for you, then; perhaps you can explain this; it is quite a mystery to me.—There, I have darned that." And Mary drew out her Bible, and, coming nearer, commenced. She was a pretty reader at any time, and now, mind and heart being engrossed, the pathos and sweetness of her tones fell soothingly on the ear of the rapt listener. She read from the fifty-third of Isaiah:

"Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows."

"There, Aunt Ellis! How could He carry my sorrows?"

"What is your sorrow, my dear?"

"Sin."

"And that is mine too, dear. Do you repent of your sins?"

"Ah, yes!" said Mary.

"Then you are just the one whom Jesus loves. He came not to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance. Can you imagine a weight so heavy that no man can lift it? You look around on one

and another, and ask help of all, still finding none able; and when you begin to despair, One is found who, with great power, hurls it into the sea, where it sinks forever. The Strong One carried it, sweating great drops of blood." And the old lady raised her glasses, and placed them above her cap border, as she asked, "Now, would you trust such a being?"

"Yes, for I should have all confidence," said Mary.

"You would not put your little hands to the burden to help lift?"

"My help would not be needed."

"True; and so, my child, Jesus has carried away your sins and mine; He has hurled them into the sea of forgetfulness. Trust Him with your heavy sorrows; cast all your care on Him."

"I have done nothing to deserve such kindness."

"True; undeserved kindness is mercy, and the Lord has proclaimed Himself merciful and gracious. You need mercy?"

"Oh, yes, Aunt Ellis; I do indeed."

"Come, then, to Jesus, the Physician of the sick soul. Seek no longer to aid in a completely finished work. The Redeemer has all power; He changes the bent of the mind; He makes you dislike a mode of life that causes you to forget Him. My child, His is a finished work; He has no need of you."

"And have I nothing to do?"

"Your work is all laid out for you."

"What is it, aunty?"

"You are to watch and pray; you are to show forth good fruit, as does a healthy tree. Now, the fruit does not make the tree; but by it we tell the kind of tree. The good works which you are commanded to bring forth, does not make you a child of God; it only shows to the world around who you are, and it may induce some to glorify the Father in heaven. And when you have done the very best act in your power, you are to feel you have only done that which was your duty. Can you see the glorious plan, my dear?"

"I see that it makes me come just as I am."

"Yes, without one plea. The atonement was made on Calvary; the great debt that stood between you and an offended God is carried away; the work was completed when He said, 'It is finished!' and gave up the spirit."

"And am I to owe my pardon to mercy alone?"

"Yes, to free grace entirely. You, being a sinner, need favor; and that you see yourself as such, gives you a claim to it on the ground of His promise to all the heavy-laden."

"Is the Lord so good!" exclaimed Mary. "Can I—dare I come to Him?"

"You can, my dear."

Still Mary pondered.

"But I shall fall into sin again, I fear; and what can I do then, dear aunty?"

"Ah! if He has made you His child, He will heal your backslidings; He will love you freely. Do you not see, my child, that you cannot do without Jesus? He is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth. He is very pitiful to the weary and heavy-laden. Are you not weary, my dear? You have seemed sad of late."

"Yes, sorrow has been my portion."

"Did you think you were unnoticed by me, my child?"

"I felt as if I were all alone in the wide world, and that, had I a thousand friends, none could help me."

Tears were dimming Mary's eyes; beautiful, penitential tears dropped one by one on the small Bible in her hand. They were not the first, nor was she the only one who had wept on those worn pages; eyes as young and bright had conned them—eyes now dimming with age, eyes forever shut.

"My child," said Mrs. Grant, "I have not spoken to you as I ought; but oh! I have prayed that you might be brought to the kingdom."

It was strangely touching to mark the sun's rays falling aslant the silver locks of age and lighting the golden hair of youth—and those two pondering the things of eternity. The elder had worldly care, and arose reluctantly.

"Well," she said, "it is not often that I give myself such a treat as this has been; now I must hurry

to make up the time. Remember, dear, that faith is the gift of God. He alone can reveal to you the way of peace. Pray often, and light will come to cheer you on the way to that city whose maker and builder is God."

Parting with Mrs. Grant at the door, Mary went to her room, where, kneeling in prayer, she asked the Redeemer to reveal Himself to her as a Saviour—a prayer of broken accents that must have sped to the courts of heaven, for light broke on the mind, and that peace which passes all understanding began to dawn on the soul.

When summoned to tea, Mary found Carrie Hall and her brother as visitors. The flippant, jesting manner of the company was distasteful, yet she served at tea with more than her usual politeness. When informed that the Halls had come to town for the winter, Mary asked the cause of a change so unexpected by all.

"Oh, there were two causes—a real and a false one," said Carrie. "The coming balls the real, opening lectures the false; and ma, for once, has been duped into the belief that her only son has a soaring mind—hem!—that he is aspiring—that he is a scholar."

"You see, Miss Mary," said Hall, "my fine literary taste would not permit me to remain among the rusticities of the country."

"He used to dislike New York of all places, but

now there is no place like it. Miss Mary, you must have charmed him."

"Now, now, sis! my penchant is for the ball-room in winter, of course including the presence of Miss Mary; and in summer, our old home, when you gather a posse of pretty girls to help kill the time."

Mary was struck by an expression so often used by herself—that of killing time. How important each moment now seemed to her. Time, the fleeting moment lent to mortals in which to prepare for eternity, as she was addressed by Mr. Hall with—

"By the way, have we lost you from our summer, as well as winter gayeties?"

"She is not lost to either, Mr. Hall," said Mrs. Rutledge curtly; "not while I am head of this house. Her moodiness, I assure you, is of short duration."

It was well for Mary that all were now rising from the table; her blushing face was unnoticed. In the drawing-room Hall drew his chair beside her, and continued,

"In truth, there are flying reports that you and the old housekeeper are about starting a mission to the South Seas."

"Charley," said Carrie, "that is a borrowed joke of Miss Ellen's."

"He is welcome to use it," said Miss Rutledge, laughingly.

"And to the jest," said Mary.

"But you do not confess to becoming bosom com-

panions. Now say that is false, and relieve my mind."

"I have nothing to deny, Mr. Hall, as my good-nature grants you all hearsays."

"Ah, let us come to facts, then, and tell me if you mean to attend the ball on Wednesday?"

"I am hoping to be excused; but you know I must abide by grandmamma's decision."

"Hoping to be excused!" exclaimed Carrie. "Why, Miss Mary! What harm in a ball?"

"What good?" ventured Mary.

"How much worse to sit at home and talk against one's neighbors."

"Good!" said Ellen.

"I see no comparison; since one is a sin, the other may lead to it;" and Mary laughingly asked, "Is there no middle course between dancing and scandal?"

"Which is the sin, Miss Mary?" asked Hall.

"Not dancing," said Mary.

"In the ball-room?" he asked.

"I cannot say; let me speak for my own feelings. A something, of late, has disinclined me to attend balls, and I do trust grandmamma will not insist on my attending the one for Wednesday."

"Well, I don't wish to be rude," said Carrie, "only I say, if religion makes us unfriendly, I do not want it."

"Nor I," said Ellen.

"I don't know," said Hall. "I rather like Miss

Mary as a saint; but poor Tremont might as well withdraw his suit. Such a devotee can have no room for human affections. I am sorry to lose such a star from our hemisphere."

"How much I dislike flattery," said Mary, seriously.

A servant now announced Mr. Tremont in the reception-room. Ellen excused herself, remarking, as she left,

"It will not last, Mr. Hall; precocity generally spends itself in a few months. Such dull creatures as Carrie and I may yet come on the calendar."

Mrs. Rutledge had excused herself on the plea of headache. Once free from the restraint of her presence, the conversation turned on various topics alike unprofitable and trifling.

Charles Hall, addressing his sister, declared he did not see the need of a strait-jacket for Mary.

"Now, there is poor Tremont, too much afraid of her bite to come in. Sis, I thought you said she was quite a monomaniac?"

"I never, in all my life, used such a big word," said Carrie.

"You gave me to understand that she was quite ridiculous."

"Am I so misrepresented?" said Mary. "May I not follow, though afar off, the example of many great and good persons now passed away? Hannah More, Lady Huntington, Jane Taylor, our own Wash-

ington, studied the Bible. To me it seems the most rational act of my hitherto useless life."

"Stop, Miss Mary! That 'our own Washington' isn't fair," said Hall.

"Fair, if you reflect that General Washington belongs to all lands—that an orator has said, no clime can appropriate him."

"That will do for a little English girl who longs to be an American," laughed Hall; but Mary, just a little piqued at him, continued,

"Of the Bible, Mr. Hall, if I find in it a character so pure that all others sink in comparison, am I not right in studying it? Is it strange that this new employment leaves no taste for the festivities of which I am so tired?"

Mr. Hall saw that trifling was useless. There seemed a reality about this change in his friend.

"At least," he said, "you have a right to please yourself; but why must you hide your smiles from such poor souls as Tremont and myself?"

Hall had but just discovered his friend standing at the back of Mary's chair. Tremont, a few moments before, had startled Ellen in the midst of a witless harangue, by asking to see her sister. Never supposing that Mary could be attractive to a person of his taste, Ellen had led the way in surprise, and half wondering at the strangeness of the request. So both had entered unnoticed. Ellen had stopped at the mirror,

to adjust a curl; while he, without intending it, escaped notice.

The favorable impression he had gained of Mary was deepened by the sincerity of her manner. He liked the earnestness of her defence. Little as he had regarded the subject of religion, he was charmed with her modest pleadings with Carrie to commence with her a more useful mode of living. Amused at Hall's deferential silence, and suspecting that he was at least convinced of the sanity of his girl-friend, Tremont listened with a deep interest. Mary's manner, too, was so meek and modest, with such a fear of seeming to teach, or to appear better than others, and so free from cant or stereotyped phrases, of which he had heard too much, that he forgot to retain his unobserved position, and spoke out an earnest response; at which Carrie shrieked her surprise, while Hall sprang to his feet with a "How are you, my dear sir!" And Mary looked the pleasure she felt at once more meeting a gentleman for whom she had from the first conceived a high respect. His manner toward herself had been a tacit compliment, since he had not addressed her as a child, nor as a simple woman—more as a sister, a friend; he had seemed to consult with, rather than talk at her. And the impression left on her mind was of a gentleman of talent and good taste in conversation—in short, there was that magnetic attraction that draws us so unaccountably to like some persons of either sex, while we pass others, if not with

dislike, with a perfect indifference. Ah, but there is a cloud on the retrospect of young Tremont, that bids him withhold an expression of admiration for the fair daughters of wealth and honorable descent. Alas! he must bide his time, even though others, more favored by circumstances of birth and pedigree, step in and win the prize.

CHAPTER IV.

Sweet are the uses of adversity; which like a toad, ugly and venomous, wears yet a precious jewel in its head.—*Shakspeare.*

BELL'S rap was answered by a fair girl of some eighteen summers.

"Dear Tice!"

"Dearest Bell!"

And for a moment the golden hair and jetty locks were clustering together; then, arm in arm, the sisters ascended the stairs leading to a room small but beautiful in its neatness. The furniture, in the selection, showed elegance of taste; on a crimson lounge slept a babe, whom Bell, at the first, had failed to notice.

"Come, sister," she said, "this is silly; instead of rejoicing to meet once more, we are acting like children."

Still Tice wept, and Bell hastened away to a picture that hung against the wall.

"This is Clary's choosing," she said; "that tossing ship, and dark, troubled sky, how plainly it tells a master hand."

Tice had dried her eyes, and now, with a mother's fondness, called her sister's attention to the child.

"Pray do not wake him," she said, as Bell began

removing an embroidered blanket from his plump white arms.

"May I not touch him?" said Bell. "Why, what a darling! You will have to tie my hands."

"Please do not," laughed Tice; "we have so much to talk about. How is dear papa?"

Bell hesitated awhile.

"Not as well as usual, sister; his temper is strangely altered of late. I think he is getting nervous."

"And I cannot come to tend on him. Oh! what a dear father I have lost by my disobedience."

"There, now, sis; do not take it so to heart. Pa ought to forgive you; he is too unrelenting. Do not think of it, dear;" and, passing her arm about the waist of the young and petted sister, she turned the discourse adroitly to other topics.

Tice is now preparing a repast, while Bell is hanging over the sleeping child. The temptation is too great; the veriest of tiny pinches, and two round, beautiful eyes are turned on Bell, two plump knees are slowly drawn up, and two rosy feet plunge out of their covering. With a broad smile, very like the sunbeam that breaks over a beautiful landscape, the baby nephew greets his young aunt; at which Bell's laughter is catching, the child is uproarious in his glee.

"How strange!" said Tice; "he generally sleeps the whole morning, and now, to wake just as we were going to dine so cozily!"

Bell only laughed more merrily, and asked,

"What is his name?"

"Edgar."

"Ed, you and I are friends; you are a dear, charming pet—aren't you?" And chime went Bell's laughter again, as she said,

"This humor always takes me when I see a likeness between a tiny little thing like this, and a great burly sailor like Clarence."

"He has Clary's eyes exactly," said Tice.

"Could pa recognize him, think you?"

"I think not, dear; pa is not quick to perceive a likeness in any one. Some never see a resemblance, you know."

Bell now sat swaying back and forth, with the child in her arms.

"I shall not allow myself to become attached to him until I know whether or not you mean to remain, or to be off again"

Tice gave the assurance that nothing would induce her husband to take her with him again

"That is good! Now tell me how you stood the voyage, and how you like Englishmen at home—and—and—" said Bell, merrily.

"How much I cried, and acted like a baby?" interposed Tice.

"Yes; and how Clarence bears his laurels as husband and father. That romping boy—how strange it seems! Do you remember the time he broke the great old mirror?—and how afraid we were of Morris?"

"Yes."

"And how glad I was that she took for granted that it was my doings, and how she scolded?"

"We were playing horse—wern't we?"

"Yes, and we were his fine bays. How we champed the bit, and ran full speed around the room, in and out, behind and before Morris's chair, enough to tilt the poor woman out of it."

"How thoughtless children are," said Tice, demurely.

"There!" said Bell, interrupting; "I have a magnetic influence, and he will always like me; he is sound asleep again."

He had not finished his nap; and the young mother placed her boy on the lounge again, and then, with Bell, sat down to a meal somewhat cooled by the mischief of her sister.

"Oh," said Tice, "I was such a baby after pa, and you. I think, now, how I must have wearied Clary. Bell, I was petted too much at home—spoiled! I hope I have gained wisdom with my boy. At one time, oh! how I wished I had not married."

"Hush, sis! never say that, not even to me."

"Ah, but it is past now. I would not be without Clary and baby for all the world. The thought was wrung from me by the circumstances around. Just think of no home, no place for a sick body but on a rocking bed. Now, Bell, do not look so very grieved; at the worst, I only wished that Clary and I had not met, and liked each other; that was all."

"I cannot have you talk so, sister," said Bell, with a shake of the head.

"Now," said Tice, "do you not suppose that I love Clary dearly, and that I would risk my life for Ed? That ugly feeling passed away with the seasickness."

Bell little dreamed that Clarence had more than once wished that he had not won her sister from a home of luxury. He could have beaten up against the rough wind and tide of fortune more manfully without her loved weight clinging to him for comfort; but these were heart-secrets, scarce whispered to himself, scarce believed in more prosperous times.

"How did you like the English?"

"Oh, tolerably."

"Tolerably! why, that is too tame, and looks as if you did not mean to come out with a book, and pay off the naughty things said of us."

"Clary says those things were unpleasant truths, which, like a tight shoe, pinches here and there."

"Clarence is generous. I cannot so easily forgive one who, making us a flying visit on business, takes one of our city warts which we were hurrying to cure, and makes it the caption of a pamphlet against us."

"Now, sister, did we not annoy him with well-meant kindness? Remember, dear, you and I have to thank him for many a pleasant hour. Have you forgotten our sofa-corner, where we sat huddled up for hours over 'Bleak House?' Oh, how I have thought

of those days, and pa's fragrant cigar curling its smoke about the room!"

"Yes; and Morris scolding about it next day, and at us for wasting time."

"Tice forgot all the bitter, and only kept the sweet," said a voice at Bell's shoulder; and Clarence Halsted, placing himself between the sisters, stole an arm about the waist of each, as he asked what author they had been abusing.

"Cannot you guess?"

"One who thrusts at the faults of institutions of all lands without partiality—one whose books have in them so much of the American heart, that we were ready to claim and love him as a brother. But how in the world came you to be discussing books?—and how have you fared since the pic-nic?"

"First tell me," laughed Bell, "how you came to know just where to find me."

"I had my informants, and you your spy, Miss Bell."

"Who?"

"Not that fine-looking fellow whom I could have shot for persisting to be at your side."

"Why must you bring such a host with you, just to drop a word of comfort to me? Why, you frightened us out of a year's growth."

"Well, sis, you know we were lying at quarantine, and an adventure with our club, bating the pleasure of seeing you, was quite a charm. I had learned all

about the projected party—how, I will not say—and my thought was to drop you a word about our return; but in vain—your knight-errant would not give me an opportunity. As our club had brought me off at some risk, we were not to be baffled. On discovering that we outnumbered your gallants, and that they were rather timid, we carried the joke more boldly than we had intended. By the way, who was that sprightly little miss who seemed to do all the work?"

"Did she offer you our dainties?"

"Yes; in a comic way."

"Ah, Carrie Hall, a good-hearted country girl—a perfect housekeeper, and as fearless as a soldier."

"She should be a sailor's wife, then. And who was the haughty dame who so spitefully turned on her?"

"Ellen Rutledge. She styled you the handsome pirate, and requested an introduction."

"Spare me!" laughed Clarence.

The entrance of visitors put an end to conversation. Tried and true friends formed the circle of Halsted's acquaintances. Bell lingered till they had gone, and then the three drew around the fire and talked of the past, and hopefully of the future. Ten o'clock came too soon for all. Bell arose reluctantly.

"Why did you delay coming to see us?" asked Clarence.

"I supposed that would be sister's first question," said Bell.

"I knew a want of affection did not keep you," said Tice.

"True love admits no doubts. Pa has kept me with him at Bath, not even permitting me to come to the city for a day. He suspects that you are at home. He is no more like our dear, good-natured papa. Why, Clarence, I have chafed the bit, I assure you, and have been quite offended at him."

"My own dear papa still! How can you, sister?" exclaimed Tice, tears dimming her blue eyes—tears that would not be put back for her husband's sake. As Bell stooped to give the good-night kiss, she at the same time pressed a heavy purse in the hand of her sister. A moment more, and she is stepping lightly along Broadway with Clarence. At her father's door they parted as strangers. Bell is soon at the old man's knee.

The marriage of Tice Gray had filled the fashionable world with a subject for gossip. Gossip, that sharp-eyed, sprightly thing, is sometimes mistaken, as now; it was settled that the captain's anger was at the humble birth of the young sailor, whereas it was a pang of jealousy that made the old man miserable. To keep his girls in their luxuriant home content with his affection was the old man's dream; the waking was too sudden. The captain had seen the arrival of Halsted, lady, and child, and to-night he shrewdly suspects that Bell has seen the face he so longs to press to his own with a kiss of forgiveness; but Bell,

too, is deceived by the eccentric old gentleman, so stern and cold in his relents. She saw nothing but the surface—not the deep current of parental love that lay far below. She came to think it a thing impossible to reconcile the staid father and erring child; hence the loved name was scrupulously avoided, or ventured in Bell's sauciest mood, not with her to-night, for she is timid as she sits in her old place at his knee, turning her rings one after the other, as was her habit.

"Well, missy, where to-day?" said the captain.

"At Mary Rutledge's, pa."

"Nice girl. Strange that she belongs to such bad blood."

"Do you know them!"

"Yes; they sailed twice with me to France, a long while ago. Madam Rutledge was proud and handsome. They had a spoiled boy with them, an only son. Yes, yes, I knew them."

"Harry, was that?"

"Yes. Well, who else have you seen?"

Bell hesitated.

"Mr. Dumont, for a few moments."

Any name but hers, thought the captain.

"Who else?"

"Pa, how you question me! I saw Miss Ellen, just out for calls."

"That's all she does, I guess;" and, rising, the old man was about to retire, when Bell, quite relieved, said,

"Good night, papa."

"Good night, my child; I am tired now."

"Tired of me, pa?"

"Oh, no, daughter!" and, stooping, he took the proffered kiss, and went out. In her own room Bell reasoned:

"How can pa be so unrelenting? How easy to have Tice with us once more! One word from him would restore the cheerful, happy evenings, the sweet old scenes at Saratoga. But he will not. Oh, how different is the heart of woman!"

So she fell asleep, while the footsteps of her father were heard pacing his room back and forth.

After leaving her, Clarence had hurried along the street, his buoyant spirits picturing a bright future. He was soon home.

"See, Clary," said Tice, as she held up to the light Bell's pretty gift.

"Beautiful!" Then, taking it in his hand, "How exquisite the workmanship!" And deliberately pouring out the shining contents, and returning the purse, he said,

"These must be returned."

"And not used for Eddie?"

"Not a cent of it."

"Why, Clary! when he needs so many things!"

"He will not need long, my Tice. You vex me by such a want of spirit."

It was no use demurring, and the young wife knew

it, and contented herself in examining the beautiful fabric so newly from Bell's hand.

Many an hour Bell had spent at her father's knee, taking up bead after bead, he sleeping, and she guessing what strange home welcomed, what new ties were forming, for her playmate sister.

"Who is that for, miss?" would be the sudden question on awaking.

"For—for—dear Tice, if I chance to see her again."

"Tut! tut! How dare you?" and his spectacles were grabbed off, wiped, and as suddenly put on again.

"I cannot cease to love my only sister! Oh, could I but see her again, if but once!"

"You shall not; mind, now!" And, placing his hand gently over Bell's eyes, would continue:

"Mind, I tell you, missy." Then, if Bell sank into silence, as was usually the case, he would call out, as he jerked a gold piece from his pocket, "There! see how it will fit the flashy thing."

Bell meekly placed the coin in the finished end of the purse.

"Don't keep it!" was roared out.

Bell would quietly hand it back, on which the old man would call out, pettishly,

"Keep it; you know I don't want it. You know I have but one living daughter."

At last, when the same scene had been enacted

over and over, Bell came to think it was a tribute paid as amends for his unkind manner toward herself. It came to her mind to put the gold by for Tice, and so the purse was filled as soon as finished.

CHAPTER V.

He that finds one drop of Heaven's sweet mercy in his cup, can dig, beg, rot, and perish, so he may wrap himself in honest rags at his last gasp.—*Courper.*

IS there a dislike more bitter than that displayed by the infidel toward the believing child of grace?

Finding it impossible to turn Mary again to the elements of the gay world, Ellen commenced a species of sarcastic raillery quite annoying to one so keenly sensitive to blame. Mrs. Rutledge assumed more bitterness than she felt, in the hope of winning back the favorite child from her supposed error, and would ask, with mock gravity,

"How are your friends this morning?"

"Which ones, grandmamma?"

"Mrs. Grant, and the other domestics. You passed the most of last evening with them. I hope you enjoyed yourself."

Mary explained. She had not meant to stay a moment; but John, the footman, had asked her aid in decyphering a letter from his father. Finding it contained sad news of the famine having caused the

death of a mother and brother, she had stayed a while to speak words of consolation; but in vain. "Oh, grandma, I never saw such grief; he was inconsolable!"

"Well, I cannot help him. It took you the whole evening to try and do so, it seems."

"I was there a half hour, only."

"More like three," said Ellen.

"I noted the time, sister, for I feared offending grandma."

At another time Mrs. Rutledge would exclaim,

"Child, you are getting the ways of that old body; manners are very catching, and one is apt to grow like those they love. See! is she not getting the ways of Grant?"

"Yes; that abstracted way of looking is precisely like her. Sis, how many converts have you made in the kitchen?"

The naturally quick temper of Mary was aroused. The color mounting to the temples told it, and Mrs. Rutledge was for the time satisfied, for she thought the remarks had cut just where she intended they should, and so the dislike came to be fostered to animosity much more deep than Mrs. Rutledge had intended. One has said, "We dislike a person, not so much that he has injured us, as, because we have talked about and against him, we search for a justifying cause." And so with them; from day to day Mary's heart was wounded. Their dislike might be read in the averted

face, the scornful lip, and curt reply. Alone in her room, she conned the passage of Scripture: "Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you." And again: "The servant is not above his master: it is enough for the servant if he be as his master."

"Mary is to attend the ball, I suppose?" said Ellen, one day, as she looked up from her embroidering frame.

"The matter is pending between me and my housekeeper. I am waiting the result patiently."

Mrs. Rutledge did not see that Mary was not present, and Ellen smiled slyly at the waste of that ironic tone, to mend which she said, blandly,

"She will go, grandma, for the sake of Mr. Tremont's company."

"Does the child prefer his to others, think you?"

"She must see that he is very handsome—the best-looking of our set."

"And he invited her?"

"I was engaged to go with Mr. Omsted, and he used that means of getting in our party," said Ellen.

It was now Mrs. Rutledge's turn to smile, which she did behind her fan.

During this colloquy Mary was in the kitchen with Mrs. Grant; for Mrs. Rutledge had bidden her go, and stay till she was tired.

"Do teach me how to cook, Aunt Ellis, so that,

when you get quite old and feeble, I can help you. Do let me learn to make bread!"

"Grandma don't like you to work, dear."

"She doesn't care now, and she never positively forbade me. Do! do! aunty! I get such a pain in my chest studying, and your feet must be so tired—just this once." And coaxingly Mary clasped her arms about the waist of the old lady, playfully holding her back for an answer.

"Well, you may sift the flour. Come, that can't soil your hands a bit."

Delightedly, Mary shoved the sieve about, as she asked,

"Why must this be sifted? 'Tis clean as possible, and not a speck remains in the sieve."

"Well, sifting makes the flour lighter—not so compact. I have a notion that the dough rises sooner. Every one does not follow the plan, but it's my way."

"Then it shall be mine, for everybody praises your bread. So many of grandmamma's friends ask where she procures it."

"Ah! that is good; one likes to please—'tis natural. Do I know the persons who ask?" And Mrs. Grant raised her spectacles, as was her manner when much pleased.

"Mrs. Lee; do you know her?"

"Yes; a pretty lady."

"And Mrs. Hall; and Bell Gray is always wishing Morris would learn of you."

"Mrs. Hall! Well, that is worth all the rest, as she is a country lady. Now your Indian meal, my dear."

"Must I sift that, too?"

"No, child, I have scalded it, there in the dish to cool. Mind the salt."

"Why! this is supawn—just like that which we had at the farm-house last summer."

"Yes; only this is thicker than supawn, and has been only scalded, not boiled. Now put the sponge through it."

"And the yeast," said Mary, laughing; "I know that must come in somewhere."

"You are right, and you are wrong. I must explain what a sponge is. Take a cup of yeast and a bowl of lukewarm water, and stir it through flour till you have a pretty thick batter, and set it to rise over night; now, that was the sponge."

"Oh! Yeast and Co.; now I see, aunty. And what must I do next?"

"Now knead in flour enough to make a soft dough—not too much flour; it makes the bread too close. Can't you knead it?"

Mrs. Grant laughed mischievously, for she knew Mary could not.

"Let me come. When time makes your arms larger, you will do well."

"Why, you toss the dough about as if there were no weight in it at all!" said Mary.

"See, my child—keep plenty of flour between the dough and the sides of the tray, and plenty of flour on your hands."

"And now have you shown me all?"

"Well, nearly. See, I put my loaves in the pans at once, so as not to break in the dough after it has risen. It's a notion of my own, however; some might not think well of it."

"Now, is that all, aunty?"

"Yes, that's the end."

"Well, bread-making isn't such a terrible thing, after all; only for want of strength, I might have said that I had made a loaf of bread."

Mrs. Grant shook her head.

"There is a sleight about it that nothing but practice will give."

"Aunt Ellis, I think a cook ought to understand chemistry."

"Why, dear? we don't want doctors' stuff to cook with. How did such a notion get in that young head of yours?"

But Mary was laughing too heartily at her imprisoned fingers to hear the question. In vain she tried to free them.

"Take hot water, my dear; cold will not move it." And Mrs. Grant poured the steaming fluid in a basin. After wiping her freed hands, Mary perched herself in the window-sill, where, with loving eyes, she watched her friend proceeding to make pies and cake. The

weight of something had been all the while checking off her light-heartedness, and now she remembered the coming ball. Was it sinful, that the thought of it should oppress her so much?

From a little child she had been sent to the dancing-school, and, as a rule, was obliged to attend the ball-room exercises, and so its scenes had become vapid and tiresome. She had wearied of its glare at a time when she was expected to take the most lively interest in it. To continue the routine of folly, seemed most unpleasant. After thinking a while, she asked, half coaxingly,

"Ought I to go, Aunt Ellis?"

Mrs. Grant paused in her egg-beating.

"I think you will have to go, my dear. I see no way to avoid it."

"Must I do wrong, aunty, to please any one?—or to avoid any punishment?"

"The Bible says, 'Obey them that have the rule over you.' See, my child—the Lord looks at our motives. Rejoice that you have no wish to go, because He has turned away your eyes from beholding vanity. You are bidden by one who, for the present, has a right to command you. Go, then, and I pray God to keep your heart and mind, and so order events that these trials may be taken out of your way."

"I can urge grandmamma; may I not? Perhaps she will excuse me."

"Certainly, my dear; use all proper means, but

never think religion enforces disobedience to guardian or parent. Duties never clash."

After Mary had hurried away to the parlor, Mrs. Grant, as she proceeded with her pie-making, fell to thinking of the past, its toils and severe trials, and the strange event that had bound her to a tyrannical mistress.

"'Tis so useless, too. He is not living; and, as for earning, I have enough." Then, brightening, "Yet she may come to need it. I must remain for the child's sake, especially now, since they are against her." Then, pressing her apron to her eyes, then dropping it, she said, cheerfully,

"'Tis all right; God cannot err." And as she resumed her work, a hymn was chanted in a sweet, but uncultivated voice.

Resting in a great cushioned chair, her head reclining on its back, sat Mrs. Rutledge, languidly closing her eyes as Mary entered, as if to forbid conversation; but the young girl's silent and waiting position seemed to annoy her more than if she had spoken her errand, for she gave vent to her feelings in a sudden and tart,

"Well, what is it?"

"I have a favor to ask, grandma."

"I knew it by your manner. Say on."

"May I be excused from attending the ball of Wednesday?"

There came no reply.

"Do, grandma—please excuse me!"

"I might as well, for all the elegance your presence would add to it."

Mary's eyes brightened.

"Oh, I should be so grateful! You will excuse me, grandma?"

"What are your objections to the ball-room?"

Mary was thinking how best to frame her answer so as not to offend.

"I see you can give no reason, only that all the demure ones are against it, and so you must be."

"God is not honored in the ball-room. He is not in the thoughts of the persons who go there. His name is excluded from it."

"Of course, that is not the place for sacred thoughts; the church is instituted for religion. 'Tis lowering to combine holy things with the amusements of life."

"Oh, then, if you would allow me to leave such amusements where the Holy Name is excluded. If it is not proper to mention it there, then it is no place for the people that love the Lord."

Mrs. Rutledge was deeply vexed.

"Now, Mary Rutledge, no more on this subject! I mean you to go cheerfully. You shall not carry this point with me. Go you shall!"

To demur was useless. Mary felt that it was settled; and, feeling that she had done all that lay in her power to prevent going, she became at once cheerful.

Her part was now to obey. With a relieved mind, she said, pleasantly,

"Grandma, you will choose my dress for me; I wish to please you in that, and I prefer your taste to Ellie's. You used to like me in blue."

The lady was nonplussed; she had expected tears. It was therefore with very round eyes, and a look of utter amazement, that she said slowly,

"You are an oddity!" And breaking in her naturally merry laugh, she continued: "You had better consult Grant; no doubt she has the modes."

There came an ugly feeling of resentment at this taunt, which Mary strove to put down, and which made her seem very meek, half awaking the pity of the lady.

"Yes," she said, "I used to prefer you in blue. I was interested in you then; but since you have taken to these strange ways, I am forced to leave you to yourself, or be always wrangling."

A tear that fell on Mary's hand attracting the notice of Mrs. Rutledge, was hailed as a favorable omen.

"Promise, now," she said coaxingly, "to be yourself again, and you will find me the same to you. I have always been kind. Have I not, my child?"

"Yes, yes, dear grandma, you have, indeed; and that makes it so hard when I cannot please you. I must not leave the way of righteousness—I dare not; any thing else to oblige you!" And Mary burst into tears.

Mrs. Rutledge was moved, yet resolved not to yield. Poor lady! she could not see other than obstinate resistance to her will. She saw not the cross which the child was bearing up the steep hill of self-denial. She saw no beauty in the impress of the Spirit working out that mysterious second birth. How could she? Is not the secret of the Lord with them that fear him?

The relenting mood was but momentary; anger came to take its place.

"I have no interest in you! Wear just that which you like best," she said.

There was something in the sudden renouncement of all care for or interest in herself that fell like a chill on the young heart. As she silently plied the needle, a strange sense of loneliness stole over her, and the great adversary whispered the murmuring word,

"What have I done? How have I deserved this? Oh, to be always taunted! to feel one's self so utterly disliked!"

Ah! but she had sought restraining grace that day, and was kept from sin by the Spirit, whose lightest breath can blow away all the schemes of the tempter.

Mrs. Rutledge now sharply eyed the material on which Mary was sewing.

"What are you making?"

"A dress for a poor child."

"I thought so."

In an instant the dark calico sleeve was jerked

from her hand, leaving the unthreaded needle in her fingers. A moment more, and it lay blazing on the grate. Mary quietly replaced the needle on the cushion, and proceeded to fold the remainder of the dress, when that, too, was suddenly drawn away, and she was ordered to play.

"That piano has not been touched for a week—ay, I might say a month," came tartly from Mrs. Rutledge.

Mary complied. Opera pieces, songs, and dances were familiar as household words to her; but the mind not being in unison with such light music, she failed to command her usual masterly style. The memory of harsh words was with her, and her fingers refused to move nimbly over the keys. After playing an hour, she turned to meet the reproving word—for her grandmother was skilled in music—but saw her sleeping soundly. Rising softly, she approached and gazed at the time-marked features. The jewelled hand rested daintily on the crimson velvet; time had changed that, too. Sleep betrayed that which the vivacious, wakeful hour had kept. Mary thought of the brevity of life, and asked herself,

"How shall I plead with her? What arguments shall I use to convince her of a need of the Saviour?"

Then the insidious whisper,

"You are too young; be not so decided; you may fall back into sin, and folly. Better keep in the shade, and let older persons talk of religion. You are a mere child."

"Ah, but my sufficiency is in God, whose arm is stronger than yours," thought Mary.

A servant announcing a letter for Miss Mary Rutledge, aroused the old lady from her nap.

"Such a horrid dream! I knew I was asleep, yet could not stir. Oh, how I wished for some one to touch me! Hope never leaves one except in dreams."

"I am afraid you are not well, grandma."

"Why do you think so, child?"

"You have those dreams so often of late."

"What have dreams to do with one's health?"

"Are not unpleasant ones caused by a deranged state of the stomach?"

"A bit of undigested cheese, hey!" And gapingly Mrs. Rutledge laughed, as she said, "You have some odd notions, child."

"I have been watching you as you slept," said Mary.

"Did I come up to your idea of a sleeping beauty?"

"I was not thinking of beauty, grandmamma. I thought of the shortness of time, and how soon we must part; and then, how we must all render an account of the use we have made of it. But you will think that is odd, too."

"That is so like George! Pray, am I in any special danger?"

"Life is uncertain," Mary ventured.

"George Leecraft again!" said Mrs. Rutledge,

dryly; and Mary, fearing to offend, turned the conversation, by asking,

"Who is George Leecraft?"

"Who? Well, he is a brother of mine, who seems to think that my immortal part is entrusted solely to his care, and that I am a terribly wicked person."

"That is because he loves you, grandmamma."

"A little less of his affection would suffice."

"He cannot help liking you, and it is natural to feel anxious for the soul of those whom we love. Grandmamma, I often wish you knew how good the Lord is to those who try to serve Him. Oh, I wish you would seek His face!"

"Suppose I do, and am, after all, good as this saintly brother of mine—what then?"

"If any one feels himself to be a lost sinner, and looks alone to the Redeemer for acceptance, he is safe; though his sins have been as scarlet, they shall be white as snow."

"What! the past all forgiven?"

"Yes, if repented of deeply because of the sin, not for fear of the punishment so much; the Bible teaches that we shall be freely forgiven."

Mrs. Rutledge seemed to reflect deeply. To hide her emotion, she assumed the old sarcastic manner.

"Have I been lacking in duty to you or Ellie, miss? Child, you make a poor return by adopting these new notions."

"Grandmamma, we are all apt to be better toward

each other than to our heavenly Friend. It was all mercy that led me to see my danger, and then my safety in a crucified Redeemer. I want you to be saved."

"I believe you mean well; but this confidence that you are right, will tend to make you opinionated and self-sufficient."

"My confidence is not in myself, but in Jesus, the Friend of sinners. And if I should not be right, and this is a delusion, I lose nothing, for religion leaves me all the real pleasures of life; but if the infidel is wrong, see what an awful loss he has sustained!"

"Well, you have preached quite a sermon, for a child."

"Not mine, grandmamma. I met the sentiment somewhere; you will excuse the awkward repetition. I cannot recall the name of the author, or the exact words. May I tell you how I came to think of religion?"

"Better read your letter, child; you have been rumpling it in your hands for the last half hour."

This was another "go thy way for this time," &c. Alone in her room, Mary failed not to ask, in prayer, a blessing on her feeble effort to tell what the Lord had done for her soul, ere she broke the seal of her letter, and read the following from the pen of Mrs. Bentley:

"HUDSON, January 10, 18—.

"DEAR MISS:—I assure you a letter from the daughter of my early friend, so far from offending, gave me the most unfeigned pleasure; and that pleasure is enhanced by the fitness which the long experience of a heart deceitful above all things has given me to hold a beacon-light to warn the young voyager from the shoals and quicksands that beset her way. Believe me to be, though distant, a true friend. Never, I trust, will you be forgotten in my prayers.

"You ask, what has wrought this change in your feelings. I trust it is of the Lord. As, at the creation, His Spirit moved upon the face of the waters, commanding light out of darkness, so I trust it is with your dark mind—so may light break forth to cheer you on a career of usefulness. Be not discouraged if it come not suddenly. Wait on the Lord, read, nay, study the Bible, making it the man of your counsel, the guide of your days. The Psalmist says, 'I waited patiently for the Lord.'

"You will not be surprised to learn that the grief, the gloom of which you speak, is the harbinger of future and everlasting peace. You are honored in being thus early called to repentance—in having the springtime of your life so clouded. And where have you carried your sorrows? Has not that Bible, which the stranger gave, told you of Jesus, the sinner's Friend? Look, and see; for there is a balm in Gilad

—there is a sacrifice on Calvary—a fountain opened for sin and uncleanness. Repentance has been given; now, by faith, look, and live. Miss Mary, I leave you, for the present, in a good and safe school: the Bible your text-book, prayer your support, Jesus your Friend. Cling to all, and you are safe. True happiness is found only in God. Live near to Him, having no confidence in the flesh. Never leave your room in the morning without waiting on the Lord—mark that—waiting, till you feel that you have received a blessing—till you are in the spirit; this is communion, and is the privilege of all who seek the Lord. As the children of Israel gathered manna for each day, so do you, my child, seek supplies of grace—not by occasional, but daily prayer; then fear not. None shall be able to pluck you from His hand. Nothing can serve so effectually to cause a sensible, rational mode of living, as waiting on the Lord. This was the meaning of her who wrote the lines so accidentally found by you. Of that, and of her, circumstances forbid me to write. She was very dear to me; but of this, enough.

"I trust you will set an example of obedience to Mrs. Rutledge, who has been as a parent to you. Tell her all the story of the Cross. The healed lepers were not allowed to follow Jesus till they had returned to tell how great things He had done for them. A close watching of one's own heart, and an interest in the theme of salvation, leaves little leisure to discuss the things of time and sense. And now, my dear, with

the assurance that you have a friend ever praying for you, one who longs to see and know you more closely, one glad to hear often from you,

"I remain,

"Yours sincerely,

"DOROTHEA BENTLEY."

The letter surprised and pleased so much, that Mary ran with it to Mrs. Grant.

"Why, Aunt Ellis, Mrs. Bentley and you think precisely alike!—the very same advice about the Saviour!"

"I hope and trust we have learned in the same school. 'And they shall all be taught of God,' says the Book; only I feel that she is far above me, in a higher class, you see, dear."

"How does she look? Is she very aged? Do describe her to me! First, hear her letter to me." And, seating herself cozily beside Mrs. Grant, Mary began to read, when a harsh tone interrupted. It was Ellen's voice, saying,

"It is too tiresome—I declare it is! One has to run from the garret to the kitchen to find you. I have been out, and he has asked to see you."

"Who?"

"Go and see."

The door was drawn to with a bang. Casting a smile back at the housekeeper, Mary ran away to find Mr. Tremont awaiting her. The meeting was cordial.

"How do you do?" was asked earnestly.

Mary's "Quite well" seemed to be surprising; Mrs. Rutledge had represented her as ill. It became necessary for that lady to explain.

"She has been moping and dull. I must say, she seems like herself this day; she has a bloom in her face that I have not seen there of late." And the lady went on to tell how she had neglected her music sorely.

Tremont, pitying Mary's embarrassment, playfully demanded a song as the only atonement for such misdemeanor, as though he had supposed the remarks of Mrs. Rutledge were made jestingly. Mary complied, and another piece was set up, and another; Tremont occasionally joining with his deep bass, until an hour had passed. Neither seemed weary. An engagement at five, however, admonished him to leave. At the door he handed Mary a slip of paper, on which he had, during his call, written the following:

"DEAR FRIEND:—Having learned to-day that you attend the ball on Wednesday unwillingly, I resign the pleasure your company would have given. Consider yourself free from the engagement.

"Yours most sincerely,

"ETHELSTANE TREMONT."

The formal tone fell like a chill—coming from him, too, her only gentleman friend. Was he offended?

Does he, can he think that I am unwilling to go with him?"

Mary knew not, until now, how much she had prized the tacit preference of the accomplished Tremont. It was a heart-secret scarcely whispered to herself. The lonely lamb, resting in the shadow of the great oak, thinks not of the more safe fold; it would stay till the chill evening, were it not for the care of the shepherd.

Our prayers are not answered just as we would have them. We come to learn how much better that they are not, in after years. Mary soon forgot her sadness in the resolve to tell her friend that it was not his society, but the ball-room, that she wished to avoid. Then, fearing that would seem consequential, she determined to leave it in the good future, and fell asleep, hoping that he too might learn to avoid scenes that tend to keep the heart engaged on trifling and unprofitable thoughts.

CHAPTER VI.

How kind, how fair she was, how good,
I cannot tell you. If I could, you too would love her.

Dickens.

AND now we must introduce our young reader to the quiet home of Mrs. Bentley and her grandson, Walter Dumont, and to the fair Lois Esbee, who sits alone thus soliloquizing:

"A home in Italy!—who but thrills at the pleasant thought? A home in the far West!—who but shrinks at its self-denying requirements? And, after all, home is where love and peace shed their genial influence. Mine is a happy one. Here the last twenty years have found me. Who shall say my spinster-life is not a pleasant one? Folding my wing here, when weary of roaming to other lands, I know I am most welcome, for the creaking of my pen disturbs not. Yes, I am very happy. Ah, there was a time—that light word, perhaps misjudged by me, and I was bereaved, and by my own decision; and there came cloudy days—nay, years—that found me different from my kind, not filling my niche in the framework of society—a dull, sad life, full of nightmare, from which

piety and reflection awoke me, sternly demanding, 'Is this brief moment the whole of existence? Is there not an after, a longer, a better state? What will it avail in the new heavens and in the new earth, who were the solitary, who the married, who the single? There is no real happiness out of God. Up, then, and seek employment in the vineyards of the earth! Go, find the poor. Go, nurse the sick, if that be thy talent; if not, go, find it, and make it ten.'

"That was the Spirit's call, of whose going and coming we wist not at the time. And, placing my sorrow at the feet of Deity, I went out and found my work. Oh, blessed work! leaving me no time to waste in useless repinings. Looking back, I count my griefs as trees of experience, under which I stand to bless their shade."

Lois had been retrospecting—her blue eye dimming, and a smile parting a mouth so beautiful that one might never dream other than gladness had been her portion. Arising abruptly, she says,

"Six months, and no word from Walter! Poor Madam! I must go and cheer her with music."

"Madam"—as Lois says in her pretty way—is just calling her.

"A letter, my dear, from Miss Mary. You remember, I have read others to you."

"Yes, perfectly; they were old and staid in their tone, as if written by a bishop."

"Good and sincere, my dear; and expressing such

need. As for the bishops, they would pronounce them not orthodox. The child has fallen on the electing love and sovereignty of God, and the dear girl is in a tangle of strange errors. Let me read a few lines."

