

THE

MYSTERIOUS FOUNDLING;

OR,

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THE GAMESTER'S FATE.

BY OSGOOD BRADBURY,

AUTHOR OF "THE FLOWER OF THE FOREST," "THE BEAUTIFUL HALF BREED," ETC., ETC.

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CHAPTER I.

'Tis certain, greatness, once fallen out with
fortune,
Must fall out with men, too. What the
declin'd is.
He shall as soon read in the ages of
others
As feel in his own fall; for man, like
butterflies,
Show not their mealy wings but to the
summer;
And not a man; for being simply man—
Hath any honor; but honor for those
honors
That are without him; as place, riches,
favor:
Prizes of accident as of't as merit;
Which, when they fall, as being slippery
standers;
The love that lean'd on them, as slippery,
too,
Do one pluck down another; and together
Die in the fall.'

I WONDER if a history of my life would
do any good in this wicked world? That
is a question which has agitated my mind
and exercised my heart for many, many
long months. Some have told me that its
publication would produce more injury than
good in the community, and others have
given quite a contrary opinion. I feel a
strong interest in the welfare of my sex, and
Heaven knows I would do nothing willingly

which might be instrumental in leading it
astray from the paths of virtue. I have not
lived long beneath our bright skies, but have
lived too fast. Yes, kind reader, I have
lived too fast! And alas! that I have thus
lived! My experience has been brief in-
deed, but full of the bitter and the sweet.
My life has been a web of mingled yarn;
and sometimes the skein was so much tan-
gled and twisted that it seemed to me I
could never straighten it out! But, thanks
to an Unseen, but not Unfelt Power, I have
been plucked as a brand from the burning,
and rescued from an untimely and dis-
honorable grave; while others have fallen
never to rise again.

I once heard an old Indian remark, that
when he got into a bad place into a swamp
where there was not sufficient foothold to
insure his safety, he always stuck up a stake
to mark the spot, and never passed that way
again. A very wise son of the Forest, and
his example is worthy of being followed by
those of whiter skins and better cultivated
heads. It is my purpose in this narrative
to stick up some stakes, and mark those
spots which I have found delusive and dan-
gerous. There are places in this world
which look fair to the eye, and seem to
furnish a good and pleasant path to travel.

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in; but which, on trial, are found dangerous and deceptive. Such places I would mark by a red flag, and warn my sex not to approach them.

But say some, by pointing out such spots in the paths of human life, you will throw a charm about them which may allure others to them who would never have seen nor visited them but for your descriptions.—There may be some so bold and venturesome as to approach and be destroyed; but while they are few, I trust there are thousands who would be warned and flee from the danger. Our motto ought to be the greatest good of the greatest number. Human instincts without instruction often lead the young and innocent into the apparently pleasant paths of vice from which reason and bitter experience never rescue them; when, perhaps, a gentle admonition might open their eyes, render them cautious, and save them from perdition.

Every body, young and old, knows there are snakes on the earth and in the grass; and if I should describe the beautiful spots on the serpent's skin, speak of the brilliancy of his eyes, how smoothly he waves along, and how beautifully he coils himself among sweet-scented flowers, and at the same time give warning of the deadly sting which he can dart into those who approach him too near; think you, gentle readers, that I should excite a dangerous curiosity by my descriptions? We all know some things at quite an early age, and the danger is, we are too apt to fix our gaze upon the pleasant side of them, and forget the danger that lies beneath. Be it my duty to point out this danger, and warn my fair readers of that path which seemeth pleasant to the eye, but the end thereof is moral death.—It has been truly said that vice is a monster of such frightful mien as to be hated, needs only to be seen. Yes, but says one, if

seen too often, we become familiar with it, and even embrace it after we have pitied it. Well, how shall we construe and apply such a doctrine to human life? Does not that mean that the first step in crime renders others that follow more easy.—How do we become familiar with the face of Vice except by indulging in it? Do beautiful descriptions of such a monster make us anxious to see him; especially, when these descriptions are accompanied by a faithful exposure of the dangers we subject ourselves to, if we dare to look him in the face?

Do not my fair readers already know that many men have a good looking outside appearance whose hearts are like whited sepulchres, full of rottenness and corruption? If I describe a man who possesses a beautiful exterior, engaging address, musical voice, bewitching eyes and fascinating face, and at the same time not only inform my readers that his heart is corrupt; but also give them some clue by which they may look through the fair exterior to the corruption within; will they be likely to love him the more for what I have said? Would they not rather shun him and avoid his company? Women already know the charms of men without being told of them; but it is not so certain that they can by instinct fathom the depths of their corruption. I speak of some men, and would not reckon all in the same category; for, praised be Heaven, there are some honest men in this wicked world. I have found out that truth by happy experience, while by a bitter one I have ascertained there are many rascals yet unhung, whose outward bearing is well calculated to deceive the most cautious and timid; and sometimes the shrewdest of my sex are lured, deceived and destroyed by them.

To such I hope and trust the history of my life will prove itself to be true, and to others I indulge the pleasing hope it will afford timely caution, and teach them to avoid those shoals and quicksands in the ocean of human life upon which so many shipwrecks have been made.

I have looked upon every side of this subject, and viewed it in all the aspects of which my mind and heart have been able to take cognizance, and my conclusion is, that I shall do more good than harm to the human race by publishing to the world some of the incidents in my life. I have not come to such a conclusion hastily and without thought or advice; but I have deeply reflected upon the subject in all its bearings, and consulted wiser judgments than my own.

It may seem strange to some and even ridiculous to others that a country-born, and rustic bred girl should presume to give her brief career to the world, and hope to enlighten it by any thing which has come within the narrow circle of her experience and observation; but let such remember that I am a human being, and possessed of all the feelings and infirmities incident to human nature. Besides, as the reader will see before he turns the last page of these chronicles, I have seen something of city life, and experienced some of its bitter fruits.

My days have not all been passed among the green hills and crystal streams and pure breezes of my native State. Would to God they had been, and then this story would never had been written! In the simplicity and innocence of a country life, far removed from the temptations and the snares with which our cities abound, I could never have found the warp and woof for such a tale, and might have gone down to my grave with better opinions of the human race than I now entertain.—

But poverty, as well as ambition, drove me to the city, where I hoped to become a good member of society, and perchance move in the higher circles, if fortune should favor me and come up to the aid of my aspirations. I fondly believed there were a good many things in the world that could never be seen in the quietness and seclusion of a country life, and Heaven knows that belief was fully realized.

Ah! I now see clearly and not through a glass, darkly, that God made the country, and men make the city. And how many of the beautiful of my sex learn that fact when it is forever too late? O, I have known many such, and my heart bleeds when I think of their graves!—How many hearts of good mothers have been wrung with the keenest anguish, and how many kind fathers have gone down sorrowing to their graves on account of the misfortunes of their daughters who left their quiet homes for the excitement of a city life! How many villains, both old and young, married and single, prowl about the cities in search of victims to their hellish lusts! I must speak plainly and bluntly, and would not spare even my own sex; for my experience has so taught me, that the black-hearted in this world are not confined to one sex. A stain is more easily seen upon the pure white snow than upon the dirty earth, and a lame woman always appears worse than a male cripple. Alas! that my own sex should cater for the bad passions of men, and practice all kinds of deception to lure young and beautiful girls into the vortex of moral death and distraction!—But such is the melancholy fact. I will not, however, dwell too long upon such facts in this portion of my narrative, and keep the reader longer unacquainted with my birth and parentage, and the innocence and loveliness of childhood.

CHAPTER II.

Birth and parentage of the heroine; some traits in her character early developed.

A good parson and his sister. Scenes in country life, &c.

I WAS born among the green hills of Vermont, on the southern bank of Onion river, not a thousand miles from the Capital of the State. My parents were poor, but honest and industrious. They had seen more prosperous days, and once lived in the city, where my father was engaged in mercantile business, and considered a man of wealth; but he lived in the age of embargoes and wars, lost all his property, failed, and left the city in disgust, with a broken spirit, and a heart soured against his own government. He saved but little from the wreck of his fortune, and declared he would live in the city no longer. My mother possessed a different disposition, and urged him to commence again in business; but no pleadings of hers could move his heart after his failure, or reconcile him to a city life or to the management of the government. No doubt there was some Tory blood in his veins, and he could not be reconciled. If he had possessed the means, he would have gone to England or to some of her Provinces in North America, but having lost all by the 'cursed embargo,' as he always called it, and becoming somewhat sour and morose, he packed off up into Vermont, and settled upon a small farm which his brother then owned, and of which he gave him the use.

My mother was exceedingly reluctant to remove from the city; but she was a reasonable woman and a good wife, fully resolved to follow the fortunes of her husband whatever they might be.

They removed from Boston in the Spring of 1813, and the following summer I came

into this breathing world, and began to open my dark blue eyes upon the green hills, rich meadows and crystal brooks of Vermont.

It will not be expected that I should give a very minute account of that event; for I know nothing about it except what my mother told me afterwards. They had been married nearly twelve years before I was born, and had every reason to expect their union would never be blessed with children; but a kind Providence ordered it otherwise. I came into the world a perfect child, much to the joy of my parents, and greatly to the surprise of friends and acquaintances.

The event had a very consoling effect upon my father's mind, and made him forget for a time the cursed embargo, and the wicked war, as he denominated them.

After my birth, my mother fondly anticipated that she might be able to induce my father to remove back to the city, and engaged once more in mercantile pursuits. And he sometimes expressed a feeling favorable to her wishes, and partly promised to go back to his old business after the war should be brought to a close. The war continued, and his health began to fail. I can remember him, but his image always seems to wear a sickly aspect in my memory. He died when I was nearly four years old. His death blasted my mother's hopes of again returning to city life, and her constitution, always weak and feeble, began to give way under the accumulated loads cast upon it by adverse fortunes.—She lingered, however, some four years after my father's death, and was buried upon a side hill under some maple trees beside my father. Well do I remember her death, and how she pressed me to her bosom but a few minutes before her spirit winged its way to a brighter and a better world. Her earthly hopes were all centered

in me; and it seemed as if I was the only tie that bound her to earth. I once overheard her say to my Aunt Tabitha, that she could die happy, if she had never given birth to me; an orphan, and so young and beautiful, was the sorest trial of all she had ever passed through. Those words I have ever treasured in my memory, and they never will be forgotten so long as my life and mind may endure. O, what feelings and emotions does that memory awaken in my heart while I now write! The tears start from my eyes and drop upon the paper; but I must dry them up, and calm my spirit, and proceed with my task.—Some Spirit whispers me that I have a mission on earth to fulfil. 'Write, write,' whispers that spirit, 'and tell the world how deep and mysterious is the human heart.'

I spoke of my Aunt Tabitha. Yes, thank Heaven, I had an aunt who cared for me after my good mother's death. She and her brother, Jeremiah Barber, an inveterate bachelor, lived on a small farm adjoining that upon which my parents lived. He never enjoyed good health, but so contrived and managed as to obtain a respectable livelihood.

After the death of my parents I went to live with Aunt Tabitha and Uncle Jeremiah. I was christened Alice Barber, in a small church that stood upon a hill about a mile from the farm where my parents lived. The ceremony I do not remember; but the sprinkling was performed in good faith by Parson Brown, who always performed such ceremonies very pleasantly, and yet with a proper degree of solemnity.

I was eight years old when I took up my abode with Aunt Tabitha. She was very kind to me, but often said she wished Nature had been less prodigal of her gifts to me; for she feared my per-

sonal beauty might become my ruin. Her opinion of men was not very favorable; at least, she frequently observed that their promises were not always to be relied upon.

At the early age of eight years she began to lecture me upon the dangers that might surround my path when I had played a few summers more in the green fields and pastures. I was exceedingly fond of what she insignificantly called 'romping,' and often ran away from the house and capered over the green meadows, and beside the crystal brooks. It was a difficult task for her to keep me in doors during the summer months. Often did she lecture me upon such truancy, but without much effect. I began early to chase butterflies, and alas! my history may show that I followed such recreation too many years. Before I even knew the meaning of the word, my aunt called me a little coquet. She was proud of my beauty; but yet she sometimes indulged fearful apprehensions that it might finally result in my injury.

Parson Brown was a frequent caller at our house, and I occasionally joked aunt upon the frequency of his visits. 'You're too young to think about such matters,' was always her reply. No doubt she told the truth; but it did seem to me that the humorous parson loved to be in the company of Aunt Tabitha, notwithstanding he was her senior by several years. His sister Jemima always watched him, and once when I was at their house on a visit, I heard her say to him that she thought he visited at Uncle Jeremiah's more often than was really becoming in a preacher of the gospel. He remarked that it was the duty of a minister to visit his parishioners. 'Yes, said she, 'it is his duty; but he ought not to visit so much as to wear his

welcome out, and also to neglect his studies. One of these days, the people will begin to talk.'

Her last remark was quite emphatical.

'Talk of it, what?' he inquired, shaking his fat sides with laughter, and slyly casting his eyes upon me as I stood in the front entry.

I noticed he was gazing upon me, but did not let him know it. Young as I was, I felt a peculiar kind of interest in their conversation. I was then about nine years of age.

'You know, brother, what I mean,' she replied, gazing at him through her spectacles, and taking a very large pinch of yellow Scotch snuff.

She always took extra pinches of snuff when she was excited about any thing.

'People may talk about a great many things,' he remarked, throwing one of his short legs over the other as he sat in a large rocking-chair.

'Yes, and they'll soon begin to talk about that,' she continued, placing a strong emphasis on the last word, and looking very sharply at him.

He was not disposed to continue the conversation any further at that time; for her piercing look and determined manner were not without their influence over him.

Little girl as I was, I was amused with their conversation, and heard and remembered more of it than they were aware of. I was much pleased, and fully bent on hinting to aunt what I had heard the parson and his sister say. It might have been wicked in me, but I did like to joke her about the parson. Sometimes I thought such jokes were not altogether unpleasant to her; although she often scolded me for meddling with affairs so much beyond my years.

What I had heard the parson and his cautious sister say, was too good to be

kept, and as soon as I had reached home, I was anxious to begin to relate to aunt. Now she was curious, like many other single and even married ladies, to hear all that was said among the neighbors.

'Well, Alice, have you had a good visit to the parson's?' she asked, soon after I entered the house.

'O, a nice one,' I replied. 'The parson and his sister are very sociable.'

'They are indeed so,' she replied. 'Did you hear any thing new, or strange?'

I told her I had heard some things which interested her. Her curiosity was at once excited, and she catechised me quite severely; but I purposely held back to make her more anxious, and told her every thing but that she was the most anxious to hear. She pressed me to speak of that which concerned her.

'I fear, aunt, you will be provoked, if I tell you,' I said, smiling, and looking full into her sharp-featured face.

'Not a bit of it, my dear,' she replied, sinking into a chair, and taking an extra pinch of snuff; for she used that article almost as often as the parson's sister did.

'Come, let me hear all,' she continued, canting her head a very little upon one side, and turning her left ear more directly towards me, that she might not lose a single word of what I might say.

I knew her curiosity, and had got her into just such a state of feeling as I desired to. Strange as it may seem, I loved to torment her in a pleasant manner; and that was one reason why she called me a little coquet. I still kept back, and she continued to urge me to 'empty my pitcher' to speak, having wrought her curiosity up to the highest pitch.

'The parson's sister thinks he visits our house too often,' I said, smiling, and looking slyly at her.

Aunt said not a word in reply, but took an enormous pinch of snuff. I at once saw how she was effected, and continued. 'She said also, that people would soon begin to talk.'

Another pinch of snuff and a sharp look from her small black eyes was the only answer. We were both silent for some time. At last she said,—

'Alice, I never knew you to tell fibs, but I fear you have this time.'

I assured her that I had uttered nothing but the truth; for I heard distinctly all I had related to her. Aunt was silent, and thoughtful for some minutes, and I was not disposed to disturb her dreams, whatever they might be. She took five pinches of snuff in more rapid succession than she was aware of, and at last said, 'that woman has some strange peculiarities.' But she did not make the remark to me; but seemed to be muttering aloud to herself.—

At that moment little Ellen Rose came running into the house, and holding a large butterfly in her hand which she had been chasing for a long while, until she was covered with perspiration and almost out of breath. The reader will be patient, and they will hear more of Ellen Rose in the next chapter.

CHAPTER III.

The mystery of birth and parentage.—

Much curiosity excited. A woman's instinctive dread of illegitimate children. A brief but mysterious history of little Ellen, &c.

ELLEN ROSE was two years younger than I was, and a member of Aunt Tabitha's family. She was a bright and beautiful girl, with black, curly hair, very dark eyes, and symmetrical form. She was full of life and animation, and quite as much given

to romping as I was. If any thing she was even wilder, if not more romantic. Beautiful as Ellen was, still I was considered as the more beautiful and bewitching. My hair was somewhat lighter than hers, and that circumstance I regretted, but it hung in more beautiful and curling ringlets over my neck and shoulders than hers did.— There was a mystery hanging over the birth and parentage of Ellen, which aunt, with all her prying curiosity, could not penetrate or unravel.

The girl was brought to the house when she was less than a year old by a very handsome and accomplished gentleman, and given to Aunt Tabitha. The gentleman did not disclose any secrets of Ellen's birth, but said her father was about to go to England, and that her mother was not living. He was requested to place the child in the care of some good woman who had no children herself.

At first Aunt Tabitha objected to taking the girl, and Uncle Jeremiah thought it was a very strange and mysterious proceeding. The gentleman urged her very strongly, and there was much curiosity excited in the quiet neighborhood about the little girl.

My father and mother were consulted, and so were Parson Brown and his sister. They saw the child, heard the man's story; but they could get no clue to her parentage other than what is above related. Parson Brown endeavored to worm that secret from the man by all the ingenuity of which he was capable; but all his efforts were unavailing.

It was surmised at first that Ellen was an illegitimate, and no breathing thing could excite the nerves of Aunt Tabitha and the parson's sister so much as an illegitimate child. They emphatically declared to the gentleman that they would

not harbor such a creature for love or money; but the good parson's love was more broad and comprehensive. He viewed the affair more in the light of the Gospel than they did, and very properly remarked that the birth of the little girl was an event over which she had no control, and therefore, was not to be condemned or held responsible for it. Still he held to the very reasonable doctrine that parents were highly censurable for their conduct, and that they must not be surprised if the judgments of Heaven overtake them sooner or later.—These elderly ladies subscribed to all the Scriptural doctrines advanced by the parson; yet they could not overcome their instinctive dread of illegitimate children.

Aunt Tabitha could not even think of assuming the guardianship of any child born out of wedlock, however pressing all other circumstances might be. The gentleman assured her that little Ellen came into the world according to the statutes in such cases made and provided, but further than that he was bound by oath not to declare.