Lois placed herself for listening. One might see it cost an effort; for she had a girlish heart, and disliked the discussion of doctrinal points. Mrs. Bentley read as follows:

"I cannot, dear Madam, reconcile predestination and the mercy of the Lord, against whom it grieves me to have one thought in opposition. That He destines some to be lost, so haunts my mind at times, that I cannot say, as I would, 'Thy will be done.' You know how my heart yearns for the safety of grand-mamma. I have written to you so often about her. You can guess where my trouble lies. He will not change His foreordination for a child like me—for my prayers. Am I singular? Tell me something to cheer away this fear. You have comforted me so often."

"Why, the dear girl!" said Lois; "what can have led her into such doubts?"

"And how has Satan tempted her to rob the Lord of His most glorious attribute, mercy!" And, seating herself at the desk of Lois, she penned a letter, from which the following will suffice:

"Do you not know that the Lord has proclaimed Himself merciful and gracious? Have you forgotten,

my love, that He takes no pleasure in the death of a sinner, but rather that he should turn and live? It was His divine pleasure that none should be lost. How have you misunderstood this dear electing love—this display of His sovereignty, in which my heart rejoices more and more with each added year of my life. Allow me a simile: A field of wheat all blighted; go through it, raise one and another head—alas! not a blade has escaped the mildew. A person, having the power, offers kindly to save a part; nor does he designate a half, or a third; he gives no account of himself, nor consults with you as to the means to be used. And when the work is accomplished, would it not be singularly ungrateful if you should find fault that all the grain is not restored? In due time the saved wheat ripens, and is gathered in the storehouse; while the part left goes on from bad to worse, till carried off, no more to cumber the ground.

"Now, my dear, who can reasonably say that that which was passed by is any worse because of the healing of a part? None, surely. And shall the mercy of God in calling some be construed into predestining any to destruction? Shall our eye be evil, because He is good?

"What, then, you may ask, is the predestination of which we read in Romans viii. 29? 'It is more than foreknowledge,' you say. Yes, for it is causing a thing to be thus and so. It is predestining to what?—to be lost? No, but to be conformed to the image of

His Son. Bear in mind, my dear, that God cannot err—not even in hardening the heart of Pharaoh; for did He not, in His prescience, know the end of that wicked king? And to harden such a heart, is to gratify its every desire. 'God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man;' James i. 13. Was it a mere form, think you, when, weeping over Jerusalem, Jesus said, 'How often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not?' Matt. xxiii. 37.

"Cheerfully learn to say, 'Thy will be done.' I heartily join you in prayer for her who has so kindly cared for you. Oh, that she may find the way of peace!

"I rejoice that you are about to confess before angels and men your hope of salvation. That you may henceforth grow in grace, is the desire of

"Yours sincerely,

"DOROTHEA BENTLEY."

As Mary sat deeply interested in the perusal of the above letter, she was closely watched by Mrs. Rutledge.

"That must contain something vastly interesting, to make you forget the slight which you have received," she said.

"From whom, grandmamma?"

"Young Tremont, of course. Any other girl of

your age would be crying, to think of his declining to accompany her."

"It did trouble me for a while," said Mary.

"Did he wish a less mopish partner?"

Mary smiled, and said,

"He did not tell me so."

"I dare say you wished to go, when it was too late."

"No, dear grandmamma—not even to go with Mr. Tremont, whose company is so much more agreeable than that of any other gentleman who visits Ellie."

"He is quite superior in looks and manners. I think the future will show you have lost a valuable acquaintance; for I apprehend that the change in your views has tired him of you."

"I cannot help it, grandmamma; I must be willing to lose all for my Redeemer, who has given me a joy that I cannot describe." And as she gazed in the bright fire, she questioned her strength for the trial, and thought, "if I could go away somewhere where I could be very busy, and had no time to spend in things of a worldly nature! If Mr. Leecraft would come and take me to live with him! Anywhere with the religious—at least, where I would not be in every body's way."

And as Mrs. Rutledge aroused from a short nap, Mary asked,

"Where is Mr. Leecraft?"

"What put him in your mind, child? He is here,

and there, and everywhere. The last I heard of him, he was off West. I do not trouble my mind about him. The last time we met—and he was preaching, as usual—said I, There is a deal of conceit and vanity about you 'good folk.' Now, what if Bertha Rutledge should find a safe place at last, as well as her pious brother?"

"Was he offended, grandma?"

"Well, he went away with one of those heavy sighs; and I was glad when the door closed on him."

Then, excusingly,

"What right has he to set up as my teacher—my father-confessor, I might say?"

"Your views are so different, grandmamma; must not one or the other be wrong? And he is a friend to religion, else he would not plead for it."

"I am not an enemy to it, child."

"Grandmamma, would not you get tired of a place where they sing praises incessantly?"

"I am afraid that I should." And Mrs. Rutledge affected to be amused at the idea.

"Not if your heart were changed," said Mary.

"You deceive yourself, child, if you suppose you would be happy always employed in the one theme of praising Deity."

"Ah, we shall have new faculties. Much that these cannot comprehend, will be clear then. Whatever of us we shall carry there, will know no pain, or weariness; there will be no night there, for the Lamb

is the light thereof. Oh, grandmamma, I want you to be there!"

"Your argument," said Mrs. Rutledge, "is easily confuted. If this change is all of grace, as George has it, and cannot be brought about by one's self, how am I to be blamed for remaining as I am?"

"God has instituted means on which we are to wait, and for the neglect of which we are to give an account. And those means will be blest; for is He not the hearer and answerer of prayer?"

"And pray, what are those means?"

"A preached gospel, prayer, and the study of the Scripture. I think our duty is to wait on; His mercy is to bless the means. I found the Lord in searching the Scriptures."

As Mrs. Rutledge did not seem to be offended, Mary talked on, gradually gaining courage.

"There seems to be nothing abiding in this world. Now I was thinking, as I read my history-lesson, how the military tact of Washington and Napoleon could not keep them from death. And so of learning; Locke, and Newton, and Watts have died—and the eloquence of Mr. Pitt, and Fox, and Clay, and Webster; and the music of Mozart, and Handel, and Haydn, and Malibran, could not save from that which comes to the ignorant and unknown. It seems strange—doesn't it?"

"You have made a queer amalgam to prove an old story not at all calculated to awaken very pleasant

associations. You should not allow your mind to run on such solemn topics."

"I cannot help it, grandma; thoughts of them come with such force. I think since the great cannot stay, how surely we must go."

A tear started, to hide which came the blunt,

"Well, I hope it does not frighten you."

"Oh, no; not since the sting is taken away—not since Christ has died."

No reproof, and she resumed with the question,

"May I read a page from my Bible?"

As Mrs. Rutledge did not object, it was taken as consent; and kneeling on the rug, so that the light of the fire might fall on her book, she read on without interruption, save a warning not to spoil her eyes. After finishing the Psalm, she arose, and sat quietly awaiting the first word of comment, when the door-bell was rung, at which the old lady retired on the plea of headache. It was a point with her not to be seen out of spirits. Keen in her perception, quick in apprehending, she at once saw the sincerity of Mary's motives. With almost kindly regard she answered the "good-night" of the delighted girl. Alas! other influences will soon change her mood. Ellen's jealous insinuations will carry it triumphantly for a time.

What a bright little creature Mary looked as she sat rocking in the great chair just vacated by her grandmother, who had, for the first time, heard from

her lips the word of life. No marvel if she met Mr. Tremont joyfully.

"Why, you are looking far happier than any one whom I have seen to-night in the ball-room," he said.

"I trust I am. But why have you left so early?—see, even before our gas is lighted," and, after ringing for that purpose, Mary returned to a seat beside her friend.

"Because I soon tire of the unreal, and am just in the mood for a chat with you," replied Tremont.

"Then I must try and be very entertaining," said Mary.

"Be just the Miss Rutledge I have seen in the classes, and whom I have so long noticed, myself unseen, on her way to and from the school."

"That I cannot be again, since the thought even of my schooldays being past makes me quite sad."

"And not glad to be a young lady, just making her debut in the society of the gay? How unlike you are to others!"

"I know it, Mr. Tremont; I am sorry; but, try as I will, I cannot be like Ellie, and others. I am very cheerful now, but I cannot be gay and entertaining to others as I ought to be."

"Like Miss Ellen!" murmured Tremont; then asked, as if to turn the subject, the cause of her present happiness.

"I owe it to grandmamma; she has been so very kind to me this evening."

"Who could be other than kind to you?"

"I have been allowed to read to her from my Bible, and we have had quite a chat. Oh! I would not have missed this evening at home for any consideration; and I am so thankful to you for excusing my attendance. Who knows how the simple reading of the Scriptures may be blessed to her!"

"And is this the cause? Are you made happy by such a trifling circumstance, Miss Mary?"

"Not trifling, Mr. Tremont, if you consider the value of the soul. I fear *you* have not considered the subject."

"Of my soul?" smiled Tremont.

"Certainly. Is it of no value?"

"Well, I cannot deny that it is; but you and I are too young. Let the future find us planning out a better life."

That which Tremont had admired in Mary's new-found principles was well until it clashed with his interests, and he continued, seriously,

"I am half offended to see you so independent of society, drawing such a fund of enjoyment from that old book, which I am tempted to wish I had thrown in the river when you handed it for my inspection."

"That would have been very unkind. I would rather you had resolved to study it. You, who study so much from books, why not this, Mr. Tremont?"

"If I could guide you, I would consent; but you

can do without me—you, who are about to turn to more congenial friends. May I prophesy?"

"Yes."

"Your circle of acquaintance will now be changed. You will become the centre of attraction to church-people; pastors will become your suitors; the sewing circle will claim the most of your time, and I shall stand outside the pale, excluded."

"Are you so opposed to the Lord's people?" Mary asked in surprise.

"No; only to cliques. I would not have you less religious; but why leave society? Why not be the same as once—a laughing girl, even deigning to ask counsel of me?"

This was said playfully, for the generous heart of Tremont began to condemn him somewhat. But Mary answered seriously,

"I cannot be the same; for then I knew no God, and cared not how time passed, so I found amusement. If you are my friend, never wish me to be as heedless as I was."

"Your friend—yes, for I have watched the development of your mind for years. I hoped we might be still better acquainted in years to come; but you choose it so,—this change is cruel to me."

"And you, too, blame me," sighed Mary.

"Ah, no! but I see the end too plainly. Do not mind my mood. You live in your affections; you were made for society; you can do without my acquaintance."

For two years Tremont, as a casual acquaintance to Ellen, had secretly admired Mary as a bright scholar, a girl of pleasant manners, amiable disposition, and most for the modest, retiring habit of hiding every grace behind the glaring accomplishments of her sister. And now, if she, believing herself scarcely noticed, is surprised, he is not less so at himself, having had no idea of a betrayal into talking thus to one of the gentlest of little friends with whom he had meant to spend a social hour. Tremont was jealous. And of what? Deny it as he might, that little Bible stood his rival in her affections.

Are there not times in our life when we have said a thing, or pursued a line of conduct, which is long after a source of wonder to us? As if we had stepped out, and another had taken possession of us, with different modes of thinking, and consequent ways of acting. "The thing was so unlike my mode of procedure. How came I to do it?" we ask.

Often, in after years, Tremont regretted the seeming unkindness of that evening; for the rattling of wheels, and loud ringing of the door-bell, announced the return of Ellen and Mr. Omsted, just as he was about to apologize to Mary.

Ellen came in languidly, her scarlet-lined cloak hanging carelessly on one arm, her long curls disarranged by the night-air, as she twirled by the strings a tri-colored opera-hood.

"Why, Ethelstane Tremont!" she exclaimed, "what

brought you here? I counted on the pleasure of dancing at least a half-dozen times with you, just to tease Mary Green. We could not guess where you had flown. Did you wait long?" she asked.

Tremont hesitated.

"The poet says, 'Patient waiting is no loss,' Miss Ellen."

"Now! 'Miss Ellen'—so formal! Why not 'Ellie'—that sounds sweetly."

Tremont moved toward the door.

"Come, sit a while, and tell me what induced you to run away from us. The star of the evening could not but be missed."

The compliment was met by a bow, as he moved on, only casting a good-night glance toward Mary; but Ellen, placing a very tiny foot against the door, detained Tremont for a brief chat. Again, at the hall-door, she kept him with that small talk which comes so readily to the trifling.

Mary was, meantime, an impatient listener to Mr. Omsted, who enlarged on the great loss sustained by her absence, and the many inquiries made by disappointed lovers. Ellen's return relieved her.

"What ails Ethel? I never saw him so cold and formal. Did he expect me to return, because he chose to leave at that early hour? He is, at times, very singular."

"I shall have to call him out," said Omsted.

"Good-night." And Mary ran up to her quiet

room, where she soon forgot Tremont's strange mood in that refreshing sleep which comes so readily to the young.

In his room sat Tremont, writing bitter things against himself, and heartily wishing to recall his words. Then, as if to forget, he took from his pocket-book a slip of paper, old-looking and much worn in the folds. A girl's cramped handwriting was upon it; the words ran thus:

MY OWN LITTLE ETHELSTANE:—Are you lonesome? I am thinking about you all the while. They say the Lord is the friend of the desolate. I know He is good, and sees my sorrow at parting with you. Oh, how much I have cried! Pray to the Lord of heaven and earth, and keep my little letter to remember me. I shall come to see you.

"Good-bye, my darling.

"From your own

"HESTER."

"It sounds strangely to a man—her 'darling.' What a little fellow I was then, and how I have clung to this bit of paper, because she bade me. That was long before I could comprehend it. Well, I ought to be a good man, with two such friends. Let me think: she must then have been about the age of Mary. Good Hester, shall I ever meet you? Did you forget to come and see me? Are you living yet?"

And, thus thinking, he fell asleep—the vagaries of his dreams presenting Mary and Hester, identifying themselves, now changing forms and faces, now taking incongruous shapes and looks quite out of the proprieties of humanity.

CHAPTER VII.

When women for answers are at a stand,
The North Sea bottom will be dry land.—*Jamieson.*

CAPTAIN GRAY awoke strangely oppressed by imaginary cares, accompanied by a desire to quarrel—with whom, it mattered not. They were sensations common to the dyspeptic, unaccountable to himself.

Slowly descending to the parlor, where, pacing the floor, he thought sullenly of Biddy the maid, and of John the waiter, he murmured thus: "Neither worth their salt; foreigners too—interlopers, ruinous to the country." He meant to advertise, that he would!

Luckily for the two faithful domestics, the current of his thoughts was turned by a something that caught his eye—a sparkling gem lay glittering at his feet. He took it up, and, on turning it about on the palm of his hand, at once recognized his own gift to Tice. It was her ring, he knew, by the initials, T. G., as plainly cut in the gold as was her image on his aching heart. Immediately he questioned: Had she been there? or,

had it been sent back to wound him? Now his anger turns on Bell, and he murmurs, "Ungrateful girl—not even to tell me how the child does! She may be in want."

Placing the ring in his vest-pocket, he paced the room back and forth. Bell entered, announcing breakfast, but startled at the abrupt answer,

"I want no breakfast."

"Aren't you well?"

"What should make me ill?"

"Have I offended you?"

"Who says I am offended?"

"Pa, you did not use to be so cross."

"Well, well, you mustn't mind. Go, now, child!"

Bell left the room. Never had her father seemed so inexplicable, so unreasonable. While the poor captain is all the while a puzzle to himself, while he is questioning the rationality of his conduct, the door is suddenly opened, and Bell, running in, begins searching about, on the centre-table, piano, ottomans, and last, on the carpet.

After eyeing her askance, the captain asked,

"What now, girl?"

"Something lost, pa."

"What is it?"

"Something that I lost last evening."

"Better advertise 'Something' in the columns of the newspapers."

"It was only a ring, pa; I was turning it on my

finger while I was talking to you, and I hoped I had dropped it here;" and Bell continued her search.

"A foolish habit, rather. Was the ring your own, child?"

"No, papa. Oh, I am so afraid it is lost!"

"Much value?" he demanded.

"A diamond."

"Get another, and that will teach you to be more careful."

"I might, but another could not replace this—not one of twice the value."

"How? let me understand you."

Bell hesitated.

"It was valued more for the sake of the giver."

"Then it ought not to have been lent."

"It was not."

"How did you come by it, then?"

"I tried it on, and forgot to return it."

The captain smiled very slyly.

"When did you first have it in your possession?"

"Not long ago, pa."

"Did you take it from the hand of the owner?"

"Pa, how you question me! No other person could have borrowed it, not for a moment."

"Ah!"

"John is honest, I suppose, papa?"

"John—yes, honest as the sun." The dyspepsia was forgotten for a time. "Mightn't you have dropped it on the street?"

"No, pa; for I saw it when I pulled off my glove, and then I noticed, for the first, that I had brought it away." And Bell, fearing further questioning, hurried away to seek elsewhere for the ring. She was called back by the bell.

"What is it, pa?"

"Daughter, I have changed my mind; I think I can relish breakfast, after all."

"I am glad of that, pa."

"How sly the minx is! But it takes more than a woman to outwit Jack Gray. Does Bell think me quite a dotard?—not know that ring! There is some of me left yet, I can tell her." And, with the old mischievous twinkle of the eye, the captain sat down to breakfast.

"Was ever any one tried as I am! Tice so anxious to be reconciled, and pa so inflexible, and yet, on other matters, so variable! And that I should lose her ring, so prized for his sake. I must tell her, and also that there is not the faintest hope of a reconciliation."

Bell had that morning, unluckily, fallen on a letter written long ago by Walter Dumont, so full of trust and confidence that the different state of feeling struck her mind too forcibly; but the black hair of Bell might have told she could never become lackadaisical, as that indicates sound judgment, a determined will, and but little romance. Flinging the letter in the fire, she rested her face in her hands, in the palms of which she crushed two shining, indignant tears, as she murmured,

"That shall be the last! Proud, hasty man! I can forget as readily as he."

The next moment found her in the kitchen.

"Biddy, I am going to make pa the rarest omelet that mortal hands ever made."

"Well, thin, miss, I wish in me heart ye'd make one every day, so we might see your two beautiful eyes often."

Bell smiled kindly at the well-meant compliment, and soon found the good-nature of the domestic to be catching—and, too, the unfailing good result of exercise.

At three o'clock the captain returned from his usual down-town walk, which had failed to make him forget. Dyspepsia was busy, the omelet was too rich, and was pushed aside for another dish.

"Dear me! what can ail pa?" sighed Bell, as she followed him to the parlor. Taking her usual seat beside him, she asked,

"Shall I read for you, pa?"

"No; thank you."

"Shall we ride?"

"I am too tired now."

"Aren't you well, pa?"

"I'm not sick."

She gave it up, and slowly left the room, heartily wishing the day of clouds and curt replies were over. In the hall she was met by Carrie, who had just been admitted.

"Why so serious, Bell?"

"Only a little dejected; one cannot always be gay, you know."

"I am wretched! Do ask me what about."

"'Tis so unusual, that I must ask the cause."

"Well, I have lost my heart."

"And who has found it?"

"Mr. Ellery, Mary's pastor. Such a beautiful man! His conversation is just like a book."

"A good book, I hope."

"Of course—all full of elegant twists and turns, and now and then a mystery that seems so grand!"

"Ah! 'the dignity of dulness.' Well, I have met him, and been introduced. He admires Mary."

"Who? I guess, if you had seen his marked attention to me, you would not think so."

"Just a ruse, Carrie; so, be careful."

"I shall, I assure you. Just imagine me sailing up the aisle as Mrs. Ellery, the right reverent."

"Come, now, be serious, Carrie; I wish to consult you about a plan I have laid, to hear of which you must stay and spend the afternoon with me. Now, would it be possible for you to keep a straight face under most trying circumstances?"

"Of course it would," said Carrie, as she drew her features to a state of gravity so awful that Bell laughed ringingly, and the captain, putting out his head, said, "Tut!"

Whatever was Bell's plan, it caused much merri-

ment. A chest of superannuated clothing was secretly scrutinized; there was cutting and sewing, and exclamations, which did not end till a quiet rehearsal was had in the garret; after which the two girls returned properly to the presence of good Captain Gray.

CHAPTER VIII.

There is no one but, at some time, finds a great backwardness and indisposition to some duties which he knows to be seasonable and necessary. This, then, is a proper occasion for self-discipline.—*Mason*.

"I CANNOT—indeed, I cannot, dear Bell! You will excuse me—I know you will."

"How can I, Mary, having counted on you as certain to join us?" said Bell.

"I would do so much to oblige you! This I must refuse you, dear Bell."

"Why this?"

"Bell, I have just that sense of the unfitness of it, as to cause me to miss my part. Now, do excuse me, and love me as well," said Mary, playfully.

"One cannot be angry with you, such a little saint. Just comply this time, and love me as well."

"Now, dear Bell, you forget the past. I could not, conscientiously."

Carrie, who had silently listened, now remarked that, in her opinion, there was such a thing as being too scrupulous.

"Not in avoiding the appearance of evil," said Mary.

"I thought," rejoined Bell, "as this was not begun for a mere frolic, not induced by a love of merriment, but for a better reason, it had not that appearance. But I am not going to persuade you against your principles."

"Where is the harm in a bit of fun?" said Carrie.

"There is harm in the least deception. Truth is far more powerful than stratagem in bringing about the desired end. Convince your father, Bell, that Mrs. Halsted still loves him, that she grieves to see him, and you have reconciled them."

"You might as well try to convince one of our Durham cows," said Carrie, pettishly; at which Mary was shocked, while Bell tried in vain to resist a smile at the allusion.

"I should be so afraid to offend your father, whom I respect so highly," said Mary.

"Lah! if you did," said Carrie, "he would only fling up his slipper, and then forgive you."

"That is true, Mary," said Bell, "and perhaps kiss and embrace you for disturbing the current of his thoughts, which, of late, seem to be other than pleasant."

Mary asked, anxiously, if he seemed unhappy.

"He is awful cross," whispered Carrie.

"Come, we must go. Good-bye. I wish I were more like you," said Bell.

Mary took both Bell's hands, as she said,

"Give up this project—do, dear Bell, if only for my sake." But the only reply was a kiss, and away ran the two gay girls, leaving her standing on the door-sill gazing after them.

"In all cases of doubtful propriety, I have found the first whisper of disapproval my safe guide. How little they know me, dear girls! They call me prudish, and too strict, and little dream how I would like to oblige them."

With these reflections, she returned to finish a letter to Mrs. Bentley. We give the broken sentence:

"Joined myself to the people of God. I have been disinherited; the altered will of my grandmother transfers all to my sister Ellen, and now I have learned how little I knew myself. The business of teaching, which I preferred to a life of ease, now, since it has become a necessity, appears irksome as I view it in the future. And my fickleness proves that it is best for me to follow a business that cannot be omitted at will. How natural to shrink from the medicine that conduces to health! for, brought up as I have been, forbidden to work, always offending if I assisted in the lightest household duties, I feel that I am most unfit to be poor. And yet, I am not cast down. I know I must take the cross daily, till duty and inclination become one—till habit has made me

used to work—till my subdued will bows to the great unerring One.

"Do not smile at my solemn letter, dear Madam; I feel so old, and yet I am hopeful. Two of my applications have met a refusal, on the ground of my youth, and consequent inability to discipline a class. These wise men might reflect that time will mend that fault soon. As they do not, I am driven to you for advice, and, if you suppose me capable, your influence, in procuring me a situation in a school or as a governess.

"Yours, Madam, very respectfully,

"M. G. RUTLEDGE."

The letter was scarcely folded, when a note from Bell was handed. It ran thus:

"CONDITIONALLY MY DEAR MARY:—The only atonement you can make for your late disobedience, is to grant your friend this favor. Come to-morrow, and entertain her dear eccentric papa, who, by the way, thinks you a none-such. Knowing his aversion to the one topic, you would do well to avoid that shoal, and cheer him as you can. He is fond of music, and you are skilled in that. I fear he is not well, and almost regret my engagement with Carrie to spend the day with Tice. I shall return early. Be obliging, and come. In anticipation of which, I can safely subscribe myself,

"Your reconciled friend,

"BELL GRAY."

The next day found Mary in Bell's place at the knee of the captain—"gruff Gray," as business men termed him; good Mr. Gray as he really was.

How little one could judge him to be the merry old man he once was on those winter evenings, with music, games, and books, cheating the time. Or see in him the proud, fond father, with his girls at the fashionable places of summer resort, more proud that none could win them from his company. And then, that a schoolboy affection should carry it—a mere lad, thus to ruffle the tide of his pleasant old age. No wonder he looked older by ten years.

Mary plied her needle, quietly thinking what to say, when she was startled by the question;

"Little girl, were you acquainted with my dead daughter?"

"Who, sir?"

"Tice. She is dead—died three years ago."

"Ah! Mrs. Halsted?"

"Call the name Tice, if you please."

Mary was silent.

"Well, did you know her?"

"Yes—as a pretty lady."

"What signifies looks? Pretty! I hate the word."

"Excuse me for speaking of that which is of the least consequence; your daughter has many virtues."

"Did I ask you to praise her, miss?"

"No."

"I have not asked you whether she looked well, or ill; and, what is more, I do not mean to."

"I hope I have not offended you, sir, on a subject so disagreeable to you."

"Now, have I said it was so? There is the way I am constantly misrepresented! This is a free country, miss, and you can talk of whom you choose." And, gently smoothing the brown curls of the frightened girl, he said, "Let me see, now—who were we speaking of?"

"Your daughter, Tice."

"Ah! so we were. And what did you say about her looks?"

"I said she was pretty, but—"

"Well," interrupted the captain, "that may be; one may be good-looking, and yet have a sombre, sad look—not saying she has."

"Your daughter is sad, though her looks do not betray it in the least."

The captain whistled an air very slowly, ere he remarked,

"I do not see why the chit should be sad. I suppose that boy doesn't beat her. Not that I am at all curious about it. She is dead to me, you know."

Mary, having resolved to speak a word in favor of Tice, yet very timid, and quite misunderstanding the old gentleman, ventured:

"I think she is sad about you, sir."

"Me! me! And pray, what is there about me to

make her sad? Am I not in good condition, little miss?"

"I think, sir, her sadness is on her own account. She wishes to see you."

"That's a wild notion of your own!"

"I have heard her wish to see you, sir."

After a short whistle:

"She doesn't care two straws for me."

"She speaks of you as her own dear papa."

"No! When? That was a long while ago, miss."

"I have not known her long, sir."

"How long? Say a year?"

"Only since her return."

"Now! I supposed you were school-girls together. What does she call me? An old fool, did you say?"

Mary was horrified. Come what might, she must correct that error.

"Oh, no! no, sir! Your daughter would not use such language to the worst of persons, much less of you. Dear sir, how have you misunderstood me!"

"What was it, then?"

Mary repeated the words used by Tice, emphasizing each one; at which the old gentleman affected to be vastly amused, as he arose and walked to the window, from whence he called out, in his deep bass voice,

"To see me?" Then, hurrying back and planting himself before the frightened girl, he asked, "Am I any great things to see?"

Mary looked up at the mottled curls that lay about

his broad shoulders, the round, ruddy face and shining gold spectacles, and, taking heart, answered,

"You are not ugly, sir." And preparing for an outburst which came duly, she added, "You do not look hard or cruel, as if you could not forgive her. Do say you will, sir!"

After walking impatiently around the room, the captain asked, fretfully,

"Does your creed uphold lying?"

"No; we consider falsehood to be a sin."

"Just so. And I have said I would not forgive her, and therefore I cannot do it."

"We must forgive, as we hope to be forgiven, sir."

"But I have the words in black and white."

"A vow?"

"Yes, bless you!"

"A bad one is better broken."

"I am surprised. Would you have me perjure myself?"

"Would that be perjury?"

"Of course it would."

"I supposed it to be swearing to that which one knows to be false. If I might not seem bold, I would call yours a rash vow."

"What is a vow?"

"I think it is a solemn promise made to the Lord."

"Well, this was made to myself. I did not think of being so wicked as to call on the holy Name, for I was angry—very angry."

"Then, since it was not a sacred vow, and to forgive is to obey the precepts of the Bible, I am bold in persuading you to see and be reconciled to your daughter."

"You may see the writing. I am no penman, having always followed the sea." And unlocking the drawer of an *escritoire*, he produced a document, from which he read as follows:

"This is to certify that I will never receive the girl Tice Gray under my roof again. From this time she is dead to me. Nevertheless, she shall, after my death, share my fortune with her sister Bell; and may it—do her good, poor child!—There, I was going to say, May it heap coals, and all that sort of thing; but that seemed harsh—rather too much so for a parent."

"Too much so, indeed," said Mary.

"You know, miss, I could have cut her off without a shilling. That paper will show that I was not a hard father. Won't it, little miss?"

"Your name is not signed to it, sir."

"Not Jack Gray at the bottom!—It is, too."

"No, sir."

The paper was grabbed from Mary's hand.

"Bless my soul, no more it isn't! No matter, I meant myself."

"Do forgive dear Tice!" said Mary.

"My dear young woman, how can I? Jack Gray was never known to break his word in his whole life."

"And yet it is in your kind heart to forgive her."

"Who says my heart is kind? She has never asked me to forgive her; and what is not worth asking for, is not worth having."

"She thought it useless even to ask; you are so invulnerable."

"In—, what? You use such big words to an old salt. Now, what does she say I am?"

"So strict to keep your word—for she has heard your resolve about refusing to see her—never to see her again, she told me, with tears."

"'Never to see her'—does it run so? Just look on the paper."

Mary read,

"Never to receive the girl Tice Gray under my roof."

"Ah, that is another thing. Now, if I should meet the child on the street, I would not turn my face away, or cross on the other side. No; I would bow politely, as I would to any other lady."

"And then she would run to meet you, forgetting, in her joy, all the bystanders."

"No, she wouldn't, either!"

"She would come to see you."

"The paper, my dear!—the paper! How unreasonable you women are!"

Mary had gained a better acquaintance with her host, and began to understand him. Her fear was gone, and it was with a smile she resumed,

"I think that document is faulty."

"What is the matter with it?"

"It is not binding."

"Tut! No quibbles. I know what I meant when I wrote it. Rather quick though—most too quick; but I am not going to make a booby of myself, and regret it now."

"Perhaps, when she has gone far away, sir, you will wish you had forgiven her. That word 'Too late' is so melancholy to some who have had daughters die unpardoned."

"Now, hush!" said the captain, stopping his ears.

"I thought noble sailors were apt to forgive and forget freely."

"So they do."

"Not always, it seems."

"She does not wish it."

"She does, sir."

"How do I know it?"

"Will you not believe me? I know she reveres you, and longs to see you. I have seen her weep, and then urge her sister to plead for her to you."

The old man seemed overcome with surprise, as he said,

"And Bell never told me that my girl cared to see me—never told me that she had returned! Poor young lamb!—turned out in the care of that boy. Ah, it has been a long three years! No one to speak to, no one to talk about her, no one to tell me where or how she was—no, I have had to bear it alone."

A tear was brushed away hastily, which Mary, on perceiving, sought to cover by talking of Bell, her faithfulness, and her error in supposing the name of Tice a forbidden one.

"They are very fond of you, sir, both Bell and Tice; and I do not wonder at it, now that I see your kindness to them."

"You are a little flatterer, and a great comfort. Not that I need comfort—no, not I; only the difference is great between your way and Bell's. She never said so much to me in her life, as you tell me of their fondness for me. Well, I have done a good deal for my girls. Good girls, both of them."

"Whatever seems wrong, Bell will explain to you when she and Tice sit again beside you."

"They cannot. You forget the writing about Tice Gray."

"There was no such person when you wrote it. Tice Gray will not come to you, call as loudly as you may. I am pleading for Tice Halsted, sir."

"Bless my soul! that's true, sure enough! Then I need not break my word. Little miss, she can come;—but then, that what's-his-name?" and away went his slipper up among the branches of the chandelier.

Mary sprang on a chair, and, carefully taking it out, handed it to him, at the same time averting her face to hide a smile at a movement so unexpected.

"Your slipper, sir," she said, demurely.

"Thank you. Now, what was that like?"

After a moment's reflection, Mary asked,

"Did it represent your anger at Tice, sent from you in a moment of true manliness?"

"No, my dear."

"No?"

"That was not it; I was thinking of the young whipper-snapper—the husband. He has cost me so much trouble. Not that exactly—nothing troubles a sailor but the loss of his ship. You know what I mean—breaking up my family, and all that."

"And yet, sir, Mr. Halsted has an unblemished character. He is a sailor, and a brave one, too. His father and grandfather were brave English sailors."

"A sailor, and the son of a sailor, and I not know it! That is strange! See, now, how Bell has kept that, too, from me!"

"And all for fear of making you feel unpleasantly, sir."

"Was that the reason?"

"It was, sir."

"Certain, miss?"

"Quite sure; for we have talked of it often, and she has wept about it."

"Poor little jade! And I have been blaming her all this time. And yet I wouldn't have the minx know how we have talked all this over, for a good deal."

"Let it be a secret, then," said Mary. "Only let

me have the pleasure of telling her that you consent to see Tice."

"Well, that will do. You needn't say that I forgot, and put the name wrong on the paper, need you?"

"Not at all; for all are liable to make a mistake—writing it so hastily, too."

After a pause, the captain remarked,

"It seems to me you are a good kind of a girl. Let me see: you are a deacon, or an elder in the church, aren't you?"

Mary explained the office of deacon and elder; on which he said Bell had told him she was something, he had forgotten what.

"You see, we seafaring men know but little about these things—less than we ought, no doubt."

Dinner was now announced. When seated at table, Mary, after some hesitation, bowed her head, silently supplicating a blessing on the viands before her.

The great adversary had whispered her to omit the custom for once. The small voice had said, "He that honors me, I will honor."

When Mary raised her head, the captain remarked that his mother always observed that service.

"Let me hear what you say, miss;—and you, John, stop that laughing. Good for me, and you too, if we did the same."

Mary slowly repeated the words selected from the ritual of the English Church.

"Just the same, and just as she used to say it. Ah, my mother was a good woman."

"I never had a mother's teaching," said Mary.

"I have that to answer for, which you will not. Miss, I ought to be a good man; but bless you, 'tis too late, now!"

"Why, sir?"

"I am too old. Who wants the old hulk of a vessel as a present? Too late, now!"

"Oh, no," said Mary, earnestly; "the Bible says, 'Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation!' And again: 'Seek the Lord while he may be found; call upon him while he is near.'"

Captain Gray was about to reply, when the handling of wine interrupted.

"Whose health, miss?"

"Master Edgar Halsted."

"Now, why not the man in the moon? Well, just to please you, here is to my grandson."

"And for the sake of Tice," suggested Mary.

"I suppose the boy could be put in a nut-shell."

"He is rather too large, sir."

"Pretty?"

"They say he is like Bell."

"Well, well! I cannot realize my little girl being a mother."

Again led to the favorite topic, they went back to the parlor, the captain in the happiest mood, and proving that the sternest need sympathy.

Where is the heart, however good, however gay or sad, but needs to unbosom itself to a friend?

At evening, as Mary found herself still talking of the reunion, she smiled at her terror of the morning, and how afraid she had been of the kind old captain. Not daring to wait longer for Bell, she hurried away. The deep shadows of the evening hid the happiest little face of all that throng now speeding home to meet the smile or frown that awaits the comer.

CHAPTER IX.

Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee.—*Bible.*

IT has been truly said, the most important events of a lifetime seem to hang on the merest trifle. Mrs. Rutledge had her conventionalities in housekeeping as well as in fashions, and ever a scrutinizing search was had from attic to basement; and during one of these perambulations she found herself in Mary's room looking in vain for neglect of her most stringent rules. All was neatness and order; dresses were turned and hung by their loops; slippers and gaiters were placed side by side on the wardrobe-floor. The toilette, with its white covering, hadn't a blemish; books were neatly piled, and papers carefully arranged. Then bureaus were examined and found faultless. Rather pleased to find her rules so well obeyed, she turned to Ellen's room, which closely adjoined. The scent of perfumery, ever disagreeable to her, and the sight of dresses thrown on chair-backs, slippers scattered about the floor, made the disorder seem doubly offensive.

Rings, ear-drops, and pomatum were huddled together in strange juxtaposition on the toilette. The contrast was most unfavorable to Ellen, the door of whose room was now set open; and, stepping back, the lady by turns surveyed both apartments, confirmed in her opinion of Mary's superiority. Just then her gaze was arrested by the corner of a letter that protruded from a book on the top of the pile. Advancing, she drew it out—not meaning to read it, for Bertha Rutledge was scrupulously polite and self-respecting; but the letter, being somewhat worn in the folds, fell open at the end, betraying a name that caused a start of surprise; that of Dorothea Bentley seemed to affect her strangely, for she laid her flushed face in her open palms, as she asked, mournfully, "How has this come about?" Then, after wiping tears that would fall despite her pride, she rose up suddenly, as if decided on a hitherto doubtful point.

"Now it must be. She must go—and yet—how can I?—but it must be. I must do as I did long years ago—put feeling out of my heart and look to my own happiness."

Just then the door was gently opened, and Mary entered; with her face brightening, she said,

"This is an unexpected pleasure."

She looked up, on hearing no reply, and saw with surprise the pained expression, in which there seemed less of anger than usual. With the pleasant current of her thought changed, she questioned in her mind

whether to speak or remain silent. At last the measured tones fell on her ear.

"Mary Rutledge, you must leave; you must seek another home; it must be."

"I will try, grandma, for I see my presence offends you. But has any thing special occurred that I must go now?"

"You correspond with a woman whom I utterly despise—a canting, over-righteous woman. Are these the letters you have been receiving of late?"

"I did not mean to conceal it from you; I would not for worlds. I did not know you disliked Mrs. Bentley."

"You took no care to find out. And, as this subject is not pleasant, do not make me repeat my words, but act according to their import."

"I will, I will, grandma; but—where shall I go? can you advise me?"

"Anywhere, child," came in troubled tones; and the door was closed after the proud woman.

Three days after this found Mary anxious and ill at ease at being sheltered by a forbidden roof. The cold word that had bidden her forth alone had struck harshly, causing the tears to spring to her eyes when she most desired to seem calm; while Mrs. Rutledge, having passed her first surprise, was soon carried away by a whirr of engagements. Ellen was gay and frivolous, as usual; nor could Mary guess, by her manner, whether she knew of her intended departure.

"Aunt Ellis must not know it; she will grieve for me. I will spare her as long as possible, and perhaps, in after years, I can come for her to live with me. And yet, what a comfort to tell her all, and have her good counsel!"

Two weeks after, when the nervous shock had subsided, and the strong will had preponderated, Mary looked with an eye of faith to the promises, and grew confident in the future, remembering that the hairs of our head are all numbered, believed that the changes in her abiding places would be overruled by a kind and loving Father. "What is place to the Omnipresent?" she would ask; and, repeating from Acts xvii. 27, would smilingly ask herself how she had comported herself in this new phase of her life. And, feeling glad that chance had kept her from seeing her young friends, she reasoned thus:

"I might have been tempted to say rash things of grandmamma—might have spoken words which I would wish in vain to recall." Then, resolving to leave Bell in ignorance of her intended departure, she thought of various plans for the future. A life of ease at Mrs. Bentley's, with the talented and beautiful Lois, of whom she had heard so often, for a moment tempted her, but was put aside. "Mine must be a working life;" and, in the resolve, she grew cheerful as she conned and answered advertisements;—much to the surprise of Mrs. Grant, who guessed in vain what the dear child could be about. * *

"The agent now in town! Then I must see him." Casting down the morning paper, and without replying—for she could not—to Mrs. Grant, Mary hastened on bonnet and shawl, and was soon hurrying toward our busy down-town streets. Fearing rude rebuffs, but most a bold and unladylike seeming, what wonder if her heart fluttered, and she had nearly given up her search among the numerous signs of publishing houses and notices of new books, when her eye caught the name of "Darras, agent." Brought thus to a stand, the poor girl drew her veil over her flushed face, and hurried by in hope of gaining courage, never heeding the prying eyes that gazed at her pretty, shrinking form.

If the worthies of type and press knew, they would hardly credit the dread with which the timid woman, when compelled by circumstances, is ushered in their august presence.

"Of what use? I must put away these foolish fears, since I must make my own way in the world;" and, retracing her steps to where the agent's name and business was duly set forth, and glad to get out of the bustle, Mary ran up a flight of steps that led to a small and illy-ventilated room. A man at a desk informed her that the gentleman himself was present. Mr. Ezekiel Smith advanced, and made himself known. He was a tall, gaunt person, shabby in dress, and strangely ungrammatic in speech, talking loudly about disciplining a school, as if that made the most important part of an education.

"You are such a child!" he said, fretfully.

"I am seventeen."

"What is that but a child, hey?"

"Time will mend that, sir."

"Good! You are quick. Well, have you references?"

Mary gave two.

"Well, they must serve, I am so hurried. I must take you, or no one."

Then followed a colloquy, that ended by Mr. Smith assuring her she had an old head on young shoulders. Promising to be ready to start for her new home by six on Thursday, Mary bounded out of the office, half wondering if it could be true, and not all a dream, only regretting that she thought so illy of her employer.

And now, as the number of days shorten, she longs to see Bell, and urge her again to leave a life of frivolity. Yielding to her desire, she is soon at the door; in the parlor she finds Bell, sitting on a low ottoman, with all the combs and pins hanging on her long loose locks.

Mary stopped midway, and joined the laughter. A fat, chubby child in German attire was mounted on a cushion, and triumphantly held out the long strands of shining hair.

"Can it be!"

"Yes, it is."

"Does he know?"

"No; he is patronizing a poor peasant child, and getting so fond of him! Just think of it—Clarence Halstead's son!"

"Oh, what a tangled web we weave
When first we practise to deceive."

"Naughty Bell." And, stooping, Mary kissed away the edge of the slight reproof.

"You disarranged our plan of dressing Tice as a German peasant, and so letting her see papa."

"There is no need, dear Bell. Your father will see her as an American, and love her as he has never ceased to do."

"Oh, but this is such sport! Why, I have my theatrics at home. To see this young thing winning on pa daily—and he is going to do so much for it in the future!"

"Does Clarence know?"

"He is in Chicago, and will not be home in a month's time." Just then the captain entered, and a ring at the door was followed by the entrance of Mrs. John Gale. "Oh, dear! where shall I run?"

"You are too late!" laughed Mary.

The captain extended his hand to his sister, who looked in astonishment at Bell, and then at the child.

"Where did the strange-looking creature come from?"

"A nice child," said the captain.

"Nice! Any thing but nice—and so out of place here! Do tell me where it comes from."

"The child is German. Look at him, and don't be so proud."

"I scarcely look at my own. But is not this a strange freak of yours, Bell? for I know my brother does not sanction it."

"I am not against it."

"Brother, you are in your dotage."

"You can't be far from yours, then, since you are just two years older than I."

"Will he not come in time to presume on it, and claim an old acquaintance?"

"Nonsense!" But the captain was annoyed. The sister had an unbounded influence. And a new train of thoughts and worries came in her insinuations.

"Do you not think this imprudent?" she asked of Mary.

"Speak your mind, little miss," said the captain.

"Let us hope no great harm will come by the child being here," said Mary.

"I see—I see. You are making the best of it."

Mrs. Gale gave an affected shrug of the shoulders, and, turning to Bell, asked where she had found the creature.

"Not far off."

"You are not despairing of marriage, that you resort to this use of your surplus affections!"

"Not at all, aunt; I am still five years younger than you were at the time of your marriage."

"Drop the subject," said the captain.

"With pleasure," said Bell.

Soon after, the lady left, and Mary followed her to the door.

"Miss Bell has grown a spirited piece," she said.

"She is very dear to me," was the reply; and, politely bidding adieu, Mary returned to the parlor, to find the captain strangely perplexed.

"That girl was always quick, and she is right; she has hit the nail right on the head. The world will laugh at us for making so much of a little foreign pauper. And yet, he is a nice child. That makes me like him so much. Well, the world will meddle, and he must go."

"Pa, Aunt Jane is not all the world."

"She is a sensible woman."

"With no heart," whispered Bell. "Pa, I shall suffer with loneliness if he goes. I must have a more genteel child in his place."

"That wont mend the spoiling of this one. I suppose the mother's head is nearly turned by this time, thinking I am going to make a rich man of him. And how can she see him wallowing in the streets, after being here so long?"

"How can you see it, pa? Just for what aunt has to say. But never fear; his mother is the essence of refinement."

"Essence of fiddlesticks!"

Bell's merriment seemed so ill-timed as to pique and annoy her father. Rising up suddenly, he said,

"I will go and see the poor woman, and satisfy her with a present."

"Pa, you needn't go."

"I shall."

"Why so soon?—say to-morrow."

"The sooner the better."

"Pa, say to-morrow; 'tis such a long walk, and I am so tired."

But the gold-headed cane was planted firmly on the floor.

"Do I own a carriage, or am I so poor I must walk? I see myself taking the chap by the hand at the risk of meeting Jane. No, no!"

"What shall I do?" whispered Bell.

"Tell him all, and urge him to see Tice."

"I cannot. You forget my promise to Clarence."

"That was not a good promise."

"Come," said the captain.

Bell caught up the child, and, regardless of results, followed to the carriage, where for the first observing that Mary had remained, the reason was testily demanded by the captain.

"She wished me to make an apology to you, pa."

"Isn't she well?"

"Perhaps not quite."

"Do you know any other reason?"

"She had some scruples, pa. You know how queer she is."

"She isn't queer at all; I never knew a young person less so. And if she has scruples, I guess I ought to have mine. Bless me! I thought nothing would please her better than to visit the poor. Well! well! the best of women are past finding out."

"Papa, let's give it all up, and keep the child."

"I wont." Then, in soliloquy, "I suppose an old salt like me had better let alone trying to do good, and tend to my own reckonings first. But what am I to do with the child?" And, bidding the coachman, they were soon passing rapidly along the busy streets. Suddenly they stop at a grocery store, and stepping out he explained.

"A few purchases for the poor woman, my dear."

During his short absence, Bell resolved to follow Mary's advice and tell her father all, and then go with him to the humble home of his son-in-law; but when he returned to the carriage, more than one voice was heard. A clerical-looking person carried the parcels, between whom and her father she heard the following:

"And you wish me to give these, and this purse, in your name?"

"That is it, sir; and make it all right about the child. You preachers have such a knack at saying kind things. My daughter Bell will show you the place."

"Happy to oblige you," said the stranger, stepping

in, and bowing politely to poor Bell, who gave, in return for his smile, a look of blank dismay. Then, seeing her father about to leave, she dashed open the carriage-door with,

"Pa, did I not urge you to postpone this visit? You are not treating me well at all—indeed you are not!"

"Daughter, you see I am not well; this dyspepsia is killing me." Then, shutting the door, and signing to the coachman, Bell was left a prey to the keenest vexation. Over the head of the child she peered at the face of the clergyman, not failing to perceive in him a dignity of mien blended with a certain grace of features that interested while it caused the more shame that such an one should be witness to her angry mood.

Mary was surprised at the speedy return of the captain.

"So soon!—and without Bell?"

"I did not go farther than 'Green's.'"

"And so Bell went alone?"

"No; she had company."

"Who, may I ask?"

"Your friend."

"Mine?"

"Yes; that good young preacher who called here once. Mr.—I forget his name."

"Oh, I wish you had gone too!"

"Me! Why, I thought you didn't wish me to go. You had your scruples, it seemed; Bell and I,

being new hands at the business, it seemed so natural that you should be with us. And then, when I found you didn't seem to like it, I just gave it up, till I saw the young man, and then I turned all over to him. It's his trade, I suppose."

A few moments after found Mary hurrying along the street, to aid poor Bell out of her trying position her only thought. But she is not in time, for the carriage has stopped at 63, and the young stranger has asked if this is the place.

Bell is hoping against hope, and is tempted to prevaricate; but Tice has espied from the window the dear old family carriage, and flies, with extended arms, to her boy. The stranger has gathered up the parcels, and, after the greeting, asks again for the poor woman.

"I will explain," said Bell; and beginning, faltered, turned away, and hid her flushed face in her hands. Tice was amazed. What did it all mean?

"Allow me to relieve you of these," she said, taking the parcels. Bell whispered to take them away; but the stranger, with thanks, retained them. Then Tice led the way up to the parlor, chatting, with well-assumed ease, about the weather, the dull times, and the late devastating fire; these exhausted, and a silence fell on all. While the young mother is slowly removing the uncouth dress of her boy, and Bell, sinking in a chair, seems lost in thought, comes a gentle tap, and Mary stands amid the group. She has glanced pityingly at Bell, greeted Tice and the

boy, ere, with a start of surprise, she extends her hand to her pastor, the Rev. George Ellery. The meeting seemed to give mutual pleasure; conversation flowed, the past was talked over, and for a time the parcels and their place of destination seemed to be forgotten. Then Tice and Bell stole singly from the room for the purpose of a brief explanation, which, while it wrung indignant tears from Bell, caused Tice to laugh despite herself.

"What shall we say to him?"

"What if Clarence comes?"

"Tell him all—all, Tice! I am forever done with deception! Henceforth my motto is 'Truth.' Oh, for Mary's stern decision of character!"

When the sisters returned, they found Mr. Ellery had arisen to go.

"Ladies," he said, "will you aid me in finding an owner for these?"

"Can't we have them sent?" asked Bell.

"I promised to put them in the hands of the poor woman; else I might."

After a long silence, and when Tice had gathered courage, she said,

"I am the person to whom these parcels were sent."

"You!"

"Yes; 'tis a mistake, that has grown out of an innocent stratagem. Miss Rutledge will explain to you, perhaps. We meant no disrespect to any one—indeed we did not."

Then Mary briefly related the simple story, which seemed to amuse the good man more than was seemly.

"Then you are the poor mother?" he said.

"Yes; and I am so ashamed! You see, sir, we have been led into this by our love for papa. But we find Mary is right; the least deception is better avoided. And now we will return to papa, and tell him all."

"Do," said Mary.

"She must not," said Bell.

"Perhaps 'tis the last favor you can grant me. Dear Bell, do not hinder her," said Mary.

"The last?" said the pastor.

"What do you mean?" said Bell. "One would think you were about to leave us."

"And if I should, let me go with the consciousness that she is reconciled to one of the most doting parents."

"Pa is good."

"I think I shall go," said Tice.

"Don't!" said Bell.

"Bell, I am going," said Tice. "And you, sir, return with us."

And carrying Edgar away, he was soon arrayed in bright plaid and a velvet cap; and now, seated in the carriage, with the rumbling of wheels preventing discourse, and that electric effect produced by putting five persons in such odd juxtaposition, a profound silence prevails.

But to return to the captain. No sooner left alone, than he began looking for Bell's return, hurrying to the window at the sound of every passing vehicle, then pacing the room with that impatience of delay so common to the aged, till, wearied into drowsiness, he threw himself in his arm-chair, and slept soundly. And thus Tice found him.

She had checked the springing step, and gone on with uplifted finger, till she glided behind his chair and laid her fair cheek down on the mottled head. The pastor, deeming the scene too sacred for intrusion, withdrew, his eyes dimming with manly tears. Bell, scarcely trusting herself, had walked to the window. Mary was calm, and collected as usual; but the child—Who can guess the end of any thing where one is? *Sans ceremonie* he was climbing the knee of the sleeper, to find his old place of rest. Aroused, the old man began looking vacantly about. Tice crept more completely behind the chair. Then Mary advanced, saying,

"You see, sir, we have brought back the boy."

"Ah! Why? Must we keep the little fellow, whether we will or no? What did the poor mother say?"

"She seems to be quite satisfied."

"That we shall keep him?"

Mary laughed; at which the old man looked up inquiringly.

"Does she think me a hard fellow?"

"She is here to answer for herself."

"Here! Where, Miss?" and, turning, he saw the silk skirt and little trim foot, so unlike the German, that a trick of Bell was suspected; till, turning, he looked where she stood quietly at the window.

"So, so!" he said; "what does it mean?"

"Papa," said Tice, very tremulously, "I brought the boy back."

"But why didn't you leave him?"

"He likes you too well, papa."

The captain turned himself puzzledly at Bell, who, despite herself, giggled in a suppressed way. Then the old man stroked his forehead, frowned, and mused. And then a young face was laid against the withered one, and a voice said,

"Papa, Tice is beside you. Can you forgive her—all her disobedience?"

"Who is it? who?"

"Tice, your lost child."

"No—can't be! That would be too good!"

"Papa."

"My child! my dear child!"

And, rising, father and daughter mingled tears of joy. Closely she was hugged to him, and then held off at arm's length and viewed.

"Tell me where you came from last, my dear; tell me how it has fared with you, and if you have been happy all this long, long time."

"Pa, I couldn't be happy, knowing I had offended

you, and that I could not see you. But, pa, you won't think my husband wasn't kind. He was; but he was not my own dear papa."

And, throwing her arms about the old man's neck, she laughed merrily as of old. Then chairs were drawn closely, and questions and answers passed till the captain became gleeful and garrulous.

"Let bygones be bygones, from this day forth." Then, for the first noticing the child, he said,

"This is a nice little chap. Would you believe, I have grown quite fond of him? But, hoity-toity, my little man, I guess Bell has been fixing you up a bit."

"Pa," said Tice, "he is not a German child."

"No; what then?"

"Cannot you guess?"

"They told me he was a foreign child."

Then Tice, taking her boy, and placing his face beside her own, asked,

"Does he look like me?"

At this up sprang the old man, and, pretending to deal heavy blows, ended by kissing her and the boy by turns.

"You see, papa, I wanted you to love my child, never supposing you would love me; and so I was glad to let Bell bring him."

"'Tis all past and gone!" shouted the captain, tossing up his slipper, as was his wont. And then Bell and Mary joined the chat, and told over their dilemma with the parson and his parcels.

And now the captain, rising up hastily, unlocks his escritoire.

"Who owns this?"

"My ring—my own ring!" said Tice. "Bell, you didn't lose it."

"Pa!" exclaimed Bell, after examining it, "how came you by it?"

"I found it where you lost it, Miss—on the floor."

"Pa, I didn't know you had so much cunning," said Bell.

During a merry laugh that now ensued, Mary quietly left the room, for the first time recollecting the lateness of the hour. None could have guessed, with that bounding step, and happy, laughing face, that she was a homeless girl.

"I can bear a scolding to-night," she said, as her thoughts turned back to the happy group she was leaving. Bell could not miss her now, with the sister restored, the boy welcomed. And no doubt Clarence coming to cheer the once saddened hearth. And then, such good news to tell Aunt Ellis! And, bounding through the front area gate, just as, when a school-girl, she used to do; she passed to the dining-room; but her quick step is arrested by seeing that dear aunty's look of suffering.

No reply is given to her evening salutation; so Mary comes to her chair, and takes a part of it, puts her arm about the bowed form, and, stooping, peers in her half-averted face.

"I hope you are not ill, dear aunty?"

"Ill at heart, my poor child."

"Why?"

"I did not believe it. I said it could not be, that you would go and leave this house; but it is too true—too true! And I might have known it would come too soon."

"Yes, aunty, it is true; but you must not be so sad about it."

"Why was it kept a secret from me?"

"To spare your feelings, aunty; because I know you love me."

"Don't you want me with you?"

"You couldn't go so far, aunty."

"I a'n't so old and useless as you think; and I don't mean to stay, and see you go alone."

"Aunt Ellis, you wouldn't leave grandmamma in her old age!"

"Yes; you are more to me than she ever can be. In truth, she is nothing to me. Oh, what will the house be, without my little Mary?"

"And what will poor grandma be, without you?"

"You don't want me, I see. And you meant to go without bidding me good-by! Oh, that hurt me!"

"Aunty, I have written a long letter to you. I meant to steal in your room, and leave it on your pillow; and then I meant to write from my new home, and tell you everything. And, if I succeeded, I had thought, if dear grandmamma should go before you, to

write, and get Mr. Ellery to bring you on to live with me. Now, don't laugh at my plans, for I meant it; and I mean it still; but not while you can be useful to her."

"I am nothing to her. Wicked! to let you go."

"'Tis all right, aunty."

"Tell me, child, how did it come about so soon?"

"Because I correspond with good Mrs. Bentley."

"Ah! that was it. I was afraid of it, and often wondered how she allowed it."

"I did not mean to be secret about it, and thought grandma knew. Aunty, why does she dislike that good lady?"

"Oh, my child, I don't dare to tell you all! you must wait. I thought sorrow would come of my staying here."

"Now, aunty! Do not dark days and adverse circumstances turn out bright to the Christian? Often you have told me that there is a silver lining to every cloud. And I am cheerful, because this change to us is not of our own seeking."

"There is something in that, child."

"And as you have not been bidden to go, aunty, you ought not to seek a change, but stay and comfort her."

"I must go with you."

"Then my task is made heavier. It is hard to leave you, with religion to sustain you; but her!—oh, aunty, stay, and plead, and pray with her! Do stay, and do

a Christian's work in this house. You are welcome here; I am not."

After reflecting a while, and seeming to contend with her convictions, the housekeeper said,

"You are right; my duty is, to stay; but oh, I want to leave this horrid house!"

"'Tis hard, dear aunty; but what are the things of time? The few little sorrows of a day are not worth a thought."

It was pitiful to see poor Mrs. Grant; the tears falling as she tried in vain to assent and smile at Mary's words of comfort. She could see nothing but gloom in the future.

"You go to Mrs. Bentley, of course?"

"No; to Canada."

"My dear child! what in the world—off there among the heathen!"

Mary remarked that the Canadians would not feel complimented, could they hear her opinion of them, and gave the assurance that they were a polite and polished nation.

"Then they have improved since I was there; but that was a long time ago. I came there quite unexpectedly. How is it about money?"

Mary felt sure she had enough, and counted seven, five, ten; and, thrusting the bills back, with loose change, into her portmonnaie, went on talking; but Mrs. Grant shook her head doubtfully.

"Whoever travels needs a good deal of money; I

know that by experience. Yes, it goes like water; and remember, you will have no rich grandma to go to. Now, I have been laying up for a stormy day, and I can give you all you will need for a while."

"No, no, aunty; not your hard-earned wages—they would burn my pocket!"

"You are not to keep money in your pocket. I s'pose there are banks in Canada, and there are bills of exchange; so take my advice, dear, about carrying money about you. I am afraid you are a little careless."

"I will try and mend my faults, dear aunty, for your sake as well as my own; but never let me be unjust."

The good housekeeper insisted.

"Do I want dress? Do I want jewelry? I have no kin; mine are all in the grave. No living being to call on me for help; and you refuse, because you think I am poor."

"Granty," said Mary, "you may loan me a certain sum, and, as I am now a business woman, I must be allowed to pay you interest. Now, will not that do?"

"Let me make you a present this time, and then, when you want again, we will talk of interest; you are not in business yet."

Seeing how much it would gratify, and really convinced of her need, Mary consented, and arrangements were made.

"I should never have thought of it."

"Poor child! who would, at your age?" And,

kissing Mary good-night, Mrs. Ellis withdrew. An hour after, two folded letters lay on Mary's toilette. They were full of earnest pleadings and kind remembrances to Mrs. Rutledge and Ellen. She was sleeping soundly, at peace with all the little world she knew.

CHAPTER X.

The strongest minds are those of whom the noisy world hears least.—*Wordsworth.*

MARY awoke with the dawn; for it was the morning of her departure, and she wished to leave a letter for Bell. That which she had penned to Ellen and her grandmother the night previous, lay on the toilette of each; for she had come and gone from her sister's bedside unobserved, leaving a plain gold ring on Ellen's letter.

It was not so easy to get away from Mrs. Rutledge. Age needs short intervals of sleep. When Mary opened the door, she was greeted testily with,

"Child, what are you doing at this early hour?" And, feeling a kiss on her forehead, she called Mary a queer little thing, and slumbered on.

"Perhaps it is the last time my eyes will rest on you, dear grandma. Who will care for you as I have?" she thought. "Who will excuse the hasty word, that does not mean half the anger it seems to imply." And, turning back softly, she spread the quilt carefully over the shoulder that was uncovered. There

was no need, for it was warm even then; but she would be doing something for the last time.

And now, farewell to childhood and mirth—to days of careless ease; henceforth she is to be the thinking, plodding little woman, making her own way in the world—to begin the Christian's path, which has no promise of being strewn with roses, yet often beautified by here and there a rill of refreshing water from the fountain of fulness. With somewhat of shrinking, Mary went slowly away from the threshold, where she had lingered to cast back a tearful glance; and then to meet the housekeeper—to inflict the wound on that lonely heart. How glad she was made by finding the old lady calm and cheerful.

"Up so soon, aunty?"

"Yes, my child; and able to say to my Lord, 'Thy will be done.'"

"That is right! that is good, aunty!"

"Alas! my dear, I find I am like the horse and mule, whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle; and 'the still small voice' has reproved me, and given me strength to say, 'Go, work in the Master's vineyard.' The Lord has made me willing to give you up, my child."

This was said exultingly, as one says a thing triumphantly, after gaining a victory over self.

"Now, aunty, this is like yourself, and it strengthens me in going. Why, nothing but sin should trouble us—nothing, aunty!"

"I know it, bless you! but we lose our faith; we forget, and fall down in the mire of discontent. He has brought me out of six troubles, and in the seventh He will sustain me."

And so they parted, in full faith, as the children of an unchanging Father should and will, while ever watching at the gate of prayer; but we are still in the body, and faint and tire by reason of infirmities known to and often forgiven by the All-Wise, who bears his children up even when they fall.

Who shall tell the loneliness of that heart, with its only affection? A few days after, when the bustle and excitement had passed, and the daily household cares kept their routine, as if the light and joy of the house had not been thrust out—as if there were the same impulses to effort and toil, Mrs. Grant, feeling as if Mary had been consigned to the grave, fell back in the old despondency.

"It was my one ewe lamb, and they took it," she would say.

And again the pitying eye of the loving Saviour marked the sorrow; and, being a High Priest who can be touched with a feeling of our infirmities, healed the wounded spirit, by sending more light into the soul, and giving a realizing sense that our light affliction is but for a moment; and, thus sustained, she took the yoke, and meekly bore the harsh reproofs of the self-condemned woman, and proud, vain girl. Recalling Mary's charge to be kind to grandmamma, Mrs. Grant

would hurry cheerfully to the presence of her mistress, who, some three weeks after Mary's departure, was found in her most genial mood.

"Why, Granty," she said, "I am like one who has lost a limb. I didn't know how useful the child was to me."

"She was a good little thing," said Ellen, patronizingly; and, bending over her framework to hide a momentary regret, she asked, or rather suggested,

"I suppose she will be back soon."

At which Mrs. Rutledge glanced keenly at the housekeeper, expecting a reply. As none came, she remarked,

"Think she will, Granty?"

"I think not, ma'am."

"Why? is she so far off?"

"Too far to expect her soon, even if the child had nothing to do but travel, and had plenty of money to do it with."

"Is she doing more than visiting that woman—that Mrs. Bunting, or Benting?" asked Ellen.

"Why don't you speak, Grant? What is she doing?" asked Mrs. Rutledge.

"Well, ma'am, I suppose, by this time, heart and hand are busy making her own living by teaching."

A long silence, and then Mrs. Rutledge asked,

"Did the foolish child go without money?"

"No, ma'am; I supplied her with enough to last

quite a while. She is not extravagant, you know, and cares but little for dress."

"True. Well, I must refund the money to you," said Mrs. Rutledge, taking out her purse.

"No, ma'am," said Mrs. Grant, as she put back the hand and proffered purse.

"Take it, Grant. I could not think the child would fly off so suddenly."

Still the money was refused.

"I like to think, ma'am, that a little of my earnings has gone with the dear child."

Mrs. Rutledge darkened.

"Take it, I say."

"Excuse me, ma'am; I must disobey you this time."

In a raised voice the mistress asked,

"Do I want you, my hireling, to supply me or mine?"

Mrs. Grant left the room, after meekly asking permission.

From this time there was much heart-burning and bickering caused by Ellen on account of Mrs. Grant's influence with Mary's friends; for Bell and Carrie, despite all the laws of custom, would run in at the arca-gate to ask if there was any word from her. Mr. Ellery, too, would call, and ask after her. These calls quite flattered good Mrs. Grant, while they served to cheat the time, till a month had passed, and then came a letter, only delayed till affairs had taken a settled

turn, and Mary could tell how well she liked her new home. The letter was so cheerful in its tone, so full of hope and useful projects, that distance seemed lessened; and a description of the journey, its new scenes and strange sights, her enjoyment in the excitement of passing from one new beauty to another, amused and pleased the good old lady so much, that she forgot her sadness in the hope of soon hearing again.

"And this is Toronto!" said Mary, as they rounded the point of swampy land that used to stretch for miles in front of the city. And her comments on the handsome buildings, the many domes and spires, that bespeak a place of some note; her approval of the wide, clean streets and well-kept gardens, were highly gratifying to her employer—for even the praises of a young girl are of consequence to a lover of his native place; and to this Mary owed somewhat of her future influence on Mr. Smith. A one-horse wagon awaited them in King street, and a five-mile ride brought them to a large white house, on the steps of which Mary noticed a group of well-dressed, pretty girls.

"Ah, here we are!" said Mr. Smith, arousing.

"Your daughters, sir?"

"Yes. Here, girls, show Miss—what's it, now?"

"Rutledge."

"Rutledge—ah! Show Miss Rutledge to a room."

Three girls advanced, smiling. One took her hat and shawl, another her wallet, while the third carried her gloves, as if anxious to do something for the new

teacher—for Mr. Smith had introduced her as such; but a prettier one than either advanced, and, half reproving them, asked Mary to a room where she might cool her face and smooth her hair.

A loud-sounding bell soon summoned Mary to a well-spread meal, and gave her an opportunity to see the family assembled. With her usual quickness of perception, she saw that there was a good deal of subdued hilarity not meant for the ear or eye of Mr. Smith; and, too, that there was more of fear than affection in their manner toward him; and, somehow, she had a vague idea that the Mr. Smith at home, and the Mr. Smith as a travelling companion, were very different personages. She wondered if the girls had lost their mother, as the oldest—Grace—waited at table, and she heard no apology made for the absent; and, fearing to ask, lest she might wound by the question, Mary hoped that some turn in the discourse might enlighten her on that point; but the chat was about some persons having said something about a some one, of course unknown to her; and though there was much suppressed mirth, and a flow of discourse, she could not but admire such a perfect freedom from censoriousness or gossip; a spirit of kindness to all seemed to prevail. Nor did the evening pass less pleasantly. A call from two young gentlemen did not change the easy gayety of Grace and Jane, or rouse Miss Kate from her good-natured indifference to her own appearance; for, except when regarding Mary, she seemed

preoccupied in mind. An easy gayety seemed to prevail, which increased to perfect merriment as soon as Mr. Smith retired for the night. The opened piano reminding, one of the gentlemen asked a song. But no; they could not play in the presence of Miss Rutledge, on whom all eyes were now turned; and, forced by kind requests and compliments, Mary was led to the instrument. After singing one or two sprightly songs, and hearing the giddy girls chatting merrily with the visitors, she followed her own mood, and sang a sad French melody, a favorite of Tremont's, and one they had often sung together. At the close of the verse, she was surprised by an alto voice, so beautifully toned, and so near her, that she turned, and smiled her approbation as she continued. Her song was not less sad as she looked on the pretty but faded face of a lady of some fifty summers, whose care-marked features, and long, drooping lash, seemed to tell of a sorrow equal to that of which both were singing. Her French accent was so pretty, that, when the song was done, Mary involuntarily placed both hands in those of the lady, as she said,

"How beautifully correct! Never have I heard it sung better."

"You did not see mamma at tea," said Grace.

"I was engaged then," said Mrs. Smith, and soon after quietly left the room.

"Your voice brought ma from the kitchen, while ours always sends her there," laughed Jane.

Mary was still thinking of the sweet singer as she looked over the pieces of music that lay about, when her ear caught the reply to some foregone remark.

"No, Jin; she is not."

"Where, then?"

"In our room, with us."

"She may not like to do so."

"She is not particular, I guess."

"Pray settle that by and by," said Kate. "What will she think?"

"She'll think we can't help it, and think right, too. You can see, to look at her once, that she is kind and considerate."

Mary could not but smile, despite her effort to seem not to hear; at which Jane said, triumphantly,

"There! I told you she was good-natured."

At ten, the two visitors left, and then the girls drew around Mary, and chatted as familiarly as if they had known her for years. But the fatigue of her journey caused her to become drowsy, and to ask the usual time of retiring.

"Why, we have no hour; we go just when we get sleepy," said Jane.

"Whenever you wish, Miss Rutledge," said Kate.

"I am quite tired," said Mary.

"Then we will go immediately." And all arose, when Grace suggested that Miss Rutledge must be hungry, and asked,

"What will you have?"

"Nothing, thank you."

"Why not? Do!"

"I seldom eat out of hours."

"What a funny idea!" laughed Grace, as she led the way up stairs.

Once in their sleeping-room, the sisters sat on the bed's side, where anecdotes were told of persons, of course, unknown to Mary, while the long hair was loosened and arranged for the night. The scantiness of furniture, and the dust on the window-ledges, was noticed excusingly by Kate, who, while she talked as gayly as the others, was stealthily replacing disarranged articles, and removing the things that lay on the only chair, that she might offer it to Mary, who, till now, had sat on the side of the bed, really amused at the merriment of the girls; but, as she felt herself becoming sleepy, fearing to offer, in her devotions, a blemished sacrifice, summoned courage to ask if she might read a portion of Scripture aloud. A cheerful assent being given, Mary read the Twenty-third Psalm.

"How beautiful!" said Kate, as Mary ceased.

"She reads like Queen Sis," said Grace.

"Precisely," said Jane.

"We have another sister, Miss Rutledge; but she doesn't live here."

"Ah!"

"Then there is Susie, and Annie, and Mabel. Oh, there's a tribe of us!" said Jane.

During the discourse springing from the first re-

mark, Mary patiently waited an opportunity for prayer. Not knowing the custom of her room-mates, she felt a momentary embarrassment; but soon remembering that our duty is to honor the Lord at all times, she knelt and supplicated a blessing on her new mode of life, fervently asking for wisdom to guide in all her ways. On arising, she was pleased to see that Grace had been kneeling too; Kate and Jane seemed to be asleep. Soon all were slumbering; and it was strange to think of our young traveller casting her lot among the young and fair and kind as herself.

The night seemed to have passed too soon; for, on waking, Mary found herself but little refreshed, having a sense of oppression—a weary, regretful feeling, quite unused to her.

“Why do I feel thus?” she asked herself, as she arose languidly, to find her answer in a candle still burning, from the wick of which streamed a smoky vapor. Hastily extinguishing it, she hurried to raise a window. On seeing she could not do so without letting in a draught of air on the fair sleepers, she sat down patiently.

“Shall I be contented here?” she mused. And, looking on her companions as they slept, she noticed in all a striking resemblance—the same long lash, the broad white forehead, the abundant wavy hair; but the shade of care on the features of Kate, which she had not perceived till now, attracted her. Deeming herself too much a stranger to be the first out, she sat

and looked wistfully at the sun lighting the far-off hills; for she had examined the small book-case that stood in the room, and found old French romances and a number of song-books alike uninteresting. Nor was it difficult to perceive that late sleeping was a habit of the family; for not a door had turned on its hinges, and the cows were lowing in the yard, as if envious of the fowls, who had trooped away long ago to the uplands. Mary thought of Mrs. More’s lines on sleep, and mentally repeated:

“Thou silent murderer Sloth, no more
My mind imprisoned keep,
Nor let me waste another hour
With thee, thou felon, Sleep.
Teach me, in health, each good to prize,
I, dying, shall esteem;
And every pleasure to despise,
I then shall worthless deem.”

At last there were signs of waking—not of arising; for, after a turn, there was the appearance of another nap, which Mary mischievously tried to prevent by bidding Kate good-morning. The reply awakened Jane, who asked what Miss Rutledge could be doing up at that hour.

“I cannot sleep after five in summer,” said Mary; “and I have been wishing, for the last hour, to go down to that beautiful stream, that has been sparkling as if to tempt me to come and rejoice with it.”

“Oh, how bookish!” said Jane.

"Why didn't you go?" asked Grace.

"I was afraid of seeming bold; I am such a stranger, you know."

"La!" said Grace, half rising. "You might as well begin as you mean to go on. Do just as you please about such matters. Who cares how a thing seems?" Then added, "I might have gone if you had asked me last evening, or if you had woke me."

"You!" laughed Jane. "She hadn't a trumpet handy, and I'm sure nothing else could arouse you."

"Not so bad, Jinny; I can wake for an object. Miss Mary's company might have had quite an arousing effect."

"Serious, now. Do you like to walk before breakfast?" asked Jane.

"I think I should. You know I am not used to the country, and cannot speak from experience."

"I will walk with you every morning," said Jane.

"No; we will share the pleasure, and take turns—wont we, Kate?" said Grace.

"I shall be happy to go with Miss Rutledge," said Kate.

"I wish I had known it!" said Mary.

"We can go yet," said Jane.

"Perhaps you have something to attend to."

"I don't have anything to do," said Grace, listlessly. "And if I had, I would let it go undone, for the sake of a walk."

"That sounds strangely to Miss Rutledge, I suppose," said Kate.

"I only thought you might be obliged to assist in preparing breakfast."

"No; ma always assists Biddy, and says we are only in the way, and that we hinder more than we help her."

"Then you surely can be spared," laughed Mary; who soon, with Jane, went bounding over the hills, now dry of dew; for the breeze was up, and tossing their curls about as they ran.

During a rest, Mary said she was ashamed of her girlish mood.

"Why, Miss Smith, I fear I shall dance, and be as gay as I once was."

"Why not be gay?" asked Jane.

"Why dance?"

"Because one is merry, of course."

"We have a command for that, Miss Smith."

"What is it?"

"'Is any merry, let him sing psalms.'"

"Ugh! that would make me gloomy."

Mary sang one of those spirited tunes usual among the Methodists, and then asked,

"Is that calculated to cause gloom?"

"No; that is beautiful; I thought hymns must be a yard long, and that one must only sing them in meeting." And, starting on a full run, Jane called Mary to follow. The chase led them on a half mile; then resting, and chatting, and on again, laughing merrily.

"Now I want my breakfast!" said Jane.

"I would not object to mine," said Mary. And, turning for home, they came less boisterously, Mary remarking that her first morning in Toronto had been a pleasant one, thus far.

At home, Jane laughed at Mary's uneasiness at finding breakfast over.

"What would Mr. Smith think?"

"He has gone to the Seminary, and you will find that the table stands for us, and our coffee and cakes are kept hot."

"Will not your mother disapprove?"

"Ask her," said Jane, as she threw open the door of the basement-room.

Mrs. Smith arose gracefully, and offered her hand, waiving apologies from Mary, and serving cheerfully, though she talked but little; showing, by a smile and nod of pleasure, her interest in Jane's account of their ramble.

It was in vain, when the meal was finished, for Mary to offer to assist in clearing the table.

"No, no, young lady; your manner of life unfits you for such work. There would have to be a breaking in, first."

"Pleasant company makes almost any employment agreeable," Mary suggested.

"I am a poor companion, Miss, for one so young as you."

Mary went away disappointed, but resolved not to

be always thus refused. She found Grace and Kate playing at checkers in the parlor, and Jane persuading them to bring their chairs near the lounge, where she could note the moves as she rested. It did not require a long acquaintance to perceive that amusement was the whole aim of the good-natured girls.

As her trunk would not arrive till noon, Mary had no means of employing herself, and asked for sewing. This being laughingly refused, she took the only book that was on the centre-table, and soon forgot herself in a pleasant narrative.

CHAPTER XI.

Did I not weep for him that was in trouble? Was not my soul grieved for the poor?—*Bible.*

A MONTH has passed rapidly; for her whose head and heart was constantly employed, took "no note of time save by its loss." Mary fills her duties as preceptress with an ease and firmness of manner that brought forth one of Mr. Smith's rare predictions that "she would do." A pleasant familiarity has sprung up among the family, quite pleasing to Mrs. Smith, who halts on her errands, and stands in a half-amused way to listen to the jest, the song, or argument, and then hurries on.

"Does your mother ever rest?" asked Mary.

"She used to have an hour or two toward evening," said Kate; "but I guess she is always busy now."

And the loss of the hour or two had grown out of an increase of company. Many were anxious to see the new lady-teacher from New York, who, being young and not ill-looking, became a subject of speculation among the beaux of the place. A round of parties were given on her account; and as Mr. Smith thought it would be well for the Seminary that she

should be widely known, a reluctant consent was given, and soon our quiet Mary became the fashion. Gradually she became used to late hours, and found, to her surprise, that the light, flippant talk, that wins many listeners, was not as distasteful as in former days. But the "still small voice" comes ever to the child of grace. Knocking gently, it asks, "What doest thou here, Elijah?" "Is it for this I called thee to work in my vineyard?" "For this you lost a home of ease?"

I write for the Christian, who will understand how one may live two lives—how flesh and spirit are set at variance. The child Samuel arose at the midnight call. An instant obedience was the duty of the child-prophet. We often resist the Spirit, and the lash is sent. A child is taken, property or health disappears, and we return, like the prodigal, to our Father's arms. To Mary, an instant obedience to what the Quakers name the "inward light," had been a habit; and, calling up all the aid of Scripture, she found herself on forbidden ground. The heedless girls were surprised and disappointed to find her steadily refusing all invitations. Her few leisure moments were now passed with their mother. A stitch taken in time, a step saved, though seeming trifles, aided materially; and the tired mother felt that sympathy like balm to her lonely heart.

On the road which Mary passed daily, stood a hut which a number of poor children had made a gather-

ing-place. She had playfully insisted to her employer, that walking is the teacher's tonic, and begged to be set down here, that she might have two miles for this exercise. The request was granted; and the children, who at first stared, and ran away, after a while came to greet her. Then the thought of a Sabbath-school occurred. It would so recall home scenes, and cheat the day of its tediousness; and, best of all, she might win a soul from the errors of its way. Mary was quick in carrying out a scheme once approved by conscience and the teaching of her Bible. The next Sabbath found her, with Annie, Mabel, and Susie, on her way to the hut, which had brightened to a cheerful room, where prayer and praise might be heard. Pleasant Sabbaths are bright waymarks on life's uneven pathway; and she who works cheerfully in the vineyard of the Lord, will find the weekly cares cast cheerfully down at the door of the great resting-day—that day which our Lord has set apart for our physical good. He who made our frames, knows best our need. Mary wisely refrained from making it a day of toil, or religious dissipation. And many a desolate home was cheered now by a visit from the young Sabbath-school teacher.

Thus time passed swiftly. Letters came often. Those from Bell and Carrie were read to the girls; often those from Mrs. Grant were for the ear of Mrs. Smith, who seemed strangely interested in their con-

tents. Then, they were all reperused during her daily walk from school.

"You will be a stooping old woman, if you go thus with your head bowed," said a voice.

"I know 'tis not right. I had been reading, and then fell to thinking of home."

"Getting homesick?"

"No," laughed Mary. "But where are you going?"

"I am not going; I came to meet you."

"That is kind."

"Kind to myself. I was so lonely. I feel as if all my friends had dropped suddenly into oblivion. I cannot understand these spells."

"And you came to me for an explanation?"

"No; for I did not mean to tell you. I only wanted to be near you. How do you manage to be happy all the time?"

"That is just the question I might have put to you, Kate."

"Oh, I am boisterous, like the ocean! You are like a calm lake."

"A nice discrimination, however misapplied. Kate, that sense of desolation, of which you speak, I have had long before I knew you. You live on excitement; this round of dissipation is injuring you, as well as your sisters. You see, I used to attend the children's ball, it being a rule of the dancing-master. Grandma found me becoming weak, and often weep-

ing without an apparent cause, as if I had sustained a great loss. At once the doctor ordered rest, and I was taken from the school. And then too, dear Kate, I had not begun to live; I was very idle."

"I can't imagine that."

"I never lived till I left a home of luxury, and became a worker, as all should be."

"I am idle. Must I go to work?"

"I wish you would."

"Think that would cure me?"

"If you have no real cause for sorrow, it would."

Kate blushed to the temples.

"Pshaw!" she said; "how serious we are getting! I am all in the wrong."

"Turn your back, then, on the present mode of living; march the other way, and, by consequence, you will come to the right. You have a mind superior to the trifling use you are making of it; it has grown rebellious, and cries for revenge. And this trouble you experience is the din of the conflict." And laughingly she hugged Kate to her side, as she urged her to live differently.

"How can I? I shall be thought insane. Besides, I have not the power. You don't know all. I should die of thinking."

"Dying does not stop us from thinking. I suppose memory, thought, and perception are doubly quickened."

"Don't preach."

"I can't, else I would. But, Kate, you have surprised me. I thought you were the happiest of beings."

"You took us to be a happy family."

"Aren't you?"

"We are boisterous, as I said."

"And not happy?"

"Of course not. How could we be? But what can I do?"

Kate said it impatiently, and espying Jane and Grace coming, she brushed a tear hastily, and, assuming a playful manner, extended her arms to intercept their way to Mary.

"News for you."

"What?"

"Somebody is married."

"Who?"

"Follow, and you shall know."

And Kate followed the flying girls, leaving Mary to her own reflections. Over and over she pondered the question, "What can be done? They cannot shut the door in the faces of visitors. And poor Mrs. Smith leads a weary life. Surely one ought not to be sacrificed to the rest; and she is so superior to all her children—even to Kate."

And so ran her last waking thoughts. Sleeping calmly the girls found her, as they stole up at midnight from the wedding-party of the somebody whose name would have failed to interest, had she thought to ask it.

CHAPTER XII.

Have ye seen the crimson torrent steal
O'er one who has erred, and yet can feel?—*Eliza Cook.*

“WHAT is it, Janie?” said Mary, as she laid aside her books.

“I’ve nothing to wear. Just see that! ’Tisn’t fit to be seen!”

“Can’t it be mended, dear?”

“Look at it; ’tis one tatter! No one but a patient donkey, as I am, would stand it!”

Never had Mary seen Janie so irritated. She held up the dress—a faded silk—and, seeing the light through many a worn place, could say nothing encouraging.

“’Tis too bad, Janie!” came pityingly.

“Stop!” said Jane, now laughing through her tears of vexation; “if I don’t accept the first offer I get! You’ll see!”

Kate, who had been looking out at the window, started, and turned suddenly round, with,

“Jane! Jane! think what you are saying.”

“Never fear, Kate,” said Mary; “Janie would not degrade herself; she is only jesting. Would you, dear?”

“Of course not!” said Jane, alarmed at her sister’s grave look. “One can say a bad thing without meaning it. I am so out of all patience!”

“I wouldn’t even name it, dear,” said Mary, laying her face close to Jane’s, and then hurrying away to her dinner; for she had been detained at the Seminary past the usual time. An hour after, as she sat in the garden, Kate joined her.

“Poor Janie is annoyed to-day.”

“Yes; and tempted to say such a dreadful thing. I’m sorry her dress seems past mending.”

“It shocked you—didn’t it?”

“Well, I knew she did not mean it. I was only sorry that she said it. Dear girl, she was so tried!”

“Mary,” said Kate, “would you think such a course entirely inexcusable?”

“Yes. Think of bartering one’s affections!”

“It has been done for the love of parents. Couldn’t that justify it?”

“Kate, you are quizzing me! You seemed fairly shocked at Janie’s remark.”

“I was, for I wondered how she came to think of it.”

“She did not reflect, that was all; and you need not fear for her. Janie hates deception, a large portion of which would be required to assume love for mercenary motives.”

"Why, Mary, how often is woman deceived. Thousands marry for money."

"I know. But it seems so much worse in a woman."

"And yet it is not."

"No; but we see it in its true light then, as mean and degrading. Oh, how much better to work, and earn for one's self!"

"Suppose you cannot?"

"Then we are not fit to marry. But how few cannot. Our heavenly Father did not create any to be idle. The stars twinkle, the sun and moon set to our view, the seasons—why, Kate, have not they their allotted work, not by sudden impulses, but in the most perfect order?"

"And I do nothing!" sighed Kate.

"You never sew or mend—do you, dear?"

"I have precious little on which to sew."

"Earn, then," said Mary, at the same time giving a little hug to Kate's waist, as if to take off the edge of what might seem like reproof.

"How can I?"

"Oh, I have such a plan! I have been thinking, ever since you and I first walked from the hut, and I have it at last; but first, would you teach?"

"Bless you! pa would not allow me. We are called rich, you know.—I wonder what it must be to be poor?—Oh, Mary, you do not know where our

petty wants have driven me. But what was your plan?"

Mary mentioned the need of a school in the neighborhood, and asked,

"Is it not strange, to see your younger sisters growing up without education?"

"Of course it is," said Kate. "I tried to teach them, but soon found how hard it must have been to attempt to make brick without straw, and gave it up; and when the thought of their neglected minds troubled me, I sang a merry air to drive it away."

"What a strange way to get rid of a duty!" said Mary.

"What could I do? go all my life with a sore in my side?" asked Kate, somewhat curtly.

"You have not learned to tell the Master. I could go to none but Him in trouble."

"Why, Mary! can you suppose the Lord, the mighty Maker of the universe, would stoop to hear all our petty annoyances, and to put them from us?"

"I know He would, Kate, from experience; and the Bible tells us He listens to the cry of the humble. Why, He is a rock to His trusting people, and none shall be cast out who come to Him."

"Well, I wish I could believe it."

"Believing is faith, and faith is the gift of God. Ask for it, Kate, and prove the kindest of masters."

After a silence, and finding Kate did not resume the subject, Mary asked,

"If I get your father's permission, will you teach? Say you will."

"Yes; I will."

"Would Jane and Grace assist?"

"I think they would, for we have often tried, and always in vain, to devise some way of supporting ourselves."

"Secretly?"

"Of course."

"I do not wonder you failed, dear Kate. Should you teach, at once meet the surprise and gossip of your neighbors cheerfully; neither will last long, and when they see you are willing to work—for teaching is work, Kate—you have won their hearts at once by favoring them."

Kate looked doubtfully, but Mary kept on assuring her, till she said,

"Well, do what you can with pa." And sighing heavily, she said, "Oh, if I had met you before, and I could have known that your heart is gentle and sympathizing! I thought you would scorn the unfortunate."

"Now, did I look so, dear Kate? Come, cheer up, and let us forget the past and trust the good future."

Mary's influence was cheering, and her bright smile soon imparted a happy mood to poor desponding Kate. Both came laughingly home, to find, as usual, a company of visitors, from whom Mary stole away to the quiet of her room.

The next day, while riding in town with Mr. Smith, Mary adroitly touched on the necessity of a school in the vicinity of his home. At once arousing, and somewhat vexed, he remarked that the people ought to get up their wagons, and bring their children to the Seminary.

"Are they blind, I ask, to the benefits of such an institution? Why, miss, I hear its praises everywhere. It has a wonderful popularity."

"And yet, sir, your children derive no benefit from it."

"Mine?" said Mr. Smith, as if forgetful that he had any.

"Yes; Mabel, and Susan, and Annie."

"True! they ought to be taught. Let me see—wouldn't that be a pleasant amusement for you, after hours? Seems to me it would just fill up the time."

Mary, being too much surprised to find a ready answer, was silent, and relieved by his asking what had set her thinking of the children.

"I see so many besides yours who are not taught, and that led me to the idea of a school;" and, delicately hinting the wants of the older girls, assured him that they had deepened her impressions on the use of a school as a means of emolument for his grown daughters; but was startled by his assurance that they did not want means—that they had no need of money, and wouldn't know what use to make of it, except to

render themselves ridiculous. It was not good for women to have much money; it spoiled them.

Mary, finding herself becoming irritated, and knowing the child of God must be gentle, kept quieting the old indignant spirit that used to burst out in words when a child. With some diffidence she ventured:

"They would be so much happier, sir; employment is so invigorating, and gives self-respect. Do let us have a room in your large house! Try your girls, sir."

"My house! What—turned into a school? and the girls taking money from my low neighbors? Why, Miss Rutledge, the thing is absurd! You see, they have not been brought up to it."

"Nor was I," said Mary, "and yet I am proud of my vocation."

"True; but you are not a Smith—not so much known."

"Let the school be in my name, then. I will take the responsibility of collecting bills, and I promise to keep the name of Smith quite hidden."

"And call it Miss Rutledge's school, hey? Well, that might do."

"Give us your consent, and then your influence, sir. Do!"

Mr. Smith, liking the pleading tone so new to him, was quite disarmed.

"Well," he said, "take one of the bed-rooms, and let it be all in your name; and I will look in at you

—just to give it an appearance of respectability, you know." And Mr. Smith pulled at the points of his collar complacently.

"One of the bed-rooms!" thought Mary, not knowing whether to cry or laugh at the gloomy denouement; but soon summoning courage again, she said,

"The rules of health, sir, require a large, airy room."

"True! very true! Let me see—there is Lee's room. Now, if there was a possibility of getting that; but I suppose it would be out of the question."

"I think Mrs. Smith would oblige us with that large back room, if you will consent, too. Oh, it would make the girls so happy!"

"You think it would? Well, I thought they couldn't be happier."

"They are, sir, in one sense; but the happiness that springs from a useful life they have to learn."

"Well, well, do as you like. Speaking of Lee's room, now, I don't suppose the girls take charge of it properly. I wish you'd make that your business, Miss Rutledge. I've been going to speak of it a dozen times, but, somehow, it slips my mind; I have so much to think of."

"What is required to be done?"

"Just to dust and air it, and keep the books in order. Between ourselves, the girls are too idle."

"Then this contemplated school will do away with

idleness, which, I am sure, the dear girls regret very much. About the room, sir, I will try to attend to it."

"I wish you would. There are only about an hundred and fifty volumes, and it would not be amiss to make out a catalogue."

"May I ask who owns the room?"

"One Lee. He is off to Europe now, and there is no saying when he will return—to-morrow, or next year. One is just as likely as the other; and I wouldn't have him come and find that room all hurry-skurry on any account."