There was a veil of mystery and gloom shrouding the whole affair which every effort, ingenuity, prompted by an intense curiosity could suggest, was made to penetrate, but without success. Ellen Rose as the little girl was named by him who accompanied her, would have been obliged to find another foster-mother beside Aunt Tabitha, but for one circumstance. The child possessed a rich and well furnished wardrobe, and also a good many materials for future use. But that was not all.—Quite a large sum of money, at least large in the eyes of Aunt Tabitha and the neighbors, was offered with Ellen. That was the last drop that made the cup run over, the weight that turned the scale, and she took the child; but with fear and trembling.

Aunt Tabitha was a good woman, and she felt the weight of such a responsibility.

The man who brought the child was really an accomplished and intelligent person, one whose personal appearance would always have its influence in society. He said he might at some future day call and see how Aunt Tabitha got along with her charge; but could make no reliable promises. It was uncertain where he might be, for he had no fixed home on earth. He and the parson held a long and private conversation together; and the parson pronounced the gentleman an experimental Christian; saying that he had not for many years conversed with a man of more intense piety and one better versed in the Scriptures. But the good parson was put to his trumps more severely than he ever was before in his life; for he could draw nothing from the man which would throw any light upon the birth or parentage of the little girl. Whenever the parson alluded to the subject or put any leading questions, as the lawyers say, the gentleman fell back upon the Scriptures, and told the parson how sacred was an oath.

The gentleman finally took his leave, and left all in great doubt. Little Ellen was the talk of the whole town for many long months. A thousand conjectures were formed in relation to her. Some entertained one opinion, and some another; but the majority of the people believed she was an illegitimate child. However, all agreed that little Ellen Rose was a beautiful and interesting girl. Aunt Tabitha became much interested in her, and treated her with all the kindness and attention of a mother.

Uncle Jeremiah was a hard-working man. He was the owner of two small farms when my parents died, and kept a very respectable flock of sheep; but it was his fortune to

lose continually. Being easy and confiding, he was often cheated. His health too, grew more and more feeble, and finally he was compelled to sell the farm on which my father lived. That freed him from debt, and rendered his circumstances more easy.

The house was situated but a few rods from the south bank of Onion river, on a spot somewhat elevated above the meadows that skirted the stream. Back of the house was a very high and steep mountain which run down quite to our humble dwelling.—A portion of the side hill was cleared and furnished a good sheep pasture. The remainder of the mountain was covered with a thick growth of wood. A few rods from the house there was a grove of maple trees, called the Sugar Orchard. It was a lovely spot; and what luscious feasts Ellen and I used to have in the season of making sugar! We used to long for the coming of Spring that we might drink sap, and eat maple molasses. And how delicious was such molasses on Aunt Tabitha's buckwheat cakes! It seems to me now that I never ate such buckwheat cakes as she used to make. We lived well and happily together.

Many an old maid envied Aunt Tabitha the possession and care of two such beautiful girls as Ellen Rose and Alice Barber. We were beautiful; for a small looking-glass in our little chamber revealed that secret to us at quite an early age. It is marvellous how soon a young girl will find out she is handsome, if she really has any claims to beauty.

Now Ellen and I knew that we were two of the prettiest girls in the whole town. Parson Brown had often told us so; but we did not require such information from him; for we knew and believed it long before he was so polite as to inform us of it.

Ellen always called me the more beautiful, and I told her she was because her hair and eyes were darker than mine. One thing is quite certain, but for me, Ellen would have been esteemed the most beautiful girl in town. I was always conscious that my personal beauty was greater than hers; still she possessed some traits that I should like to have been the owner of.—Her hands and feet were smaller than mine according to our respective ages.—The truth is, she was a little more delicate than I was; but my complexion was the clearest and my cheeks the more fresh and blooming; besides, my teeth were more regular and whiter. My hair was beautiful; but I always thought hers was finer and of a better color. Often did we speak of those things when in our chamber, but always pleasantly and in good humor. At the early age of eight and ten we used to talk of husbands and describe such ones as we should like. Ellen said she should like one with hair not so dark as her own, and I contended for one of raven black hair, and so we differed in our young opinions and tastes; but never quarrelled. I should indeed have been wicked to have quarrelled with such a good and beautiful girl as Ellen Rose. No—no, we never quarrelled; and I am now thankful that we never did. Often I conversed with her about her parents; but her memory was very indistinct and vague. She could remember to have seen a good many houses, and had some recollection of the woman who took care of her before she was brought to our house. She knew very little about the man who gave her to aunt, and seemed not to have any particular affection for him. Her birth and parentage were as much a mystery to her as they were to every body else. She could give no satisfactory account of them. Two years had elapsed since she was given to aunt, and no one had called to see her.—And no tidings had been received from the gentleman who brought her. All was still mystery.

CHAPTER IV.

Beautiful prospects. A journey up a mountain. Rural sights and sounds. A mountain stream, and dangerous gorges. A thunder shower. Shelter of a rock, &c.

ONE bright and beautiful morning in the month of August, Ellen and myself, stole away from the house, while Aunt Tabitha was busy in her household affairs, and Uncle Jeremiah had gone into the field to mow some grass. Our object was to ascend the steep mountain whose base was but a few rods from the door. We followed a well trodden path through a small grove on the side-hill which led to uncle's sheep pasture.

Soon we were in the cleared land on the southeast side of the mountain among the sheep and lambs. Some of the old sheep were very tame and came round us, making that kind of music which a good farmer loves to hear, and asking as plainly as the dumb creatures could ask, for salt, but we had none to give them. We had often been in this pasture with uncle, when he came to salt the sheep, and expressed a wish that he would accompany us through the wood to the summit of the mountain; but he always declined, telling us it was much farther than it looked to be, and that the trees were very thick and the passage difficult.

We picked our way along over rough rocks, and through tangled under-brush, following up the stream as it seemed to come from the elevated spot we were desirous of reaching. Our way grew more and more difficult of ascent; but our hearts were excited, and our hopes buoyant.—We travelled on and upward, and new and beautiful scenes were constantly opening before us. Strange we were not frightened

in such a wild, solitary place! But our hearts knew no fear; for we believed the summit of the mountain was not a great way distant from home. It never looked very far.

On and upward we climbed, following the course of the brook, and expecting soon to reach the summit of the mountain from which we could see the world at our feet.

Never did two young mortals struggle harder than we did to obtain an object.—Ellen had torn her dress, and a twig of a spruce tree scratched my cheek so, that the blood run freely for a short time, but I washed it off in the brook, and was not yet discouraged.

Onward and upward we continued our way. The brook grew smaller; but the scenery more wild and romantic. Occasionally, as we climbed from one rock to another we caught a glimpse through the opening trees of the distant mountains: but we had entirely lost sight of the river below, our home, the green meadows, the church spires and all familiar scenes.—Even the distant mountains upon which we had gazed so many times from the valley below, now looked strange and formed different outlines upon the clear sky from any one we had ever seen before. All looked strange, new, romantic and beautiful.

It seemed to us that we had travelled far enough to reach the summit of the mountain, and yet it was far above us.—The brook had now dwindled to a very small stream, and seemed almost to be lost upon the mountain side. The ravine grew less deep, and at last we could not well trace the main stream; for there appeared to be several small ones oozing out of a low, wet ground even high up as we were.

The scenery had entirely changed, and the travelling grew worse and worse. We had lost our beautiful brook, and that loss we felt severely; for it had been our companion for a long distance up the rugged side of that mountain.

'O, I'm sorry we have lost the brook and its lovely cascades,' exclaimed Ellen, in a voice that told how deeply she regretted the circumstance.

'We have followed it to its sources,' I replied. 'We must turn to the right to avoid this wet ground.'

We did so, and hurried along as fast as we could, hoping soon to reach the mountain-top, the height of our ambition and our hopes. The sun had gone up, and now shone upon the opposite side of the mountain. The day had far advanced, much further than we were aware of; but we pushed forward, fully bent on seeing all that was to be seen.

We gazed upward and round, but could see but a short distance in any direction. We were completely hemmed in upon all sides, and it did not seem as if we were upon a mountain, or that we should ever reach the summit of one. We sat down upon a moss-covered rock and rested some time.

The truth is, I began to be somewhat discouraged and rather inclined to give up the search for the mountain's summit; but my young and ambitious companion was for pressing on and upward upon the valley. We crossed over and began to ascend the steepest and most rugged place we had yet encountered.

We could see neither sun nor sky; but we continued to climb and climb, and now it seemed as if we were really making our way to the long sought summit. We began to feel encouraged and pressed on, forgetting how we were to get back to our cozy little chamber.

Rougher and more rugged grew our way. A dry root caught in the bottom of my dress and tore it quite up to the waist.—Ellen laughed, and how her sweet voice rang out and echoed along the dark valley below! It was sweet music, but to me to be much out of place.

After climbing more than two hours we reached the spot where the trees grew shorter and less thick. The rocks were bare, and but little earth was to be seen.—We travelled on over the moss-covered ledge and began to think we were fast approaching the much desired summit.—Now the trees were scattering, of dwarfish growth, and we could see out and catch glimpses of Camel's Hump, Old Mansfield's naked summit, and other distant mountains; but home, the green meadows and the church spires were still hidden from our view.

We stood and gazed awhile, and my young and enthusiastic companion was highly gratified with the sight of the tops of the old mountains; but I was tired of our tramp, and sighed for Aunt Tabitha's pantry; for I was hungry, it being long past noon. We strained our eyes in the direction where we supposed the summit of the mountain was; but could see no signs of it.