"Hurry-skurry." Mary pondered the word, and went comically searching for its root, till she became so amused at the idea as to forget all about the presence of her employer and his new requirement. The sudden stopping of the chaise at the entrance-gate of the Seminary recalled her. Gaining Mr. Smith's permission to take home a few parcels, she ran in with a lightened heart, almost singing as she entered on the duties of the day. Passing from class to class, she controlled, as if by magic, the boisterous spirits of the girls, ever awaking an honest emulation for study where formerly only inefficiency prevailed, and now and then dropping a precept of the religion that formed the governing principle of her life.

The day had passed quickly, and by consequence happily, away. Mr. Smith was at the gate—strangely enough for him—patiently waiting for Mary; and

although he found a box of stationery seriously in the way of his feet, only said, curtly,

"I guess you are in earnest, and mean to go to work, tooth and nail."

"Yes; and your consent has made me happy all day. I thank you very much."

"Well, you are welcome to the happiness; but when are you any other way than happy?"

"Oh, I was unhappy once, when I knew no God, and couldn't tell how to get a pardon for my sins. Indeed, I was a poor unhappy child."

"Yes, a body feels unhappy in that case, I suppose." And, glad to turn the subject, he said, "This school may turn out a good thing."

"It shall not be without effort to make it do so," said Mary, as she espied Kate coming; and finding they had reached the hut, alighted to join her. Of course all the good news was told, and not a few words of praise bestowed on the kindness of Mr. Smith in consenting to allow the school at all.

Kate almost vexed Mary by assuring her that the plan was an excellent one for Grace and her sisters.

"And why not for you, dear?"

"I mean to assist."

A dozen answers alike incomprehensible, and Mary and Kate finished the way in silence.

Mrs. Smith, having cheerfully given up the largest room in her house, marvelled at "the little lady," as she termed Mary, gathering in her

pupils; for the neighbors, being glad of a school, cheerfully responded, and the list of names ran up to thirty. Then a merry week followed—merry and noisy; for the carpenters had been summoned to put up desks and benches. Susie, Annie, and Mabel gathered the blocks, and jumped over the tools, and pronounced it real fun. A false pride that alternated in the hearts of Grace and Jane, kept them in some check; while Kate quietly looked on, seeming less interested than Mary had hoped; while Mr. Smith seemed to humanize under the kindly influence of a home-conference and all this, being brought about by the prudent management of a little praying girl, was a marvel to him; and more so, as, month after month, it grew in the eyes of the people to be acknowledged as an institution—a something owned and interested in by the neighborhood, who, for the first, learn that Miss Grace and Jane can do something besides playing the piano; for, having each their class, less time is given to amusement. Sweeping and dusting has put out some charm for Kate, who is ever on the foot. A change is on the house; none are idle now. The younger girls are fond of study; the first payment has been made, and the thousand nameless wants of a large family may be partially met. At every spare moment Mary is present to shield the name of Smith from the supposed obloquy of school-teaching. Saturday and the Sabbath come quickly and pleasantly to the girls, who now, for the first, have learned the value of rest;

for what is that magic word "Rest" to one who has never been weary?

A winter of industry had sped by, and the early spring warmth had tempted the girls to cluster in a group on the piazza. The casual mention of Mr. Lee caused Mary to spring from where she sat, holding Kate's head in her lap. "Dear Jane," she said, "I quite forgot the room!"

"My poor head," said Kate.

While Jane asked, in utter surprise,

"What room?"

"The one occupied by Mr. Lee—isn't that the name? Where is it?"

"Just across the hall. Why, what of it?"

"Who spoke of the room to you?" asked Grace.

"Your father—long ago, before you began teaching. I promised to keep it in order, and to make a catalogue of the books. Dear, O me! how could I be so forgetful!"

The color mounted to the temples of Grace. For a moment she seemed to reflect, then went in the house abruptly.

"Mamma was speaking of the room to-day," said Kate. "She thinks you would enjoy the library, and the organ, as you are fond of music. Ma said I must get the key, and let you claim the room as your *sanc-tum sanctorum*. I will not, though; for you would grow to it, and then farewell to our social chats."

"Do let me see a library, and a musical instru-

ment will be nothing to it! I will relieve you of all care of the room. Let us go now; can we not?"

"Promise not to live there," said Jane.

"I promise," said Mary, with mock gravity.

Jane took a key from a nail, and, swinging it on her finger, led the way along the hall, and through a narrow passage-way.

"Grace keeps the room," she said. "If you find anything out of place, or dust on any of the furniture, I shall be surprised. Why is it," she said, stopping, and turning to Mary, "that pa doubts us in every thing? He will trust any one before his own children; and yet we have never deceived him."

The tone was so indignant, and there seemed such a just sense of wrong, that Mary was puzzled to answer. She only said,

"Janie, dear, you never talk with him; and if you are conversing, when he enters you are silent."

"Well, he doesn't want to hear our nonsense."

"Why talk nonsense?"

"'Tis natural, I guess."

"You do not seem to love him, Janie."

"What a funny idea! He never taught us to love him."

"Can't you teach him to love you?"

"Let me see," said Jane, as she gave her eyes a comical turn. "How should I begin?"

The thought seemed so amusing, that Jane's laughter made it difficult to turn the massive key in the lock.

"The day we prepared the room for your school, how pleased your father seemed when Grace and Kate consulted with him."

Mary's forlorn hope was of no avail.

"Bless your simple heart, that was for your sake!" she said.

"May-be you misunderstand him, dear."

"Not likely," said Jane, pushing the door, and finally succeeding in throwing it wide open. Mary entered, silently, a room superbly furnished, almost dark with its rich curtaining.

"There!" said Jane; "find a blemish, if you can. Grace knows who appreciates her."

But Mary did not hear; she stood lost in thought, as completely separated from all associations of the Smiths and Toronto as if a thousand miles had suddenly dropped between them.

"How beautiful!" she said, in a subdued tone, as she walked from one picture to another.

"This is Lorraine's; and this too."

"See this beautiful face—painted by Van Dyke, mamma says;" and Jane tossed up a gauze curtain that had covered the picture of a female, whose rare beauty was not diminished by the antique drapery. The round arm and full chest bespoke health and youth.

"Who was she? Could I ever have seen her?" asked Mary.

"Perhaps you have—that is, if you were living

forty years ago. I sometimes think you are about that age," said Jane, demurely.

"Do I look so old?" said Mary, still contemplating the picture.

"Not a bit; but you are so old in your ways. For instance, why must you whisper, and look so awe-struck at me?"

"Oh, it is so beautiful to be here! This room reminds me of home, and of grandmamma. Janie, please let me look and act as I like when here, and I will be any thing you direct elsewhere."

"No, that is false. I might ask you till doomsday to be a ball-character, or a theatre-goer, and you would not."

"I meant any thing in reason."

"Seriously, Mary, I am sorry we forgot to bring you here till now. 'Tis such an old thing with us—why, as long as I can remember; and I am sixteen."

"If I had only told you how I wished for my books, and how many times I have regretted leaving mine at home, it would have reminded you at once."

"Yes; or if you had remembered your promise to pa, and come to clean away all the cobwebs."

"Cobwebs, indeed! 'Tis in lovely order, and Grace is a charming librarian. And see! here is a catalogue."

Jane had been all this time unlocking the book-case. Setting it open, she said,

"There is a feast for you, and a good-bye to Jane."

Dropping her tiny slippers, Mary sprang on one of the massive old chairs, and began drawing forth a book, from which she read here and there a passage.

Then drowsiness crept over Jane, as she lay on the sofa waiting for Mary; for it was Saturday, and she was tired. Sleep soon had her fast, for the stillness of the room might almost be felt.

At last, satisfied with her book, Mary had slid down on the chair, and now sat reading page after page, with only the measured breathing of the pretty sleeper to break the stillness, while the beautiful eyes of the portrait seemed to watch her intently. So she read on, as if between the living and dead, the beautiful closed eyes and the large watching ones alike forgotten in the interest of her book, till the dusky shade came to shut out the theme, and forbid that intense reading. Then she sat and thought how she had expected nothing but humility in following the path of duty—nothing but a round of commonplaces; how weaned she thought herself from the luxuries amid which she had been reared; how calmly, by faith, she had descended to the humbler walks of life, and now how unexpectedly she had found herself in an elegant retreat, a hiding-place from the gay company by which she had been too often tempted. From these reflections she was aroused by the loud ringing of the tea-bell. Hastily replacing the book and chair, and awaking Jane, who insisted that she had not been asleep, Mary crept about in the dusk to find her slippers.

"Have I really slept, Mary?"

"About three hours."

"Dear me! hurry, then. Have you found them?"

"Yes."

"'Tis dark so soon here; perhaps that made me sleep so."

"You was tired, perhaps. Didn't I see you sweeping?"

"Yes; I had been cleaning and dusting, and was tired, but not done, when I looked out, and was tempted by seeing all of you chatting so merrily."

"How do you like a working life?"

"Oh, I am beginning to have quite a respect for Jane Smith. When I see her now in the glass, I give her a little bow, and bid her 'good day.'"

And having succeeded in locking the door, the girls hurried to the tea-room, where Mr. Smith awaited them in no complacent mood.

The next day being the Sabbath, Grace presented the key to Mary.

"You keep it; I can trust you. I will only ask it of you once a week, that I may see that all is right."

"Is Mr. Lee exacting?"

"No, nor cross; and yet you would not break a promise made to him, even if it was not wrong to do so."

"Hark!" said Jane.

"I cannot tell you, Mary, what he is, unless I say he is like no one else in the world."

"Mary, you must know that our Grace is never eloquent till Mr. Lee is mentioned; and then—why, I do not know her!"

"Is he handsome?" asked Mary.

"Well, that is the first time I ever heard you ask that of any one! You are improving."

"Then you ought to answer me, Janie."

"I do not remember him, Mary. Ma speaks of him as an aged person."

"Aged, or young," said Grace, "he is like a king."

"There!" said Jane, "she has reached what pa calls a climax. Now, no more questions."

"A king!" said Mary. "That does not convey the idea of a democratic personage at all."

"And you think he must be that, to keep on friendly terms with us."

"Not at all, dear Kate."

"He is a regular out-and-out John Bull," said Jane.

"Sister, don't speak of him in that way; I cannot hear it!" said Grace, vexedly.

"Now, Gracie, you know I revere him; only I like to tease you."

Mary now remembered that the conversation was not suited to the sacredness of the Sabbath, and strolled out in the garden, where Kate had just gone.

"Is it not too soon after the shower, to be out here?"

"The ground seems dry, and the sun is so warm; let us stay out a while."

"While I read this beautiful Psalm, so suitable to the Sabbath."

Kate listened while Mary read.

"That is beautiful!" she said. "If all are like that, I should not think the Bible so very dull."

"Who calls it dull, Kate?"

"One who urges me never to read it."

"Never! That surely must be an enemy."

"I hope not."

"A relative?"

"No."

"Whoever-it is, I beg you to avoid him or her. The Bible dull! Kate, 'tis like no other book; since, read it as often as you will, 'tis always new. Out of the most familiar verse will spring some unseen meaning; and those who read it most, get most surely in this secret. Kate, have I ever deceived you?"

"Never."

"Then take my word. I have read it so often."

"And do you never tire of it?"

"No. Does this person read it often?"

"Seldom, if ever, I guess."

"Is that person liked better than me?"

Kate hesitated; then said decidedly,

"No."

"Kate, promise me to read the Bible."

"How often?"

"At least on the Sabbath."

"How many chapters?"

"One, at first, attentively, when you are alone in our room. If it is a cross—well, the command is, to take that daily. Remember, dear, 'tis God's word, and woe to us if we disregard it."

Kate had promised, when she was startled by a step. Turning, she said,

"You here, Mr. Haywood! I thought you left for New York yesterday."

A very rosy-complexioned young man now advanced to acknowledge an introduction to Mary. Bowing profoundly, he said it was a pleasure he had long sought, and expressed himself grieved that an opportunity had not offered before; to which Mary listened impatiently, as she watched an opportunity to leave, which soon offered in the presence of Grace, who joined the chat in a lively manner. With Mary it was a principle not to entertain gay company on the Lord's day. She soon withdrew unnoticed, and found a quiet retreat in her new-found *sanctorum*.

CHAPTER XIII.

When liberty is gone, life grows insipid and has lost its relish. —*Addison.*

IT was now the season for vacation at the Seminary, the regulations of which served as well the home-school.

The girls, having learned the sweets of industry, rejoiced in a brief rest; and, with the buoyancy of youth, joined in the gayety of the village. Mary's only pleasure in quitting for a while her duties, was a hope of freeing herself from an annoyance that had come to her of late in the form of rose-colored *billet-doux*, and the too frequent calls at the Seminary of Mr. James Haywood, the gentleman to whom Kate had introduced her one Sabbath a few months ago. Not content with calling, he had almost daily intercepted her homeward way, until, out of patience, she resigned her pleasant walk and rode with Mr. Smith.

If Mary possessed one Christian grace over another, it was that most rare one of being slow to speak on a subject that had vexed her. And as the young gentleman, on learning where she usually met her friend, left

e'er they reached the place, none knew of her further acquaintance with him; and the walk was resigned without questioning.

One day when the girls had gone their separate ways of amusement, Mary finding herself alone, stole to Mr. Lee's room.

"At least, I can hide from him here," she said, laughing to herself as she sat in the old retreat behind the curtains, where, completely hid from view, her feet drawn under her, she reclined and became as lost to the present as though she were part and parcel of the old stone window-frame against which she leaned. And so she read for hours, till, wearied, she leaned back with closed lids, murmuring, "Books, you are blest companions, holy gifts to men, by which mind can commune with minds long since dwelling in light. By you we forget the sorrows of the past, care for the future, and the gloom of the present. O ye book-makers! ye who think for others, see to it that ye do your work conscientiously, chastely, religiously."

The volume slipped from her fingers, resting on her lap. She was amid a heavenly choir borne far away on wings of light, speeding from earth and sin to the enjoyment of that happiness which a renewed soul cannot taste on earth. Ah, her head falls heavily from its resting-place, she is awake—how regretfully again to be earth-bound. Still, it is not all a dream, for the music that has shaped and tinged it lingers on her ear—'tis in the room with her.

"Who plays?" she thought.

Then, hastily putting back the curtain, and looking out in the deep shade of the room, to drop it as suddenly.

"Why, I might have known it—the same incomparable voice!"

Then, looking out cautiously again, she sees a slight figure seated at the organ, and notes the small work-embrowned hands moving gracefully over the keys. Such pathos in the voice, such wild, beseeching tones. Then the singing ceased, and, as if discarding the mood, the key is quickly changed for the bold and fearless. Never, to Mary's ear, did the creations of Mozart sound so grandly. A spirit of merriment came to her with the enlivened tones, and she was about to spring from her place of concealment and surprise her friend, when the music ceased, the hands fell listlessly to the lap, the large languid eyes were moist with tears. Mary pondered a moment, looked out again, and questioned,

"What does it mean? How has she come to be the companion of that coarse man?"

While thus questioning, Mrs. Smith arose and left the room, softly closing the door behind her.

"How sedulously she avoids any show of talent, and more than once has denied any knowledge of music—as if I had forgotten the first evening I came to Toronto."

A few hours after, when Mary and Mrs. Smith

met, the latter was sewing on some coarse towelling while seated near enough to note the stewing of some cherries on the stove. Glad to find her alone, Mary took a seat, remarking, as she drew out her sewing,

"You are always busy."

"One must do something," was the reply, as, with a smile, she drew a foot-bench toward Mary, adding,

"So you would not join the party."

"No; for I find one only leads to another. I was nearly tempted, but I remembered my resolve."

"And yet, if they make you happy, and serve to cheat the time, why not attend them?"

"Cheat the time! Dear madam, my time goes too rapidly; I have so much to do."

"You are not like a young person."

"Why, dear madam?"

"The society of gentlemen seems to have no attractions for you."

Mary laughingly confessed to a degree of stoicism.

"No, no, miss; you are sanguine, you are ardent; 'tis not coldness. I cannot understand it. Have you an attachment?"

"No one has a claim on me," Mary said.

"You are always so happy."

"Because I know the Father cannot err in what He appoints for me; and then, this life being short—a mere probationary state—I cannot suffer the worst thing that could befall me long, and so I am made happy."

"Is it this way of taking things that makes you so industrious, and always in a hurry, as though you would finish your work?"

"Well, I do find all days too short."

"You are sure to win heaven," was murmured, rather than spoken; but Mary caught it up.

"Not by my works. Oh, no, dear Mrs. Smith—not if every minute of my life were passed in doing good: that would not procure me a place in heaven. No, no."

"What, then, would?"

"The blood of atonement, the meritorious death of our Saviour; nothing else."

"Then you discard good deeds?"

"Let me ask, dear madam, if the apples on a tree make it an apple-tree."

"No; they only show it to be one."

"And the good works of a child of God proves him to be such. A Christian can't live idly; 'tis as natural for him to show forth good works, as for a healthful tree to bear fruit. And who will say the fruit makes the tree, or that good works make the Christian?"

"I see, miss; I comprehend."

"The Lord has condescended to show Himself pleased or displeased with the acts of His children; and I always feel, when I have offended, that His approval is withdrawn for a while."

Mrs. Smith, glancing up timidly, said,

"You are very different from others. Were you always so?"

"Once I cared for nothing but study; it engrossed all my thoughts, and kept me from being as fond of amusement as I might have been. But let me tell you from the beginning."

Drawing her chair nearer, and resting her hand on the lap of Mrs. Smith, as, some years ago, she used to sit beside Mrs. Grant, she told, in her own pretty way, the story of her conversion.

The theme to Mrs. Smith was new and strange, seeming to engross the attention wholly, for hitherto she had deemed the subject of religion fit only for Sabbath days and the pulpit. Never, till now, had the gospel plan been so simplified. That which to her had been so incomprehensible, so dull, now carried with it all the force of truth. She felt there was a reality, a something not of earth, in the religion thus set forth and bearing such fruit. Ah! let the professor take heed to his example, by which men may glorify the Father which is in heaven. From the time when, months gone, Mary had spoken to Mrs. Smith of the claims of the gospel, she had wished to hear more of a theme so grand, and had been troubled and in doubt of her own safety.

Ah, how Hester would have rejoiced to know of this! How she would hail in Mary the friend thus divinely raised up to do a daughter's part—a daughter thrust away by an unkind hand!

Time thus passed slips away unheeded. It was close on the hour of Mr. Smith's arrival from town. The cherries were done on the stove, from which the fire had gone out. The Martha who had been cumbered about much serving, had to-day become the Mary who attended to the words of the Master. Mary saw the nervous tremor of her friend, and hurried out to the wood-pile, where filling her arms, she quickly returned to try the new lesson of making fire, as we say. Glad to see the blaze, she laughingly ran to the spring for water; and peering down the road, where no sign of the green chaise was seen, she assured her friend, as she breathlessly set down the pail, that all would be ready in time. And so it happened; for the tea was emitting its fragrance, and the steak was nicely broiled, as he rode in the lane. And when the quiet meal was over, with a lighted cigar, and his chair tilted to what we call an Americanism, Mr. Smith puffed, and listened for the return of his daughters.

"There! they have found each other, as sure as a brood of chickens will. Just hear! clatter, clatter, like a mill. I think, however, Miss Rutledge, they are improved of late. Ah, you see, silent influence does a good deal. I teach by example more than precept, and it begins to tell at last."

"Precept without example is of little value," said Mary, scarcely knowing what reply to make, and feeling anxious to keep the kindly mood so seldom found with him.

"Hear them now! Was there ever such a giddy set—such levity? Well, they don't get it from me; that I know."

"'Tis pleasant to see them so happy, sir," Mary had ventured, when they came bounding in, laughing, and talking seemingly all at once; for it took quite a degree of attentive listening to find that a riding party was the subject, and the next morning the time.

"And we are all going. Oh, if you would go too!—but I told them it was no use," said Jane.

"Daughters, I am very glad Miss Rutledge has better sense. She has nerve; she can resist; and I wish you were all more like her."

"Yes," whispered Grace; "if we only inherited some of these virtues."

Mary had drawn Grace to her with a little hug, as she said,

"You are a happy set. How has the day gone?"

"Oh, so pleasant! and we must be off so early to-morrow, to avoid the heat."

"Oh, dear!" sighed Kate, "if I might be excused."

"Now, hear her!" said Jane. "When you know we would not go a step, if you do not. What ails you, Kate? I have no patience left. Why, if you were as old as the hills, you couldn't be much worse."

"Why, Janie, you are severe," said Mary; and turning to Kate, she passed an arm about her, and, as both walked up the hall, the question came,

"What is it, Kate? there does seem to be some—"

thing weighing on your mind. I had hoped all this had gone with the working life."

"'Tis no use. I laugh, and romp, and they call me the life of these gatherings, and I am the most miserable of all young persons."

"Are you jesting?"

"No; do let me be capable of one rational moment! I am miserable."

"Do tell me all about it—do, dear Kate."

"There isn't much to tell; and what there is, will make you hate me."

"What can it be?"

"Oh, forget what I say, Mary."

"I can't. If you are miserable, can I forget? 'Tis not so easy. Only this: when I am worthy of your confidence, tell me. Till then, I must put this away from my thoughts."

Her first care, next morning, was to save steps for the mother, by aiding the daughters in getting ready for the excursion. She had been running here and there, pinning collars and tying bows, till really weary, and not at all sorry to see the group ride off. Many a merry "good-day" sent back with kissing of hands; and then Mary, shutting the hall-door, hurries away to arrange all the disarranged places. Putting back the moist, curly hair from her forehead, she made her way to the kitchen; but the merry tune she was humming ceased suddenly, for then her eye caught sight of a stooping figure crouching over the stove. At once she

knew ague must have sent poor Mrs. Smith there on so hot a morning. Feeling her head and hands, she said,

"'Tis on you now. I'm so sorry!—and the headache and fever will so surely follow."

"Don't mind, miss; it will pass off. I am used to it."

"You have been fatiguing, and you was not to do so."

"No, miss; not that only. I was not well, and I was foolish enough to look over some old letters. I ought not; they put me in mind of her."

"Who?"

"Don't mind. I was thinking you knew. Oh, isn't it cold! Is the day changing?"

"'Tis not the day, dear Mrs. Smith." And, hurrying away, Mary soon returned with her own warm shawl; then to the parlor and back, drawing the rocking-chair after her, in which she soon had the shivering invalid.

"Now, don't think about those sad things, for they may prove the cloud behind which the Lord has hid a smiling face. That hymn of Cowper's is so beautiful."

"I have cared so little for them."

"You will care more in the future; but now you must not think at all; only sit here and wait. I am going to attend to the house."

"I must make the bread. I left it half mixed."

"I can see to that."

Mary did not see the look of surprise that followed her, as she tied on Mrs. Smith's wide apron, rolled up her sleeves, and plunged in the great tray of dough. It now became Mrs. Smith's turn to find attainments she had not dreamed of; for the teaching of Mrs. Grant came in most opportunely. With a relieved mind, the invalid now gave way to the claims of the pained body. Besides aching limbs, came the intense headache that so surely accompanies fever; and she consented to be led to her bed, where, after placing the cover and darkening the room, Mary left her. Never, in her school-days, had she been more pleased at finding the solution of a problem, than she was, some few hours after, to find the loaves light and well baked. The nameless things of housekeeping are those that tire; and when the morning had sped away, Mary saw before her a tidy house, and felt at last some weariness.

For the third time she went softly to the invalid, grieved to find the fever still raging. She leaned over the sufferer to catch a word in the low murmur, but only heard words in the French tongue, telling regretfully of a something in the past, which Mary, deeming she had no right to hear, interrupted by offering the cooling draught she had prepared with the gentleness so wholly her own. The sufferer drank; and seeming, after a time, somewhat relieved, resumed her gentle complaint in the English. "My head—my poor head!" And when it was pressed by Mary's

hands, and the pillow was changed for a cooler one, she left her patient sleeping calmly, and went to prepare a lonely meal for herself, only to leave it untasted; for her mind was preoccupied with the strange incident. The name of Hester, that had been murmured more than once, had called up the Hester once spoken of by Tremont. "She could not have been then older than you are now," were his words. But then, what folly—as if there were not hundreds of that name! And dismissing the thought, she took a book and soon became lost in the contents. Finishing that, she would listen again, and was pleased to hear the measured breathing that told of sleep. Then, as it grew into evening, she went in the parlor, where, partly opening the blinds, she looked down the long lane, not quite expecting the girls, but to while the time, when her attention was arrested by the sound of wheels coming nearer, and then stopping at the door. Mary saw a gentleman alighting; and, remembering there was no one to attend the door, took off her apron, and, smoothing her hair, went out, thinking,

"Some one for the girls."

But, to her astonishment, the person called for was herself. The Rev. George Ellery had extended his hand.

"Can it be!" exclaimed Mary. And the thought of being face to face with one just from her old home, was too pleasant to leave time for cool reflection. Both hands were extended, and a hearty "Come in" given.

Nor did she notice the hesitation of her pastor. And then, too busy in throwing open the blinds, and placing a chair, to note his cautious manner, as he stood, hat in hand, on the door-sill, she asked,

"How is grandmamma, and Aunt Ellis? Do tell me of all the dear ones at home!"

Receiving no answer, and for the first noticing his manner, she said quickly,

"Pray, sit down. You are so welcome!"

Still he stood; while she, in surprise, advanced to take his hat. The look of mingled sorrow and pity with which he regarded her, seemed to give an undefined dread of something, she knew not what; and quickly the question came,

"All are well, I hope?"

"The living are well, but in some sorrow."

"Sorrow! Why? Who is sick? Not Aunt Ellis—not grandmamma?"

Mr. Ellery advanced, and, taking Mary's hand, said,

"It pains me to be the bearer of ill-tidings, to you of all persons; and yet I must, for that has brought me."

"Ill-tidings! Tell me quickly—is aunty sick?"

"My dear Miss Rutledge, the aged must go; they wish to leave pain and sorrow behind. She has, and you must not grieve as one without hope."

"Who is dead, Mr. Ellery?" exclaimed Mary.

The answer came slowly, but, alas! too soon:

"Mrs. Grant died on the twentieth, in the full assurance of a blessed immortality."

"It cannot be! Dead, and I not to see her again!" And as she paced the room, with clasped and trembling hands, she said,

"Dear aunty, I was to return and cheer your old age. This hope made my work so light. Dead! Can it be?"

"I wish it were not so, for your sake, not her own; for she bade me tell you to rejoice that one more soul is past the power of temptation."

"Oh, that is so like her!"

"Yes; you could not weep if you had seen how gladly she went."

"Let me see her. Let us go. Are we too late to-day?"

"'Tis useless, dear miss," he said, taking her hand. "Our friend is buried. Try and believe it all right and wise that God should take His tried and faithful children home."

"Can it be—must I believe it? Oh, if I had been there! Couldn't they have sent for me?" And, casting herself on the sofa, forgetting the presence of any one, she wept bitterly. And how like mockery seem words at such a time. In vain we seek for consoling ones as offerings; in vain we tell of inducements to die, or the poor hope of living. 'Tis all one to the mourner in his hour of agony. The loved one is gone. Never more for him will the eye kindle, or

the warm heart respond. So the young pastor sought for words by which to alleviate, but in vain. He stood mutely gazing at the weeping girl, and heartily wishing one more fitted to relieve had come instead, when the noise of approaching wheels, and the sound of laughing voices, fell discordantly on his ear. Mary heard it too, and rose up in the dusk of the evening, her swollen eyes and husky voice unnoticed by the merry group amid which the pastor stood. In her desire to slip away unseen, she had nearly forgotten to introduce him, till recalled by Kate's look of inquiry; then, making him known, and whispering her to see him properly entertained, retired to weep alone over a new and untried sorrow. The moonbeams stole gloomily through the foliage as she gazed out at the grotesque figures forming themselves out of the shadows; gradually the doubtful became certain, and the full conviction of her deep loss came with overwhelming truthfulness, and then the thought,

"Perhaps she was neglected. No kind one to aid the feeble mind in viewing the valley and the dark waters lying before her."

All these reflections haunted poor Mary; and, throwing herself face down along the bed, she wept aloud. Thus tempted to rebel, she lay, when the latch was softly raised, and a figure in white, advancing, stooped and seemed to listen to the piteous moan into which Mary's cry had now subsided.

"What is it, poor girl? Can you find no consolation in your religion?"

Mary knew the voice, and remembered her invalid friend. Stretching her arms to Mrs. Smith, she drew her down to a place beside her, as she told what sad words had been sent to her. As she proceeded, the sick lady, who had kept Mary in her embrace, now raised herself slowly, as she asked,

"Is it well to mourn for one so fully prepared to go? Oh, how gladly I would have gone, had I a hope of heaven! when this poor brain was mad with its load of grief; when days and nights ran into one, and seemed to have no ending; hating life, and yet afraid to die; glad to see the flesh going away, and laughing wildly at my bony hands—oh, how can you weep for her, so different, so good, as I knew her to be!"

"I know I am wrong. I suppose 'tis the shocked nerves, the great disappointment, and a tempting adversary," sobbed Mary.

"And the grief is more for yourself, after all; isn't it, dear miss?"

"Yes; but I cannot help it. I did love her so; so much more than I ever told her."

"Little as I know, blind as I am, I cannot but see that it was better for Ellis Grant to have gone away among the angels."

"My judgment assents, and I know the holy Father cannot err; but if you knew how entirely I was living

for her! There wasn't a pleasure I had, but in fancy I was telling her of it. My plan was, to return, and be the comfort of her old age."

"See how she has been spared the need."

"Yes."

"And the Infinite can comfort her as you never could."

"True. And you have done me good; you have reminded me."

"And yet I know not God. I had no comfort in my grief."

"When was that you speak of?"

"It seems but yesterday, yet it was more than five-and-twenty years ago. I will tell you at some future time."

Then Mary noticed how the poor frame trembled, and how the clammy night-sweat had moistened her clothing; so, kissing the tawny forehead, she urged the need of composure and sleep.

"You have not undressed, dear miss. And I must go; he will miss me."

"Mrs. Smith, you have comforted me to-night; and yet you tell me you know not God. Seek His face. None seek in vain." And Mary led her back to her room, at the door of which she bade good night. And poor Mrs. Smith had the one comfort of having done some good—of having been told that she had reminded, at least; and, slight as it may seem, it gave a better sleep than she had known in a long time.

In her own room, Mary, for a moment forgetting her own sorrow, thought of the strange attractiveness of the invalid; and so, when praying, the grief of another was borne with her own to a throne of grace.

Mr. Ellery, whom we left amid the laughing group, ere an hour had passed found himself on the easy footing of an old acquaintance. It was pleasant to find himself thus familiarly treated. He found himself laughing with Jane, condoling with Grace on her torn dress, and secretly admiring the beauty of Kate. Nor was he less pleased with the cordial invitation of Mr. Smith to remain and make himself acquainted with the place and its institutions. In short, he retired for the night well pleased with Mary's home; yet not without some self-condemnations for levity, and forgetfulness of her sorrow.

Perhaps the great distinguishing mark of a renewed heart is its unselfishness. The Christian, when living near the Cross, is ever looking out of self to the needs of others.

Mary awoke at dawn, after an uneasy slumber, to ask where she might be of use; and, remembering the absence of the maid, hurried down stairs. There comes, sometimes, to the Christian, comfort—nay, happiness—in the time of bereavement, which to a worldling must be a surprise. The Rev. Dean said, imprudently, because likely to be misunderstood, "The happiest hour of my life was while standing at the new-made grave of my beloved wife." And it was because God

had so manifested His presence as to leave no room for earthly sorrow. To Mary it seemed that the presence of Ellis Grant was around, whispering her to fill up her work in the common as well as in the higher walks of life. Can we doubt that the departed commune with and comfort those who are left behind? The miles that had lain between Mary and Ellis were not, for the spirit had been lifted above all earthly barriers, and another link was added to the chain that reaches to the skies.

On reaching the kitchen, Mary was glad to find the maid in her place.

"Welcome home, Biddy," she said.

"And glad is me to git here, miss."

"How came it you did not stay, as you had intended?"

"Och, home is home."

"Now you are here, Biddy, I can go out and gather some berries."

"Indade ye can, miss; there is time enough. Yoursel' has made another place of this. The mistress is gittin' some life in her, and lifts up her head as a lady should; and he"—and the maid lowered her tone to a whisper—"isn't sich a roarin' lion; and betwane our two selves—"

"Stop, Biddy! Don't say any thing to me, that you wouldn't say to the family."

The good-natured maid blushed, and said, excusingly,

"I only meant to tell ye how I used to git me wages by scraps and bits at a time."

"And now you get them regularly."

"It's true for me! That clock aint more rig'lar; and I'm often thinkin' it's yoursel' that finds the money."

"No, no, Biddy; you are mistaken. It comes from Miss Jane and Grace. Now, do you wish me to be pleased with you—to love you?"

"Faith, an' I'd go on me two knees all round St. Patrick's, to have your likens."

"Then promise not to say any thing about the way things used to be."

"I promise, on me life."

"And be very thankful that you are getting on so much better."

"That I am, miss."

"To the Lord, for He orders all things."

"That's true; an' the praste 'il tell ye the same."

"And then, Biddy, mind the golden rule. You remember how I explained it to you?"

"I remimber. Let me say it: I must take care of all these things, an' be as savin' and as careful as if they belonged to me very sel'."

"Yes; do as you would be done by."

Mary left Biddy repeating the rule, which she had sought to explain, and hurried to the garden in quest of berries. While picking, and hid from view by the high fence, she heard the sound of merry voices, and,

peeping through, saw Grace, Jane, and Kate, with Mr. Ellery, passing. She smiled to see Jane swinging her bonnet by one of its strings, while the young pastor held the other, the inverted bonnet being filled with flowers.

Mary, as she went on picking, thought of Mrs. Smith, whom she had not seen that morning; and hoping she would not arise, and be at work, hurried the tedious task, and tried to put away an unpleasant and disapproving feeling toward the girls.

"Why must they all leave at once? and yet I am glad to see them so happy."

Biddy's voice was at her ear.

"It's ye that should be beside the young gentleman this blissed minute, and not breakin' your back over them roots."

"Why, Biddy! How came you here?"

"The mistress is there, an' feelin' better; an' the breakfast is all ready, an' they off wid 'em, where ye should be."

"Suppose I am happier here, Biddy?"

"It's the truth; an' that's why ye don't give yoursel' the way of catchin' a husband at all. Ye jist let every one have the place as is meant for yoursel'."

"There! hear them coming now. They have not forgotten your nice biscuit."

"Good mornin' to them. They'll remimber the good things, and the young praste too."

"Now, Biddy; they have only taken a turn." And Mary hurried on with her basket full of berries,

and was soon followed by the laughing group, who must have had a merry time of it, and scarcely now could repress their laughter, despite the presence of the august Mr. Smith.

Mr. Ellery seemed to regard Mary keenly as she moved about the breakfast table, and noted the simple mourning attire, which she had kept in her wardrobe for funeral occasions. Kate, too, was reproved by the token of grief; for, till now, she had quite forgotten to inquire the cause of Mary's unusual seriousness.

"How do you like my friend and pastor?"

This was asked a few weeks after the events of this morning, and when Kate and Mary were alone.

With blushing hesitation Kate replied,

"One can scarcely judge so soon."

"Soon! Three long weeks."

"Is it so long? How rapidly the time has gone. And papa is so pleased with him, and insists that he shall finish the month with us. How strange, the only one he has ever praised to me."

"He likes the Seminary, and has more than once addressed an audience there."

"Yes; and he seems to like papa. But, Mary, how little you talk to him! Is it the shyness of affection that makes you seem to avoid him?"

"Why, Kate! what an absurd idea! His being here as an inmate makes more care for your mother, and I have been assisting her. I do not care who entertains him, as long as he seems contented."

"How cold you are, Mary!"

And the fifth week found the young man still there; Mary often joining the long strolls, but as often slipping away on her return to cheer the tired hostess.

Sitting, one morning, in the old window retreat, with the scent of the late fall flowers and the song of the thrush stealing in, she heard a footfall, and then a shadow fell across her page, and the pastor stood looking at her.

A moment before, Jane had been threading the way with him over and under entangling brushwood and vines, till, reaching the window that had come to be called Mary's, she crept away, laughing at his surprise at so soon coming in the presence of such coziness.

Then Mr. Ellery laid his hand on the page, and said,

"You read too much."

"Not of late," Mary said, closing the book; "not as much as I like."

"You are quite exclusive."

"I meant to join you an hour ago; but my book was so interesting, I quite forgot."

"Forgot! Then I shall not be blamed for—"

"Forgetting, too?"

"Yes; for something more interesting."

"Certainly not."

"And you will not blame me?"

"I! why should I?"

"I came to ask you to ride with us this morning."

"Us—who?"

"One of the ladies."

"How shall we go—on horseback?"

"Which you prefer."

"The saddle, of course, on so fine a morning. I will go; but can I step from this casement?"

"May I step in the room? Miss Jane has torn her dress getting here, and I have not escaped a torn coat. You need not fear frequent interruptions, I assure you, if all must come by that path."

As Mary gave no encouragement to climb the window, Mr. Ellery was soon dodging the tangled vines, and pushing back branches that flapped their dewy arms in his face; while Mary laid aside the book, and went in search of her long-neglected riding habit. At the gate Jane stood holding up her torn hands, and laughing as the three rode out gallantly; the horses springing over hill and dell, and the cool breeze fanning the cheek and lifting the curls, bringing gladness to the hearts too long oppressed by care.

Two miles ere the pace slackened, and Mary turned to thank her pastor for causing her to leave her book; but saw him stooping over the reins of Kate, and talking intently. Then, noticing her, he said, as he came up,

"Let me see—I have been here more than a month, and how little I have had of your society!"

"True; but I have seen you so well entertained. And, sure of not being missed, I have given more time to Mrs. Smith, that the girls might feel quite at liberty to show you the place, and make you feel at home."

"And if, in the future, any act of mine should make me seem fickle, you will excuse me, will you not?"

Mary looked up in surprise, as she said,

"You owe me no apology, Mr. Ellery. Fickleness ought not to belong to a minister of the gospel, however."

"Perhaps a want of knowledge of one's self may explain my future course. At all events, I know I shall not find a severe judge in you."

Mary laughed, as she said,

"I cannot guess your meaning. You seem contemplating an act that I shall disapprove."

"I fear you will, Miss Mary."

"I shall have to use the old motto: 'Do right, and fear the opinion of no one.'"

Then there followed a low-toned discourse between Mary and the pastor, the latter talking earnestly; the confusion manifest in his look, contrasting with the kind considerateness of Mary's. As she quickened the pace of her horse she looked back, saying,

"Faint heart never won fair lady." And as she passed on, an observer might have seen a look of amusement as well as surprise on her face. She was soon below the hill, and hesitating whether to wait or proceed, when a carriage came sweeping round a turn

of the road, and was stopped beside her—it contained a lady and gentleman. The beauty of the former riveted her gaze—a dimpled, merry face, and full, rosy mouth, from which might be seen teeth of pearly whiteness. Mary's look of pleased admiration was answered with a smile; and the gentleman spoke,

"Can you direct us to the Belcher Farms?"

"I can. About a half mile on, and you meet a cross-road; turn to the right, and—I am not good at measuring distance—I think ten rods on you come to the Farms."

"Thank you."

"This is a fine day for riding," said the lady, "and the country is so beautiful. Are you a resident?"

"I have been for a few years."

"Ah! Then you cannot inform us, I suppose." And a look of sadness came to the bright face, as she bowed a good-bye. But Mary had said,

"Mr. Dumont, you do not recognize me!"

"I do—the young lady I once had the honor to meet at a party up the Hudson. Have you been well these long years?"

"Quite well."

And then Kate and Mr. Ellery came in sight; and the fine bays, that had been champing the bit and pawing the ground, passed on.

"What a pretty face, Walter!"

"Think so?"

"Well, not beautiful, but so full of goodness, and

so fair. I have no patience with these china dolls, which are so taking with you gentlemen. Now, there is not a regular feature in that face, and yet I call it pretty."

"Lois, you are always admiring ladies, and never seem to waste a moment's admiration on the sterner sex."

"Oh, you shall see my admiration, one of these days—a savage sort of a bison, with beautiful eyes."

"Ah! an E, and an R, and an N, and an S, and an—"

Then a rosy-tipped hand was laid on his lips, with,
"Walter!"

And when he spoke again, it was on this wise:

"Now, you must give me credit for ready tact. I could not recall the name—only the face of that young girl. And the time and place I remember only too well—that fatal picnic!"

"Ah! Was she there?"

"Yes; and Tremont seemed to be much attracted by her—the plainest of the party, I thought."

"A man of sense is not caught by beauty," laughed Lois.

"Tremont is all that."

"Tremont. What a pretty name!"

"Yes; this Tremont is of English extraction."

"Why did you say 'that fatal picnic,' Walter? You know, they are proverbially begun in folly, and end in matrimony."

"This one was destined to be an exception, for it crushed my hope of entering on that happy state."

"Console yourself, my dear Walter, with the assurance that she was not your affinity, and that the future Mrs. Dumont is waiting for the coming of her other half—I shall not say better half."

"She may wait for me; I shall never marry till she does, Lois. But let us change the subject."

"Do, for it makes you sad, dear; and I cannot say I fancy a love-lorn companion on so fine a day. Seriously, Walter, I suppose the only way to get rid of real sadness, is to carry it where we take all our sorrows—to a throne of grace. How few think, in my gay manner, how fully I rely on the power of prayer—the goodness of the holy Father in stooping to hear an earnest cry. I suppose the author of fictitious books is scarcely credited with a spark of faith."

"My good grandmamma would say, 'Put more piety in your book,'" said Walter.

"Yes, Madam is right. A book that does not show our belief in a Redeemer, is of little value. I doubt if the works of the present time, such as the 'Wide, Wide World,' 'The Cotta Family,' and books of that class, ought to be called 'novels.'—But see that beautiful stream, and those hills! Oh, how beautiful!"

Turning to the right, as directed by Mary, the travellers soon found themselves at the Farms, and making known the errand that had brought them.

CHAPTER XIV.

Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed.—*Bible.*

WHEN Mary joined the company of Kate and Mr. Ellery, they were in earnest discourse, Kate looking grieved and unhappy.

"Where have you been?" she asked.

"Away among scenes of the past. I met a friend of one of my dearest friends, and ventured to speak to him, that I might ask after her; but a sober second thought forbade."

"And so the gentleman wears his plumes, and flatters himself that he alone drew your attention."

"Mary cares very little for the gentlemen," said Kate.

"Ah, the ladies are sweet dissemblers!" Kate now pleaded a headache, and all turned for home, and Mr. Ellery resumed:

"I question if Miss Mary will ever settle down to a life-affection. What think you, Miss Kate?"

"Then we shall be companions for life," was the reply.

"Dissembling again."

"You have a poor opinion of us."

"Oh, no; 'tis pretty, only another name for coyness, Miss Mary."

"Deception, I should say."

"And that is Mary's horror. Be candid, then, about that life-affection, Miss Mary."

"What is it to you, sir?" laughed Mary. "I think my life-friends are chosen."

"Their names, if you please."

"You are curious; but you shall know.—My grandmamma, a small but dearly prized circle in New York, the family where I now live, my honored pastor, an unknown friend who gave me a Bible, and one now abroad. You see, I am quite exclusive."

"That one abroad—a lady?"

But Mary had put her horse on a lope, and was soon out of sight. Then Mr. Ellery fell in an earnest chat with Kate.

Just as the sun dropped below the horizon, Mary came to the gate, that opened at Jane's bidding.

"Well, have you been here ever since?"

"No; but why have you parted company?"

"They are coming." And as Jane walked up the long lane, with her hand on Jin's neck, she asked,

"Mary, what ails our Kate?"

"She has a headache to-day."

"I think the heart is a little affected. Don't you?"

"I hope it will pass away as headaches do."

"I am puzzled to know which he cares most for—you, or she."

"I am not, in the least."

"Do tell me," laughed Jane, "what you think."

"'Tis not me, and that is all I am going to tell, for I do not know."

"Would you care if it were her, and not you?"

"Jinnie, I have yet to experience my heartaches. There is one person in the wide world I might love; but he is far away, and perhaps settled in life. Now I have told you all about myself."

"And I thank you, dear Mary, for deeming me worth your confidence. So few trust giddy Jane."

In her own room, and while changing the heavy riding-dress for a silk, and cooling her face, she thought of Jane's remark, and of Kate's probable future. Then a hand on her shoulder, and she looked up, to see Kate, with pale and sad face.

"How is your headache, dear?"

"That is nothing."

"And what is something?"

"Oh, I have a world of trouble!"

Then Mary turned emphatically, with,

"Now, Kate, you must tell me all. I had hoped that a busy life of industry would bring happiness—and it would, but there is something on your mind; and you know me well enough to know 'tis more than

mere curiosity. I want to be your friend, and share this with you. Do unburden your mind to me!"

"Mary, I mean to tell you all, and, in so doing, lose your love and respect; but not now—he is waiting. Only, Mary, dear Mary! don't think I am troubled about his going. 'Tis not that."

"Whose going?"

"Mr. Ellery; he is going home soon, you know."

For many days Mary sought to be alone with Kate. Either Jane or Grace was present at their stolen meetings. At last in the garden retreat, and both said, with a laugh,

"Met at last!"