Again we started, and Ellen led the way; for she was full of hope and animation.—Another hour brought us to a high bluff over which it was impossible for us to climb. Ellen fancied if we could surmount that obstacle we should soon stand on the summit where the prospect would well pay us for all our trouble and fatigue; but that bluff was not to be scaled by human feet: and so we struck a course to pass round it. We hurried along, and it seemed as if we should never find the end of it, so long and dreary was the way. Thus we worried

along at the base of this rugged steep for nearly an hour, when we came to what might reasonably be called a 'jumping-off-place.'

At last I told Ellen we must make the best of our way home; for the sun was sinking in the west. She was loth to give up the search; but we did, and began to direct our course towards home, as we thought. But we knew not the way; for we were bewildered. However, we concluded if we kept going down hill, we should at least reach the base of the mountain. So we began to descend, and were ere long in another deep ravine. Crossing it, we found the hill upon the other side very steep and difficult to be climbed.—Ascending this hill, seemed like any thing but going down the mountain towards it; and yet I felt sure such was our course.—I longed to find a brook; yet that brook whose stream we followed up in the morning; for if we could find that I knew it would lead us down; but we could not find its clear waters, nor hear their sweet music. Ellen began to grow fatigued now the excitement and hope of seeing the summit of the mountain had passed away. The forests grew dark, and it seemed to me it was near nightfall. I was much alarmed, but concealed my fears from Ellen.

The idea of being compelled to remain all night in such a desolate place was truly horrible; but I had some fearful forebodings that such might be our fate.

We sat down on a fallen tree to rest, and were soon startled by the sound of thunder. I was glad to hear it; for it gave me hope that the clouds had darkened the forest, and that we might have time to reach home before night overtook us.

The peals of thunder grew louder and more frequent, and the flashes of lightning looked frightful among the trees. We rose

and hurried along. Large drops of rain began to patter on the leaves of the trees. Soon we came to a bluff of rocks, under which we sought shelter from the coming storm.

The lightning would dart among the trees, and seemed to linger a moment as if to give us warning of the thundering that followed.

While we were intently gazing upon the wild scene before us, and hearing the loud and frequent thunder, a flash and a crash both came together, and a large spruce tree was shivered into a thousand pieces. It was a terrible bolt, and the reverberations were loud and long in the mountain gorges. Immediately after, it seemed to rain harder than ever, and the water came down in sheets rather than in drops. Ellen was somewhat frightened; and I would have given worlds to be at home, if I had possessed them. In spite of all my efforts to restrain them, tears started into my eyes, and my heart beat violently. Ellen drew closer to me, and we sat encircled in each other's arms. What a fearful time for us! The shower continued, it seemed to me, longer than I ever knew one to continue. It seemed as if the rushing waters would tear up the sides of the mountain and shake it to its very centre.

After a long time the storm abated, and the darkened forest grew more light. We did not, however, leave our shelter; for the rushing waters below would stop our progress if we had attempted to pass along.

The rain finally ceased altogether, and very soon afterwards but little of the water of the deluge was to be seen; for it soon found its way down to the river below.—We left our rock-covered shelter, but, alas, the shades of night began to gather over the mountain and soon darkness settled upon us; but not, however, before we had taken our back-tracks and found shelter under the same friendly rock again.

CHAPTER V.

A night on the mountain. The brook, and the journey the next day. The bleating of sheep. Strange sensations at being found. Prayer meeting, &c.

O, WHAT a long and gloomy night did we pass under our rock-covered roof! The night was calm and very warm. We laid down in each other's arms, and sleep sometimes came to our relief. We were very hungry; but we did not cry, and longed for the coming of the morning's light. We thought how much frightened uncle and aunt would be on account of our absence. We both had heard of children being lost in the wood; but now we had the terrible experience.

It was a moonless night, and the air was calm and still, so that we could occasionally hear the sound of falling waters. O, how we longed to find our beautiful brook again that its friendly waters might lead us down the mountain side to our loved home. Long and anxiously did we wait for the morning's dawn; but it came not. It seemed as if eternal night had shrouded the earth, and no more sun or moon would ever be seen. I began to fear I had seen the last shower upon the earth. What pen can describe my feelings and emotions during that long and fearful night! But the sun knoweth his course and will pursue it in spite of all earthly power. Once more his glad beams illumined the forest and the city. Soon as his first ray darted upon the mountain's top, we rose from our bed of rocks, and left our good shelter.

We were completely bewildered, and knew not in what direction to go in order to find our home. Our first object was to find our favorite brook; but that seemed quite as difficult as to direct our course home.

Thus we wandered about, faint and fatigued until after noon; but found no brook, no home. Notwithstanding the great fatigue she had undergone, still Ellen would frequently keep ahead of me.

At last I heard her exclaim, in a voice the most musical I ever heard,—

'I have found it! Here's the beautiful brook!'

I hurried on, and soon stood upon some rocks below, which a small brook was finding its way down the mountain; but whether it was the brook whose stream we had followed up yesterday, or not, was more than we could tell; for we saw no object which we recognized. All seemed strange and new; yet we indulged the hope it was the brook we were so anxiously seeking for. The ravine looked as if it had but recently been a great river. The rocks were washed very clean, and much drift wood was piled up in several places. We had but one course to pursue, and that was to follow down the stream wherever it might lead. We did so, and continued down for more than an hour without discovering a single spot we had ever seen before. But we knew if we kept on with the stream we must at last find the river. Down, down we hurried, leaping from rock to rock, over fallen trees, across smaller brooks that emptied into it, and up one bluff and down another, until we began to think we should never find the end.

The stream, fed by springs and other tributaries, increased in violence and became quite a little river. I was satisfied that this was not the brook we supposed it was; nevertheless, we turned not away from it, but continued to follow it down through the wildest scenes we had yet witnessed.

The day began to wear away, and still all was wildness. No signs of fields or

meadows were seen. The ravine was deep and dark; but we travelled on, and hoped on, until the middle of the afternoon. I trembled lest night should again close upon us, before we reached a green field, or a much desired sheep pasture. If we could have seen a single tree felled by the axe, it would have encouraged us; but our eyes were greeted by no such signs. No tree had ever been cut, and every thing remained as it came from the hand of Nature.

Down, down we hurried, and O, how I longed to hear the bleating of sheep!—But no such music greeted my ears. In our passage we found large trees torn up by the roots, and enormous piles of drift wood and earth which the shower of yesterday had produced.

We were faint for the want of food, and it seemed to me we could not survive another night in the wood; but I did not communicate my fears to Ellen.

We hurried along, and at last I heard the bleating of sheep, that music to which I had so long been wishing to hear. Ellen heard it the same moment, and exclaimed, 'It is the voice of old smutty face,' the name of the sheep that had followed us so far.

Soon we came to an opening from which we could see over a large extent of country; but every thing looked strange to us. It could not be that we were in uncle's pastures. Seeing a large flock of sheep, we ran towards them, hoping to see old smutty face. The sheep scampered away. We called them; but old smutty face did not come out from the flock and follow us. Soon the sheep passed round a hill and down a small ravine and were lost to our sight.

We stood and gazed around; we could see the river at a great distance wending through the meadows, and houses dotting

its banks; but we could make out no scene we had ever before witnessed. Here we stood on the side of a mountain in a great pasture which was apparently surrounded by wood.

Our way was plain, and so we hurried down hill towards the river. Again we started the sheep, and they ran up a hill; gathered under the shadow of an old oak tree, turned round and gazed upon us with apparent fear. Had we grown wild that docile and innocent sheep were afraid of us? That question we could not answer. And O, how we longed to see our images reflected in our little mirror that hung in the chamber that we might discover how much our wild tramp had changed our looks.

Down we hurried, and soon came to a fence between us and the wood. We could not see the river, nor the houses nor farms, and we dreaded to enter the wood again. Travelling along beside the fence at last, we discovered a path or wood road into which we struck, and followed it down quite a long distance without seeing any thing but large trees upon either side.—We pressed forward, and soon heard human voices; but they sounded strangely, and we were afraid, and hid ourselves in the bushes. How singular was that impulse! But we felt it notwithstanding. It seemed as if we had been away from human society for months, and was almost afraid to mingle with it again.

Two men came along, and we heard them speak of us, and express a fear that we should never be found alive. I made an effort to speak; but some strange power prevented me. I felt a kind of instinctive dread that they might injure us. Strange infatuation! They would have passed without noticing us, had not Ellen broken a dry twig, the noise of which attracted

their attention to the spot where we lay.—They came towards us, and my first impulse was to run away from them; but I did not obey that impulse. Ellen, however, rose upon her feet and gazed wildly upon them.

They appeared strangers to us; but we found them friends. They appeared more overjoyed in finding us than we were in being thus found. It is indeed strange that we should have felt so; but so it was. And I have never forgotten that meeting, and the impressions it made upon me.—Why did we hide and dread to meet them? God only knows. And how strangely, and even coarsely sounded their voices when we first heard them speak!

We were bewildered, and had indeed grown wild. Soon, however, we recovered from our fright, and the men led us down the wood road. We now began to grow more faint and exhausted. The power that had sustained us seemed to be withdrawn, and we breathed in a different atmosphere.

The men told us the whole town were much alarmed at our absence, and hundreds were scouring the woods to find us. They, too, had been upon the mountain hunting for us all day. We were informed that we had mistaken the brook, and were some five miles from home.

In a short time we reached a house, and were permitted to eat a little food; but not as much as our appetites craved. But we soon began to feel new strength and a desire to see home.