"And I have had such a chase to get away from Susie!" said Mary. Then, after an interval of silence, "Well, Kate."

"Well, there isn't much to tell. I hope you are not expecting a tragedy, or a romance."

"No."

"Well, Mary, I am a tied, hopped prisoner. I am affianced to a man I hate. And when I tell you all, you will try and find my excuse in the circumstances that surrounded me."

"Kate, I am surprised—I am grieved! But I do not come to sit as a judge; I love you too well."

"Yes, I know; and others love me too well. You know how we were situated, when you came like sunlight among us—idle, wasteful, and yet in want, sore want, petty wants; and pa too proud to allow us to

earn, which we tried secretly, only to fail. And I resolved on a change, come as it might; and the only thing that offered was marriage—that sacred ordinance, to which I guess we all look forward as the perfecting of happiness. Now, it seemed as my only way of escape. You are shocked, I see; and when my better nature prevailed, I was, too; and then I would resolve to seek Hester. But you don't know about her. We never speak of her to mamma; 'tis so sure to bring on those spells of sadness, almost insanity. Please do not name her to me!"

"I am glad you warned me. I had come near to, once. But go on, dear, about yourself."

"Well, this young man from New York (I'll keep his name, for his sake) is about my age, quite wealthy, and seemed to pay me a tacit homage, that, while it flattered, only increased my first impression of dislike. He has made me the most costly presents of jewelry, which, though I never wore, I did not return, lest I should offend ere I had decided to accept. Don't shrink from me so, or I shall not dare tell you all. I loathe myself enough. And who had I to advise me?"

"Your mother."

"She lives in herself; she wouldn't know."

"Go on, dear."

"Say you do not hate me."

"I love you, Kate, my poor dear!"

"When he offered me hand and heart, urging me

to become his immediately, and I had an opportunity to choose between real and nominal wealth, my heart, that couldn't respond, refused to be bartered, and I said no."

"I am glad for that," said Mary.

"But then, I yielded at last. Oh, so weak of me! Why did I not know you then? But so it is; and I am most unfortunate. I am affectionate by nature—capable of a true and devoted attachment, that will never be for him. And just when he came again, and I had accepted, you came! Oh, how my heart recoiled, while I admired you—your neatness, your consistent piety, your fixed habits—all seemed a tacit protest against us. How I pined at the contrast: you all industry, we idle. And as pa's respect increased for you, he became more unjust to us, ever taunting us with the want of that which he had not cared to teach us. And then I became envious of you. Do you remember how tartly I used to speak to you?"

"Yes; a few times only."

"Thank Heaven, that did not last. I drove it from me as too mean, too degrading. What wonder—had I not opened the door to sin? I had begun acting that lie that is eating my heart out. Once, when you repeated the couplet,

"Oh, what a tangled web we weave,
When first we practise to deceive!"

every word seemed aimed at me. And day after day

I had to act my lie, and seem to love him to whom I had promised marriage."

"Kate, my dear, you are to be pitied."

"Yes; and the ennobling influence of a working life seemed only to mock at me; for I had dropped my petty wants, my bitter poverty, to stand with both hands tied, with no inducement to labor. Now, can you see why I taught so indifferently?" And Kate broke out in bitter sobs.

"How can I advise you? what shall we do, dear Kate? This is my sorrow now, as well as your own. At least, put off the marriage for the present. There may come a way of release."

"Oh, I must bear my punishment!"

"Kate, in all that conflict with those trying circumstances, did you not seek counsel of the Lord?"

"Never; for I then thought Him a severe Judge, and would not stoop to our petty cares."

"And now?"

"He seems a tender Father."

"Let us hope all will be well yet."

"I have no right to hope. I take it as my due, to find that man each day more imperious."

"Why, is he unamiable?"

"He is, of late; and that leads me to think he suspects me."

"Is he manly? Could he bear to be told all the truth? Would he release you?"

"No; he is narrow-minded as well as hot-tem-

pered. Of late he has dared to find fault with my attainments. If I could make him hate me, I would pretend I couldn't read."

Mary laid her hand on Kate's pretty mouth, as she said,

"Never pretend any thing. Learn to hate deception as a viper. I read that men forget soon—that they find a new affection in every new face; while a woman's affection is her very being. I am tempted to say, Break with him, at any risk."

"Should I not do as I would be done by?"

Mary was glad to see, out of the mists of error, this cleaving to what she deemed right. She knew that Kate had recently become a believer, and contemplated making a profession of her faith. And, too, in these Antinomian days, a neglected morality casts many a blot on the name of Christian; and she asked,

"Ought the young man to be deceived as to your feelings?"

"How can I tell him?"

"Commission me. He cannot suffer more than you do."

"Could you tell him that my poor respect is growing less each day? You could not, and I cannot hope to feel differently, since——"

And seeing the blush, Mary asked,

"Since when, Kate?"

"Since contrasted with him."

"Mr. Ellery?"

"Yes—so good and talented."

"He is good; but you, dear, must make your decision without regard to him."

"He must know all soon," murmured Kate, as Mary asked,

"Why have I never met him?"

"He only calls during the day, always pleading an engagement for the evening. Since our vacation, he has not called at all."

"Kate, let me tell him all."

"He doesn't wish to see you, and seems offended when I praise you, and says I overrate you."

"He is right in one opinion, then. But why avoid me?"

"He once said he did not wish a New Yorker to see him in this small way."

The presence of the young pastor put an end to the painful subject. But Mary kept dwelling on the best way of relieving her friend. She was recalled, by an appeal from the pastor.

"Is it not so, Miss Mary?"

"I was not attending; excuse me."

"That the Christian cannot trust himself a moment, without the Spirit's influence?"

"A writer has said, 'Failing of this Guide, we fall to rise again, but the scars we must carry long after.'"

"Yes," said the pastor; "if left to ourselves, we fall back on old habits, old tempers, and scarcely know ourselves to be the happy souls of a day gone. The

Spirit's aid is as the manna that was to be gathered daily. Do you not find it so, Miss Kate?"

"I am only a slow learner, sir."

"Then remember this, dear Miss, that a neglect of private prayer and asking for aid will always be followed with doubt and coldness."

Then Mabel came running with a message.

"Company again!" sighed Kate.

"Do you not like it?"

"Yes, if one could have a choice, and not be obliged to say heartless things, to laugh without gayety, as a penalty to the world for lending us its smiles."

"And this from you, Miss Kate!"

Mary smiled at Mr. Ellery's look of surprise; while poor Kate blushed painfully at having thus far committed herself. She hurried away with Mabel, the pastor soon following.

To one of refined taste, the incessant routine of housekeeping, the caring for each meal, the task of pleasing the appetite of dozens, the petty wants to be met daily—nay, three times daily—the care that makes eating a vast item, takes from the careworn that which would make a crust palatable; and for this phase of life the world has not a drop of sympathy. Out of many a kitchen goes swiftly on memory's wing a sigh for the days of girlhood. And so, that day, thought had carried Mrs. Smith to the land of vines and sunshine, to her sweet France. Alas, that memory will not sleep with the dear ones in the grave!

When Mary left Kate, she hurried to find her mother.

"I am going to assist you," she said. And when the face was turned to smile a thankful answer, Mary saw traces of tears. Not tears of discontent were they—not tears that she had a large family to care for—but nervous tears of sheer weariness at her lonely lot. And Mary's sweet face was a sunbeam, lighting all the place. With pleasant chat and ready help the table was soon arranged for waiting appetites; and then, obtaining a seat near, she aided so deftly, all the while cheating notice from the dear lady. And after tea, she said, "Now you will come to the parlor, and leave Biddy awhile; won't you?"

"What should I do there, my dear?"

"Make it pleasant for me."

"I any use to you! That seems so singular!"

"You have been of use ever since I first came here; because you have given me another to love." And putting her arm about her friend, she succeeded in winning her to the little parlor, now resounding with merry, laughing voices. There they sat stealthily for a while in a shaded corner, till espied by Jane, who called out,

"Well, if here isn't a wonder!"

"Where? where?" was asked by several.

"Here—my bashful mamma! I do believe Mary Rutledge can do any thing she likes with ma."

In vain Mary pulled at Jane's skirt, begging her to be quiet. The giddy girl called out,

"Now, Mr. Ellery, if you can succeed in getting papa, we shall crown you a wonderful pair."

"I can try, at least," said the pastor, glad to escape from the room.

"What do you think Kate says?" said Miss Lee, taking a seat by Mary.

"I don't know," said Mary, vacantly.

"'Tis about your bean," giggled the girl.

"Who is he?"

"Mr. Ellery, of course! Why don't you ask me the name of the moon, or, who was the first man?"

"What does Kate say?" asked Mary, trying to put away her vexation at being interrupted, and by such an one.

"Oh! that he is the handsomest, and the best, and the most interesting of men."

A shadow, and Mary looked up, to see Mr. Ellery standing by the open casement, having only passed to the outside of the window, where he waited the pleasure of his host. The embarrassment of the parson was increased by the merriment of a laughing group, who now eyed him mischievously. Jane whispered him to bear his laurels meekly, as became a Christian and a clergyman.

"Do sing for me!" whispered Mary. "They are so merry and self-engrossed, they will not miss us."

And the rest of the evening was passed by the

music-loving in the cozy room where Mary had first heard that song, so long remembered and so longed for. Piece after piece was tried; and late in the night, when nearly all had departed, the two congenial in tastes went laughing to their rooms. And the last word of Jane, that night, was whispered to Grace:

"I believe mamma is a real lady, after all."

CHAPTER XV.

For whom the Lord loveth, He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth.—*Bible.*

HOWEVER the waters of affliction may have passed over the Christian, let him not think he has been fully tried, till sickness, long, hopeless, and lingering, has held him with an unyielding grasp.

With strong and elastic nerves, one can meet emergencies calmly; with shaken ones, the merest trifles annoy.

To find the new day bringing the old weight of pain, making the common courtesies of life irksome, is to be afflicted indeed. And this was now the case with Mary. An oversight of the two schools, with the self-imposed duties at home, had proved too enervating for one never strong. She found herself weeping, without an apparent cause, often irritated at a trifling annoyance, at which she would once have laughed; then weeping penitentially, then pettishly; and these ebullitions always followed by the keenest self-reproach.

"Oh, how sinfully I am acting! Why am I thus

complaining? Is my religion a mere illusion—a dream of the past? Has the Lord forgotten to be gracious?” were questions often asked, as she crept to the tasks once so delightful.

When the physician came, pronouncing the case one of nervous debility, Mary expressed herself pleased. Not so, when he ordered an entire suspension of mental toil, just hinting at the need of a change of scene.

“I am very glad,” said Mary.

“Of what, my dear?”

“That I am really ill.”

The demureness of the remark caused the doctor some merriment.

“Why are you glad, Miss?”

“Because I now know that it is not all my wicked heart. There is just a little excuse for my complaining and irritability, that has grieved me so much.”

“These unpleasant sensations are not wholly under your control, my child. Shut your books, and be as giddy as Jane for a while, and walk out gayly; not studiously, with bowed head, as I have seen you.”

A letter from Mrs. Bentley now came opportunely—the first she had received from that excellent lady since her residence in Canada. The address had been forgotten, and now only half recalled—“Mary Rutledge, Toronto.” With this scanty direction, no wonder it had lain some time in the office. But it had come at last, with its warm, hospitable invitation; and

Mary began to question the way of duty, and to take counsel with Mrs. Smith.

“How can we part with you?” came mournfully. “At least, let us first try our skill. You can rest here, my child.”

Mary, who was anxious to remain, sought to rally by putting away the thoughts of her ailments. To be unemployed, was out of the question; it would have made her head ache. With some light sewing for Mrs. Smith, she might have been seen walking to and fro in the long lane that led to the road. Thus she was becoming hopeful, when an irritating circumstance, in itself but trifling, occurred to render her unhappy. A rumor that the Seminary was about to lose its efficient principal spread, and reached the ears of Mr. James Haywood, who, much to her dismay, came out on rose-colored paper with an open declaration, and an offer of heart and hand. The *billet-doux* was unnoticed, while the vexing circumstance produced another attack of that strange nervous fear, that seemed to take from her that promptness of decision for which she had been remarked. Again the doctor insisted on the resignation of all care.

“I find I must yield, as it regards the school; but I mean to stay here, if possible. I will try to be as merry as Jane, and obedient as Kate; for I cannot think with composure of leaving all of you, who have so won me to a homelike feeling for Toronto.”

“Do stay, if possible! It would be so hard to lose

you from among us," sighed Mrs. Smith, to whom Mary had been talking.

Reluctantly, amid sorrowful adieus, Mary resigned her place at the Seminary. The useful toil of years was now laid aside; and no marvel that a headache resulted from the excitement of leave-taking—a headache causing her to come slowly along the woodland path, not obeying her physician; for her head was drooped, and she thinking hopelessly of the future. In this mood she was startled by the sound of approaching wheels, and then a voice, too well known and too much disliked. The effort to be civil, and yet determined not to accept Mr. Haywood's invitation to ride, only added to poor Mary's trepidation. She made an effort to put down the dislike so new to her, and replied to his many questions as to the report of her intended departure; while she secretly questioned her ability to walk the rest of the way home. Mr. Haywood seemed not to notice the pallor that had come to cheek and lip, though he persisted in leading her to his carriage. At last, too weak and faint to refuse, she reluctantly stepped in.

"I supposed the narrow path would not admit a carriage," she said.

"Oh, it will, just here. I know where to come in, and just where to head you off. Now I must get on the road again, or I may get in a box, as we say."

It was by short turns and much backing, with no little cracking of the whip, that seemed to jar her

head, that Mr. Haywood succeeded in getting out of the woods; and, being in high good-humor, somewhat reassured Mary by his attempted urbanity; she meanwhile trying to make herself comfortable, and to put away the dislike which she had always felt for him; but then the little kindness only served to make him insufferably polite, as spoiled as a child by a little encouragement.

"If only he would sit up, and not loll, and put his face so near to mine!" she thought, just as she espied Kate in the old chaise drawn by Jin, the old black mare. At once divining her errand, and not dreaming of a refusal, she mentioned her intention to join her friend, and relieve him of farther care; to which relief he had no mind to consent. For, as Mary arose to call Kate, the whirr of the whip had sent the fine bays forward with a bound. Then he replied, coolly,

"You are too late; and she can but return, on finding that you did not wait."

"I wish I had waited. Think of the unnecessary trouble she is put to," Mary murmured.

"She might feel honored, if she knew enough."

"What—to ride two miles after sunset?"

"Yes; ten, for all I care."

"Mr. Haywood!"

"I am vexed. It almost seems as if you cared more for that girl, than for me."

Mary smiled at the "almost," and asked if she had

not better alight, and wait for Kate, who would be sure to return on reaching the hut.

"For what? To stand, and catch a cold?"

"To save her from one."

"Her! That Miss Smith, it seems, is destined to be in my way. How long I was seeking an introduction, which she could easily have brought about, but would not! I claim the right of precedence, at least to-day, Miss Mary."

"Cannot I persuade you to turn, and we can let her know how it is, so that she need not be perplexed at not finding me."

"Now, you would not put me to that trouble, when I tell you I have an important engagement at eight. You are too good!"

Mary was losing temper, and said,

"Mr. Haywood, I wish you had allowed me to join her at first. This is too bad!"

"You can't get out without my permission. You consented to my taking you home; and Christians ought to keep to truth, I think."

"I think so too, Mr. Haywood," came so meekly from Mary's lips, that the arm of the young man soon found its way about her waist, as he laughed mischievously at her utter helplessness.

"Why are you so crusty to me?" he asked.

"You cause me to be so," said Mary, as she drew away to the end of the seat.

"Oh, you needn't be so shy. Come, you have not answered that letter yet."

"I wish you had not written it, Mr. Haywood."

"Why, pray?"

"Our slight acquaintance did not warrant it. I shall return it, and that will be answer enough."

"You will? Let me tell you, then, you will not act the part of a lady. Do you know that I could sue you?"

"I did not," said Mary; "and I am not afraid. I feel too sure that you would not, if you had the power."

"Don't mistake me, Miss Mary. I can be kind, and I can be desperate, too. I warn you not to aggravate me. You encouraged my addresses, and I shall demand an explanation for this change in your manner toward me."

Mary was for the first becoming afraid. More than once she had measured with a glance the distance from the side of the carriage to the ground; but the arm was still about her, and the horses were kept with a taut rein; so she sat still, suppressing the vexation to which she dared not give vent in words. While the youth, seeing his advantage, condescended to be more gracious in speech, remarking on the beauty of the scene and the fertility of the soil. They had been riding thus for a half hour or more, when Mary saw a man approaching, not observed by her companion, and who, on a nearer view, was recognized as one whose

farm she had passed daily. Her resolution was taken. Not daring to speak, she stretched her arms to him, while the tears stood in her eyes.

Farmer King knew Haywood of old; and at once, suspecting him of rudeness, grasped the restive animals firmly by the bits; while Mary, with one bound clearing the wheel, sprang to the ground.

Haywood looked up in utter amazement, to find himself in the presence of a third person, and that one his old enemy, Jediah King. Robbed of his innate cowardice by rage, he dealt a blow with his whip at the face of the young farmer. Aye! and in a moment more it was wrenched from his hand; for King had leaped in the carriage, to convince Haywood in a twinkling of the difference between a New York fop and a sturdy Canadian farmer.

There seemed to be something cooling in the process; for Haywood brought many arguments to bear on his pleadings for mercy, as the blows fell like showers upon his back. Then the broken whip was flung after him as he rode off, and this brief exordium accompanying:

"You cowardly brute! Let me catch you at any of your tricks again, and I'll take all the hide off of you."

And, hurrying after Mary, who had looked back with frightened glances, he said,

"That fellow will never trouble you again, I'll bet. You needn't be afraid, Miss; he daren't show fight to

any but women folk. Now, he's made you 'most cry—hasn't he? 'Tis a shame! Blame if I don't wish I'd 'a' given him more!"

"Oh, no, sir! You took my part bravely. I am so happy to be away from him, that I can forgive him with all my heart."

"Well, that's Bible, I know; but see here, don't you trust them little feet of yours in his wagon agin:—that's my say. Miss, he's all gone at the core, like a bad apple, that I wouldn't put among my greenen's for the world. Mebbe I can afford to forgive him; but don't you." And, bidding Mary "good day," he hurried on.

Up the long lane she tried to recall some passage of Scripture to aid her in keeping a discreet silence about the unpleasant occurrence. A habit so fixed stood her well in the time when self-discipline was needed.

"Slow to speak, slow to wrath," came to her mind as she entered the wide hall where Mrs. Smith sat alone. "Just her." She longed to tell how she had been vexed; but the still voice said, "No;" so, dropping a few words of kind inquiry instead, she went on to her room, where, soon after, she was found by Kate.

"How and when did you get home?"

"I rode part of the way."

"Much fatigued?"

"Yes; a good deal so."

"How could I have missed you?"

"We were coming out of the wood as you passed."

"We? Who?"

"Mr. Haywood took me in."

"James Haywood?"

"Yes."

"Well, how do you like him?"

"Not at all, Kate."

"Why?"

"He is not a gentleman. But no more. Let us turn the subject."

"Then you are not likely to become attached."

"Never, Kate! But why mention such an absurd thing?"

"Only for information. You know I am trying to find out your taste." And Kate hurried away at the call of her father.

"What has she heard?" said Mary, as, an hour after, she sat alone in Mr. Lee's room recalling Haywood's rudeness.

Finding it difficult to read, and half angry to be thus annoyed, she kept sweeping the leaves of an open book with her palm. While thus engaged, her eye caught a name on the title-page. Something in that old calf-bound volume has engrossed her wholly. She carries it to the window, and, bending over it, murmurs,

"It is! the very name. What can it mean?"

Then, with her finger holding the book open, she went in quest of Kate; and having to pass through

the kitchen, Mrs. Smith looked up smilingly, and, supposing she had come to sit a while, said,

"Sit here, Miss; 'tis more pleasant."

"I want light," said Mary.

"By the window, then; it gets dark so early here." And she sent Biddy for a chair from the keeping-room.

"No," said Mary, smiling; "you misunderstand me; I want light on a subject—an explanation. I have found a book with Mr. Leecraft's name written in it. 'Tis so strange! See—'Wiltshire, England, 1820.' That, you know, is the name of grandmamma's brother. How came the book here?"

Mrs. Smith, without looking up or seeming at all surprised, asked composedly if Mary found that name only in one of the books.

"I have not looked, Mrs. Smith. Is it in more than one? You know something about it; I see you do! Does the library belong to him? Tell me all, dear Mrs. Smith!" And, kneeling, with her hands on the lap of her friend, she waited eagerly the first word of reply, which came calmly.

"It is only natural that his name should be in his own books."

"How? Do not books, furniture, and all, belong to Mr. Lee? Mr. Smith led me to think so, and the girls too."

"Leecraft—the girls call the name Lee, for shortness; they caught the foolish habit of Mr. Smith.

No, Miss; all in that room belongs to Mr. George Leecraft, of England. The beautiful portrait is that of his wife; the musical instrument belonged to her father, and is very old."

"My grandmama's brother here! How strange it seems! And you have known it all this while?"

"I have suspected it. The knowledge did not come all at once; now, you make it certain. I began by searching your features, but find no likeness to him."

"Did you know my mother?"

"Only by reputation; only Mr. Leecraft personally. I supposed that Harry Rutledge had no children, and for this reason he was irritable, often cruel. Your parents went abroad. I never heard of them after, till you spoke of them to me."

"Irritable and cruel!—my father? I thought he was one of the best of men. And my mother—do not tell me she was not good! Mrs. Bentley told me my parents were most honorable and good."

"Harry Rutledge may have become so, my dear. You know, I only knew by others. I never saw them."

But as Mrs. Smith noticed Mary's look of weary disappointment, and herself puzzled, sought to turn the discourse on Mr. Leecraft, whose goodness had never been doubted, and of whom she could speak certainly.

"How came he here? Grandmamma said that he

travelled a good deal, but that his home was on the Hudson."

"True; this is not his residence, nor has he ever been to this house. His relics were placed with us before we removed, and the room was chosen for him as much like the one he had as possible. He is informed where to find us when he comes to Canada. Our change of residence was a sad one for me."

"How long have you lived here, Mrs. Smith?"

"Three years; and she——"

A sigh and sudden check of speech were not unnoticed by Mary, who remarked,

"How much I should like to see Mr. Leecraft!"

"I supposed you had."

"No; for grandmamma and he were not on friendly terms."

"Did you know why?"

"Because he would urge the claims of the gospel, and beg her to repent; which made her dislike him very much."

"Was that the only reason?"

"All that I ever heard assigned. It seemed to be sufficient with grandmamma. I hope she will yet find he was a true friend."

"There were other causes, Miss Mary."

"Won't you tell me all you know of my people? Tell me from the beginning—how you came to know them. Are you related to us? I hope you are!"

"I am not, my dear. Do you not know that I am French?"

"Mrs. Smith! How can that be?"

"Yes; born in sunny France, to die with cold, proud English. But forgive me; you are so little like them."

"I belong only in part to them; my mother was American."

"No, my dear—English."

Oh, no, dear Mrs. Smith! there must be some mistake, because Mrs. Bentley knows."

Mrs. Smith was silent, and Mary went on to remark that her grandmamma never would talk of her mother, and that Mrs. Grant seemed to avoid the subject; only Mrs. Bentley wrote of her goodness.

"Come, tell me how you knew us—do, do! I shall be so attentive!"

"Mary's vehemence had left no time to notice the pallor that had come to the cheek and lip of her friend; for Mrs. Smith now leaned over her sewing, as if puzzled.

It was a pretext, often used by women in times of doubt or hesitation; so that Mary had repeated her request ere she replied,

"You will be disappointed when you hear how little I know of any but Mr. Leecraft and his son Ethelstane—and then by a mere accident."

"Ethelstane!" said Mary, the color mounting to her face. "I knew a person by that singular name;

but then, it was not Leecraft. He used to say there could not be another with such an outlandish name. Then you did not know my people intimately?"

"No; a mere chance drew me in the current of his sufferings—a rapid, headlong stream, that swept me in, for a time drifting me from health and reason. But I cannot tell you now," she said, putting both hands to her head, as she moaned out a something in French only half audibly.

Mary remembered the spell to which Kate had alluded when speaking of her mother; and, blaming herself for want of caution, turned the subject to a piece of village news, that seemed to interest her at other times—not now. She kept rocking back and forth, and moaning, till Mary arose quickly to call one of the girls.

"Do not, miss; this is nothing. They would not understand it. Go, my dear; I am best alone."

"I am so sorry! How selfish I have been!" said Mary.

"You are never selfish; you are good, and I am better for knowing you. But they will be looking, and find you here, and 'tis better not."

As she spoke, she had been smoothing the hair away from Mary's forehead with her hands, and had looked lovingly in her face with an expression not seen there often. It made the dark eyes more beautiful. Mary thought so, as she went out in the dusk of the garden, for there was no staying within doors in that

excited mood; her hot face must be cooled by the fanning breeze. There was light and shade in her expression—light, when she thought of him so revered; he, the owner of all in that sheltering room; he, who shared the burden with herself in prayer for the salvation of Bertha Rutledge; but shade, when she thought of the allusion to past suffering; and then the words recalled as soon as spoken by Aunt Ellis—a something of implied ignominy on the family. But thoughts of these were banished by Kate, who sprang out on the path from where she had been watching Mary's face as she came slowly down the path.

"Mary, your face is an enigma, and I cannot guess it. Are you more sad than pleased?"

"Do I look pleased, on a nearer view?"

"Too much so for one who ought to be crying that poor I should ride so far to spare the limbs of one who picks up a beau as easily as one takes up a straw."

"And who would far rather have been with her friend Kate."

"There evidence conflicts; for at the Seminary (I went all the way) I was told that you meant to walk, since it was the last time. I turned, sure of finding you resting at the hut. You tell me you rode with one Mr. Haywood, and to-day Mr. King tells me he saw you safe in the lane; and when I mentioned Haywood, he begged me to desist, as the name made his teeth ache."

Mary laughed, and, to evade the subject, asked if Kate had known Mr. King long.

"Yes; all my life. He is brave and generous, but illiterate."

"Kate, the chaise holds four; why did not Mr. Ellery ride with you to meet me?"

"For the good reason that he is now, I suppose, safely at home in New York."

"Gone!" said Mary.

"Yes; didn't Jane tell you? A letter from his home. Why, he left all sorts of kind regards for you—regretted your absence, and assures me that he means to come again. I wish he wouldn't."

"Why?"

"'Tis better that he should not."

"You surprise me, Kate."

"I like his company too well; it renders that of others insipid, and that is not right."

"Was he getting too fond of the company of my friend Kate, and found that to be wrong?"

"Your friend Kate is in bondage."

"Yet finds the freedom to take away my beau."

"Do you like him, Mary?"

And when the long lash drooped heavily, and Kate's hand trembled as it lay in her own, Mary was glad to say confidently,

"Not as a lover."

"Then who could you like, Mary?"

"I like Kate Smith."

"No one else?"

"Yes, a good many; few better than Kate."

"And not Mr. Ellery?"

"Not entirely—not fondly."

"How is it? Why did he come here, if not to see you?"

"He thinks that he came to tell me of dear aunty's death. I am hoping that he came to meet his life-companion."

"So I thought, till you told me you do not regard him as a lover," said Kate.

"Now, that sad face compels me to tell all! Do not start—Mr. Ellery came to me, in his conscientious way, and apologized for having won my affections."

"Mary!"

"Yes; and confessed to a degree of fickleness common to the sex."

"Why, how unlike the humble, pious Mr. Ellery!"

"I assured him that I had never entertained other than feelings of the highest respect for him."

"And he supposed you fond of him?"

"Of late, he said; not formerly."

"Consummate vanity!" said Kate.

"No, no," persisted Mary.

"Yes; for he took too much for granted."

"Now, Kate, make allowance for circumstances. The young preacher leaves home early for the pursuit of his studies; he has not the society of his sisters, and dare not associate with other ladies; and how can

he understand the ambitious mammas who court and flatter him for their daughters? Enough to make him a little vain."

"That does not explain his coming and apologizing before he gave you the mitten."

"Yes, for he misunderstood me; and then there is a something he said about you—a message left; but I must not tell you yet."

The deepened color on poor Kate's face, and her start of surprise, told how deeply she was moved, although she said, indifferently enough,

"It cannot interest me. Besides, I am disappointed; he is vain and fickle."

"Kate, he is too good to dissemble, and dealt plainly with me, as one disciple should with another. A man of the world would not have told his thoughts so plainly. He misunderstood me; that was all."

"And what did he say of me, whose doom is that of a loveless wife?"

"I must not tell you, Kate, until you give me the liberty to tell your affianced all the truth, and then appeal to his good sense and self-respect to set you free."

"How could you tell him that I dislike him?"

"In a kind way, that could not be mistaken."

"Mary, I am certain he would smite you."

"Now! not so bad as that! You once told me he is little. Would the odds be very great?"

"Ah, Mary, he is, I fear, a bad man!"

"Kate, let us venture; I am not afraid. Seriously, now, give me his name and place of residence. There are none without redeeming traits; perhaps his may be generosity."

Kate shook her head mournfully; while Mary urged, by saying,

"Come, put the case in my hands. If he strikes me, I can sue for assault. Come, Kate, write the name here, on this blank leaf."

Kate took the volume, wrote a name, and handed it back. "Don't read it now," she said, "and don't fee me too largely." And turning toward the house, she went slowly on, glad to find no one in the parlor. She flung herself on the sofa, where, as she watched the moon's rays glimmering on the carpet, thoughts of what Mary had told her of a message from Mr. Ellery made her very happy even in the hope of being remembered by one whom she dared not think of in return. Meantime, Mary had stepped out in the moonlight, and read the name with a start of surprise.

"Can it be?"

A second reading, and she started on a run toward the house—in at the front door, up the stairs, and in her room. Was she really laughing, as, by the moonlight, she tumbles over a package of letters, from which selecting one, and placing it in her dress pocket, she hurries on to find her friend?

Down on her knees beside Kate, she whispers,

"Kate, you are free."

"You have not seen him," was the reply, as, without raising her eyes, Kate put a hand on Mary's neck.

"No; but I have a letter, dear."

"From him?"

"Yes."

Kate opened her eyes. "How can it be, Mary?"

"It is, Kate—an offer of hand and heart, not to you, but to me."

"From James Haywood?"

"Yes; take it, and read for yourself."

In a moment Kate had gone with it to find a light; and Mary, left alone, fell to pondering the two startling discoveries of the day. She thought of Mr. Leecraft, and his strange commingling with the quondam Mr. Lee, who at present was a myth instead of a middle-aged bachelor of elegant tastes and extensive travel and reading—for so her lively imagination had embodied him, as to make it difficult to take him from the niche where she had placed him, and put good pious Mr. Leecraft there. It was at this vagary she was smiling, when Kate returned, holding the letter, and having such a chuckle and a cry struggling in her voice that Mary's smile ran to a merry giggle.

"Well, Kate."

"Mary, Mary, I never was so glad to be cut out in my life! 'Tis a dream. Pinch me—do, dear, to see if I am awake. Why, it will take a week to begin to realize it!"

Grace now entered, comically asking,

"Well, whose beau did mine whip?"

"Not mine," said Mary.

"Not mine," said Kate.

"What new mystery is this?" said Kate. "Was it Jediah that gave Haywood that whipping?"

"Girls, come to tea," called Jane; and, assuring them that pa was cross, urged them not to keep him waiting.

Mary, with a comic attempt to take all the girls in her embrace and draw them to the tea-room, said,

"How soon we shall all be parted! Yet do not let us think of it on this happy night."

"Trust the good future."

"My motto, Kate."

"And mine, from this time forth," said Kate.

Two and two the girls entered the tea-room, Jane bringing down the corners of her mouth demurely at sight of her father.

CHAPTER XVI.

What a long train of difficulties do sometimes proceed from one wrong step! and every evil that befalls us in consequence of that, we are to charge upon ourselves.—*Mason*.

THE light of a sea-coal fire is shedding its rays over the apartment, glowing on and mellowing the time-worn features of the old lady who sways slowly in her rocking-chair, while it enhances the beauty of the younger, though not young lady, who sits on the opposite side of the hearth. Walter is there too, and, in answer to foregone remarks, Mrs. Bentley says,

"Then we must leave it cheerfully in the hands of an unerring Providence."

"Why do we not live daily on this prop, and let nothing trouble us. How much our want of faith frustrates His merciful designs toward us!" said Lois.

"You talk boldly of frustrating the designs of Providence," said Walter.

"Because I firmly believe we do so. We put away His loving-kindness; we are such erring creatures.—Yes, dear Walter; for what said our Redeemer, as He

wept over Jerusalem. Was it not, 'How often I would have gathered you, as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!' And my hours of reflection warn me that, by sinful doubts and worldliness, I am daily turning His mercy from me—not, mark me, from the salvation of my soul; that is fixed."

"Yes, my Lois; the chosen people wound themselves by many a careless step. To grace we owe it that they rise again, and are healed."

When the light sleep that comes so readily to the aged had fallen a moment after on the serene spirit of the venerable lady. Walter, lifting his face out of his hands, ventured,

"Then you might say that I, for want of thought, turned away a blessing in the form of a noble-minded woman, when, in a fit of jealousy, I sailed for Europe, and found, when too late, how much I had lost."

"No doubt of it," said Lois.

"What an error!" I exclaimed, when fairly out on the deep, with every mile widening between us."

"And every hour widening the breach of suspicion and mistrust in your mind?"

"No; but rather, time and distance enhancing my esteem, and that which seemed an unmaidenly act dissolving itself to a mere girlish freak. But why dwell on this?"

Lois, who had had her little heart-trials, read in the light laugh that the wound of years was unhealed.

"Walter, have you seen her since?"

The fag end of an opera air was finished ere the reply came, with assumed carelessness,

"Many a time."

"Ah! What is her manner toward you?"

"That of the most provoking indifference. She can allude to the past, and that horrid excursion, as merrily as though it had not formed the epoch of our lives. She is the brilliant centre of a charmed circle in the evening of days that witness to her beneficence. I find her among the Germans, conversing as fluently as in her own tongue; sometimes singing to them, or listening to their legends, purposely to cheer and amuse; and her mode of treatment proves more efficacious than mine in relieving, and they tell me Dr. Gray is a more skilful physician by far than I."

"Her pecuniary aid does that, I suspect; and 'tis well that her pity does not waste itself in a mere 'be ye warmed and be ye fed,' " said Lois.

"Bell is seldom among the wealthy," continued Walter. "Old Mrs. Rutledge excepted, so excessively peevish to others, is quite civil to her. Bell waits on her because of a promise made to a grand-daughter whose home was made miserable by virtue, to use a paradox, of her sister Ellen; or so the story goes."

"And you think this Bell Gray is entirely indifferent to you?"

"Of course. A hard-working, plodding physician is no match for the gay and light-hearted. Why, the

very presence of a careworn doctor, only met in scenes of sorrow, must call up gloomy reflections."

"Now, I am amazed, Walter! A physician of as high reputation as yours can mingle in any class of society, I care not how select. You must not feel as you do—you who have won your name by close and faithful study."

"Yes, with one hand, while with the other I dashed away all that was worth the winning. Did I not, without one word of explanation, leave the woman to whom I was affianced?—I deserve it, and I admire her ability to forget so completely. Lois, she is right to despise me!"

"She dare not do it," said Lois.

"She cannot help it," said Walter.

"I doubt it. I know the heart of woman."

"Not hers, my Lois."

"They are all the same, where the affections are at stake."

And Lois sat thinking and questioning long after Mrs. Bentley had retired, and Walter was lost in the *Evening Express*.

The next morning found Walter and his foster-sister riding out. Everywhere the fair authoress was greeted with cordiality.

"How this would have flattered me once, when unused to fortune and fame; and how well it is that success comes not in the first flush of youth, when we are so illy prepared for the right use of it!"

"It is not displeasing now," suggested Walter.

"No; for it pleases, as a means to a certain end. How little those who praise my books know the tear-wrung strife that has given tone and truthfulness to my life scenes and sketches." Then, after a pause, "I wish I knew Bell Gray."

"Why—because she hates me?"

"No, but because she has past the unrest of life."

"She is not old, Lois."

"A little so in heart."

"Why, she is gleeful as a child—much more so now than when we were friends."

"Walter, it is not years that make one aged, but how much we have lived out, or, if you please, outlived."

"Then, like yourself, whatever she has outlived has left more brightness and beauty than it found." And Walter glanced admiringly at the maturing beauty of his companion.

"I like your picture of this Bell among the indigent and sick. Cannot I make her acquaintance?"

"You have an opportunity," said Walter.

"How?"

"Do you not attend the *soirée* at St. Marks?"

"Am I invited?"

"You are." And Walter produced the card.

"Will she be there?"

"Will you go, if I can say 'yes?'"

"I will."

"Done!" said Walter.

This settled, and the chiming laugh rings out at the happiness she has conferred. A catching laugh was that of Lois Esbee's, tempting one to join it; so free from satire, chirruping and clear as a bird-song. The ride had proved a pleasant one. They had dashed on fearlessly, or paced gently, as the mood dictated—had talked or been silent, as they listed. So friends may ride.

The spacious apartments of the Rutledge mansion are brilliantly lighted; guests are filling the dressing-rooms, passing hurriedly along the halls with a pleasant hum of voices; while outside, carriages are drawing up in quick succession, and drivers, those matter-of-fact men, are grumbling at the intense cold of that November night.

Bell Gray is in that gay assemblage. White blossoms gleam among her dark tresses; the crimson cheek and flashing eye carry the palm bravely with Miss Ellen Rutledge. But there are different shades and kinds of beauty, and well is it for the plain that it lives sometimes only in the eye of the beholder.

Bell, quite forgetful of self, has shrunk behind the throng, to make way for the passing of Walter and his friend; and not for that alone. With one glance she has taken in the graceful carriage, the rounded chest, the gentle blue of the eye, the white arm so beautiful in its proportion, and the smile that lingers about the full rosy mouth. Ah, the fond, confiding gaze, the

almost wife-like manner! Poor Bell! how mistaken, in supposing her early affection put aside as a mere girlish freak—how wounded at this sudden apparition of a beautiful rival!

As the name of the successful authoress runs from lip to lip, and many press for an introduction, Bell sinks in a seat overwhelmed with emotions of the deepest dislike for this new satellite; and yet, half ashamed of a feeling which she suspects as growing out of envy, tries to reason away the new and troublesome thoughts that oppress her.

"She cannot help being beautiful; nor has she purposely injured me. Ah! but she has more than her share; talents, beauty, and—and—Walter."

But the roused heart beats as wildly while Lois, still hanging on Walter's arm, has unconsciously drawn around her a circle of admirers waiting to hear something very sensible—something of the profundity of thought with which her books abound; but she has slipped away, and is kneeling before a beautiful boy. With both his little hands in her own, she is asking his name; which he, intuitively seeing that she loves children, tells lovingly, giving back the pressure.

"Edgar Dumont Halsted. Why, what a pretty name!" said Lois.

"Aunt Bell says it's Dumont. Ma don't say so." And in a comic whisper, "I mind Aunt Bell."

"And not dear mamma!" with feigned surprise.

"No," with a suppressed smile.

"Yes!" with an attempt to be serious.

"Aunt Bell loves me."

"And doesn't mamma?"

"Aunt Bell lets me do whatever I like."

"Ah, that is the secret!" And laughing merrily, Lois led the boy to a seat beside her, and, turning to a gentleman near, said, "These gentle living flowers are seldom seen at our evening revels. Perhaps 'tis better so."

"Fond of children, ma'am?"

"Fond of them! indeed, I adore them. What would the world be without children?"

"Less noisy—less of a bewilderment."

"You jest, surely. They form the sweetest companionship in this hollow world, with their young, loving hearts all unscathed by mistrust and suspicion."

"Little pests! One cannot lay a thing down, but it is snapped up and carried off. And then, who wants to be clambered on; but worst of all, that incessant questioning. Humph!"

"I don't like you, Mr. Ernstine," said Edgar, his eyes filling.

Lois hugged the boy, and declared the gentleman to be a heathen, as she went laughingly away with the small hand clinging to her own, now and then looking down at the upturned face as she takes Walter's arm.

Mr. Ernstine gazed after Lois in a puzzled way, sank in a revery, and for a time forgot politics.

"At least, let me see her," said Lois.

After looking about, Walter replied,

"There—just under the pier glass, beside the dark-haired man."

"I see. She is pretty; but how pale!"

"That is unusual. The gentleman is a brother-in-law, by the way—one who unwittingly turned the current of my life; to him I owe my success as a physician."

"On friendly terms?"

"Yes; he is a splendid fellow—upright and truthful as he is handsome."

"What is his business?"

"Follows the sea. Worth, like talent, will work itself clear, and rise to the light. Captain Gray appreciates him at last."

And who dreamed, in that lowly-murmured colloquy, there was aught but the heart-absorbing theme so interesting to lovers?

Bell's gaze perversely turned with a strange fascination upon Lois. In vain she sought to detect a fault in tone or movement. Walter turned the music pages, while a circle of critics clustered around to admire the faultless execution of the talented lady.

"How she triumphs! One can see it in every glance. And he is delighted; no doubt he has told her all, and she would like to see the poor crushed thing. She shall not." And Bell rose up, resolved on going home.

"Not yet, Miss Bell."

"Yes, I am tired; and Ed is under my care."

"I had hoped to dance with you."

"Not to-night, Mr. Hall."

"Ill?"

"No." And the answer came pettishly; for the poor girl was sorely tried, and now as to how she shall get Edgar from that horrid woman. She did wish people would let the boy be and not spoil him; the world was full of meddlers. And thus angrily poor Bell stood at the door of the music room, from whence she at last succeeded in catching the notice of her little charge, who, as he ran to her, exclaimed, "Isn't it Dumont, Aunt Bell?"

"Edgar, dear, why do you leave me for so long?"

"Isn't it, Aunt Bell? I said I would ask you."

"Hush, dear; we must go now."

"My name, Aunty, didn't you say it should be—"

"Come, darling—come!"

Bell felt the gaze of Walter fastened on her, as she drew the boy along, who obstinately pulled away, with—

"Let me kiss her for good-night."

While Walter and Lois advanced to take the proffered kiss, Bell waited indignantly; then bowing coldly to the latter, she hurried toward the hall. A moment more, and she had fallen to the floor; the struggle between pride and grief had proved too much; she had fainted, and the crowd, now gathering around, seemed to outvie each other in excluding the air, which

Lois perceiving advanced, and, with a sort of undefined right, demanded a change; then, making her way gently but in a firm manner, kneels to, take the head of the poor girl to her arms, and putting back the dark clustering locks, applies the cold water with her palm to the temples, meanwhile asking Walter why he does not assist her a little.

"Certainly," said Walter, at the same time knocking down a beautiful vase in his efforts to do so.

"Quite a scene!" said Ellen Rutledge, turning away with a sneer to Mr. Ernstine, who had stood a silent witness to all that had passed.

Bell recovered, to find herself in the apartment of Mrs. Rutledge, the poor invalid moaning of her, while Clarence and Lois sat by.

"The room has been too close for the child."

"No doubt; and with last night's watching with a sick child, she has been overcome."

"I am better now," said Bell, rising with an effort, and announcing her wish to return to her home.

"You cannot, child," said Mrs. Rutledge.

"I must; papa is alone, and I shall be quite well in a few moments."

"Let me urge you to remain to-night." And Lois took the trembling hands in her own, fixing on Bell such a look of interest and affection that the weary head was laid down again; but when it was told that Walter had hurried away for medicine, and would soon return, she sprang from her reclining posture, and the

next fifteen minutes found her seated in the family carriage, beside Clarence and his boy.

As Lois stood in the drawing-room amusedly watching the dancers, a voice arrested her notice.

"Does this belong to you?"

"It does, thank you; the boy must have unclasped it from my wrist."

"The name inscribed on the clasp?"

"Is mine."

"Not changed, then."

"Not changed."

"Then I am not mistaken."

"And you recognize me?" said Lois.

"I only doubted a moment. You are so much larger; time has touched you lightly. See!" he said, laying his hand on a head of profuse hair, with here and there a silver thread gleaming out.

"I noticed them; do they trouble you, Will—eh, Mr. Ernstine?"

"Ah, you correct that! Why not William, as of old?"

"Do they annoy you? I mean."

"Should they, Lois?"

"No; for they are gentle monitors, serving to remind us to keep the stakes loose, and ready for journeying at a moment's warning."

The statesman stared in unfeigned amazement.

"You seem surprised. I mean that long journey admitting not a retrograde motion. May the brief one

here be pleasant;" was rather sighed than said by Lois.

"Humph! the larger part is passed already. I see you keep the amulet yet, after fifteen years."

"Fifteen. Ah, you are considerate for me. Five-and-twenty—well, one gets attached to a jewel from habit and old acquaintanceship."

"And for no other reason?"

"William! there again! Mr. Ernstine."

"Why not? I will not grow bold on it, the other is so cold."

"Oh, you are a great man now, and I have learned to be very proper since I saw you last.—Walter, your patient has gone."

"Where?"