It was nearly sun-down, and one of the men drove us home in a wagon. As we passed along the man informed all that the children were found, and many came running out of their houses to see us. Surely we had become objects of great curiosity. Our dresses were much torn, and we presented a very sorry appearance to the gaping crowds that flocked round to look at us.

Just at night fall we reached our home, and there were scores of men who had just come down from the mountain, and given us up as forever lost. Before our arrival Aunt Tabitha had lain down sick at heart. She, too, had given us up as lost and never to be found. She was almost crazy when the men gathered about the house after a long day's hunting. Aunt was sure the wild beasts had destroyed us.

Parson Brown and his sister were there, endeavoring to console uncle and aunt; but aunt could not be comforted even by the good parson. Just before we were driven up to the house, a shout went up that we were found, which roused Aunt Tabitha from her bed, and she ran out before we had alighted from the wagon.—Soon we were in her arms; and such a time was never witnessed under that humble roof. There was great joy and rejoicing on that occasion. Our torn dresses and the dishevelled state of our hair, gave us a wild appearance; and both young and old crowded into the room to see us.—Never were two children stared at as we were.

'Our escape from death was indeed, marvellous,' said Deacon Johnson, placing his hand upon my head, and looking very sad and solemn.

'It is truly providential,' replied the good parson. 'Not a sparrow falls to the ground without the notice of our Heavenly Father.'

'Yes, and He always hears the young ravens when they cry,' added the solemn deacon. 'I think the occasion fitting and proper for a prayer of thanksgiving and praise to Him, who hath protected these lost children in the hour of danger.'

'True, very true,' responded the fat parson.

'I perfectly agree with you and Deacon Johnson,' added my uncle. 'But a few

CHAPTER VI.

minutes ago, I had given them up for lost, and never expected to see them alive again.'

'I'm sure I never expected to behold them again,' said Aunt Tabitha, in a voice of trembling. 'It is strange, Alice, that you should have ran away up the mountain when I have so often told you never to go any where without my leave.'

'I would not chide them now,' said the good deacon. 'The occasion seems more fitting for prayer than chiding.'

Aunt Tabitha felt rebuked, and was silent, while Uncle Jeremiah called all into the room to listen to prayer. There was not much need of uncle's calling upon the people to come in; for the room was then much crowded, and all were in that could get in. The front room being very small, the deacon proposed to go into the large kitchen; and so all hastened to that apartment.

It was not often that the parson found such a goodly number present on a week day or evening, to listen to his prayers, especially at such a busy season of the year. Ellen and myself stood beside Aunt Tabitha while the parson offered up a very fervent prayer of thanksgiving for our deliverance from all danger. He very feelingly alluded to aunt in his prayer which drew the tears from her eyes. Strange that I should have been so roguish on such an occasion; but I could not help gazing upon the countenance of the parson's sister when he spoke so feelingly of aunt, and her care of the beautiful children. I might have been mistaken; but I'm quite sure I saw some slight frown upon her fat, round face. No matter—let that pass. The parson prayed long and fervently; and all seemed to be much satisfied with his performance. Soon the crowd dispersed to their respective homes, and Alice and myself were sound asleep in our little cozy room

The good care of an aunt. Taste early developed in some. A singing master. The effects of good music on churches and congregations, &c.

O, how refreshing is a night of good sleep after severe fatigue! How admirably every thing is adjusted in this world, if the inhabitants thereof would but view them in a correct light. I once heard a man complain that he had not been made so as to live without sleeping! But how unwise was that man? He loved a night's dissipation better than he did sweet and innocent sleep! I knew that man well; but I will not go before my story.

Soon as the day dawned, aunt was in our chamber to know how we had rested. We were hardly awake before she kissed us, and asked how we felt. I told her we had slept finely; and should be exceedingly cautious in the future how we ran up the mountain or elsewhere without her consent. She was rejoiced to hear me talk so reasonably. Ellen uncovered her bright peepers, and told her what beautiful waterfalls she saw on the brook. The girl had been dreaming about them, and they were fresh in her recollection. Aunt had not much taste for such things, and could not well understand how a girl so young should be so much in love with the works of Nature. And Uncle Jeremiah thought more of a good sheep with a heavy fleece than he did of the most beautiful cascade upon any mountain side. Well, there is no accounting for tastes in this world. Such matters are not legitimate subjects of dispute, and so let them pass *sub silentis*, as the lawyers say.

We rose from our snug little bed, and made our toilet. Our hair very much needed the comb, and aunt assisted us in

that operation. My cheek was a little sore where a twig scratched it, and there were the remains of some musketoe bites on our faces, hands and arms, otherwise we looked about as well as usual. True, we felt some stiff and sore in consequence of our jaunt; still we rose from our bed much refreshed by sleep, and appeared quite lively.

Shortly after breakfast Parson Brown came waddling along like a fat duck to inquire how we had passed the night, and soon after several neighbors called to inquire after our health. I found that our absence on the mountain had produced a great excitement through the whole town. The good parson kissed us and patted our heads, appearing as much rejoiced to find us so well as if we had been his daughters. It struck me when he kissed us that he would have preferred to perform a similar operation upon the thin lips of Aunt Tabitha. Strange that such thoughts should have intruded themselves on a person who had not yet seen a dozen summers; but as the great poet says, 'of such stuff is human nature made.' It was firmly fixed in my mind that the fat parson really desired to make Aunt Tabitha his wife. Somehow or other, I could not drive such thoughts from my mind; and yet aunt always said I was not old enough to even think of such things. Perhaps she was right; still my heart would harbor and cherish such feelings in spite of all her instructions and remonstrances.

The parson was exceedingly social and pleasant. In fact he always was when he came to our house. He questioned us about our ramble upon the mountain, and asked us many questions, all of which we answered according to the best of our ability. Our story very much interested him, as it did in fact all the neighborhood. In the opinion of all we had made a most marvellous escape from a cruel and lingering death.

'Why, my dear Alice,' he said, as he sat beside me with his fat hand upon my head. 'You have been very providentially saved! You were not only in danger from the wild beasts, but also in danger of starvation. Sometimes there are bears and panthers prowling about the mountains.—Such creatures have often been seen, and sometimes killed in this region. Did you not fear them?'

I replied that I did not even once think of such animals, and I am very glad I did not; for the thought would have frightened us, and rendered our ramble even more unpleasant than it was. He particularly inquired where we was during the heavy shower, and how we passed the night. I described the shelving rock, and what a convenient house it made for us during the tempest and also during the night.

'How fortunate you were to be so near such a place when the shower came up!'—he continued. 'It is perfectly evident a good Providence directed your steps to that spot, and I trust and believe you will always be thankful for such a wonderful preservation.'

I assured him I intended to be; and if I knew my own heart I believe I was and always have been grateful.

The neighbors kept flocking into the house until some twenty were present on the occasion. I began to think I was of a good deal of consequence in the world when I saw so many interested in my behalf. I confess I was proud and ambitious at that early age, and every year added to my pride and ambition.

After our state and condition were ascertained the people began to disperse, all but the parson, who still remained. He was never in a hurry to leave when he visited at our house. Before he left a singing master called to get subscribers for a sing

ing school. I was delighted, and so was Ellen, with the idea of learning to sing.—Both of us had a good deal of musical tact, and could sing several pieces which we had learned by rote. Parson Brown always praised us for our good voices, and expressed the hope that we should be seated in the choir of his church. That was an event to which we looked with great interest.

The singing master was a stranger to us all, and came from Massachusetts. The parson was delighted to see him, and expressed a deep interest in the enterprise in which he was engaged. I never shall forget the appearance of that musical genius; for his form contrasted strangely with the good old parson's. The parson was very short and fat, and Simon Quaver, (that being the name of the singing master,) was exceedingly tall and lank. The parson could almost walk erect between the legs of Mr. Quaver, if I may be allowed such an expression; at any rate, he could stand under the outstretched arm of the singing master. I could hardly restrain my laughing, when I gazed up into his freckled face. And Ellen was really disposed to make a good deal of fun about his looks. She possessed a pair of very keen eyes, which would instantly detect the least imperfection in form or the least awkward movement. Her taste was exceedingly nice and discriminating, more so than mine ever was.

Mr. Quaver's hair was of a faded hue, and hung in heavy bunches over his neck and shoulders. His whiskers were very large, and Ellen whispered to me that she thought they were very coarse and ugly looking. His eyes were grayish, and his eyebrows very heavy, and yet they could not be very distinctly seen at much distance; for the reason that they were colored

very much like his skin. His nose was thin and a very prominent feature in his face. His mouth was exceedingly large, and slit round a good ways into his lank cheeks; but he had a set of very fine teeth, the only redeeming quality in the *tout ensemble* of his countenance. He held under his arm a green baize bag, which contained a fiddle. How Ellen and myself longed to hear him play! She hung round him, and occasionally reached up and felt of the green bag, much to my amusement. Now Parson Brown was not a very superstitious man. He was so liberal in his religious notions that he was not opposed to instrumental music in his church; for one Mr. Saunders always played on a bass viol in the parson's choir at church. In that respect he was a very different man from a Methodist minister who preached in a schoolhouse two miles below our house.

'You have taught singing schools, I suppose, and profess to be master of your business,' said the parson, addressing the musical man, and fastening his eyes upon the green bag.

'I have taught music several years and ought to know something about the business of my profession,' replied Quaver, placing his left foot forward and standing as erect as a grenadier. 'I believe I have given good satisfaction wherever I have taught; at least, these papers will testify.'

And Mr. Simon Quaver thrust his long, freckled fingers into his pocket, and handed the parson a small package of dirty papers which contained certificates of the singing master's good success in the schools he had taught.

Parson Brown put on his spectacles and carefully examined these certificates. Some of them he read aloud so that Aunt Tabitha might hear their contents.

'These are very well,' said the parson, handing back the papers, and gazing full into the face of Mr. Quaver, who stood as erect as a May pole. 'You come, sir, well recommended. Sacred music is a very pleasing part of religious service. I suppose you play on that instrument under your arm.'

'I profess to be somewhat skilled in the use of the violin,' answered Mr. Quaver.

But, however, I never use it in my schools or in church when the people raise any objections. Some persons think no instruments ought to be used in sacred music; and such have a right to their own views and opinions. I can instruct a school with or without my instrument.'

'Don't you think instruments assist the voices?' asked the parson.

'Very much, sir,' replied Mr. Quaver. 'They keep up the pitch. Voices are very apt to flat without the aid of some instrument.'

'Your opinion agrees with mine,' said the parson. 'But some ministers of the Gospel have great objections to the use of instruments in the performance of sacred music; I confess I have none, after looking at the question in all its bearings. Have you a good instrument?'

'It is so considered by good judges,' replied Mr. Quaver, letting his fiddle slip down from under his arm into his hand.

'O, I wish you would play a tune,' said Ellen, gazing up into the man's face, and placing her fingers on the green bag.

'I will do so, if there is no objection, my good girl,' replied Mr. Quaver.

'There can be no objections, sir,' said the parson.

Mr. Quaver took from his pocket an old singing book and began to play one part and sing another. It was a tune familiar to me and Ellen; for we had sung

it a good many times. While he was playing Ellen could hold in no longer, and put in her voice which was remarkably strong and sweet for a girl of her age.—True, she could not make so much music as I could; but then she was extraordinary, considering her youth. Mr. Quaver turned his eyes upon Ellen and smiled, but she was not daunted, and sang the tune to its finale.

'An extraordinary voice for one so young,' said Mr. Quaver. 'She ought to attend singing school, by all means.'

'This other girl can too,' said my uncle, by whose side I stood.

Mr. Quaver requested me to join, and so we all sung. The singing master was apparently much pleased as well as all the rest. We had quite a little concert; for he happened to have the same tunes in his book with which we were familiar.

The result of all this was that uncle signed for two scholars, and Mr. Quaver went on his way to obtain more scholars. He was very successful, and got up quite a large school for such a town. The parson interested himself in the enterprise. And the whole neighborhood joined him, especially all the members of the church and society.

I have alluded to the above circumstances because music became quite a pastime for Ellen and myself at that age, and afterwards it had something to do with the history of our lives, whether for good or for evil, the reader will judge. We proved to be the best singers in Mr. Quaver's school; young as we were, and before the school closed, we were admitted to the singer's seats in Parson Brown's church. There were several boys a few years older than we, who became singers in consequence of Mr. Quaver's school; and other misses too, who joined the choir.

Our choir increased in numbers, and it was said that Parson Brown had the best singing in his church of any on the banks of Onion River. The consequence was, his congregation increased, and every thing went on swimmingly for awhile. Good music in a church will always attract hearers when sermons may fail to do so. Let churches and religious societies remember that fact and govern themselves accordingly.

CHAPTER VII.

Time passes, and age creeps on. The danger of setting bad examples before the young. The arrival of a stranger. His reception. The dinner, &c.

I must now pass over two years of my life without relating the incidents connected with that period; for not much occurred that would particularly interest the reader. Enough has been related to give the reader some idea of the place where I resided and of the characters with whom I lived and associated.

The neighborhood was a pleasant one, and the people industrious, and church-going.

Parson Brown still continued a bachelor, and I may safely say he remained so on compulsion; for his sister Jemima, was fully resolved that he should never take a wife while she lived. It was evident enough that one house would not be sufficiently spacious to hold her and her brother's wife, however kind and agreeable that wife might be. Jemima entertained a poor opinion of matrimony, any how. And the good parson was made fully sensible of that fact.—Nevertheless, he was a frequent visitor at our house; but then it was the duty of a minister to go round and visit his parishioners; and surely Aunt Tabitha was one of them.

A certain degree of coldness grew up between these two snuff-taking ladies; and yet they remained on visiting terms. Aunt knew very well that the parson's sister was a bitter opponent to marriage in general, and to his marriage in particular.—It was evident to my mind, young as I was, that there existed between the parson and aunt some stronger feeling than that of common friendship.

I am not certain whether I ought to tell of it or not; but setting out in this narrative to speak of facts and facts only, I will say that I more than once saw the good parson stretch up and imprint kisses on aunt's lips when they believed no mortal eye was upon them. Now aunt was almost a head and shoulders taller than the parson, and he must stand on tiptoe to salute her with a kiss, unless they happened to be sitting side by side. But that position they did not often occupy, especially if any other persons were about the house. After seeing him kiss aunt once, I frankly confess that I sought opportunities afterwards to witness the same spectacle, and succeeded but two well.

It was indeed a bad example for a minister of the Gospel to set before a young and handsome girl like myself; but then the parson never imagined for a moment that I ever saw him in such an exercise.—After all, the question comes up, ought a minister or any other honest person do that under cover of darkness which they would not do in open daylight? I know for a certainty that this practice of the parson did not have any very favorable influence upon my character. God only knows how much such an example injured me! If a minister of the Gospel could do such deeds with impunity, could not others of whom less was expected in a moral or religious point of view do the same? I often asked

myself such a question, and never found much difficulty in answering it. Besides, and worse than all, it lowered my estimate of human nature. Quite early I was thus made to believe that there was but precious little virtue in the world. Such a belief is a rock upon which thousands have made shipwreck of their characters and their fortune.

The doctrine that every man or woman has his or her price, is a dangerous one, and fraught with untold evils. It is a terrible doctrine, and yet thousands advocate it.

The libertine would persuade himself into the belief that other men at heart are as bad as he is; and the wanton loudly proclaims that all women would do as she does, but for pride and worldly reputation. The thief, too, has a very poor opinion of his race, and forces himself into the belief that other men would commit theft, and steal money rather than honestly work for it, but for fear of detection and punishment.

The greatest villain unhung tries to believe that others would be as bad as he is, if they had as much of what he is pleased to term moral courage as he possesses.—The fear of the penalties of broken laws, restrains men from the commission of crimes, and moral principles. Such is the reasoning of rogues whether in rags or in ruffles, or whether male or female.

O, Parson Brown! thou knowest not how much evil thy example wrought in this heart of mine! Ministers of grace, defend me! O, with what strange feelings and emotions I look back upon my girlhood's days!

Let me here call upon all those who officiate in the sacred desk, and upon all good aunts who have the care of nieces, to be cautious what examples they set in their daily walk of life. Be not only virtuous, but above suspicion. How susceptible is the young heart, and how ready to find excuses for its evil thoughts and propensities!

But I will not in this portion of my chronicles read or longer lecture to ministers and aunts; and yet the world is full of such characters.

I had now reached the age of fourteen, and Ellen had seen twelve summers, exceedingly critical ages for my sex. We had grown quite tall, and began to feel ourselves to be young ladies. Our forms were faultless, our faces beautiful, and our manners pleasing. We were in fact the pets of our neighborhood. True, some young misses of our age envied us the possession of so much beauty and so many accomplishments, and some of the older girls thought we were quite too forward.—We were the best singers in the parish; for every body said so, and surely no girls could compare with us for personal beauty. That was a point upon which we were perfectly satisfied. It is quite possible that such belief and knowledge might have made us appear sometimes rather aristocratic and overbearing; but generally we endeavored to treat every person kindly.

An incident occurred one day which I never shall forget. Myself, Ellen and Elizabeth Warner were one afternoon in uncle's pasture picking some strawberries. Elizabeth was a good, smart girl, but not overburdened with beauty. In fact she was rather homely both in face and form. She was the only daughter of a very respectable and wealthy physician of our neighborhood. For her good character, brightness and good sense she was highly esteemed by every body.

While we were busily engaged in picking berries, a hornet stung Elizabeth on the cheek. It was somewhat painful for a short time, and then her cheek began to swell until it became puffed out quite large. Elizabeth placed her hand upon the swollen part, and remarked in a jocosé manner, 'well, I shall look pretty when I go home, I reckon.'

'It will take more than one hornet to spoil the beauty of your face,' carelessly replied Ellen.

I saw at a glance, that Elizabeth was touched to the quick. Her dark eyes sparkled, and her lips quivered, and I feared she would say something in the heat of the moment that might create a rupture between them. My fears were too soon realized.

'It may, miss, take more than one hornet to spoil the beauty of my face; but thank Heaven I have a father, and there are some girls who don't know whether they ever had any fathers or not,' added Elizabeth, in a sharp, tremulous voice, that showed how deeply she was wounded.

Ellen gazed upon her for a moment in silence, and then turned away and went to picking berries at some distance from us. I noticed that some tears stood in her eyes as she turned away, and my heart was sorrowful. I regretted the circumstance very much. Both were angry and touched in tender points. Twitting upon facts is a dangerous pastime for young or old. The heart of Alice was stung more severely by the words of her companion, than Elizabeth's cheek was by the hornet. Both had received wounds which could not be healed that day.

'She may go away and be alone, if she pleases; but she shall not berate me on account of my looks without being paid back,' continued the agitated girl, after Ellen had gone out of hearing.