"Home, with Mr. Halsted and the boy."

"Then I have but to wait your pleasure."

"I am ready now."

In a moment the warm velvet cloak was wrapped about her, and Lois stood waiting.

"Good-night, Mr. Ernstine."

"Farewell."

And Lois accepted the extended hand. As they passed out at the hall-door, the keen eye of the politician waited them. Lois only said, as she passed,

"Don't dye it."

"Who is that fine-looking man?" said Walter.

"Is he fine-looking?"

"Very! such speaking eyes!"

After a long silence, and when both had indulged in separate thoughts for a while,

"How Bell disdains me!"

"She has a restive spirit, Walter; she likes you better than me. I admire her."

"Think she doesn't like you, Lois?"

"Certainly. I know she does not."

"And you still admire her?"

"Yes; and she will like me better and fear me less by daylight."

"Fear! Who could fear you? The thing is not supposable. You talk in riddles."

The smile was unseen, and Walter continued to dream on almost sullenly, till the carriage stopped to leave Lois at the house of a friend, and he was carried on to his boarding-house on Broadway.

CHAPTER XVII.

The low brow, the frank space between the eyes, which always had the brown, pathetic look of a dumb creature who had been beaten once, and never since was easy with the world. Ah! ah! now I remember perfectly those eyes to-day—how over-large they seemed, as if some patient, passionate despair (like a coal dropped and forgot on tapestry, which slowly burns a widening circle out) had burnt them larger, larger.—*E. B. Browning.*

AS might be expected, the next day found Mary suffering with nervous headache, which of late surely followed loss of sleep. While she rested languidly on the sofa, the sound of merry voices from the kitchen jarred on her ear.

"Why do they laugh and talk so loudly, when they know my head aches!" was murmured pettishly, as Susan put her head in at the door, to ask if she might come in.

"Yes, dear Susy; but shut the door softly, if you please."

"Is your head so bad?"

"The ache is bad, Susy," Mary said, as she tried to smile, and fearing to seem ill-natured. "Whose voice do I hear below?"

"Grace is there, and Mr. King. He would have come in, but she would not allow him to disturb you. Mamma was troubled for fear their laughing would annoy you."

"Susy, when you and Grace return to the school-room, will you ask your mamma to come and sit here with her sewing? The sound of her voice will do me good; 'tis so low and gentle."

"'Tis just like your harp, Mary; but I would not say so to the girls, for fear they would laugh at me; but you know what I mean, don't you? I will tell ma to be sure to come."

An hour after, Mrs. Smith came, and, drawing her chair close to the sofa, quietly sewed, now and then glancing at the closed lids of the invalid.

"Oh, dear! my mind is full of murmurings. I am all the while blaming myself for deeds that have passed beyond recall. Now, I think I ought not to have left Aunt Ellis. And yet, I could not help it; I had to go. Could I help it? But you do not know the circumstances; it was my correspondence with Mrs. Bentley that offended grandmamma, because she is religious. I used to see the hand of the Lord in each event of my life; now I cannot. Oh, if I should lose the faith that has sustained me ever since I knew the Lord!"

"My dear Miss, I am very ignorant in religion; and yet I feel assured this is no evidence of a change. Remember how, in sickness, every thing wears a

gloomy aspect. 'Tis the night-time of life; and you know how different, how much lighter, even the deepest sorrow seems by day."

"Is it that which makes it seem that I have done every thing wrong? All the past seems to reproach me."

Tears were falling from Mary's eyes; and Mrs. Smith, who, of all women, knew the subtilty of nervous debility, shrewdly suspecting that the mind should be called off to some startling or surprising subject, at once resolved to tell her own simple story of grief.

"Mary," she said, "shall I tell you how I came to know Mr. Leecraft?"

"Do!" was the ready response.

"You know that Mr. Smith is not my first husband."

"Yes; I learned it lately," said Mary.

"At the age of sixteen I married Eugene Le Doit; and be not surprised when I say he was the only man I have ever truly loved; for who could forget him for another? Too well I remember his manly beauty, and happy, cheerful spirit. Yes, Miss Mary, I have loved but one husband."

Mary found little difficulty in believing that the present husband was not regarded with affection; and, scarcely knowing what to say, awaited in silence to hear the cause of so loveless a marriage. After a pause, Mrs. Smith continued:

"One little girl was given us, the idol of our hearts

—too much the idol, I see now. How I was cared for then, and how proud he was of his ‘two girls,’ as he used to call us! And how tossed and neglected I have been since! Oh, how the storm has beaten me!” And the narrator, seeming to forget she was not alone, kept repeating the last sentence, till her voice died to a whisper, and her work fell to her feet. Mary watched her, tremblingly, till glad to see her aroused as from a dream, and stoop to take up the piece on which she was sewing, and resume by saying:

“His treasures have been abused, since then.”

“Where is your child now?” Mary asked.

“Ah, I forgot; I was thinking you knew about her. We lived in the south of France. I am, as you know, of French parentage, which makes me so timid when speaking your language, not having learned it in my youth. Eugene was German, and, by inheritance, came in possession of a large fortune, which he freely—dear Eugene! indiscreetly—lavished on us. Well——” And she hesitated. “Let me hurry. First came losses, then sickness and death, and my only love was laid in the grave while I was insensible. Eugene dead! For months after, I crept about like one half awake, conscious only of a great loss, a something gone; and I knew not, but guessed it was Eugene had left the sense of loneliness that now oppressed me. And here my little Hester, laying aside her girlishness, assumed the woman and comforter to me. It was for her, after months, I awoke

again to life, and also to full consciousness of all that had befallen me; a widow and penniless at twenty, and so educated in womanly dependence as to be wholly unequal to the task of maintaining myself and child.

“Two years I lived among relatives, who were too evidently tired of me to seem sorry when a way opened for me to come here to Canada. The means of paying my way was quickly proffered by them. I cannot blame them. I was a spoiled child, and perhaps—who knows?—some signs of aberration of mind in me warned them of increasing trouble.

“Well, it was at the hotel, on my first landing here, that I met Mr. Smith. It seems as yesterday that I sat with my girl, pining and disappointed. How foolish to expect it! That change of scene brought no change of grief for resignation. When he entered, and, seeming at once attracted by Hester’s beauty, called her, and, placing the child on his knee, won her to a merry chat with him. We did not stay at the hotel; it was too expensive for me. After a month, he sought us out at my new home in a boarding-house, where I had succeeded in getting music pupils. Again, at sight of him, Hester awoke to her old merriment—a fact to my poor heart holding out a vague hope that he was kind—a friend in need; for his continued attentions were pleasant; it made me think there was one being to whom we were of consequence. And so, after a few months, for her sake—

mind, for her!—to secure this friend to her, I consented to marry.

“You know how wrong that was, Miss. I need not stop to tell you how fully I saw my error. Ah! if, in my grief, I did wrong, how I have been punished!

“I, being of a gentle temper, could have lived in comparative happiness with my new husband, had he continued kind to my child.”

“Was he not?” asked Mary, in surprise. “Was he not kind to Hester?”

“No. A jealous feeling took possession of his mind; he complained that Hester had too much of my affection. Oh! I could not tell you, Miss, my surprise at the new character he assumed—the mean, low subterfuge to which he resorted to wound the gentle little creature for whose sake I had married him.

“I had lived on thus, breaking in to my new master’s yoke, when the circumstance occurred that made me acquainted with Mr. Leecraft. Hester was in her eighth year, and I allowed her to play out on the lawn, that she might annoy him as little as possible; for I had two more girls then—Grace and Jane—and I could not patiently witness the marked difference in his treatment of the children. Hester was of a remarkably volatile turn, and delighted in her freedom, not forgetting to run in and drop an endearing word, and then off again on the green lawn. But I did not tell you of her fortune, bequeathed by an aunt, a sis-

ter of my Eugene, with this restriction (why, I cannot tell, as she had always seemed friendly), that not a tithe should be spent on the wife of Ezekiel Smith. I did not care much for the slight; I had lived my deep sorrow that makes others light. I was glad for my child; but then an enemy told my husband. Ah! there was the wound. Of course, his dislike was not made less; and wo to me for a circumstance that occurred while he was smarting at the knowledge of it.

“One morning, after Hester had been gone a few moments to her usual play, she came running in haste, leading by the hand a beautiful boy of some four summers. I supposed him to be a casual acquaintance from the school near by, when she cried out gleefully, ‘He is mine, mamma! The woman gave him to me, and she says I must keep him, and I must take good care of him, for he is a rich man’s son. And, mamma, she says some day he will come and take us both to England with him. And, mamma, she asked me if I had a mother; and when I said “yes,” she said, “Tell her he is no common child.” So, ma, you must let him stay, because, when night comes, he will have no place to go to.’

“All this was said in broken and hasty sentences; and I, forgetting my new bondage, and following a mother’s impulses, took the noble little fellow to my arms, and promised to keep him. Then you should have seen Hester dance about for joy! The gift of a

pet kitten could not have seemed more wholly hers than did the beautiful boy."

"What did Mr. Smith say?" Mary asked.

At the question, the large eyes seemed to dilate, and the answer came slowly:

"He did that which has made me hate him ever since. With one blow he felled her to the floor. Oh! to see him spring like a wild beast upon my gentle, loving girl, the pet of Eugene! Oh! why didn't the grave let him out then, to avenge his child!"

Mary began to fear the spell of which Kate had told her, and, seeking to divert her from her girl, asked carelessly,

"And you—what did you do?"

"I raved like a mad woman. Strange, fierce blood seemed boiling in my veins. I felt—Miss, I must have felt as murderers do. I grasped his arm with superhuman strength, and loudly called in my neighbors to resent my wrong. When they came, I had fainted, and they said a fever kept me six long weeks to my couch, entirely unconscious of all around me; but when reason was restored, and my two girls were beside me, calling me 'mamma,' and dimly bringing back the present, Hester and the boy were gone. And now a strange dread came over me, as if I must not ask, because I must not name her. Demons seemed guarding my mouth, and whispers came close to my ear to forbid her name; so I became like a beaten ox, dull and uncomplaining. For hours I sat

and watched the windows, to see her loved form bounding home. But she never came as a child again, and I was counted crazy, and allowed to keep my vigils unmolested."

"Where is Hester now?" Mary asked, eagerly, rising and pressing back the hot curls from her forehead, while her lips trembled with suppressed emotion; for a sudden memory of Tremont had crossed her mind.

Mrs. Smith took from her bosom a letter, which she handed to Mary; it was dated six years back, and ran thus:

"MY DEAR, DEAR MAMMA:—I am earning—earning for you. Cheer up! God is so good. He has counted all the tears you and I have shed, and Hope tells me we shall yet live together, and you shall never hear another unkind word. Do you remember how I used to say, when I went out of a morning, 'I shall come again, mamma?' And now I say I will surely come again to you. Think of me as one never forgetting my mamma—as one very happy, no longer your little, but tall, strong, and healthy

"HESTER."

"Earning—earning!" said Mary; "I suppose with the needle."

"Yes; and hurting herself, for me."

"No; for she says 'strong and healthy.'"

"She certainly looked so."

"Why, have you seen her?"

"She came twice. The first time I sat rocking my baby, in the doorway, when a voice beside me, and I looked in the face of a beautiful young girl. Would you think, I knew her in a moment! Could a mother forget?—The neighbors had told her just where I might be seen at that hour; else she would not have known me—poor me, so changed! But she smoothed my face, and called me her own dear mamma; and she said I did not disappoint her. I was so glad I was not repulsive to my beautiful girl. She sat beside me, chatting of the past, and I describing to her just how she used to look, and showing her the place where she used to play; and among her childish expressions, that of 'I shall come again, mamma,' with her courtesy at the door each morning; but we were interrupted by Mr. Smith's coming."

"Ah! what did he say?"

"I believe he was really glad to know she was still living, though he was most awkward in seeking to hide it, and to seem displeased; but Hester chatted in a sprightly way she has to him, calling him 'papa,' as she used to. Secretly she put in my hand a hundred dollars, saying merrily, 'Tis not French money, mamma, but earned for you; use it for yourself, and always think of me as happy and well;' and, kissing me, she stood on the door-sill, and courtied, with the old mimic, 'I shall come again, mamma.'"

"Was that the last time?" said Mary.

"No; she came just as suddenly two years after. She had been away to her native France, and to other countries. She stayed a week, largely remunerating Mr. Smith for a visit at his board. But again the old jealousy awoke, at finding she had won the hearts of her sisters, and that I was becoming too happy. No sooner had she gone, than he let the house, and moved in this out-of-the-way place, in the hope that she could not find us. But she will. Stupid! He thinks I do not know his motive, telling me it was necessary the girls should have a more pleasant home, now that they are grown. Vile man, you have had your day! She will find me."

"He must be very unhappy."

"He is; I know it by his talk when asleep. He seems to dread the coming of Mr. Leecraft, and talks of California, and his wish to get away."

"And what of Mr. Leecraft?"

"He came to us just two years after Hester had flown. The story of Mr. Smith's cruelty, and the cause, had spread the news of the boy, and thus his father was led to find us. Judge of his disappointment that we could give him no information. Mr. Smith knew as little as he cared where the two wanderers went. He had turned them on the wide world in a stormy night—a fact elicited as he quailed beneath the sharp inquiries of the noble stranger. Ah, that calm look of despair, as he turned from us without one

word of reproach! Our moving did not evade him; for he came here, and, taking Mr. Smith aside, held a long conference, urging on him the duties of religion. Miss, he is a good man thus to forgive so great an injury."

"The Christian can do that by grace," said Mary.

"What induced him to hire the room, and place his relics among us, I know not. Perhaps he thinks Canada still holds his son; or it may be out of pity, and to help us."

"Could Hester tell you nothing of the boy?"

"Yes; he had been taken to an institution where boys are maintained till fourteen years of age—where Hester, too, might dwell at pleasure, and a privilege of which she availed herself for a few years, till, attracting by her beauty a person of wealth and standing, she was sent to a first-class school, and forbid to acknowledge any acquaintance with the asylum or its inmates. Breaking away from the dominance of this person, she became self-reliant, and earned enough to travel. Her fortune did not avail her till her eighteenth year. On her return from France, she hurried to find the boy; but he had gone with an applicant, a merchant, to Europe. This intelligence I imparted to his father by letter."

"Could it be him!" thought Mary; and then, putting away the idea as absurd, and blushing at her romantic thought, she asked,

"Where does Hester now reside?"

"I know not, Miss Mary. She seemed unwilling to say, only assuring me that she was very happy in the hope of coming to me at a future day. Nor could I draw from her how it fared on that stormy night. She said it was not so bad as the telling would make it seem, and closed the discourse by the remark that God was good, and then the playful promise to come again."

"And you have not seen her since?"

"Never since; but I shall."

"And you have told me all?"

"All but the years of suffering, which cannot be told, and which I trust you cannot even imagine."

"And you have given me a friend. My heart has already adopted Hester, so good, so cheerful, so loving to you. Oh, how you are honored in such a daughter! How plainly I see good coming out of intended evil. Perhaps she might have grown up a pampered, selfish, proud woman; but see how she trusts in God, and how cheerful she must be in her strong faith. And what says Paul? 'For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.' Cheer up, dear madam, and say, with Hester, 'God is good.' You will—I know you will—seek Him with your whole heart."

"Mary, I am learning slowly. I feel that I have been too forgetful of Him—too full of my own griefs—too selfish."

"I am going to leave my Bible with you. Be

assured, the time spent in searching the Scriptures will not be regretted at the judgment-day. May I crave the promise?"

The beautiful eyes brightened, and the vow was given; and the Bible of Marcions was placed in the work-basket, henceforth to be her daily companion till claimed again by Mary.

"But you are not going to leave us?"

"Yes; and sooner than I supposed. The doctor reiterates his command, and a second letter from Mrs. Bentley seems to make the way plain."

"Ah, me!" sighed Mrs. Smith.

"Now, let us bear the whole will of the Lord. It was He that brought us to know each other; let Him part us for a while. Our souls may mingle, though miles apart." And Mary, smiling back her tears, and sure that the ache had nearly gone from her head, said, "Let us take a walk, and call on our neighbors. I can get along, with the help of your arm."

"My neighbors! They would be astonished."

"Let them. Perhaps they need arousing; they will see you come as a support to my weak frame. And they will be so glad to see you; I talk so often of you to them."

"What a different being you have made of me!" said the shy lady, as she went away for her bonnet.

A few minutes after, the two, so different in years, so alike in tastes, were wending their way slowly along. The talk was cheerful, and very significant of

a hopeful future. Another scholar had entered the Christian arena; another pilgrim was on the way to Calvary's foot; another soul was taking on the light and easy yoke.

CHAPTER XVIII.

The heart whose strength
Is proof 'gainst Pleasure's overpowering smiles,
Can ne'er be conquered by the throb of pain.—*Stagnelius.*

AND now, after a year, we return to the Toronto home. Everywhere the light step and kindly smile is missing. To Mrs. Smith most, the garden, the parlor, the school-room, whisper Mary's absence—her, whose presence had been like sunlight on a hitherto gray and lurid landscape. Many a letter has come to them from the home which for a while she enjoys with Mrs. Bentley and Lois and Walter; and many have been sent, urging her return.

"Think of a year gone, and you still away from us!" wrote Kate. And Jane, in postscript, asked, "What has become of Mr. Ellery? We hear nothing of him. So you was the attraction to our home, after all, and I was not mistaken."

And Mrs. Smith had written in French, "My dear, are you happy?" And Mary had replied, in the same tongue, "Religion is a great cementer of Christian

hearts; 'tis our letter of introduction, by which we find mutual friends in a Paul, John, and Peter; which opens our hearts for poor doubting Thomas, and fills us with love for dying Stephen; gives a holy reverence for Jesus, our own and their elder brother; and this is called fellowship, and has bound my heart to Lois, and somewhat repaid me for the sorrow I experienced in leaving you, dear madam."

At first, this Lois had thrown open her parlor-door that the pale girl might hear her play; then she had ventured with a book, or brought her embroidery frame, while she listened to Mary's adventures in Canada. And recurring to their meeting on the road, Lois had said,

"I little dreamed, then, you were the person we had tried in vain to find."

"Mr. Dumont did not remember my name."

"No; but your face, and the time when he met you."

"We found your address at last by means of the Seminary report, your name being down as principal," said Mrs. Bentley.

"And then, you wrote so cheerfully, that madam felt sure you was happy," added Lois.

"No one could be other than happy with them—so kind and considerate."

"But so terribly democratic with that name," laughed Lois. "They must have a charm by which they hold you."

"A charm of unaffected goodness, and a degree of sterling common sense; and with the girls a fund of merriment. Ah, Lois, you would like them too."

"Well, now, are they all so good—no exceptions? You hinted, once, that Mr. Smith was harsh and exacting."

"Did I? I am sorry."

"I fear my Lois is just a little envious of the family."

"Madam is right, if my wish to find a blemish signifies any thing."

"You jest, my dear."

"So plebeian!" laughed Lois, with uplifted hands.

"She would tease me a little," said Mary, putting her hand in that of Lois, and taking the proffered kiss.

At the time of which we are writing, Mrs. Bentley was at her summer-home on the Hudson. The family mansion nestled in deep shade, its castellated top only seen from the river-side. Here had rested many a revolutionary patriot, and talked of troubled times to her who had been a sharer in its deep losses. And many a tale of those times would Mrs. Bentley relate at twilight to Mary and Lois. Outside, the smooth gravel walks that surrounded the mansion were byways and paths that led over the mountains, where the grand old Hudson might be seen here and there through the interstices of foliage. Amid such scenes the two friends whiled many an hour. One day, when

they had ridden many miles, a turn in the road brought them in view of the Hudson, and Lois exclaimed,

"Wouldn't you be glad to call a land of such scenery yours by birth?"

"Yes, Lois; I have wished it many a time."

"And if one could tell you truly that you can claim the right, would you really be glad?"

"Lois, you taunt me. Of course I would."

"Mary, you are not English."

"What am I, then?"

"Your parents were American, both of them, and your grandfather one of the heroes of revolutionary times, and a kinsman, though distant, of Madam Bentley."

"Lois, you are strangely humorous to-day. What ails you?"

"I want you to believe me, Mary."

"Be serious, then."

"I am. Did you not hear what Madam said, when you came so suddenly upon us?"

"Yes; she said I ought to know something. I did not try to hear what."

"You will believe her; will you not?"

"I see now, Lois, that you are in earnest. What am I to learn of myself?"

"That you are American."

"How? Are not the Rutledges English?"

"Well, yes."

"Am I not one of them?"

"You are nothing to that bad race, my Mary."

"How can I believe you, Lois?"

"Madam commissioned me to tell you, Mary. Now, do not let us be romantic about it. You have been deceived too long, and now you will see why Mrs. Rutledge could so coolly send you drifting on the wide world. Think she would have sent a kindred of her own out to teach? No, no, my dear! That ought to convince you."

Mary put her hands to her head, and said, tremblingly,

"I must—I do believe you, but cannot realize it all at once. Tell me here how it all came about."

"I can, in few words; but do not look so alarmed."

"Let me know the worst; say it all out, Lois. Aunt Ellis hinted something, and then seemed frightened, as if she had betrayed a trust. Then I forgot it, and hoped I was mistaken. Oh, the thing I most dread! Yet, do not spare me."

"There is nothing to dread, my dear. I am sorry to see you thus. What do you fear, Mary?"

"A stain on my birth."

"No, no, my dear—unless you insist on being a Rutledge; then—guilt, crime. You are not of that hot race."

"Are you certain of all this?"

"Remember, Mary, I am speaking on the authority of Mrs. Bentley—one who has held you when an

infant. All I have to tell is simple truth, not at all frightful. Why, what a nervous little creature you are!"

All this time Lois was tying her horse, arranging the seats and parcels; after which she drew Mary's arm through her own, and, soon finding seats on a fallen tree, proceeded:

"You ask what brought you among the Rutledges. I answer, Pride, indomitable pride—that which leads its possessor to suppose the whole great world is standing still to take cognizance of him. Let me see, what shall I call it—pride of progeny? You must know, Harry Rutledge—mind, no relative of yours, but the only son of Bertha—had no children. What a circumstance, that such a noble race should not transmit a line of glorious names! Mary, I sometimes think Napoleon I. stamped his own ruin in the rash act of divorcing Josephine, just that the world might continue its worship to his name. And how all that heartburning, that wringing of both souls—for they truly loved—was for nought! What a sequel! A feeble boy, an exotic, faded ere it bloomed. O ambition, whither do you lead!"

"It is one of the saddest pages of French history," sighed Mary.

"Well, I have digressed. When Mrs. Harry Rutledge gave up all hope of having children, you was found and adopted, for the sole reason of having a pretty face and form. Money did that which persua-

sion failed to do ; it bought you of an aunt with whom you had been placed till Mrs. Bentley's return from abroad."

"And I am nothing to Mr. Leecraft."

"Why, what of that?"

"He must be so good. Is Ellen aware?"

"She is nothing to you."

"Tell me all, Lois ; I am not afraid now. I did dread to hear of a low, stigmatized birth."

"You need not, darling. Come, you have heard enough for delicate nerves ; you are all excitement, and the poor head will feel it for days."

"I cannot rest, Lois, till I hear of my mother, of whom grandmamma would never speak, nor Aunt Ellis either."

"Now, I ask in reason, how could your noble, intellectual father, be the son of wicked Bertha Rutledge ? The supposition is absurd."

"Not so harsh, Lois ; she is not all bad. And she has a good brother, and I cannot but love her."

"Good little girl !" murmured Lois ; while Mary went on with—

"So old, and they tell me so feeble now, and so far from the fold. If I might see her once more !"

"You would care less for her, if you knew all."

"What bad thing has she been guilty of?"

"What has she not done?"

"I don't mind her turning me out. I was dependent, and must have been in her way."

"Not dependent, Mary ; for your means were ample as soon as you come of age ; and, then, Mrs. Bentley was ready to claim you. Your father was a lawyer of great ability, the author of several standard works ; of your mother you can hear nothing but good. She was the bosom companion of Mrs. Bentley."

"Then, at last, I may talk freely of her. And Ellen, who was she?"

"She was found somewhere in England—I forget, nor does it matter. Her real name is Fits Hughs. Your name is—— But you have not cared to ask your own name."

"I shall keep the name of Rutledge."

"Pray do not ; you have only to make a trifling change. Talmadge is your lawful name. And now you must be content. The sun is getting low, and you must not be in the dewfall."

"How little I thought of this when we came out ! oh, how my head aches ! And it was of me you and Mrs. Bentley were conversing."

"Yes ; she wanted you to know all."

"I know ; but it will take weeks fully to believe."

"Come, we will go home by the old dam we both admire so much ; and let us pledge ourselves not to resume the talk about those haughty Rutledges. Tell me about those Smiths, or Bell Gray, or the giddy Carrie Hall—any thing but of them ; for one cannot touch pitch without being defiled, you know."

The disapproval expressed by Mary's peculiar shake of the head was quite disregarded by Lois, who, having performed an unpleasant task, grew happy again. There seemed no element of gloom in her nature, depress her as you might; there was ever the rebound to gayety. Clapping her hands gleefully, she said,

"See, where the river widens out there among those brown and blue hills—this is your native land."

"I am glad and happy. Strange that I, of all persons, should be the subject of a mystery—a romance. I must be dreaming, Lois."

"Forbidden topic."

"Oh! I forgot. Well, what must I tell you of my friends? The Smiths you don't like; so let it be Bell."

"Talk of those you like best, and I will take up with the disagreeable."

"You are not like an American, Lois; you are proud. The Smiths would not like you."

"I would compel them; and you must take me there, and I will be very agreeable."

"They would compel you; for you could not help loving them."

"Will they win me, think you, as you have done?"

"Yes; if you will lay aside that unreasonable dislike."

"I will, for I want to win you now to a promise."

Do you know you can oblige me? I am about to ask a favor."

"Do, dear Lois, that I may grant it."

"Let us get on our way first." And as Lois drove on toward their home, she resumed: "Well, you will be amazed at my request."

"I have lived out all that is capable of amazement in me to-day. You may safely go on."

"Will you go with me to New York?"

"Yes—shopping?"

"No; to attend a *soirée* at the house of Mrs. Rutledge. 'Tis said to be Ellen's birthday. There! do not annihilate me with that look."

"A *soirée*!—and without an invitation! Why, Lois!"

"A note accompanied the card, extending the invitation to my lady visitor."

"Without knowing even her name! And aside from that, long ago, when I first became a believer, I resigned all such amusements. And didn't you, dear? You disappoint me. I thought you would not go where you so dislike the people!"

"I must seem to you inconsistent, and must explain thus much: I have a special reason—an old memory strongly tempts me to accept this invitation."

"I, too, have old memories there."

"Then come; it would so enhance my pleasure to have you!"

Mary reflected a while. "She did not tell me

never to see her again. Could I go? This new thought of her being no kin of mine will embarrass me. Yet my duty—I will go.”

“Thank you.”

“Not with you, dear; I want to pass the time with grandmamma.”

“Whose grandmamma?”

“Mine, for that evening, Lois. I must see her. Oh, the redemption of the soul is precious! I must seek to point her again to the Cross.”

“Just a while in the drawing-room.”

“Not a moment, Lois. It may be the last opportunity.”

“And you will go, and suspend a severe judgment of me till such time as I can explain this vagary of mine?”

“Am I apt to pass severe judgments?”

“Yes, where there is a right and a wrong.”

“And I am to hope this is not wrong?”

“Mary, I have an errand at that *soirée*.”

“I will go trusting you, dear Lois.”

And as the two rode home, happiness seemed to possess both hearts.

CHAPTER XIX.

Well showed the elder lady's mien,
That courts and cities she had seen.—*Scott*.

THAT is a tempting room, with its glowing fire, and lamp shaded for reading. The cushioned armchair is drawn to the centre-table, on which is spread the yet moist evening paper. One whiff of the fragrant cigar, and Ethelstane Tremont lays it by, and, walking to the window, looks wistfully out on the dim and thickening atmosphere. 'Tis piercing cold; the frost has pictured the window-panes with grotesque figures, pressing the snow softly down on sill and frame, doorstep and pavement. Yet, what cares the lonely heart, in its cravings for the voice of her he has never ceased to love?

Tremont is once more in New York, among the scenes of his boyhood, and old memories are astir. He recalls the merry sled-rides, the skating frolics, the first stealthy visit to the theatre; then nearer—college days, the lost chum, the separation of the graduating class, the dreaded salutatory, and then the disbanding for working lives—all come freshly to mind, then fade

again before the remembrance of other and holier claims. Tremont is now on the arena of life; prosperity has crowned him victor over years of effort. Thinking of his past, he pities the Tremont of other days, so friendless in his orphanage—friendless, with two exceptions; for has not the angel of his girl-guardian Hester followed him in storm and sunshine, ever holding up the warning finger, and so keeping his vision while among the gay daughters of France, that he heeded not the syren voice, the alluring glance, the unchaste beckoning on to ruin? And the other, his grave little friend, of whom only he is thinking to-night.

"I have dared fiercer storms since I saw her last," he said, as he hastily flung around him a fur-lined cloak, then, pulling down the lapels of his cap, ventured forth, cautiously choosing his way among the snow-drifts that lay before him.

"What if I find her pure, clean mind harassed by the customs and follies of the gay? What if she be turned aside from that religion to which, by her example, she first led me? And what if she has remained the good and true, to bless another's home?"

Thus thinking, as he beat against storms without and within, poor Tremont found himself at last on the east side of the town. Then he stopped, in doubt of the number. Such rapid changes had taken place—whole blocks of houses had been carried up; but a voice from a hackney-coach opportunely called out,

"Seventeen, driver."

"That was it—the very same!" And where it halted, he saw other coaches drawing up.

"Here is a festivity of some kind," he said, as he noted the open door and the waiter's hand on the knob. In a moment he has bounded up the steps, and asked eagerly the question to which the answer falls gloomily on his ear.

"You say she has gone—pray tell me where? and how long ago did it happen?"

The attention of the busy waiter was now called off, and the eager questions had to be repeated.

"In a moment, sir," And then, "What was it, sir?"

"How long, I ask, has she been gone from here?"

"Miss Rutledge left some years ago."

Tremont lingered. A lady and gentleman, hurrying from the storm, pass him on the steps. In the latter he recognizes a familiar face. The lady, as she threw back her crimson hood, attracted him by her surpassing beauty, himself unnoticed.

"Sorry you came, Lois?"

The answer arrested him.

"No; for those who venture nothing, will gain less; and you know I had an object in coming."

"So had I," thought Tremont, as he advanced toward the busy waiter, asking, as he slipped a piece of money in his hand, "Will you say to Miss Ellen Rutledge that a friend would speak a word to her?"

Lois turned at the sound of his pleasant voice, and, thus drawn, gazed at the handsome and now flushed face; then, ashamed of her inadvertency, hurried on toward the dressing-room. On the landing she was detained by a crowd of young ladies. Finding it impossible to pass, and not caring to encounter a tide of silks and laces, she doffed her hood, and, dropping the heavy mantle from her shoulders, stood leaning against the wall and smiling at her own indifference to dress—a thing seemingly so important to those gay young creatures now crowding to the mirror, that would not expand to oblige the prettiest.

The waiter to whom Tremont had spoken, despite the crowd of flatterers that surrounded her, made his way to Ellen, and delivered his message.

"What is he like, John?"

"Upper ten, Miss."

Then, in affected alarm, Ellen asked,

"What if he carries me off forcibly?"

"I would not notice the request," said Mr. Omsted.

"John, is he handsome?" drawled Ellen.

"He has the look of a true gentleman, Miss."

Ellen was talking for the crowd; it was not her way to hold discourse with a hireling. And yet, from his replies, she guessed the stranger might be worth noticing; and disregarding the jealous fears of Mr. Omsted, yet accepting a proffered shawl, she followed John, to recognize with pleasure the man of all others whom she most admired.

And now prettily, and in a coaxing way, she drew him from the shaded corner where he had hoped to escape the notice of others.

"Come—you must, for 'auld lang syne.'"

"Excuse me to-night," he said; and, recalling the adage of Lois, he ventured the question, "Your sister Mary?"

Ellen's look was very grave.

"Where can I find her?"

"La!" she said, suddenly dropping the hands which she had grasped playfully, "she may be in the moon, for all that I know of her. She went off alone years ago—perhaps to be married. She was always queer, you know—perhaps on one of those missions I used to tease her about. La! do you remember those times?"

"I hoped, from her letters, to learn something of her," sighed Tremont.

As Ellen marked the shade of disappointment pass over the features, reading the earnestness of his heart in seeking her sister, and divining his only reason for asking for herself, she became suddenly angry. "We have no correspondence," she said abruptly, and, turning, left him alone in the hall; whence, after musing gloomily, he turned, and, slowly descending the steps, called to one of the hackmen, requesting to be driven home, as the storm was increasing in violence.

"A 'V' will do it, sir," was the gruff reply.

"Two, if you demand it, my good fellow," said

Tremont; and the door was quickly opened, and he about to enter the hack, when the touch of a hand on his arm and a voice arrested him, at which he turned, and instantly, on seeing a lady beside him, placed his umbrella over her, and was about to lead her in from the piercing cold, when she said quickly,

"Have no care for me, sir; my health is good."

"At least this." And Tremont unclasped his cloak, and threw it about her.

"I must speak while I can," she said hurriedly. "You have been led in an error by Miss Ellen. Mary did not go away to be married; she did not go alone, nor did she go voluntarily from her home; she was sent away, sir, to seek a living where she might."

"Poor child! And for conscience' sake. I thank you for the kindness; I too might have misjudged her. Where is she?"

"Here, at the house, though Ellen does not know it—to-night for the first time since she was sent away. She is spending the evening with Mrs. Rutledge."

"Can I see her?"

"Not to-night, I think. Come to this address." And Lois thrust one of Mrs. Bentley's cards in his hand, and, turning, ran up the steps.

But her knight-errant was not to be so easily dismissed. Having followed at her side with his umbrella, and entering the hall, he for the first recognized the beautiful face that had so attracted him, and asked,

"To whom am I indebted for this kindness?"

"To one who loves Mary," said Lois, as she removed and gave back the cloak.

"Are you not chilled?"

Lois put out the toe of a thin slipper. "Dripping," she said; "and yet I would not have failed to see you for ten colds—and then, to defeat her."

"Take care of your health," urged Tremont.

"I do, generally. Remember, I had no time to lose in caution."

As Tremont turned reluctantly toward the door, Lois sprang on before him. "I had forgotten," she said; and out on the stoop she stood, to signal a coachman. In a moment her carriage glittered in the lamp-light.

"James, you will drive the gentleman to his home."

"Not till I see you sheltered, lady."

"What word for Mary?" asked Lois.

Tremont handed his card, with best respects.

"And you—how shall I thank you?"

"No need, sir." And hurrying away, and up to the ladies' dressing-room, now unoccupied, she stood, and laughed merrily at her bold adventure, and more than once read the name on the card.

On descending the steps, Tremont found James holding the carriage-door open. Entering, and flinging himself on the back seat, he forgot for a time even Mary, in thoughts of a more beautiful being dispelling his gloom as with a fairy wand. Her tone of voice,

peculiar enunciation, the decided and self-reliant manner (for which Lois had ever been noticeable), won him as a spell, too soon interrupted by the stopping of the carriage at his own lodgings.

"No, sir," said James, the coachman, as he put back the proffered reward.

"To whom am I indebted?"

"The carriage is private, sir."

"Who owns it, my good fellow?"

"Didn't the lady say?"

"I was careless in not asking."

"And I have no orders." And James mounted the box.

Tremont smiled at the undisturbed position of things, remaining just as he had left them. How different his thoughts! Flinging himself in his arm-chair, and congratulating himself that the storm had not kept him in-doors, he repeated the motto of his fair unknown friend: "He who ventures nothing, will gain less." "A sort of paradox," he said, "but it conveys the idea."

After Lois had patiently dried her gossamer stockings and thin slippers, she despatched a servant for Walter.

"Pray, where did you vanish? or were you spirited away from me?"

"Dear Walter, I have somewhat to tell thee; but not to-night."

Bell Gray caught the words in passing. "Dear

Walter!" she repeated slowly, and then recalled other and happier days.

But to return to Mary. On leaving Lois and Walter, she passed unnoticed to the front-area gate. Glad enough to find it unfastened, she entered the dining-room on tip-toe. At a glance she saw the same massive old furniture. Gladly she would have been alone and unnoticed in a place where good Mrs. Grant had so long been; but strange eyes looked wonderingly at her. Pressing back the tears, she hurried on to a well-remembered stairway; ascending with beating heart, she reached a door, and stood, doubtful of the reception that awaited her. A timid rap, and a low, faint "Come in," and she stood in the dear familiar room where, as a child, she had gone for the good-night kiss. Now she stood summoning courage to meet the cold reproof. While standing thus, she noted the bed draped as of old, in its white curtaining. She saw, too, at a glance, all that was unseemly, and missed the gloss that used to reflect the light from mirror and bureau; but most annoying was the lamp standing near the bed, from which a vapor curled up in sickening odor; the bed too near the fire; the floor strewn with clothes, as if a person had made toilet in the room.

"I thought some one came in," was lowly murmured.

"It is me, grandmamma."

"Who? Who speaks?"

Mary walked lightly around to the bed.

"Tis Mary Rutledge. Grandmamma, will you be offended at me for coming to see you? I will not stay long." And leaning over the bed, she looked on the altered countenance till tears fell fast from her eyes. Slowly the old lady turned on Mary such a dazed expression, as to cause her to dread the first word of recognition.

"Mary, child, is it you?" came very gently.

"Yes, grandmamma. May I stay awhile?"

A thin hand was raised in token of surprise. "Where did you come from, my poor child?"

"I came last from up the Hudson, where I had been visiting."

"But where all this long time? I never thought of seeing you again."

"Am I wrong in coming?"

"No; but they said you never would. And I wanted you so much."

"Did you, grandmamma!" And Mary put her face down lovingly on the tawny forehead, as she said, "Whoever said I would not come to you, did not know me. I only wish I had known you were sick."

"But I have ill-treated you," came in a deprecating tone; while Mary patted the shoulder as we do to a child, and said,

"That is past now; do not think of it. Have I forgotten all your past kindness to me, grandmamma?"

—the education you gave me, or the trouble I must have been while too young to take care of myself?"

"I told them I was not always bad to you; but they contradicted me."

"Who dared treat you so, dear grandmamma?" asked Mary.

"Ellie told the servants, and they all had it over and over to me, till I thought my poor brain would turn."

"Well, I wish I could have heard them; I should certainly have let them know I did not consider them my friends, insulting you, my dear, kind grandmamma."

"Would you have scolded them?"

"Indeed I would," said Mary.

"But you never knew how, child. Have you learned, among the foreigners?"

Mary smiled at the child-like manner, and leaned over the bed, till a brief nap succeeded, from which Mrs. Rutledge soon aroused with,

"I never thought of you coming to Ellie's party. How is your dress? You can arrange your hair at the glass."

"Now, I did not come for that, but only to see you," said Mary. "I never liked parties; I would rather be by you."

"I remember, now, and I suspect you was right, after all. How fond I used to be of them! But, child, you do not look quite well."

"I have been ill, but now I call myself well," replied Mary.

"You do not look as you used, at all. Come and lie on the bed; do, my child."

"First let me attend to this lamp." And after cutting the wick, and placing a shade between the lamp and the bed, Mary crept behind the invalid, remarking, as she did so, on her dislike to an annoyance of that kind.

"Ah! I have become used to it," sighed the old lady.

"Why, who took so little care of you?"

"I have had no care, my child, except as Miss Gray drops in during the day; at night I am alone. Oh, such long nights!"

"They do seem long when one is sick. I could not have believed it, till taught by experience; now I am glad I can pity you, dear grandmamma."

"Ah, you do not know half of what I have borne. Always taunting me about turning you away, because she sees how the subject hurt me more than any other. I knew it was wrong, and I did not think you would go so far off."

"And yet, here we are together again, and the past forgiven; and, dear grandmamma, only one thing wanting."

"I know what you mean. Ah, I am too bad; 'tis no use reading, as Granty made me promise; 'tis too late now—I am too old."

"But you have read the Bible! Oh, is it not a wonderful book?"

"Well, I suppose it is to any one but me."

"Why not you?"

"It seems to chide me all the way along, and wake up such a warfare between us."

"Who?"

"The far-off God—the angry God and myself. I did not think I was so bad, till I read the Bible. Oh, child, my mind is more pained than my body!"

"The law threatens, but the gospel—— Have you read about Jesus coming to seek and save the lost? Grandmamma, He came to heal the sick. He has addressed himself especially to those who need a physician. While you felt yourself good enough, you did not want His aid; you did not acknowledge Him. Oh, I am so glad you feel as you do!"

"How strange of you!" murmured the sick lady.

"Well, you do not know all, nor how much I have sinned. There is something I ought to tell you."

"Concerning yourself, grandmamma?"

"No; about you—something wrong. But that is not the great sin—not the thing that troubles me most. That about you was Harry's doings."

"Me—Mary Talmadge?"

The old lady turned her gaze on Mary. "Who has told you?"

"Oh, some one who wished to save you the trouble, grandmamma. I know all about my not being

your real grandchild, and I shall not mind, if you will only love me as if I were."

With a sigh of relief the old lady said,

"You are a good child not to be angry. But that is not all."

"Let it be all for the present. We want the time to talk of the future—of our best interest."

"Talk!" interrupted the invalid, in a severe tone. "What is mere talk? I tell you, I have that to do which must be done. I must tell him."

"Who?"

"George. I must tell him about the boy. You was there. I took him out to walk, and put him with the old man."

"When?"

"Oh, five-and-twenty or may-be thirty years ago."

"And I there!"

"Yes, child; is your memory failing too?"

Mary raised herself to look for an explanation in the face. There was the strange, dazed look—that which in the eye, especially at night, is so chilling. Feeling the hands, she found them hot and dry. Perceiving at once that a fever was on, and blaming herself for allowing the poor invalid to talk at all, she gently urged composure. But all in vain; the mind was out on a long retrospect, and the talk went on in a hurried, strange way, each word sending the startling secret of the past to her shocked ear.

"Now, Tim, my good fellow, keep him a good long time, and, however much they seek him, tell nothing till I give you permission.—But hark! they are coming." And crouchingly she drew Mary down under the bed-clothes, while her frame trembled with fear.

"No one is coming, grandmamma; you are ill, and the brain is confused."

"Yes, George is after me; he wants his boy. Ha! ha!" And she laughed the old chime, without its chuckling merriment.

"What can she mean?" thought Mary; then ventured,

"What was the boy's name, grandmamma?"

"Ask Tim; he will tell you."

"Who is Tim?"

"Tim Grant. How stupid of you to forget, and you there, too! O dear! how many pounds that cost me. But I threatened him as well, and he had to obey me."

With a chill of horror came the recollection of Mr. Leecraft's lost boy—Hester—Mr. Smith's cruelty; and that with it should be mingled the revered name of Grant; and feeling that she must now know the worst, Mary asked,

"What did Tim do with the boy?"

"You know as well as I do; you know he did as I bade him. Who dared disobey Bertha Rutledge!"

Mary drew herself quickly and quietly as possible

from the bed ; and then, as she went about on tip-toe, could not but hear the murmured sound of,

"Oh ! so sorry, so sorry since—sorry, sorry !"

At last the words died on the lips, and the measured breathing told that the poor invalid slept. Mary put down her ear to listen ; then, with suffused eyes, crept lightly about the room, putting back the chairs, taking up here a sleeve and there a slipper, thinking meanwhile of the new phase in the life of Ellis Grant.

"Tim—that was her husband. Could he have done it ? And she—was this the secret power which grandmamma seemed to exert over her ?"

Could Mary have known how perfectly that good woman had disarranged the proud Bertha's malicious scheme, and, in defiance of her timid husband, taken the boy to Canada, where, in after-years, she journeyed in search of the heart-stricken father, the horrid suspicions of her heart might have been quieted. It was well the train of her sad reflections was interrupted by the sound of music. The opening of a door below had sent up merry voices, that disturbed the patient, and sent Mary to the bedside, where, leaning down to catch the first word, she was glad to find the few moments of sound sleep had restored the mind.

"How late ?"

"Ten minutes of two."

"Is it you, Mary ?"

"Yes, grandmamma."

"Come here, so I may see you."

Mary came, and, placing her hand in the hand of the patient, gave the promise not to go away in a long while. Again the measured breathing despite the sound of voices on the stairway, and the evident breaking up of the revel ; for there were hurrying feet and merry voices passing to the dressing-room.

"What a place for festivity—death and life so mingled !"

Presently a tap at the door, which Mary opened cautiously.

"May I come in ?" asked Lois.

"Yes, and stay a moment with grandmamma." I must see her as she passes."

"Hurry, then ; she is leaving with Walter."

Mary is at Bell's back, with her arms about her waist.

"Who are you ?" But looking down on the small clasped hands, Bell started round with almost a scream of joy. "Mary Rutledge !"

"Dear Bell !"

Warm greetings on both sides, many hurried questions, promises to meet, again, and Bell was called away. After leaning over the bannister to see her go away with Walter, Mary returned, to find the fire stirred to a blaze, and Lois looking on the glowing embers, with the same bright smile, which soon rippled to a laugh as Mary stole a hand, and said slowly,

"Bell and Walter."

"Instead of Walter and Lois. Does it puzzle you?"

"Yes. What has wrought the change?"

Lois passed her arm about Mary's waist, and, laying her head on the head of her little friend, half whispered (for she feared to awake the invalid),

"Have you seen a rivulet flowing on gently, till parted in twain by an ugly root, or stone, or tuft of grass?"

"I have."

"Have you ever doffed shoes and stockings to wade out and remove the impediment?"

"No; but I have seen it done."

"And then you saw the united stream go laughing on in bright ripples?"

"Yes; but what has that to do with the subject?"

"Only that I have waded through a fierce storm, endured a New York party, and risked your censure to reconcile those obstinate lovers."

"Lois, was this your errand?"

"It was."

"And you sacrifice nothing yourself?"

"Now, would I not rather have been with you?"

"In your affections, I mean. You were so much together, and seemed so congenial, I had thought—"

"Well, dear, you were a little goose. Am I not affianced to my books, and—— Well, you were not alone in that thought; Bell shared the delusion. So, after much wading, I told her my early history, my

little heart-trial, and my resolve never to marry; and then a fact which she found difficult to believe—that I had seen ten more summers than he had; and then I told her of his unchanged affection for her. And you can guess the rest."

"Yes, you have made them happy."

"Just as you have made me happy, Mary—by years of kindness, for which I am thanking you in my heart daily."

"Years, Lois! I have not been with you quite a twelvemonth. What can you mean?"

"At some other time, dear, I will explain; not now—I need rest after to-night's success. One gets elated, and needs breathing-space after conquest." And laughing in her own sweet, merry way, Lois arose, and after whispering a word of comfort to the waking invalid, descended to the hall to await Walter's return. Then for the first remembering the card of Tremont, she ran back, and, thrusting it in Mary's hand, said,

"I will explain at a future time. That was a literal wading, and at the sacrifice of the prettiest of slippers. Be patient. Good-night."

Mary read the card with astonishment.

"How has she obtained it?"

And wishing again and again to know if it had been sent to herself, she moved about the now still room, with all sleepiness banished for the remainder of the night. The first ray of morning found her still a watcher by the bedside of Mrs. Bertha Rutledge.

CHAPTER XX.

Then deep within her sobbing breast
She locked the struggling sigh to rest.—*Scott.*

AGAIN Tremont sits in his room, with all the events of the last evening moving like a panorama before his mind, making him alike indifferent to the dainty note of invitation and a few letters that lay unopened on the table beside him. And thus they were suffered to remain, till he had conned the *Daily*; then he carelessly tears off the envelope of the one that came first to hand, and drawing out a rumpled half-sheet, his gaze rests on the writing of a woman. Presently his eye kindles, and seems to catch up the meaning with eager intensity. Let us read with him:

"NEW YORK, ——— street, 18—.

"MR. TREMONT:

"SIR: For the last ten days I have doubted and resolved by turns. To address you, and ask a simple question, has cost me much. Is your Christian name Ethelstane? And were you, for a short time, an inmate of Blank Orphan Asylum? If you were not,

this note will not concern you, and I hope you will burn it. If you were, send a letter to 'H., box 296, New York Post-Office,' and tell me if you remember the young girl who used to take care of you. Tell me her name, and then I shall be sure. I do not write this to bring myself to your notice. I want to tell you something about yourself that may be of use to you. I am far from wishing to intrude on your time, or to practise a foolish jest on a gentleman of wealth and standing—for such you seem to be.

"Your humble

"FRIEND."

In a moment the ready pen of Tremont is flying along the lines, telling all the remembrances of the past, and uttering fervent assurances of gratitude that would end only with life. This letter was prettily toned down at the last with a reverent regard for one whose youth was marked by a degree of piety that must sustain in declining years.

"Hester, I remember you well. I can shut my eyes, and, in fancy, hear the lullaby-song still sweet to my ear.

"Yours, with reverence and regard,

"ETHELSTANE TREMONT."

There followed a week of impatient waiting, and then another letter, which was not suffered to remain long unopened. Tearing off the end of the envelope,

and opening the note with some trepidation, Tremont read as follows :

"MY DEAR ETHEL:—How long I hesitated ere I wrote that note—and now, how glad I am! So you haven't forgot your friend, nor that stormy night. I remember too well. I would forget, that I may more completely forgive; and you know we must all do that to our worst enemy.

"Do you remember Toronto? Well, you must go there (the enclosed card will give you the address), and inquire for Mrs. Smith—my dear mamma; she will tell you much about your father. Possibly she may tell where you can go to him. She will show your mother's portrait, together with a few family relics. But oh! you must be guarded, Ethel, and see her alone, lest you arouse his anger. And when you get there, do write me all about the dear girls, and mamma. You will direct as before, and believe me, yours,
"HESTER."

One month from the date of this found Tremont in Toronto. It was a dark night, and storm-drenched streets looked dismally as he stepped forth amid the confusion consequent on a car-arrival. He began looking about for the hotel to which a fellow-traveller had directed him, meanwhile picking his way amid the pools that caught a gleam of light, as if to beacon him on his gloomy path. The hotels of Toronto are notice-

able for their elegance; so that Tremont found nothing to mar his happiness but the incertitude of mind that annoys more than the worst certainty. In this state of mind he whiled away a week, lest the idle curiosity of his new acquaintance should be aroused. While here, the innocent gossip at table frequently ran on the ladies of the place. The Smiths were set forth as a rollicking set of party-goers, kind and good as they were foolish and pretty.

"Do you know them personally?"

"Yes, intimately, and should like to introduce you."

The offer was accepted, and a week from that time found Tremont a welcome caller, and christened by Jane as "the handsome New Yorker."

"Perhaps he can tell us something of Mr. Ellery," suggested Grace.

"And that pitiful Haywood, who is the cause of his coldness."

Kate sighed and begged Jane not to judge too harshly. "How should he care for a dissembler, as I must have seemed to him?"

"Kate," said Jane, "Mr. Tremont has been in our place a month, and, handsome as he is, I do think him queer."

"He is eccentric, I grant," said Kate.

"Why, he seeks ma's society in preference to ours."

"He likes good sense."

"'Tis unusual, though."

"He follows ma to the kitchen, and I must conclude she has made a conquest."

"Jinny, remember your promise to Mary, and her motto, 'Jest not at all.'"

"Then I must be severe, and compel myself to count the spoons."

"Miss Grace," said Tremont, with difficulty suppressing a laugh at the last thoughtless speech, "your mother has given me permission to visit the library."

"Mary's retreat," said Kate.

"Mary, the sweetest of all names," murmured Tremont.

"And she is the best of Marys," said Kate.

"With one exception," thought Tremont.

If Jane's wonder had been aroused by the young man's indifference, it was increased by an occurrence that took place a few days after Tremont had found her mother in the usual place, and, after greeting her with his wonted cordiality, began chatting; and as men are terrible bunglers where nice tact is required, kept on chatting, and getting farther away from the desired topic. Then suddenly,

"Your daughters seem very happy."

"Yes; but I fear they are too giddy."

"No; I could not say that of them. They are considerate, and all very kind; or have I not seen all your family?"

With a look of uneasiness, she said,

"One is absent."

"Married?"

"No—at least, I hope not."

"I should like to have made the acquaintance of all your daughters; but I suppose she is like them."

"Not at all like them; she is like her father."

"A blonde?"

"Yes."

"The eldest?"

"Yes, my first-born—my own Hester."

He did not see the pallor that had come to her face, and dashed on with,

"Where is she?"

"Ah, monsieur, you ask too much!"

"Don't you know?"

"I do not."

"Then I must tell you all I know of this good daughter."

"You! What can you know?"

A sudden thought of an undefined trouble, the cause of this unusual kindness on the part of the stranger, all served to fasten on her unsettled mind the conviction that he had come with sad tidings—something had befallen her first-born. Tremont sprang to his feet, and caught her sinking form just as Jane entered the room.

"Only one of mother's spells," she said. "Don't be alarmed. I heard you speaking of our sister; you couldn't know how it affects her." And bringing a

glass of water, she began cooling the wrists and forehead of her mother.

On his way home, Tremont gave way to a fit of *ennui*. He was thoroughly tired of Toronto, and yet no nearer the attainment of his purpose in coming. Had he known that a letter from his father was then in the pocket of Grace, announcing that father's coming, he might have had a lighter heart, and, too, might have found a solution to the sudden departure of Mr. Smith for the gold regions of California.

Then followed three days of incessant rain, such as precludes the possibility of travelling. On the fourth, Tremont started afoot, resolved to learn his history from the lips of Mrs. Smith, come weal or woe. When arrived, despite his anxiety, he could not but notice with a smile the girl's vain endeavor to seem sorry for their father's absence.

"How little they think I know more of his early life than they do!" he thought. In the wife he saw no change of manner, moving about the house in her quiet way, he did not know she was sad; because she could not be sadder at a separation that bade fair to be for years. And again no opportunity offered to aid poor Tremont. The girls seemed to guard her suspiciously till she retired, and then he took leave abruptly.

One hope sustained him—the departure of Mr. Smith might induce Hester to visit her mother. On reaching home, he penned the following:

"TORONTO, June 10, 18—.

"DEAR HESTER:—You will be surprised to learn that, after being here a month, during which I have become well acquainted with your kind-hearted sisters and most excellent mother, I have learned nothing concerning my own history. Will you send me a letter to your mother, telling her all—a sort of letter of introduction? Or can you not do better, by coming yourself, to be my helper, as you was in years gone by? In that event, my dear friend, I claim the right to defray all expenses of travel. Please find enclosed check. And let me confess to a strong desire to see and know personally one who has on me all the claims of a sister. Come soon, and believe me,

"Yours most kindly,

"ETHELSTANE."

A week passed rapidly, bringing a letter in reply:

"NEW YORK, June 17, 18—.

"DEAR ETHEL—so I used to call you—I am glad he has gone, for the fact indicates that your father is coming: for I learned long ago, from mamma, that he held himself in readiness to go whenever that seemed likely to happen. I am coming after my heart, which has ever been where mamma is; but, lest I should be detained, I send the required letter to her.—Yes, I must break away from work, and come. Till then,

"Your faithful

"HESTER."

"P. S.—Please find check returned, with thanks for intended kindness."

"Hester is proud. She ought not to use her earnings thus freely; for the poor sempstress has a toilsome life," mused Tremont, as he folded her letter, and, placing the one to Mrs. Smith in a side-pocket, went in search of her.

"Something for you," he said.

"For me?"

"Yes; and very cheering."

"What, may I ask?"

"A letter for you, Madam. Hester is well," he said, handing the letter.

A look of mingled surprise and pleasure at the mention of the dear name, and then she tore across the end of the envelope, to read as follows:

"MY OWN DEAR MAMMA:—Did I not know that I would find you?—because God is good, and hears prayer, though He may wait long. Oh, it did seem long, mamma. But I must tell you something very gently, for they say you can't hear strange news; but this is so good, and will delight you, I am sure. The young man, Mr. Tremont, who will hand you this—can you guess?—he is the little boy, my pet boy, Mr. Leecraft's lost son. There! I must wait till your surprise is over. Mamma, you are so gentle, how is it he could not get the courage to tell you? You will, of

course, tell him all you remember of his father; and tell him the portrait is his mother's.

"Mamma, 'I come back,' as I used to say, perhaps to stay a long time. Till then, I am yours, lovingly,

"HESTER."

Tremont sat opposite during the perusal, seeming to read, while he watched, over the margin of his paper, the varying expression of the once beautiful face. A start of surprise, an intense scrutiny, and then, with a smile brightening her features, a hand was extended across the table, and, half rising and curtsying a graceful and girlish recognition, with deepening blush she said,

"Welcome! welcome, Monsieur, to my heart, and this poor home!"

And when the clock had told the hour of twelve, the two sat talking of the past. And in the parlor, from which guests had long departed, the girls waited in wonder, and not a little curiosity, their coming. Then the door was opened softly, and Mrs. Smith, looking in, said, "Daughters, he will tell you all," and passed on to her room.

"What does mamma mean?"

Taking a seat, Tremont replied,

"Your mamma means, that I must tell you that I am a very old acquaintance of the family."

"You!"

"Yes; and the companion of your sister, long ago."

"Did you know our sister—our good sister Hester?"

"Can it be?" chimed Kate.

"Yes; long ago we used to be as a brother and elder sister."

"How? Do tell us—do!"

"Let me tell you she is coming very soon, to stay a long time."

"Good! good!"

"And you are going to be married!" screamed Jane, rising up suddenly, and clapping her hands.

"Jane! Jane!" whispered Kate.

"No, no," laughed Tremont. "I have not seen her since we were children. You must tell me all you remember of her."

And now questions and answers moved briskly. A description of Hester's appearance, a history of her goodness—all were talked over; while the rash act of the father, being unknown to the girls, was omitted, of course.

And when the clock struck two, the four went on tip-toe up the creaking stairway.

The next day came Mr. Leecraft, and father and son grasped hands over the hearthstone of Ezekiel Smith. The giddy girls were by turns still with astonishment and boisterous with mirth. That their quiet mamma had ever done much more than cook and mend and be patient—that fancy had ever carried her from the dull routine of underground life to sunny

days of ease and happiness—had not so much as entered their preoccupied minds. To them the history of Mr. Leecraft's lost boy was all new; and straight to Mary went letters telling of the romantic events that had culminated under the roof of the most commonplace people.

With Kate there was a sense of keen reproach for carelessness. "How much better you have done a daughter's part!" she wrote to Mary. While with Tremont (so we shall continue to call him), as the strange and startling facts settled to conviction, the dark shadow that had hung over his birth rolled away—the supposed stigma was not, and hope and future gladness seemed to light his way to a blissful union. Then, there was a certain pride in being the son of such a father, so handsome in his green old age. For a while sleep came fitfully. Thinking, thinking, he would lie till the faint light crept in with dappled fingers; and as the sun came out in dazzling lines of gold and crimson, he was out with the new sense of joy upon him, and with heart upraised to Him who chastens lovingly. This morning he had bounded on, glad for mere existence in a world so rife with beauty, till a waymark told he was three miles away from home. Then, with a light laugh tossing up his cane, he turned to retrace his steps, just as his ear caught sounds of merriment; and then, rising a hillock, he met his father with the three girls.

"We are looking for that lost boy," said Jane.

"I came near being lost again," was the reply. "I bounded on thoughtlessly, till a milestone and weariness told me how far I had strayed," said the happy Tremont, taking the arm of his father, and preceding the girls.

"Make allowance for the coming back, my son. I once plunged in the water and swam vigorously, till my tired limbs reminded me; then I turned, and reached the shore with the utmost difficulty. Age and experience teach, in life's journey, to make allowance for the coming back."

Thus conversing, amid merry interruptions and questionings, the party returned, to find Mrs. Smith cheerfully waiting at the teeming board.

CHAPTER XXI.

But we have the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God.—*Bible.*

MANY months have passed, and still Mary watches by the bed of Mrs. Rutledge. Neither her love of rural scenery nor the urging of friends have tempted her from her post of duty.

The summer has passed, the autumn has tinted the leaves, and now the chill winter finds her leaning over the poor invalid.

"What is my ease, to the winning of a soul?" was her steadfast reply to all Bell's urgings. "I can rest by and by, dear, when she is gone, and I shall be longing in vain to see her."

Thus steadily but mildly refused, entreaties were given up, and Mary and her vigils seem to be forgotten.

To-day it has snowed incessantly, and the mournful whistle of the wind, and the monotonous breathing, so full of deathly pathos, has cast a gloom on the naturally hopeful girl.

Many times she has been to the bedside to catch a word or two, to break the stillness of the room. The accustomed "No, child," or, "Yes, Mary," would have been some relief; but only the mournful breathing sound went on. Now that it had been disturbed, there was the added moan of pain and sorrow. Creeping to the window, Mary looked up the bleak, wide street, now all laid with pure and unpressed snow. Scarcely less white is the young face that rests against the pane. Tears are filling the weary eyes.

"Is this to be my first unanswered prayer? Is the Lord about to teach me that I must sometimes submit to be denied? Who am I, that He should always regard my prayer?" And now a pining wish for companionship.

"Oh, to see Kate!" she murmured. And thus led, she thought of Kate's mother, and the news of her becoming a decided Christian; and then, that they had a visit from Hester, and Mr. Leccraft had been there. While seeking the letter, which she had twice read, her naturally buoyant spirits revived. Seating herself before the fire, with her small feet on the fendruff, she gave it a third perusal.

"I wonder if I shall ever see Hester? How strangely it has come about, that she is the gentle nurse of Ethelstane! And by this time they have met. I wish Kate had filled out another page about it; she has not told me half—has not particularized, as

she used to, never telling me how they met, or what was said."

Here Mary's soliloquy was cut short by the postman's ring. A letter from Hudson side; it ran thus:

"January, 18—.

"DARLING MARY:—What a while since we have met! Were you not in the discharge of a duty, and most usefully employed, I should feel disposed to murmur at your long absence from us. At first I missed you everywhere, and wandered about the house in a most unsettled state of mind; but time partially, sometimes wholly, heals all wounds. That flying creature, so abused for his haste, gets but little praise for all the balm and reconcilements which he carries along with his dreaded scythe. By slow degrees I learned to live, as I had done, without you. Not only time, but circumstance, aided me by introducing, at this crisis, no other than your friend, Mr. Ethelstane Tremont, who fills the niche you left admirably. Mary, you were highly favored in having his society so long—he tells me, for years. What amulet do you carry, by which you charm all with whom you associate?

"But to your friend—I confess it is a long time since I have conversed with a gentleman as talented and fascinating as he. Time, in his society, passes pleasantly; we ride, walk, and visit congenially together. Our long rambles on the snow, and over mountains, conduces to my good health, and adds

greatly to my happiness. The conversation (always led by him) is of the most improving kind; and I confess I never was so willing to be a mere listener. Only your company can complete our happiness. But hold! you will think me a flatterer! We—Mr. T. and I—will be in the city next week, when I shall hasten to you. Mrs. Bentley sends much love, and bids me remind you not to be weary in well-doing; of which there is no need—I mean the reminder.

“Excuse haste, my love, and believe me,

“Yours entirely,

“LOIS.”

“To Mary Talmadge, late Rutledge.”

A thought of the free mountain-air—of her early friend,—and for a moment Mary longed to fly from that close room; the air seemed so to oppress her. It was a momentary failing of the flesh; the spirit was willing to wait for years, could she but see the soul made ready for the change from this to the “better land.” And then, as if to make amends for that one truant wish, with self-chidings, she hurries to the bed, and leans lovingly over the wan face of the dear sufferer. It must have aroused Mrs. Rutledge from her broken slumber, for she asked,

“Have I slept long?”

“Yes, grandmamma; five hours at least.”

“I feel better, child, much better; not so gloomy.”

“I am glad, grandmamma; but what has cheered you?”

“I have dreamed about heaven.”

“Ah! How did it seem to you?”

“Pleasant. God was not angry with me. I looked to Jesus, who seemed to plead my cause.”

Having no confidence in dreams of heaven, Mary questioned tremblingly,

“Grandmamma, how does religion seem to you when awake?”

“I was happy before I went to sleep. I hated my sins, and found I could do nothing but ask; and so I did. I sought for a way to be saved from myself, and Jesus was revealed to me; and I saw why he had died—not for the good, but for sinners—great sinners, such as Bertha Rutledge. And when I fell asleep, I dreamed on about it.”

“And you had been thinking of these things?”

“Ah, yes, child—for a good while; but my proud will was not subdued, and I could not tell any one. I used to excuse myself for that sin of my youth about the boy, you know, because I did not mean the harm that came of it; and I thought that was my only sin. But since—oh, dear! I find I was all covered with sin; every thought of my heart was sinful, and I cared less for my Creator than any of His creatures. So, when I found I could not cleanse myself, I did as Granty had told me—carried my burden to the foot of the Cross. I laid it down at His feet who died for me.”

That was no longer the pale, blanched face (pale with hopeless waiting) now laid to that of the newborn one. No; for the joyful news had sent the blood to cheek and brow.

"He is faithful to those who call on Him; for is He not answering the prayer of years?"

Mary's faith in prayer was strengthening daily, and the easy yoke which she had put on tremblingly was now worn with pleasure. Duty and inclination had blended into one. As she moved about the room, with the murmured tones of the invalid falling on her ear, sometimes talking of a something in the past, oftener of the future, Mary could scarcely realize the perfect change that had come to the once haughty woman. Once, as Mary listened, she heard her whisper,

"Pride, detestable pride! oh, how I loathe it, the bane of all my past life! Oh! wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Cleanse thou me from secret faults. Free grace! now I understand it, my brother! You and I will talk of it by and by. Bertha Rutledge saved by grace—free, unbounded, unmerited! Wonder of wonders!"

"It wants an endless world in which to talk of and comprehend it; does it not, grandmamma?"

"Yes, dear child; for I find this body soon tires. I must rest now."

The sleep that followed was like that of childhood. At one time Mrs. Rutledge asked,

"Why do not professing Christians talk more about Christ and His kingdom?"

"Do they not, grandmamma?"

"Only you and George. All the others talked about the minister, and their church. Oh, my child, you did well to warn me! The soul is of priceless value. Now I see why the old man gave you that Bible. I see why you loved Granty better than all the gay ones. And that good Mrs. Bentley—do you know, I hated her because she knew you are not my grandchild, and she knew about the boy. Ah, that was a sin of mine, sending him away secretly to be educated. Nothing but faith could have sustained George through that trouble. My poor brother! these blind eyes are seeing everything in a new light."

One day there came a letter, from which Mary, with her arm about Mrs. Rutledge, read the most soothing assurances of forgiveness. It was from George Leecraft, and told his joy at the news of her conversion—spoke of the useful lesson his early sorrow had taught him, the finding of his son, his present happiness, and his wish, denied by the physician, to visit her.

"My good brother!" she murmured. "I was so ignorant; I scarcely knew there was a God. I thought religion a sort of family escutcheon, and felt so disgraced when he became a Christian, and married Elise, and that her boy would be a relative of mine; and I robbed him of years of happiness by one rash

act. Oh! my child, how could I forget it for years? How could I be so giddy? But I have repented, and I know that my Redeemer liveth, and George has forgiven me. But will the young man?"

"He does, grandmamma." And opening a letter from Tremont, she read words of kindness, and an assurance of filial affection and forgiveness; at which the heart of the poor lady seemed to rejoice.

"They know I did it ignorantly. Paul did something that way; what was it?"

Mary then read the passage where the great Apostle speaks of persecuting the churches.

"Born out of due time," he said. "And so am I. And will He put me among His saints? Can I, dare I hope it?"

"I came not to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.' 'Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.' 'He that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.' And, grandmamma, speaking of those who have come on the terms of the gospel, He says, 'No man shall pluck them out of my hands.'"

"That is a comfort. But how can I understand such goodness?"

"The finite can illy comprehend the infinite. When we reach heaven, and have new faculties, we shall be able to understand all that now puzzles us, I think."

After dozing a while, Mrs. Rutledge asked Mary if she had seen the young man—meaning her nephew.

"Yes, grandmamma, more than once," she said, with a smile.

"Long ago?"

"Nearly six years."

"Before you left for that place?"

"Yes, grandmamma; but I did not know he was Mr. Leecraft's son, you know."

"And you have not seen him since you came back?"

"No; for not a person has been allowed to come here except Dr. Dumont, and a very few others."

"How lonesome for you!"

"Not often; for all my thoughts were about you, dear grandmamma." And, pressing the hand that lay in her own, she thought how little the dear invalid knew that she too had seen and conversed with her own nephew, and that in her own parlor.

"What a child! What a blessing!" And the hands were raised and rested down again—a gesture common to Mrs. Rutledge when unable to say all she wished.

As the day closed in, the patient slept soundly. Mary drew in the shutters, first brushing off the snow that lay in piles on the ledges, little heeding the cold, blustering wind that blew in her face, lifting the brown locks from her temples; for her mind was too full of happy thoughts to heed so trifling an annoyance. Sitting before the fire, she smiled at the fantastic and grotesque shapes that formed themselves out of the

glowing embers; her lightened heart sprang back to the days of childhood.

Can the worldling comprehend the peace of those who serve the Lord faithfully?

The daily cross which Jesus demands, is not to do some great thing. Bridling the tongue, checking an angry word, suffering as well as doing His will, the obeying which is better than sacrifice, the simple "Lord, what wilt thou have me do?"—proving that they serve who only stand and wait: this is to serve the Master, who finished the work when He gave up the spirit. Mary could now say with the Psalmist, "Return unto thy rest, O my soul! for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee!"

On waking next morning, she found that the storm had passed away. The day was piercing cold, and the sun lit up the thousand icicles that hung on the trees before the house. She might reasonably expect the visit of Lois, and hoped that Tremont would call in below, that she might once more see the friend so highly respected now, not only for his own sake, but that of his father. But an hour after, when the jingle of bells called her to the window to see a sleigh dash up to the door, the crimson-bound buffalo turned back only to give out one. Lois alighted, nodding farewell to Tremont as he passed on. Putting down a momentary disappointment, Mary, after bidding the maid watch closely, went softly out.

"My darling, how thin and pale you are!"

"And yet I am so happy, dear Lois."

This was after the sincere kiss and warm embrace; and when, with bonnet and furs doffed, and both sat, as, years before, she and Bell had sat, in that shaded parlor, the contrast was striking between the rosy-mouthed Lois and her little friend.

While sipping her coffee, Lois listened to Mary's relation of the conversion of Mrs. Rutledge, and, deeply interested, still kept eying her little friend with a strange sort of pity.

"Now I am right glad Mr. Tremont would not be persuaded to come in and see you. My poor little darling, who dreamed of seeing you so changed!"

"Am I so pitifully ill-looking as to disgust him?" Mary asked.

"No, dear; but when you meet that travelled gentleman and critic, I would have you perfectly *au fait*."

Mary smiled, as she said,

"Dear Lois, I have gained that which will soon restore the trifle of good looks lost in the path of duty. Mr. Tremont did not use to regard appearance so much as manners. I trust there is nothing wanting in that respect. Now, do not let me think of these things. Excuse me, while I run up and look at grandmamma, and then tell me about dear Mrs. Bentley—how she does; and, too, how you came to be acquainted with Mr. Tremont."

Finding her patient still sleeping, Mary soon returned to Lois.

"Well, Mrs. Bentley is well, and most anxious to see you. Why, she rejoiced over your letter, reading it over and over. And Mr. Tremont had that pleasure too."

"He has read many a letter of mine."

The tone was so indifferent, where Lois had expected reproof, that she set down her cup and laughed merrily.

"And now," she said, "your question as to the way I first became acquainted with him. First, when I took his card to give you, on the night of the *soirée*—you remember?"

"Yes; now I recall it."

"Now! Shame on you!—a pair of wet feet, and a heavy cold, all for your sake!"

"My sake? I hope the injury has been repaired by the value of his acquaintance."

"Somewhat, I must allow; for I am passing a most delightful winter."

"Lois, where did you meet after that?"

"You are not as sharp as some, my Mary; for you do not ask how we came to converse on that first evening. Let me tell you all about it."

Then followed a minute "tell," as girls say; and Lois went on with,

"Then, with Bell's directions, he came to us in search of you, and at first seemed much disappointed; and I had to be general consoler."

"I had intended to come to you, and wrote Bell a

farewell letter; and then grandmamma grew worse, and I gave it up, and I forgot all in the care of her."

"How could you forget him? Well, we became friends immediately--congenial spirits, affinities, you know."

"He ought to come and see his aunt."

"Mary, he has been denied twice by Dr. Dumont. Not only meeting him as a nephew, but recognizing in him an acquaintance, would quite bewilder the old lady."

"Perhaps it might. I did not know he had called."

"Yes; and waited long in the parlor. I thought you had denied seeing him."

Mary's cup was in her hand, the coffee untasted; she was musing. After a time, Lois asked,

"What now?"

"Only thinking."

"Of him?"

"Of you most."

"And what of me?"

"Only fearing for you."

"Fearing what, my love? Come, I must know."

"Not now. I have been so surrounded by sobering influences, you amid gayeties, that I may seem prosy, and a little too anxious for those I love."

"I have it! You were going to warn me against falling in love with your once beau."

"No, no!" protested Mary; while Lois went on with,

"Well, now, suppose I cannot help it? If you cast him off as not good enough, I may now take him, not being very good myself; may I not?"

"Do not trifle, dear Lois. All our goodness is in and through the merits of a Redeemer. Surely I am not better than you in that sense. And, should you become the life-companion of Mr. Tremont, do not make him flippant and trifling. Try and keep him unspotted from the world—which you are both dangerously fitted to charm."

Lois was sobered at once. She had been less gay than she seemed, for down in her warm heart was a fountain of gratitude welling up to the Giver of all good for a crowning success of all her efforts; and a sense of the goodness of our God may make one happy, but never trifling. No, Lois had thought to cheer her friend; but finding no need, she was wearing to more serious thoughts.

"You are right," she said. "I had been carried, almost against my will, from one scene of gayety to another, until urged to a more quiet mode of life by the very one for whom you are fearing. Only this morning I promised him to live differently—not so much in society; and he resolved to be less gay."

"That is good! Your letters seemed to imply a mixing with the world, which is not safe. While we

pray, 'Lead us not into temptation,' we must not run into the way of it. Is it not so, dear Lois?"

"Yes; and I am amused to find how similar your views are. You certainly have learned in the same school."

"And you are satisfied that he is a Christian?"

"Yes, indeed; for he has told me all of that mysterious change denominated in the Scripture as the 'new birth.' Yes, Mary; I could as soon doubt my own existence, as to doubt that of him."

And now, with arms entwined, Mary and Lois ascended to the sick-room, silently to watch the sleeping form of the dear invalid. An hour passed thus, and Lois looks at her watch.

"Will he call for you?"

"No; we meet at the house of a friend. I have a little shopping to do first. We go out with the five-o'clock boat."

There was something in that little "we" that felt teasingly on Mary's ear, annoying her long after Lois had gone, and more and more as the evening closed in and the shadows gathered in the corners of that still room. She tried to put away the feeling of loss, while an ugly demon kept repeating, "We go out by the five-o'clock boat. I promised him to live differently." While—from the good angel—"What harm? He was only my friend, and he can be that still," was thrown back with, "Why seek you out in that violent storm?"

Why leave his card expressly for you? Why follow you to Mrs. Bentley's?"

"Because Lois had been telling him of me. What more natural?"

"Ah!" said her tormentor, "he was looking for you first."

"Well, he had not seen her then. She has dazzled him by her beauty and talents."

Mary arose, determined to put down these new and strange sensations. It was a relief when Mrs. Rutledge, waking, asked for a drink. In a moment she was beside the bed. The upturned pleading look, the meek asking eye, so childlike in its dependence, went to her heart, to banish every other thought. Her good angel had returned, to banish, from that moment, the first attack of the demon Jealousy; and, as of late, Mary fell asleep pillowing the head of that dear suffering one on her arm. Well she may; for the moments of the once gay Bertha are numbered. Mary's days of watching will soon be over, and she may go free among the young and light-hearted.

CHAPTER XXII.

Though the chalice of life has its acid and gall,
There are honey-drops, too, for the taste.—*Eliza Cook.*

THE rose has bloomed and faded on the grave of Bertha Rutledge, and Mary has passed out across the threshold for the last time. Her mission there is done, and well done. And now her lonely heart turns toward the Toronto home, for word has come that the place as Principal is held in reserve for her. The old friendship with Ethelstane has been renewed; she has seen him and Lois coming and going, ever side by side, ever happy. And now, amid the hurry of departure, out of a multitude of engagements, a day and a night must be given to dear friends, and again we find Mary and Lois, the lily and the dahlia, contrasting where they brighten the home of good Mrs. Bentley. The old lady has retired early, and the two sit and muse silently; Lois gazing meanwhile in the bright fire; Mary, in the shade of the corner, watching her, and seeking in vain to read her thoughts.

"I am guessing what you are thinking of all this long time."

Lois started. "Were you noticing me? I had even forgotten you, dear. I was lost in thought."

"Why, I fancied I saw lines of sorrow. But that couldn't be."

Lois, passing her hand across her eyes, asked,

"Why? Do you suppose I have no sorrow?"

"If so, you have a happy way of hiding it. But, Lois, that frown was so out of keeping with your features."

"Did I frown? My foolish heart had wandered back as far as—well, five-and-twenty years. Before you were born, Mary. It is not often I indulge in painful reminiscences; they are so useless. I guess I was frowning a little."

"Not only the frown, but you raised your hand as if defending yourself. What were you thinking of?"

"Did I seem angry?"

"Frightened, rather."

"Perhaps it was the old nervous fear that haunts me at times. Not anger, I trust. No, for I freely forgive. If I know my own heart, there is not a thought of malice. In truth, I forget it for years, till some chance, as to-day, brings it up. I am happier when I forget."

"Lois, what can you have to do with forgiving or forgetting—you, without an enemy in the world, and

with such a bright future? What, tears! or do I imagine it so?"

After a pause, and feeling that Mary still waited, Lois said,

"Yes, tears will come at such times. Do not mind me, dear." And, arousing, she said, "Come, tell me of your future prospects—how are you going to get on with that large family? How many are there?"

"Six daughters."

"Six girls, the mother and father, all in that heart of yours! I know 'tis a large one; but then, to think of eight Smiths!"

"And all with separate ways of pleasing, and all so kind," said Mary.

"And so plebeian, with that name. But do not mind; tell me about them, for I know it makes you happy." And Lois assumed a laugh.

"I supposed you were tired of hearing of them. I feared I had offended long ago by the too frequent mention of so plebeian a name."

"Never mind; talk of any one to-night. I believe I am sad about you leaving us so soon."

"Dear Lois," said Mary, "we never know how soon we are to part, nor how long we are to remain away from our friends; so let us leave all our changes in the hands of our heavenly Parent."

"I do try, and thought I had succeeded, but find myself unable to-night. Can it be that I have nerves?"

I had hoped that I was born before they were in fashion."

"Lois, I had a letter to-day from Kate Smith."

"Ah! Is she well?"

"Yes; and dear Mrs. Smith is particularly happy. Mr. Smith has been gone to California a long time, and means to stay."

Lois laughed. "And that makes his wife particularly happy?"

"Now, I did not say that. I only threw in the fact as a bit of news; at least, you ought to be interested in my patron."

"I am. Does Mr. Smith go for gain, or for change of scene?"

"Perhaps neither are the impelling motives. Kate says she will explain when we meet." And Mary added quickly, "I wish you knew Kate; she is so amiable! You smile; but wait till you see her!"

"I am ready to be introduced, and to judge of her for myself; but then, Smith is such a common name, and you revere it so."

"As common as Esbee is outlandish, think you?" Mary said it with the slightest shade of pique.

"Almost," said Lois. "Well, perhaps I am a little envious of their influence over you. I must see them."

"I wish it were possible," said Mary.

"It is not impossible, my dear; since all the world is my home, and I can buy me a nest anywhere, and live for a while in any place, so I but fold my wing

here at the last. I might accompany you to Canada, if you would ask me."

"Now you jest, dear Lois!"

"No, Mary; I am serious."

"You dislike Mrs. Smith and her family."

"If I have been rash, Mary, in my conclusions, the greatest minds are those that can retract. And then, by going, I may secure your return."

Mary shook her head, as she said,

"No, dear Lois; I go for life."

"What! doom yourself to teach away a whole life, with your means? Why, the thing is absurd! No doubt Kate (as you call her) will marry, and then half the attraction is gone from the house—for you, at least."

"You speak of means. Oh, if I should become a woman of fashion, living at my ease! No; let me remain in the safe path of industry. Mrs. Bentley has sheltered me till my health is nearly restored, and Canada seems to be my place of duty, even if all my young companions marry and leave it."

"And you are reduced to Mrs. Smith?"

"Lois, why that laugh? She is companionable now more than ever, since she has become a Christian. I am sure you could not but love her, if once you had the pleasure of an acquaintance."

"Would that be difficult?"

"I found it so. Mrs. Smith is very reserved, indeed. I won her by slow stages."

"How?"

"First I offered to assist in household duties, then in sewing; both were declined gently. When she fell sick, and when I was in deep sorrow, her kind heart opened and took me in; and now I know she loves me."

"How she came to win you, who are so exclusive in your attachment, is more surprising than that she should learn to love you."

"Lois, I was drawn by that mysterious magnetism that sometimes almost persuades us we have met and conversed before."

"Now, that is a sentiment as unlike you as possible! What are her attractive qualities—what her acquirements? There must be some traits to allure you to one so much older than yourself."

"Oh, she is so refined in manners, so accomplished, and yet so modest and unassuming; then, so superior to her husband, to whom she is a slave."

"I fancied that she had won you by some romantic story of her youth, crushed affection, and that sort of thing, so taking to the young."

A look of blank surprise brought a smile to the lips of Lois, as she continued,

"You say she has the traces of beauty—that she is accomplished in music; and seeing that you admire her, I supposed she had grown confiding, and told you the story of a first love. Now, hasn't she? Confess, my romantic little friend."

Mary hesitated.

"Romantic!" she said. "I hope there is no romance in my habits; it is so opposed to the simple but grand truths of the Bible, by which all our conduct is to be guided. Lois, I am not romantic."

"That is not answering my question," said Lois. "I fancy this Mrs. Smith has had a disappointment in her youth, which she has sought to forget by marrying the commonplace Mr. Smith. Come, I like to find myself correct in my surmises."

"She had a severe disappointment in the death of a beloved husband, the father of her first daughter, Hester."

"Is that the queen sis, of whom you told me?"

"Yes."

"What induced Mrs. Smith to put a stepfather over her only child, think you?"

"I am not at liberty, dear Lois, to go into particulars; and I am sure you are not interested enough to require it."

"You are cautious," said Lois.

"As I ought to be between strangers."

"La! she would never know you had told me. But as you will; I only thought no one stood between us."

Mary looked up in surprise, as she said,

"How you disappoint me, Lois. I surely thought I ought not to betray a confidence."

The beautiful head, that had been bowed on the open palms, was raised suddenly.

"Mary, tell me all you know of Mrs. Smith!"

"And betray confidence?"

"Yes; for me."

"Why you, Lois?"

"I am interested—deeply interested."

Mary rose up suddenly, with a new thought, and exclaimed,

"You want to make a wicked novel of it!"

At which Lois laughed through her tears—tears that arrested Mary as she was about to leave the room, causing her to turn back with the question,

"Lois, why are you so unlike yourself to-night? I cannot comprehend you."

"I see," said Lois, "I am betrayed, and must tell you all the secret, since I can act deceiver no longer. Oh, how I respect you for this evening's trial! You are right. Never betray them—never! never!" almost shrieked Lois.

As Mary silently drew her chair nearer, Lois continued:

"What if I know Mrs. Smith and her family well?"

"If!" said Mary.

"Seriously, I do."

"There happen to be a great many Smiths in the world," said Mary.

"Not so many Ezekiel Smiths."

After a pause, and a shake of the head,

"I mistrust these romance writers."

But the beautiful sad face had in it something of reproof, as she said,

"I am speaking of Mrs. Smith, once the wife of Eugene Le Doit."

Mary started.

"I know Kate, and Jane, and Grace."

"And Susie? and Mabel? and Annie?" was asked eagerly.

"Yes, Mary; I know them all, and love them too."

"What do you mean, Lois!"

"I mean just what I say—that I know and love the Smiths devotedly."

"You! How? Why not tell me long ago? And why speak so lightly of them?"

"Mary, it was with them my thoughts were when you woke me from my reverie. Did you know, dearest, that your praise of her was to me as water to a parched tongue—as honey dropping from the comb?"

"Then you like her?"

"I do."

"Then why not tell me you knew her?"

"That by and by, dearest."

"And what were your thoughts of them? What had you to forgive?"

"This." And lifting a cluster of curls from her right temple, Lois laid her finger on a deep scar, as she asked,

"Can you see it by the firelight?"

"Yes. Why, that has been a terrible wound!"

She did not—oh, no!—she could not have done it!”

“She! my darling mamma? No, she never knew of it; she never need know how he followed and hunted me, and, when I would not be repelled, struck me to the earth, leaving me for dead. Never tell her, Mary. Enough that she saw him strike me once.”

“Who? You do not tell me.”

“The stepfather. How the storm beat in our faces that night! and what a sight I was—my face dyed with blood; and yet, how I clung to him, pinching his little hand, and urging him on, he crying the while; and afterward, how I watched him day and night through that fever. I often wonder if a mother’s love could have surpassed mine for him. And then, when we parted! That was the hopeless suffering, only known to childhood. You know, Mary, with children there is the utter inability to follow out an inclination—the dismal doom of inaction widening the distance that lies between them and a loved companion. Oh! the grief of childhood is ten times more bitter than that of after years!”

During this soliloquy—if such it may be called—Mary had crept to the feet of Lois, clinging to both her hands as she gazed up intently in her face. It had all come to her at once—Tremont’s Hester!

“Are you—tell me—are you her daughter?—are you little Hester?”

“Not so little, my dear; I am large Hester—Hester Lois. Has mamma told you about me?”

“Yes, all. And Mr. Tremont told me of you too. How strange! I must be dreaming.”

“No, for those eyes are too wide open.” And drawing Mary to her lap, she said,

“Come, look at me closely, and see if I resemble her—my dear mamma, her for whom I have foregone every other affection. Think you I regret I am still *Le Doit*, alone, unmated, instead of the happy wife of an honored statesman? No; I have conquered, and I am satisfied.”

Mary was silent. All the past was moving like a panorama before her; and Lois, seeing how much she was moved, shook off her grave mood (a lesson she had learned early), and, breaking in her merry laugh, said,

“You did not perceive how I enticed you to talk of my people, and then, lest you should suspect me, feigned to think lightly of them. Oh, the balm of your words! Did I not tell you that I was thanking you in my heart for a kindness of which I would one day tell you? Did you suppose my books were written for fame? Think you I would write for that bubble long past the midnight hour? Why, I have been earning since I was so high, first for Ethel, then for her—by the needle, by flower-making, a little by painting; but books, blessed books! they have done it, and by them I have gained my life-purpose; and she is free

from the man to whom, in a moment of false hope, she gave herself for my sake. Mary, there was a time when I could not find her. He was too keen for me; but you—through you I found her; and now—”

The entrance of Ethelstane put an end to farther discourse on the exciting topic. He had come by the evening boat; and now, taking a seat familiarly beside Lois, asked what pleasant gossip he had interrupted.

“The old theme, Ethel—my people, and Mary’s Democratic Smiths.”

“Then you have told her?”

“Yes, all.”

“How do you like Hester, Miss Mary?”

“I am in such a maze, sir, that I cannot define my likings at all. Perhaps perplexity is just now predominating. I cannot guess why this has been kept so strictly from me—why I have been so poor a guesser. And then, I cannot identify the humble Hester with the gay, dashing Lois.”

“If you are puzzled, Miss Mary, what must have been my surprise, when, as a great boon, I was permitted to call on my ‘faithful old nurse,’ as she chose to style herself, I found the admired of all admirers, with such a merry twinkle in her eye, that I stood in a bewildered state for three days, till the true state of the case settled itself in my head, and then I returned to claim her as my friend, having more than once risked her life for my sake.”

“How has she kept that round and dimpled face?”

“And that chiming laugh, so free from sarcasm?”

“There, now; you are a couple of flatterers. My heart is low enough at this moment; there is the old aching to see mamma. Ethel, I am going home with Mary. Can I leave you?”

“Haven’t you the grace to ask me to go too? I find Miss Mary quite impervious to a hint.”

But the whirr of thoughts that had come with the revelations of Lois had sent Mary quietly to her room, where, an hour after, Lois found her sleeping, the long brown tresses floating back from the white brow above the finely cut but irregular features. In the hope of waking her, Lois stooped and kissed the parted lips. This failing, she hummed a tune as she combed out her long light hair. There was something she would know of Mary—something that would have made her own sleep more sound; but then, it seemed a pity to awaken her, and Lois resolved to bide her time.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Home of my childhood! If I go to thee now,
None can remember my voice or my brow—
None can remember the sunny-faced child
That played by the water-mill, joyous and wild.—*Eliza Cook.*

IN the dusk of evening, three persons might have been seen hurrying along the then fir-lined road that led to the outskirts of Toronto.

"What may not have befallen them since I left!" were Mary's thoughts as she followed Lois and Ethelstane; but on nearing the house, sounds of merry music banished all fears—those fears so common to the returning traveller.

"Don't rap; let us surprise them."

"Through the hall, then," said Lois, leading the way on tip-toe. But Biddy heard steps, and, rushing out, screamed for very joy as she grasped Mary's hand. Both the scream and the laughter that followed was unheard, for there was much laughter and merriment beside.

"We were going to have a bit of fun, Biddy, by stealing on them unawares," said Lois.

"I couldn't help it, miss. If I hadn't a-shouted, the great joy would 'a' kilt me right off."

"Glad you did it, then, Biddy; for we can't spare you yet," laughed Lois; while Mary asked,

"How are they all?"