I endeavored to reconcile her; but without success. Both were very sensitive, and their hearts were much excited.—Ellen knew very well that she never had the pleasure of calling any gentleman father, and her pride was alarmed on that account. It was seldom that ever any thing passed between us in relation to her

birth or parentage; for I knew how sensitive she was upon that subject and studiously refrained from introducing it into our conversation. I had heard her say she wished she knew who her parents were. No doubt she was anxious to know, and so were all the people of the neighborhood.—There was a mystery hanging over her origin which no one could solve; and yet all were curious to pry into it. The gentleman who gave her to aunt had never called to see her, and no one knew any thing about the affair.

The next day after this affair happened between Ellen and Elizabeth Warner, a gentleman drove up to our house with a very handsome horse and carriage. He was a stranger to all; but a very handsome man. He was very fashionably and richly dressed, wearing an elegant gold ring upon his little finger, and a splendid gold chain about his neck to which a very superb gold watch was attached, which he drew out to see what time of the day it was. It was about two o'clock in the afternoon.

Aunt Tabitha was a good deal embarrassed by the call of such a nice gentleman; she managed to appear quite well, old-fashioned as she was. Ellen and I were delighted with his polite manners and rich dress. We thought we had never seen so handsome a man before. How different he looked from Uncle Jeremiah, Parson Brown, or any of our neighbors! He was apparently about forty-five years of age, but he might have been fifty. He alighted from his carriage, hitched his horse to a post that stood in the door-yard green, and entered the house. Aunt Tabitha ushered him in to her best room. He did not appear at all haughty, but talked very familiarly with aunt, and with me and Ellen. Uncle was in the field at work; he seemed

to be much pleased with us young girls, and talked and laughed with us as familiarly as Parson Brown or any of the neighbors.

'You have a very beautiful place here, madame,' he said; addressing aunt. 'I should delight to live in such a spot in the summer season; but I suppose your winters are very severe.'

'We have a good deal of cold weather; but then we have wood enough, and so contrive to be comfortable,' replied Aunt Tabitha.

'I take it so,' he added. 'I see your mountains here are covered with trees quite to their summits. Are these young misses your daughters, madam?'

'One is my niece, and the other a girl I took when she was quite young,' she answered, blushing, and wanting to take a pinch of snuff; but was afraid it would not be polite before such a gentleman. I saw her two or three times thrust her hand into her pocket; but on second thought drew it out again.

'They are fine misses, and must afford you a good deal of pleasure, madam,' he continued. 'Is your husband at home?'

'My brother, sir, is in the field,' she answered; blushing more deeply than ever. 'I was never married, sir.'

'Well, madame, those who don't wed often do better than those who do,' he added. 'I suppose I am considered a bachelor; at any rate I was never married.'

He now took out his watch to see the time of day, and continued. 'I declare the day wears away apace. I have not dined yet. Could you not furnish me, madam, with some dinner? I'm not at all particular. I stopped here, because I expected the brook I crossed a few rods from your house might contain some trout.

I'm exceedingly fond of angling, and wish I had some trout for dinner. Does not yonder stream furnish trout?'

'It does, sir,' replied my aunt. 'My brother sometimes goes up the mountain and brings home a string of them. I wish I had some to cook for your dinner; but I can give you some bacon and eggs.'

'That will be capital, the next best to trout,' he said. 'I'm sorry to put you to so much trouble; but I will endeavor to pay you for it.'

'O, no trouble at all, sir,' she replied; leaving the room to prepare some dinner for the gentleman.

'Do you ever kill any of these beautiful brook trout?' he asked, taking me by the hand, and smiling.

I told him I had been out with uncle, and once caught quite a lot of them. He then called Ellen to him and took her by the hand and asked her the same question. She told him she never caught but one.—He appeared to be very much pleased with us, and even ventured to kiss us. But I didn't think that was any worse, nor so bad as Parson Brown's kissing Aunt Tabitha, we were so young! He said he should like to see my uncle, and so I went out and called him. Soon after uncle came in, he went out, unharnessed the gentleman's horse, and put him into the barn. I was glad of that; for I knew he would tarry all night. Ellen was glad, too, for we both liked him, and hoped he would stay a good while. He brought in his fishing-rod and a little basket to put his trout in when he caught them. He and uncle were very talkative.

Aunt Tabitha soon had the dinner ready, and he ate a very hearty meal. I thought I never saw such a pleasant man in my life. After he had dined, he and uncle went up the brook. I wanted to go with them, and so did Ellen.

CHAPTER VIII.

The angler's return. Mode of cooking trout. The supper. Cracking of jokes. Objects of taste. Conversation at table. Progress of events, &c.

JUST as twilight began to give the mountains a sombre hue and shade the valleys in softest light, uncle and the gentleman arrived from their angling excursion up the brook with which Ellen and I were once so well pleased. The gentleman had well nigh filled his basket, and was highly gratified with his success. He said he had never had better sport in his life.—Aunt Tabitha began to prepare for cooking the trout; for the excited angler was bent upon supping on his trout. Soon the frying pan began to sputter and hiss, which pleased the gentleman greatly.

Soon the fried trout and other things were ready, and we were called to supper. I had never seen our table set so genteely before. Aunt had taken out her best dishes and the table-cloth was as white as the driven snow. It seemed to me that she had even gone beyond herself. Now aunt was a prudent housekeeper and an excellent cook in the old fashion, which, after all, is the best way. She had put on her black silk dress, and made a very respectable appearance. Nothing came amiss to the gentleman; for he possessed the tact to accommodate himself to any circumstances, and make the people feel easy in their respective positions. Aunt had entirely got over her embarrassment, and behaved herself with great propriety. The thought struck me that she might be setting her cap for the gentleman who called himself Col. Carpenter, of Boston. Strange that such thoughts were so prone to enter my head. I believe I used to be a very singular young girl. No doubt I

began to think too early, and to think too much about love affairs and of marriage.

We had indeed a social time; for the handsome colonel made himself very much at home, and all of us quite at our ease. He seemed like an old familiar friend or acquaintance.

'Is your tea agreeable, sir?' asked aunt, handing the colonel a second cup, and feeling anxious to say something as she could not tickle her thin, sharp nose with snuff.

'Perfectly, my dear madam,' he replied, placing an emphasis on the word next preceding madam. 'I never drank a better cup of tea, and your bread and butter is capital, vastly better than that we get in the city.'

'Do you keep house, sir,' modestly inquired aunt.

'Perhaps he will hereafter, if he never did before,' I said, before the colonel had time to answer.

'Why, Alice, it seems to me that your tongue is very limber this evening,' said aunt, rather reproachfully.

'Little girls should be seen and not heard,' added uncle, while a frown sat upon his brow.

Again I felt sorry for speaking; but I couldn't help it. It was a habit I contracted at a very early age.

'Your niece is a real joker, and for my part I love to hear young misses crack their innocent jokes,' said the colonel. 'It shows that they have some life in them.—Your lambs will hop and skip about your pasture, and such gambols makes them healthy and strong.'

'O, yes, exclaimed Ellen, who had remained quite silent for her. 'Old smutty face has a pair of twin lambs this year, and they are the most cunning, playful

little creature I ever saw. O, how I love to go into the pasture and see them run and leap from one knoll to another!'

No young girl ever had a more intense love for Nature's works than Ellen Rose, and hence her exclamation. Ah, and she was the most innocent and lovely girl I ever knew.

'Old smutty face!' repeated the colonel, smiling. 'Rather an ugly name for the mother of such beautiful twins.'

'I know it; but then she is a dear old sheep,' added Ellen. 'She will follow Alice and me all over the pasture, and I shall be very sorry when she dies. I hope she will live as long as I do.'

'Capital!' said the colonel! I love such taste and feeling; but then I wish that good old sheep had a better name. Old smutty face! I don't like that at all.—Call her old ebony face, if her face is black; any thing but smutty face.'

'O, sir, it wouldn't do to change her name now,' said Ellen, smiling, and gazing into the colonel's handsome face. 'We have known her by that name so long and are so familiar with it, that no change would please me.'

'True, my dear girl, there's good sense in what you say,' added the colonel. 'Let the good old sheep always be called smutty face; but do call her lambs silver face.'

'We'll do that, sir; for their faces are very white and clean,' said this good girl, smiling, and feeling much pleased with the suggestion.

'Well, Ellen, now we've got a good name for our lambs, and we'll thank the gentleman for it,' I remarked. 'Uncle has given us the lambs, and their names shall be silver face.'

The conversation had taken such a turn that Aunt Tabitha had completely recovered from her embarrassment; and the frown on uncle's face had given place to a pleasant smile.

The colonel was somewhat fatigued by his angling excursion, and manifested some symptoms of wishing to retire. And what a clean, sweet bed did Aunt Tabitha prepare for him! The sheets were as white as Lapland snows, and he slept on live geese feathers which aunt's own hand had plucked. Ellen and I soon found our little chamber; so, kind reader, good night.

CHAPTER IX.

The bed chamber. Dreams of girlhood. Sound advice. The toilette. Cooking breakfast. Table conversation. Blushes, and young wit, &c.

THE morning dawned, and a soft twilight began to reveal the scant furniture in our chamber and show our dresses that hung upon some wooden pegs on the board wall at the foot of our bed. I had been awake some time, listening to the soft breathing of my companion and reflecting upon the occurrences of the day.