"Well, Miss, but rale lonesful after ye's, 'specially since Miss Lose went." And Biddy dropped a courtesy.

"You see I have made Biddy's acquaintance of late," said Lois.

"Wasn't she and the grand gintleman here, and hasn't she made the house a castle from the top down—indeed she has. Och! she's the beautiful lady!" whispered the good-natured girl.

"Company, Biddy?" asked Lois.

Both hands were raised, and then placed over her own mouth, as Biddy chuckled out,

"Whisht, now! I mustn't tell sacrets."

The entrance of the trio had been unnoticed. Ethelstane, pretty sure of meeting his father in the room so long Mary's retreat, passed round to an outside door, leaving Lois and Mary to pursue their way quietly to Kate's room, on the door-sill of which Mary stood in surprise; for, notwithstanding Biddy's hint, she was not prepared for such a change. The carpet, shaded by blue and gold-colored curtains, seemed a bed of roses, where chairs of curious device, ottomans, and divans, stood about in gay confusion.

"How beautiful you have made it!"

"This is only placed here till she leaves," said Lois.

"Who?"

"Grace."

"Where is she going?"

"To her new home with her husband. Isn't she Mrs. King?"

"Grace married!"

"Of course."

"When?"

"Now, my dear, see how much more I know of these Smiths than you do. Grace married your knight-errant, Mr. Jediah King, about two months ago, and wrote you all about the event, to which you sent no reply. Hark! some one is coming; let us hide!" And Lois, drawing Mary with her, stepped behind the door just as a person entered humming a pretty air. Both listened, Lois with upraised finger. There was the stepping on and off of a chair seemingly, and then the window was raised.

"It is Kate," whispered Mary.

"No."

"Who?"

"Look!" And, peering out, Mary saw a lady busy with the flowers in the window; she could discern a black satin dress, a blonde cap with white strings, a tiny gaiter boot, and one gloved hand; the glove mate was white, and had fallen on the carpet at the feet of the lady.

"Who is she?" whispered Mary, as she drew back.

Lois looked out, the old sweet smile breaking over her face, as she advanced with,

"How is my dear mamma?"

Then the joyful start of surprise, the loving glance, the cordial greeting.

"Can it be?" The beautiful eyes are no more sad; a look of peace has settled on her features. "It is." And Mary came out from her hiding-place, all aglow with the delight of the moment, to clasp the dear lady in a warm embrace; while Lois, smiling through tears of joy, placed a hand on each, as she murmured,

"God is good, mamma. He has united us, through her."

"And brought me to know Him, my Lois; so that my last are my best days. He has brought me by a way I knew not, and has been better to me than all my fears."

"Mother, come!—please hurry!"

It was Jane's voice calling from the foot of the stairs.

"I want to speak with you a moment."

And Jane came at the bidding of her mother, started, clapped her hands, and, bursting in a merry laugh, declared it the funniest thing in the world. "Why, where did you come from? What does it mean?—to-night of all times! Excellent!"

"And Ethelstane, too!" said Lois.

"Better yet—and Mr. Leecraft here! But, Queen, no time for talking; there is a lot of company below. Now, make yourselves pretty as quickly as possible. I will send Biddy with lights."

Travelling dresses were soon changed for silks, the walking shoe for slippers, a few flowers tastefully arranged in the curls of Lois, and all descended to the parlor just as four persons swept by. There were the rustling of white silks, the fragrance of a jessamine, the sweeping of a long bridal veil, and Mary looked up to see Kate leaning on the arm of Rev. George Ellery. The minister arose, and the solemn ceremony proceeded. As one in a dream, Mary heard the benediction, and then followed on to salute the bride—perhaps as much surprised as herself, and by the kiss and embrace certainly not less pleased.

A touch on her arm, then a "How do ye do?" and Mary turned to accept the proffered hand of Farmer King, who comically asked after the health of Mr. Haywood; to which Mary laughingly replied, that the gentleman must have been frightened out of the land, as she had not seen or heard from him since he had left Toronto; then, looking about the room, Mary began to search among the company for one whom, of all others, she most desired to see—Mr. Leecraft, the father of Ethelstane; meanwhile noticing that Jane had grown taller, Susan prettier, and that

time had improved many of her pupils, who pressed toward her with glad smiles of recognition.

"You attract more notice than the bride."

"And yet I do not attract the one I am most anxious to see—your father."

"There, by the pier-glass, now speaking with Mrs. King."

Mary's eyes grew large with amazement, while Ethelstane's contracted with suppressed mirth.

"What is it, Miss Mary?"

"The old gentleman of the pic-nic—the man who gave me my Bible!"

"Yes; and my father."

"No!"

"Yes. Come, let me introduce you." And, drawing Mary's hand to his arm, he advanced with, "Father, this young lady thinks she owes you a large debt of gratitude."

"One which I can never repay," said Mary.

The hand was pressed kindly as the name was announced; for still Mary chose to be called by the name of Rutledge.

"Do you remember me, sir?"

"The name has a pleasant flavor. I have often heard of your kindness to Bertha, and have since learned that you are the child to whom I gave the Bible of good old Marcious. I saw you young, and surrounded by the allurements of gayety. Time was passing; I might not meet you again; and, deeming

the soul precious, and remembering that the entrance of the Word giveth light, I parted with the Bible of your grandfather, Ethelstane. You remember, I told you."

"I do, father; and from it she has read many a page to Aunt Bertha."

"And so, in caring for the soul of a stranger, I was made the instrument to save a sister. Yes, it is well to obey the voice of the Spirit."

The mirth of the evening sent out the hum of laughing voices, making it difficult for the more serious ones to carry on a discourse, which was often interrupted by appeals to Lois to aid in the plays that so innocently abound at country weddings. Ethelstane, too, was called away to assist in serving viands, from which duty he returned to find the chairs of Mary and his father vacant. In the old retreat he found them, talking of his Aunt Bertha.

"Stay, my son," said Mr. Leecraft; "this young lady is telling me good news, adding much to that which we had heard of my poor sister. We may safely rejoice over her conversion."

Mary saw, by the sparkling eye and deep interest which he manifested, how truly her friend had that secret of the Lord which is with them that fear Him. Her heart gladdened for his chosen companion, just as the door softly opened, and Lois, looking in, asked permission to enter.

"Certainly," said Mr. Leecraft.

"And mamma too?—just till we get our ears rested; they are making such a noise."

The cheerful welcome brought the ladies in, Lois dropping in a seat beside Mary, as she said,

"Now, in this atmosphere I breathe freely."

"And yet you seemed so happy there!" said Mary.

"Gayety is a life of seeming, my dear. I am only happy when true and tried friends are about me; and my only idea of a happy home is a quiet one."

A tap at the door, and Grace entered.

"The room I kept so long ought to welcome me."

"Come in—come in, daughter," said Mr. Leecraft, smiling, and making a place for one who had always been a favorite of his.

And so a pleasant group gathered around that early fire, smiling anon as merry peals of laughter came dimly to the ear, or when the tune changed for a more sprightly dance. But as the sounds died in the distance, perhaps by the shutting of the doors, the discourse turned on past scenes; and Mrs. Smith recounted to Ethelstane some of his boyish sayings, and caused a laugh at the recital of the motherly devotion of Lois. Then the story went on the old theme—the early youth of Mr. Leecraft—urged somewhat by Ethelstane, who longed to hear of his mother; for there was much that, unexplained, annoyed him.

"Tell us from the first," urged Lois.

"Why, you have all heard of my bereavement;

and now you see the great mercy that is shown me—my Joseph is yet alive, and my vanished treasures are in heaven; and I can say from the depth of my heart, ‘Surely goodness and mercy have followed me all the days of my life.’ I was a pampered boy, nursed in the lap of luxury, and, being well-featured, a convenient appendage to poor Bertha’s train at court and tournament, till her marriage—not approved by my parents—left me sole master of two hearts loving me not wisely, but too well. I think my heart was never cruel; but there are a thousand secret gates for sin, which, entering, made me, while caressed, much feared. A love of display, a braggart, boasting spirit, possessed me. At fourteen I shut my books because tired of study, and lounged all day about, from Bertha’s home, near by, to mine, scarce knowing how to use the lagging time until a festive scene required my presence. At times a sudden sense of wrong, a questioning within whether a life thus spent answered the end for which I was allowed to live—‘Was this the purpose of my being?’

“In this mood, one day, a servant found me. ‘Would the young master come and speak to a beggar at the western gate?—one who insolently refused to go. My word would be sufficient,’ so he said. I went out sullenly, and met, not a beggar, but one so reverent in mien, so courtly in speech, that I was awed, and bent my ear to hear, my young heart softening at his grace of speech; at which the artful clique, bent on

mischievous, interrupting, told of his insults on our family name; and I, too credulous, gave the word to put him forth. I was cruelly obeyed, not meaning other than a slight repulse, and startled as a heavy blow felled the old man to the ground. As he arose and staggered on, I hid the indignant burning blush that dyed my face as I turned relenting home.

“Ah, a great house neglected soon runs riot, and winks at sin! At the board, that night, the tale went round. I was pronounced my father’s boy; I must repeat the valorous deed, and I was made to act the old man grappling with the dust; and as the noisy laugh went round, I never dreamed that wine, not wit, supplied the hollow mirth. With that night began a conflict that took away my sleep. I was haunted by the image of that white-haired man. A change came on my spirit. I bemoaned myself, and crept about my stately home, a sad, unhappy boy. Whatever else was dark and unexplained, I knew I was a sinner; every thought and wish at variance with the mind of my Creator. In short, it was the gathering of that storm which never ceases till the mighty Arm is raised to bid it, ‘Peace—be still!’ Ah! when I came to learn the old man’s errand—for he had come to lead me to a place where faithful John lay dying, and pleaded to see the boy he had carried in his arms; my good old nurse died, his wish ungratified—it tore me with a sorrow only known to children. How I had repaid his years of care, his doting fondness!

"At length my mother saw a change in me—wondered what ailed her boy, and then consigned me to the doctor's care, until, less puny, I should deck the brilliant scenes of revelry. Oh, how poor I was, my children—poor amid pompous wealth, and living in that worst solitude, alone in spirit! So a year passed by, my mother travelling on the continent, and seeming to forget me quite. Breaking from the doctor's care, I wandered off for days unnoticed—sometimes by the river's bank, to watch the sportive fish whose nimble movements seemed to mock my feeble motions; sometimes, missing my way, beneath the falling dew or misting rain I have hurried to a home where no welcome waited. Once came a day—the epoch of my life—when I strolled far past my usual limit, to where the ocean dashes on the coast; where, being weary, sleep stole over me. I must have slumbered a long while; for, when a person with a gentle voice aroused me with a warning of the danger of sleeping thus, it was nearly dusk, with a dull sense of being only half alive, I looked up at the speaker, but started, as, in the mild, benignant features, I recalled the old man so insulted at my father's doors. With that nice tact so much his own, he offered his hand, and asked me for my friendship. 'My friendship!' I exclaimed; 'how could you forgive, or I forget, the past?' The old man smiled, and said, 'Most freely I forgive, as I expect to be forgiven, for the rashness of

my youth. Shall I be more exacting than the God to whom I daily kneel for mercy?"

"And this was Marcious, of whom, through grace, I learned the way of righteousness—from whom I heard of Calvary, and all the sacrifice and journeyings, the thorn and nail and spear; from him I heard of prophecies, and, as he pressed the Bible on my notice, told me of seeming contradictions, which, had it been the work of men, they would have carefully avoided. He pointed out the errors into which David and Peter, and other holy men, had fallen, because they trusted in mere human strength; and so, by his prayers and teachings, I found the way of life, and rested all my hope on Jesus, the crucified Redeemer. With the peace that accompanies believing, came health and all the ruddiness of youth that wins the eye. And now my mother claimed me, playfully declaring that the tilt and tournament were dull without her handsome boy. Then came the taking of the cross. I told her all the change, that made such scenes distasteful to a new-born soul. Ah, my gentle mother! how I see her now, half convinced, and tearfully urging me to hide the book, with its strange truths, from my stern father. I could not. I went, next Sabbath, to put on the easy yoke—to take my seat among the lowly. A Christian, among us a name proscribed—a name my father could not brook. After threats and urgings in a sad, decisive tone, he commanded recantation, or banishment from home—my home, my mother! I saw them no more,

except by stealth. Too sorrowfully I took the cross; too fearfully I yielded to the yoke, which, as it presses, only fits the neck each day more easily.

"Though homeless, I had wealth, and I resolved to visit this good land. I left my mother weeping, my father sternly silent, Bertha tauntingly foretelling a proper penitence. Sadly I took my way to my 'Bethesda' on the coast, there to meet and bid farewell to Marcious. In the summer twilight I waited. He came not. Night closed in, and there, on the coast, I rested for the night. Good men had fared no better; so I thought of Jacob and the Patriarchs, and slept soundly. At dawn I was waked by the sound of music—not such notes as led the dancers in my father's hall; this arose majestically, with now and then a sweet soprano stealing in and mingling with the distant melody. Guided by the sound, I hurried on, nearer and nearer, till words broke on my ear—a morning hymn of praise to God. I ran until a turn in the path brought me before the open door of a cottage. And there, my son, with her ruddy cheek laid lovingly on the white head of Marcious, I first saw Elise, your mother.

"The narration of my story gave no surprise. Marcious had expected it, and told me he had been thus banished in his youth, to find a peace of which the world could not rob him.

"And now pass five years, bringing me to my nineteenth birthday, during which time I studied dili-

gently, to amend lost time; ever watching over the interest and guarding Elise from care; often stealing to my father's land, to catch a glimpse of those I loved. Then I went up to London, to learn the trick of merchandise. And here, to your good land, I came to work, and choose a home for her who had now become my promised wife.

"Alas! had I but stayed, to guard my treasures from the ruthless foe. The ripened beauty of Elise had attracted the notice of many—among others, that of Bertha's husband. Having met her in her daily walks to school, his repeated praises awoke the jealousy of my poor sister—a jealousy how fatal to me and mine, you all know. That cottage home!—no ancestral palace could outvie it, with its green and crimson foliage. When I returned to it, how rifled of its charms! Marcious had died; Elise had flown from the rude visits of Harry Rutledge, to find a temporary hiding-place in the home of Tim Grant."

"The husband of Aunt Ellis?" Mary asked eagerly.

"The same. From that humble roof I took my wife, made her a very queen in wealth, but, in so doing, I increased the wrath of Bertha. How she avenged herself you know. I cannot dwell on it, waking, as it does, bitter memories far better laid aside. With them now I have nothing to do—I, who wait to meet a wife and sister. The wounded and the wounded saved from sin. In heaven, perhaps, Bertha and Elise, hand in hand, tell over the amazing grace that

led them where they cast their crowns at Jesus' feet; both rejoicing that, out of much tribulation, they have come to a land where no sorrow comes.

"Enough of the past, my children. The Lord has led me by a way I knew not; trials have refined the gold of grace that might have become dim by prosperity. My heart is humbled by the thought that I must have needed just such discipline to save me as by fire."

An hour after, and when all had strolled back to the parlor, Ethelstane returned alone. For the first time he had heard the history of his mother, and with a deep interest now stood gazing on the beautiful portrait, as he thought of her blighted hopes. Scarcely could he forgive the cruelty of his aunt as he thought of the past. A voice aroused him from his gloomy reverie.

"The company are separating, and many have inquired for you."

"Ah! I supposed my absence would not be observed."

"Lois and I feared you were making yourself too sad; and yet we did not like to disturb you."

"You thought of me, Mary?"

"Lois missed you so much!"

"And you came for her sake?"

"Well, partly; we three have been so much in company of late, that it was only natural to miss one."

"You are right to be candid; yet it was pleasant to

delude myself with the thought that you missed me without the help of Lois." And as Ethelstane noticed Mary's look of surprise, he continued: "I am so desolate to-night, I scarcely think before speaking. You used to be so much my solace when sad."

"I!"

"Yes, though you did not know it. I used to tell you some of my sorrows, ere we separated so suddenly."

"I know; my leaving home was very unexpected."

"I wrote you twice, but received no answer."

"I never received a line from you, after you left."

"And you would have replied?"

"I would, certainly."

"Did you think I had forgotten you?"

"I was hurried away to new scenes, and became so busy; and then, I had no right to expect you to trouble yourself about writing to me."

"And so you came to forget me?"

Mary was thinking what a schooling it had cost her to do so, as the question came abruptly,

"Did you miss me to-night from the room?"

"I did."

"Umph! Old ladies talk of missing a stitch—and one might miss an annoyance."

Mary laughingly set about describing how she had missed him; but, finding herself in a dilemma, yielded to an awkward silence, which Ethelstane rather enjoyed.

"Will you miss me when I leave here, Mary?"

"I shall try not to, sir."

"Why?"

"Because you must go, I suppose, and Lois and I must be parted. 'Tis well to be a little stoical, and do one's duty cheerfully."

There was an ugly feeling creeping in the mind of poor Mary. Why question her thus? Could this man be a trifler?

"As to our parting, Miss Mary, you seem to have written it so without consulting me. Am I not as worthy of your friendship now, as once when you called me a friend?"

"Just as much so."

"And yet, your manner is changed."

Mary arose up suddenly. "I came to bring you," she said, "and here I am staying!" As she passed the old musical instrument, she dropped on the seat, only meaning to play a prelude; but, somehow, that ran into an air so plaintive that Ethelstane drew near, and, joining with his fine bass, sung a song that suited the air. The last verse was finished farther off, for he was standing against the door.

"Let me pass, if you please."

"A few words first."

"Say them."

"Why must I be forgotten?"

"You need not; I shall always remember my first gentleman acquaintance. I did not exactly mean forgetting."

"I am going to claim a promise, to the effect that, instead of trying to forget, you will try to remember me. You do not know how long and fondly I have cherished your image in my heart. What else brought me to New York, think you, but to see you?"

Mary vexedly drew away the hand he had taken, as she said,

"If I were in any way instrumental in bringing you there, you know what changes have taken place since. You do not need my remembrance now; my mind must be all on my work. Now, no more." And, hurriedly, she tried to open the door, despite the burly framework set up in opposition.

"Now you are offended."

"No; but we misunderstand each other so strangely."

"We need not. With your keen perception, you must see that I prefer your society to that of others. The memory of you has gone with me on sea and land. It was your example that first led me to the Bible, wherein I have found peace in believing; and now, to talk to me of forgetting!"

"Oh, Mr. Leecraft, can it be?—you false and fickle, and to her, the best, the noblest of women!"

"Where are you truants?" was called out by Lois, as she entered, and, taking a hand of each, drew them to a seat on either side of her, as she began recounting an adventure of the evening; but, noting the sad look of Mary, ceased her narration with,

"What is it, dear?"

"Tell her, Lois, will you? She is determined not to understand me. She will not believe that I cannot live without her."

No sooner had the door closed after Ethelstane, than Lois, putting her arms about Mary, asked softly,

"Been quarrelling, dear?"

"No; but this is too humiliating, surely. I did not complain; I was glad of your happiness, and now you give him up for my sake, because you both pity me."

"Child, what do you mean?" exclaimed Lois, in blank surprise. But Mary left the question unheeded.

"You, who were made for each other, so alike in greatness of soul, so congenial in tastes and sentiment."

"What—do—you—mean?" asked Lois.

"That you have been making a sacrifice for me."

"I? You are mistaken, dear; I have not made one in so long a time, I fear I should not know how. I am getting too selfish, and of so little consequence, that none has been required."

"You have given him up."

"Who?"

"Ethel, as you call him."

"Indeed, I have done no such thing!"

"Then he is a flirt."

"Preposterous!" laughed Lois.

"How could you, Lois?"

"What have I done, Mary?"

"Changed your mind; or else it is as I say. Why not tell me? I had it long ago."

"What?"

"The certain knowledge of his outspoken preference for you. Do I not know? Did he not tell you of a first, an unchanged affection? and was it wonderful? you, his own Hester?"

"When was that?" Lois asked, with very round eyes.

"Last winter, at grandmamma's, by the merest accident I heard it."

"Explain, darling—do! This is so little like you."

"Biddy had brimmed the cup, so that I was obliged to walk very softly; and as I passed the door, I heard him tell you. I did not seek to hear—indeed I did not, Lois. And now, to be so disappointed in him! Tell me, is the change in him, or you?"

Lois reflected a while, and kept repeating: "At your grandmamma's?" "First, unchanged affection." Then, suddenly seeming to remember, she cried out,

"Now I have it!—an expression of his gratitude. He did use words to that effect."

"The very words," said Mary.

"Well, men are bunglers. The dear soul only meant to express his filial affection for poor lonely Hester. Cannot I have a little corner of that noble heart? You have his true, passionate devotion."

"Can it be so?"

"Have you not guessed it, Mary?"

"How could I? All his notice has been directed to you. We only met by accident."

"That needs explanation. For a long time he believed you had devoted yourself to a missionary life—I mean the foreign field; and if I waded out to remove that impediment, you must not blame me. Can it be, as he believes, that you are indifferent to his suit?"

There was an awkward pause.

"Don't you like him, Lois?"

"Of course I do!" And with the old, merry laugh, she continued, "I love him very much, as a mother regards a son of whom she is as proud as she is fond."

Mary sat with such a puzzled look, that Lois asked,

"What now?"

"How could he prefer me to you?"

"Well, now, it is surprising, considering how much more consistent, and humble, and pious, and—and youthful I am! Let us go and ask him how it is."

"Oh, no—no, Lois! pray do not say a word! I see, now, nothing can win you from your books."

"From mamma, you mean. Well, he has not sought to do so," and putting an arm lovingly about Mary, she said,

"And so you have lived a year in this mistake, thinking only of others, and happy in the happiness

of your friends. Oh, I hope you will keep that unselfish nature all through life."

"I shall do nothing aright, my Lois, except as I am kept through grace. In me there is no good."

Thus talking, the friends sauntered to the parlor, now deserted by all but Ethelstane, who sat reading by a very dim light.

"Only one pair of eyes to a lifetime, Ethel," said Lois, taking his book from him.

"True; but your theory and practice do not agree," was the reply.

"It will, for the future; I am tired now."

Mary had followed Lois half across the room, had glanced at the vacant seat beside Ethelstane, became suddenly embarrassed, and hastened back to a seat as far off as the room would permit. In a moment Lois is gone, and he is leading her back to a seat beside him on the sofa.

"Now, tell me why you thought me fickle—I, of all men, who pique myself on my constancy to you!"

"Oh, I was mistaken. Lois will tell you what I meant. Good-night."

"Lois has entrusted you to my care; and now, tell me why I am to be forgotten."

"You need not be," said Mary.

"Tell me if I am to be remembered."

"Are you going away?"

"Not from you, unless you command me. You must be a tired little wanderer by this time. I want

you to give me a right to stop these toils—this care of teaching. Come, rest in my home; be my companion, my wife. Never for a moment have I given up the wish to call you mine.”

“Mr. Leecraft, must my toil cease because I prefer you to all others? Is not yours a consecrated life? May we not strive together to live usefully, circumspectly—as a holy Father would have us live?”

“No, Mary; for when, far away, with scarcely a hope of meeting you again, I found that peace in believing of which you had told me; far be it from me to change a mode of life so much as I would have it. My sole object in returning was to find you. I found a parent, a friend—and now, may I hope, a wife?”

Mary looked up, laughing through tears, as she asked,

“Have I not said enough? Must it be ‘yes?’ Good-night.”

And, hurrying away to her room, she tried timidly to recall her words, half afraid that she had been too bold, and very happy in the friend so strangely restored to her. Soon she is asleep, her head on the arm of Lois, who had roused sufficiently to pat her curly head, and ask,

“Was it not strange, darling, how he came to prefer you to me?”

CHAPTER XXIV.

Some kill with Cupid's arrows, some with traps.—Shakspeare.

BROADWAY, so fast yielding the *élite* to Fifth Avenue, has been for a score of years the centre of attraction to the fashion-loving woman. There was ever to be seen the newest styles in dress, and every phase of self-sufficiency in the wearer, from which, as offshoots, come the mincing, the languid, the sliding, the shuffling gait. And, too, the glance: there was that of the conscious beauty, saucily defying competition; the haughty glance, demanding its tribute of admiration; the furtive glance, the savage, the convinced, the deceptive, seeming to see something ahead. And in our day, as if all follies had culminated to a climax of absurdities, comes the “bend,” at which a long-tolerant public arouses itself to enter a protest of indignant sarcasm; to which the newsboy and little bootblack assent uproariously. In contrast to these have ever been the firm step and genial look of the truly sensible woman, too busy to assume in anywise, too much engrossed with home ties to seek

display. Among the smiling, self-forgetful walkers, were two ladies whose simple but rich attire attracted less than their cheerful, animated faces. Arm in arm they walk briskly as they talk.

"New York is quite a study. Would you believe I have been lost more than once since I came," said Kate.

"Indeed. Well, you must go out oftener."

"I have commenced to-day, Mary; but I am sure I shall find the practice quite a detriment to my duties as a housekeeper; for when one has been out, the day seems broken."

"There we see the superiority of country living. One is in and out all day while busy, and no need to put on bonnet, shawl, and gloves, to catch a breath of air."

"I fear I shall not like city life."

"And yet, a pastor's wife must be where duty calls her husband."

"Yes; and I am so illy fitted to fill such a responsible place—so afraid to speak a word for the Master; and when the opportunity is past, I find a sense of reproach that I had no more courage."

"If it were not so, dear, where were the striving, where the daily taking of the cross, where the watching, that makes the Christian life a warfare? After all, dear Kate, women had better teach by example. Even the pastor's wife is not called on to say, as much as to do good things."

Thus conversing, the friends found themselves at the door of old St. Mark's.

"You will not expect me to be a bit interested in the affair."

"Why not?"

"Knowing her bad treatment of you."

"'Tis not worth a thought."

"Not the loss of a fortune?"

"I have enough, and to spare."

"What is her new name?"

"There—I am at a loss; the cards were left, and mislaid during my absence."

"Do you care to witness the ceremony?"

"Yes; for, should I neglect her now, she might refuse to know me afterwards; and grandmamma's wish was that we should be friendly." And Mary and Kate, smiling at their own indifference to the modes, passed in with the full dressed, to pay court to the wealthy bride. There was a momentary sadness with Mary, for old associations crowded to her mind as she led the way toward Ellen, whose brightening smile made her glad that she had come. The ceremony over, and she, followed by Kate, pressed her way to greet her who for so long had shared the same home. But the groom! Why is his face suffused, and his glance averted? Whence has flown the nonchalant air so much admired by the coterie of fashionables? And what has put such mischief in Kate's eye?

After Mary in her usually kind way has greeted

both, she steps aside to make way for the throng pressing up the aisle for salutations; and Kate, as she searched Mary's face, saw there only a deep regret. And when they had, by dint of edging and a little pushing, gained the street, Kate asked eagerly,

"Did you know of this?"

"No; I am so surprised! Kate, I thought it would be John Omsted. Oh, I am so sorry; there seems to be no hope for poor Ellie now!"

"Now you are discussing the bride," said Carrie Hall, as she sprang at the shoulders of Mary in her old boisterous way.

"We were. Have you been there?"

"Me? No, indeed! I would not waste my time I must like her better first."

"And you do not favor her?"

"My dear Mrs. Ellery, we have been on the eve of a battle for the last five years. I only tolerated her for Mary's sake. I suppose you know that was love at first sight—ahem! of dollars and cents."

"We only know that they are married."

"And not that he cut out John Omsted? Why, you aren't posted. He knew a Rutledge somewhere—I suppose it was some fifty-ninth cousin of yours—and asked an introduction for the name's sake. That was only a few months ago, and she pronounced him 'a love of a man;' and he heard what she said, and frisked about like a little dog, and escorted her about, and found she was rich; and Omsted became offended,

and during the miff the new engagement was made. Here I leave you. I have lots more to tell. You two are green. Good-bye." And Carrie ran off, laughing merrily.

"The same funny Carrie," said Mary, and then amused Kate with some of the past tricks of the good-natured girl, till met by Lois.

"Well, didn't you get on as well without me?"

"We haven't bought a thing."

"Why?"

"All at once we remembered the wedding."

"Whose?"

"First, did Mary ever speak to you of one James Haywood?"

"Yes; a would-be beau."

"I did not tell you that."

"No; I inferred it."

"Well, he has married Ellen Rutledge."

"Indeed! And which is most to be pitied?"

"Pity her."

"Pity! What would she say, and so many congratulating?"

CHAPTER XXV.

The heart, the heart that's truly blest,
Is never all its own;
No ray of glory lights the breast
That beats for self alone.—*Eliza Cook.*

IT was in the wide hall of the cottage of Lois they were sitting, when Jane, dropping the wristband on which she had been stitching, said,

"There are enough rainy days for sewing; can we not walk to-day?"

And Susie, springing up, said,

"That mountain with the queer name, can we not go to it? May we not, mamma?"

"The dresses, my dear."

"Oh, dear!" said Susie; "the winter will be here so soon, and then we must stay at home."

"And the winter of life too, my dear, when you will prefer to stay at home," said Mrs. Bentley.

"The better reason that we should enjoy the summer; isn't it, madam?" said Carrie. And Mrs. Bentley, who had not—as many have—forgotten her own

youthful freaks of fun, consulted with Lois on the possibility of getting the poor supplied with the needed garments by the allotted time.

"I think we can; and I must confess to having been roaming among the hills at every stitch," said Lois.

"Let us go," said Kate.

"Let it be by the Deer-path, then."

"Why not by the road?" asked Mrs. Smith.

"Oh, that would not be romantic enough for the Queen; the road winds around the sides of the mountain, with about the look of all other roads. She must have something out of the common course, you know."

"Certainly," said Lois. "The possibility of a deer closely pursued by a handsome hunter falling at my feet, which in the course of time is followed by said hunter, and becomes a very dear to me."

"Mamma and grandmamma, please settle it; we are all impatience," said Bell.

The consent was given conditionally.

"Would Lois read aloud all the next rainy day?"

"Certainly, for the needle and the reader's voice seem to set up a quiet competition and run a gentle race. There is a sort of rhythm about it too, and, ere you are aware, the sewing is ended; so we shall lose but little by going," said Lois.

And thus six pairs of hands struck for a day of leisure. The High Torne belongs to Warren Village, on the Hudson. It rises about a thousand feet above

tide-water, and may be known by its height from the numerous peaks that adorn that part of the river. Who has not noticed those blue-looking piles, which, on a hazy day, can scarcely be distinguished from the fleecy clouds floating above them?"

Though deer have long since been scared away by the car-whistle and the hum of the great rolling-mill, yet the way most direct to the mountain will long retain the name of the Deer-path, on which the depth of shade falls with a twilight appearance till one ascends where sun-spots dance and gleam here and there; just as, in life, light dawns before us, thrown out by the Divine hand to cheer us upward and onward to a higher and purer atmosphere. With many a peal of laughter, that startled the sparrow from its brief rest, causing the chit to dart away in frightened haste, Lois and her guests went up singly, soon to find that the ascent, which at first allowed of merry chatting, must be changed to climbing from one foothold to another, and even grasping at the small saplings that line the way must aid them. And as the heat becomes oppressive, steps begin to lag and the brow to moisten; and now Lois turns laughingly around, as she says, "to review her troops," and sees, with disappointment, Kate with pallid face and trembling frame. Reaching a hand to her, she said,

"You are faint, Kate; aren't you?"

"Just a little. Let me rest here; and all pass on, that I may not hinder you. Don't let them know, Sis."

Soon Mary came to Kate's side; but she insisted, "Do not let me spoil the pleasure of the party. If you go, they will not miss me. Go, both of you."

"Indeed we will not leave you alone."

"See how disappointed they all look. Go, one of you at least."

Mary saw that going would relieve, and passed on with attempted cheerfulness. Then Lois, supporting the trembling form of her sister, began to retrace her steps carefully, looking, as they went, for a rill of water which they had passed in coming. Meanwhile Carrie, who began to miss Lois and Kate, and fearing her dulness would prove catching, called out,

"Girls, no one is dead. If Kate has the strength of a kitty, she will soon feel well again; you'll see her and the Queen returning soon. Now follow me across this field, and then up the stone path."

"A path of rolling stones must be a treacherous one," said Mary.

"They don't roll; the storms of years have drenched them together. You may venture safely now, girls."

Stepping from stone to stone, now dodging a branch, now lifting a spray of green, all come safely to the open lawn, to see rock upon rock piled far above them. Looking up the steep, moss-covered crown, with its dripping foliage and pendant vines, with here and there the crimson foxglove and purple harebell, Jane asks,

"Can it be done?"

"It has been done many a time."

"I suspect it would be as difficult to return as to proceed," said Jane.

"Whoever thinks of returning, goes without Miss Caroline Matilda Hall," said Carrie.

"I can see no path," said Mary.

All this time the "Torne" seemed to leer from his great frowsy eyelids, as if saying, "Ladies, I am green, but not easily come over." So they see, as, following the fearless Carrie, they climb from rock to rock a long way up, to find, as many another has, when on the wrong road to elevation, an impediment—a ledge overhanging them, from which storm and winds have swept tuft and twig.

"We must turn back."

"Look down," said Jane.

"Dreadful! What shall we do?"

"I made a mistake—I see it now—in turning to the right," said Carrie. Only to Mary she confessed it.

"Keep your courage, Carrie, for we must go on now."

In a moment Carrie is face down, feeling along the ground for roughness or protrusion by which she may draw herself along. Gaining inch by inch, snail-like, she has conquered; and now both hands are reached down to draw the trembling girls one by one over the solid Rubicon. It was a fearful risk; one slipping stone, and they would have been hurled from rock to

rock, down, down among the sharp crags below. Now each one bounds gladly to the green and undulating top of the two-crowned mountain—to gain the top of which is not difficult if one knows the path. To Carrie, who had felt all the responsibility of a leader, it was delightful thus to come off conqueror, and this set her chatting merrily. Even to the tiny basket she carried on her arm she became garrulous. "You came near being pitched away, I can tell you. Only for being small, like myself, you are saved." Then, sitting down and wiping her throbbing temples, she told to Susie and Mabel how she came to miss the way. Mary had found a seat where she could look down on the dusky village lying far below, and smiled to see the mimic horses working in the brickyards, the roads diverging as mere footways, and the sound of the boat-bell coming up with a tinkling tone; and saw the Hudson stretching away amid its banks, over the queen of rivers. "How long you have been flowing thus," thought Mary. "Well might the beloved Irving nestle by your side, after having woven the web of his enchanting legends out of the nooks and dells that lay along your banks—a fitting home for one who had no enemies." And turning her gaze on the farms sleeping all adown the slopes, far as the eye could see away in the distance, she espies, singularly perched upon an eminence, a blue and sparkling lake. We might have whispered, "That little patch of water gives to half New York its cooling ice; it smiles for

many a party of the young and fair who come to sail or fish; and months after King Frost has chained its dancing waves, it goes peering into many a house with blessings; so that, whether silent or rippling, All hail to little Rockland Lake, doing its work right cheerfully." But Mary went on in her old, mature way, thinking with pity of the city-tied—those who have no time for recreation; and, too, of the Thinkers, with sweating brain and brow; and of the poor sempstress, bowed over her hopeless tasks; and the sick, amid dust and tumult; and demurely comparing the lot of the contented farmer with the uncertain position of the wealthy merchant. Then she dwelt on the fewness of man's real wants, the host of imaginary ones, till a hand on her shoulder, and a voice saying,

"Always thinking."

And Mary sprang up at sight of Kate and Lois, accompanied by a gentleman with handsome face, and eyes that seemed to burn with intentness of gaze.

"Where are all the girls?" asked Lois.

"They have been all about, singing and laughing and noisy till now. Have you not seen them?"

"Pretenders!" laughed Lois, as she saw them lying side by side as if dead. And when all sprang to their feet, peals of laughter rang out, to cease as suddenly at sight of the stranger.

"Ladies, this is Mr. Ernstine, a friend of mine. You must not allow him to frighten you. I would bespeak for him your smiles."

Carrie's extended hand soon set the handsome bachelor at his ease.

"Where did you pick him up?" whispered Jane.

"My illness was merely the effect of heat. Rest, and a cool draught, as it always has, restored me. We were drinking from a spring by the foot-path that crosses the road, when his carriage came by. Lois immediately recognized an old acquaintance, and made me seem one of the most pitiable of invalids. He took us in, and we sat a long time in the shade of a great spreading oak, Lois and he chatting of old times, and I recovering with all my might, so as to get back to you."

"Mr. Ernstine!" called Lois.

"The last I saw was a head disappearing below the rocks," said Jane.

"Of all the eyes!" said Carrie.

"Hush! he is coming."

"See what it is to be a bachelor, ladies. I can supply dinner for all." And a well-filled basket was handed to Carrie; and then a barefooted boy came running, with a pail of milk and a basket of boiled corn.

"Do you carry a cow with you, sir?" asked Carrie.

"Nearly every convenience but that. My house-keeper has determined I shall never know the cravings of hunger; she has put up that quantity, all for my use."

"She is a nice woman. I like her this minute for her good sense. Any thing but a scant-looking meal.

Just present my thanks, when you go home. Will you, sir?"

"And your compliments on her good sense?"

"Yes, her common sense; without which, ma says, all other sense is nonsense."

"The sense which, I see, you possess, and which I suspect will one day get you a good husband."

Carrie drew a wry face, as she said,

"The best reward, I suppose."

"Of course," said the stranger.

That was a very feast on the mountain, because hunger reigned at the board at the first. It was enlivened by the witty small-talk of Jane and Carrie.

"Let us try the effect of music up here."

"Your flute, then," said Lois.

"Do! do, Mr. Ern——What is it?"

"If you believe with me, Miss Carrie, that music, like wine, is better for being old, I can favor you."

And the wild sweet strain that went from the mountain-top was joined by Lois.

"How beautifully you harmonize!" said Mary; and Carrie whispered she had been thinking so too.

"We have sung that before," said Lois.

"Yes, many a time," was responded.

And when the flute was put aside, and talk and noise with much laughter reigned, Mr. Ernstine said to Lois,

"How long since I have heard you sing!"

"And as long since I have heard you play."

"Just see how I have torn my dress!—and to mend it here is out of the question. I come to you, Lois, for help, and all the pins that can be found."

Then Mr. Ernstine demurely handed to Carrie a silk needle-book, a ball of thread, and a thimble.

"Gracious! what an odd man! Thank you for all but that; I could put my head in it," said Carrie, handing back the thimble, and hurrying to Jane and Mabel with the announcement that, if he were not so handsome and manly-looking, she would pronounce him an old granny in disguise. Meanwhile, Kate and Bell, who had joined Lois, were examining the needle-book, which Carrie had flung back to the owner.

"That faded embroidery is exquisitely done," said Bell.

"It used to belong to her."

"To me!" said Lois, in surprise.

"Yes. Do you not recognize it?"

And when Bell and Kate had gone, at Carrie's call,

"And you did not remember it? You might have, for old acquaintance' sake."

As Lois examined it closely, he said,

"I have had it many years."

"You have? Well, it looks somewhat superannuated."

"It is not, though."

"Very near it."

"Look sharply; you will know it."

Lois lifted the scalloped bit of flannel on which the

coarse needles were closely packed, and saw the letters "H. L. L. D." wrought in faded blue silk. It was her own work. She looked up earnestly, with,

"How came you by it?"

"I took it from where you left it when you went away in a pet. You cannot have it now; 'tis useful to me. Besides, you made me a bachelor, and oblige me to sew."

"When was it, William?"

"In Paris."

"In my parlor?"

"Yes; at Madame De Leru's."

"On the workstand?"

"Yes."

Lois mused a while "My pretty room, and that papier-mache stand—how it all comes to me now! I rose up abruptly, but not in anger. There you mistake me; I am not apt to get angry."

"Weren't you? I thought so."

"Disappointed, perhaps—resolved, certainly. You ridiculed a woman's right to study, and make books, and you tried to turn me from my purpose. And then, that harsh word about her."

"I remember. I was young then, and had not valued a mother by her loss. I knew, long after, how entirely right you were." And, with well-assumed carelessness, "I never could account for that 'D.' at the end."

"Did I not tell you? Esbee was the name of my

aunt, and came to me with her fortune, a dollar of which was not to be used for my mamma. Hence my industry, which you derided so bitterly. I kept the dear name on all my treasures; and now it will go with me through life, my mother's name."

"It ought not," was murmured, so low that she did not hear it, as she went on with,

"We had been on the Boulevards that day, and you had been urging me to give up my studies. Your mood seemed imperative."

"I tell you, Lois, I was young then, and used to having my own way. I was jealous of your books—nay, of your mother. Now, spare me! am I not sufficiently punished? Have I not lost enough by an impetuous temper?"

Lois saw in the face of her once-lover the look of pain and the struggle of pride, and playfully—perhaps to hide her own emotions—asked,

"And what of my stolen needle-book? You have not told me when or how you obtained it."

"Business called me to Lyons, and kept me there a week. It seemed a month, for I knew I had been unjust, and I had a world of apologies to make. I hurried home, and, as I fondly thought, to you. I was asked in your room; I waited an hour. There stood your workstand, and I pilfered this, meaning only to surprise you at a future visit. The servant entered, and coolly told me you had sailed three days ago for America. Oh, Lois!" And the little faded needle-

book was twisted till the tinsel cord snapped and began to untwine.

"There, Mr. Ernstine! do not destroy it now, in its old age. I will take it, if you please."

"You won't; it is useful to me. Besides, I have outlawed it now."

"And for that you have kept it so long?"

"Of course—exactly. Pins and needles are useful, you know. Of course, there can be no pleasant recollections for me—no hope."

Lois looked up in the handsome face, now marred by a look of keen anguish. They were alone.

"I have been a solitary man."

"How?—and surrounded by politicians?"

"My only resort, Lois. You must remember me as I was, with tastes adverse to the intrigues of the politician. I am not happy, though crowned with wealth and influence. They give me no rest; they drag me from retirement, till bustling has become a habit, and retirement causes gloom."

"Stand firm, William, and refuse your presence till they weary of seeking you."

"As well could the entangled vessel get out of the whirlpool. I must go away."

"No, stay. Are there no men of exalted principles in our public places—men like the second Adams? William, I say to you, rise up, and be as you once was; and they will either leave you, or grow better by your influence. Tell me not that our first

need be our worst men. I cannot so read it. But I am overstepping my bounds. Forgive me."

"No, I like you to lecture me; but you forget the men you bid me imitate were not miserable, desolate bachelors, with none to cheer them to a higher walk."

"Many warm friends will gladly cheer you, William. But do the work yourself; be self-reliant. And then——"

"What?"

"I shall be so glad."

"Is that all?"

A voice calling to Lois put an end to the *tête-à-tête*. Slyly taking the smallest bit of tobacco, the lawyer walked to the edge of the mountain, and looked down with fixed gaze.

"Double its value in five years."

He was thinking of a land speculation, and Lois of the romantic choice of a girl of nineteen. An hour after, the party, closely packed in the bachelor's carriage, were speeding home.

CHAPTER XXVI.

Blow music o'er the festal land from harp and merry rebeck, till the floating air seems harmony.—*Milman.*

ON a bright day in October, carriages were seen drawn up in front of old St. John's. The dark-green coach of Mr. Leecraft, with foreign insignia and Quaker-like plainness, contrasting with the glittering equipage of the Halsteads. There, too, was the old family carriage of the Grays, near the light phaeton of Lois, as ultra in its prettiness as is the fair owner. But that which most excited the envy of those liveried gents, who among themselves have their grades and modes, was the old Rutledge carriage with coat of arms on the side. As one and another of inferior style rolled up, the passer, finding his way impeded, looked back, remarking on the fineness of the day for a wedding.

Within the church all was still with reverential awe at the sacredness of the place and occasion. And now every eye is turned lovingly to the broad aisle, as Mary advances, leaning on the arm of Ethelstane, soon to take the solemn vow that shall make them one

henceforth, to walk the way of life together. There is a rustling of silks now, and subdued murmurs of greetings, as all press toward the two so well loved; and amid it all, the sun, like a real presence, steals in through the tinted glass, to tinge and kiss the cheek of the bride, resting a moment on the brow of the groom, touching reverently the silver head of him who gave away the bride, lighting up jocosely the mottled head of Captain Gray, smiling among the curls of Lois, just tipping the blonde cap of Mrs. Smith, peeping in the faces of Bell and Walter, Tice and Clarence, Jane and Kate and Grace, then laughing full in the face of Carrie, who, with a comic shrug, steps aside to let the ray pass over Ellen Haywood. Never did it glance a moment at the far corner of the gallery, where stands a coarse-featured man, who eyes demurely the happy group now bidding adieus with moist eyes. Then, as they go out, it meets to tint them all alike with a sunset glow for a sweet "good-night."

An hour after, amid the hurrying throng, alone and unnoticed, went Ezekiel Smith toward the wharf, from whence he takes his way toward the land of his adoption—the land of gold. He has chosen it so, and calls it destiny. Henceforth he will mingle with men of his sort, never again to be illy mated. He will not be found among the God-fearing band who still along the Hudson tell that to them the lines have fallen in pleasant places, as they sing with thanksgiving, "Surely we have a goodly heritage."