It seemed to me that I had never seen a man half so handsome as Colonel Carpenter, and the wish entered my young and enthusiastic heart that my husband, whenever I should get one, might be as good-looking, and genteel as the colonel.—Strange, some one may say, that a girl so young should think of a husband! But stranger things than that sometimes happen. Ellen and I often talked over matters about marriage and husbands, and I can assure the reader we always said our husbands should be handsome, genteel, accomplished gentlemen. We had raised our standard high, and no ordinary looking men would satisfy us. Even before we saw the accomplished and graceful colonel, we had figured to ourselves the kind of men we should fancy, and love; and now

we had seen him, we very soon came to the conclusion that our partners for life must resemble him. O, what foolish notions possessed our young and ambitious minds! Let me here utter a word of caution to any young female whose eyes perchance may glance over these pages of my history.

Don't be in a hurry to be married, and curb your fancy while you are yet young. These fancy-formed images can never be realized in this cold, bleak world! The experience of all women tell just such a tale as that; for I have heard hundreds relate the same story. O, how beautiful is girlhood, and how full of pleasant dreams that can never be realized!

Ellen, the beautiful Ellen, now began to move, and soon her bright eyes were open and glancing about our dimly lighted chamber; I remained perfectly still, and she did not know that I was awake. At last she threw her arm over my side and kissed me. We were often in the habit of awakening each other by a kiss. I laughed, and said, 'Ellen, I was awake first this morning.'

'And why did not you kiss me?' she asked.

'O, you were sleeping so sweetly, I thought I would not disturb your slumbers,' was my reply. 'And besides, I didn't know but you might be enjoying a pleasant dream, and so concluded to let you dream on.'

'Well, Alice, I was dreaming,' she replied, smiling, and placing her hand upon my forehead. 'I dreamt that a young man called here and accompanied me a long way over the mountain. O, it was a delightful ramble, and how beautifully he described the brooks, rocks, and waterfalls. It seemed to me that he saw many beauties and pointed them out which had escaped my notice.'

'He must be a smart fellow to discover beauties in such scenes, that you had not discovered,' I said; 'for you generally see all there is to be seen, and sometimes I think your fancy forms images which do not exist.'

'So you have often told me,' she replied. 'O, I thought the young man was a very handsome person, and very much resembled the colonel, only he appeared to my fancy much younger.'

'Of course he did,' I answered, laughing. 'Your fancy always does its work up perfectly, never stopping half way. If you could get such a young man as your fancy forms, I dare say he would be a perfect beauty.'

'Well, Alice, you needn't say any thing; for you are always dreaming of handsome fellows,' she said.

I acknowledged the fact; for such it was. We now began to think it was time to rise, and both sprung out of the bed at the same time, and tried to see which could dress first. Such trials we frequently made.—The truth is, we were in our joyous girlhood, and the future looked bright and beautiful. We had no past to live in, save our adventure on the mountain when we wandered and were lost.

That time and those scenes were fresh in our young memories, and we often told to our companions the scenes we witnessed, and the emotions that pressed our hearts. We were glad we had thus been lost; for we had something to talk about and make our playmates stare and wonder. We then thought how pleasant it must be for the aged to look back into their past lives, and recount the deeds they had done; but O, God! we didn't then know how much humanity suffers in this world! I am almost now, tempted to drop the pen and draw a veil over my past life and hide all from

the gaze of the curious; but some guardian Spirit still whispers me to write and warn the young and unsuspecting of the many dangers that lurk in their paths.

We were soon dressed, and descended to the kitchen where aunt was busily engaged in preparing an extraordinary breakfast; I never had witnessed such preparations before.

The remainder of the trout were frying, the biscuit were baking, and the coffee-pot was steaming. In another dish the good sweet ham was sputtering in its own fat and Aunt Tabitha was breaking the large white eggs into a tin basin to have them all ready to dump into the sizzling fat. I can assure the reader that the breakfast aunt was preparing was fit to place before a queen.

The colonel wanted his breakfast early that he might take the morning for his angling. Ellen occasionally looked into the front room to see if he had arisen; for she was anxious to see him, and so was I.—We had talked over the matter, and hoped he would ask us to accompany him; but we had said nothing to aunt about it.

'Run into the other room, Ellen, and see whether you can hear the gentleman moving overhead in his chamber,' said aunt. 'Breakfast is almost ready, and I don't want to put the eggs in until he gets up.'

Ellen obeyed the command, and soon informed aunt that he was stirring. In went the eggs, and made such music as the hungry man loves to hear. A few minutes more and the gentleman was in the front room. The breakfast was shortly smoking upon the table; the savory smell of which was enough to give any one a sharp appetite.

Uncle was called, and we all sat down. My good uncle never ate a meal without

first asking the blessing of Heaven upon it. Such was his invariable custom, and he would not depart from it for no man, high or low. While grace was being said, the colonel dropped his head, elongated his face, and accommodated himself to the occasion. Aunt had no doubt but he was a pious man; for she thought no man could assume such pious looks as he did, without a proper degree of religious feeling in his heart. O, charitable woman! I never shall forget thy honesty and single heartedness. Would to Heaven I had found more such women in the world! But I must not go before my story.

'Beautiful trout!' exclaimed the colonel, as uncle filled his plate with the well-browned fish. 'This is a breakfast worth eating. Such fare, and such cooking, I cannot find at our public hotels.'

'You are fond of trout, are you, my dear?' he asked, addressing me, and then smiling.

'When aunt cooks them,' I replied, smiling, and slyly turning my eyes on aunt, to see how she received the compliment.

'Capital!' said the colonel. 'Admirably said, my dear. Young as you are, you know what good cooking is.'

'I should think I might, having been so long accustomed to it,' I added.

Aunt was evidently well-pleased at my remarks, and would have taken a full pinch of snuff, but for the presence of the gentleman.

'True, true, indeed, my dear,' said the colonel. 'Now is your time to learn some of your aunt's good skill; for the days may come when you will not find such good cooking, unless you do it yourself.'

'I have endeavored to learn her, and Ellen, too; but they are so wild and love play so well, that they have not made so good progress in the art as they might

have done,' added aunt, turning her sharp eyes on the colonel's handsome face, and assuming a wise look.

The truth is, aunt prided herself on cooking, and was ready to swallow any compliments that might be presented to her in relation to that subject.

'They are young, yet,' said the colonel, apparently disposed to shield us from any implied censure on the part of aunt, for our inattention and romance. I love to see feelings and emotions correspond to different ages. The instincts of nature must be obeyed.'

'I don't suppose that aunt will consider all right that we once ran away, and were obliged to stay all night under a shelving rock on the mountain,' I said.

'No, no, Alice, that was all wrong; but then I trust you have repented of such folly,' she replied.

'Our repentance was bitter that night, and we haven't ran away since,' I added.—'And I don't think we shall again very soon. But I do love to follow up the brooks through the green wood, and hear the music of the waterfalls.'

'And O, so do I,' said Ellen. 'And I should love to see the gentleman catch the shining trout with his beautiful flies.—Shouldn't you, Alice?'

'Indeed I should,' I replied. 'But I suppose the gentleman would be afraid that we should frighten away the little fishes.'

'Not at all,' replied the colonel. 'And I should admire to have your company.'

'O, aunt, may we go?' we both exclaimed, almost in the same breath.

'If the gentleman thinks you would not discommode him, you may accompany him,' she replied.

'Nothing would give me more pleasure,' he said. 'Old bachelors are proverbial for their love of young girls.'

'Then they ought to get married and have some of their own!' I added, before I thought what I was going to say.

Aunt blushed, uncle opened wide his eyes, and the colonel laughed, as if he would split his sides.

'All right, my dear,' he said. 'Capital! First rate! So they ought, and the sight of you and your younger companion makes me repent of the folly of having lived so long single.'

'It isn't too late yet, to remedy the evil,' I thoughtlessly added.

'Why, Alice, how talkative you are to-day?' said aunt, reprovingly, and blushing quite up to her eyes.

Uncle said nothing, but partially hid his face behind a cup of coffee; I could see by his eyes that he peered over the edge of the cup that he was pleased, and could not refrain from smiling. As soon as the colonel could leave off laughing long enough, he remarked. 'Capital! It may not be too late after all, my dear.'

Thus answering me, he looked Aunt Tabitha full in the face just as if he meant something. That look almost lifted her from the chair, and made her spill some coffee. Breakfast was now over, and we prepared to accompany the angler.

CHAPTER X.

The angling excursion. Reflections upon cold-blooded creatures. The big trout. Kissing in the wood, &c.

AFTER breakfast, the colonel lighted a cigar, slung his basket over his shoulder, took his fishing-rod in his hand, and started off. We scampered ahead of him, and led the way; for we knew the brook he intended to angle in.

The morning was delightful, and as good luck would have it, there was dew upon

the grass. We crossed over one of uncle's hay-fields, and then passed along a side-hill where he pastured his cows. The sun had but just risen, and we could see his morning beams glittering on the summit of Old Mansfield, the highest mountain in the State. The scenery was lovely and inspiring.

We now crossed a bridge and passed up a small valley in which the brook discoursed its sweet music. Just above the bridge there was a beautiful cascade which Ellen had gazed upon a hundred times, and knew all its crooks and turns by heart. It was not so wild and romantic as some waterfalls; but it was exceedingly beautiful and picturesque. Ellen stood gazing upon it when we came up, and pointed out to us many of its beauties which a less observant eye than hers would not have discovered.

'Isn't that beautiful!' she exclaimed, pointing to a small stream of the crystal water that separated from the rest and leaped down several rocky stairs, and fell into a boiling basin below. 'See how it leaps from rock to rock, and then almost hides itself under some green moss, as if it were too modest to be seen after cutting up such pranks.'

'Capital, my dear!' replied the colonel. 'You are, indeed, a poetess from the hand of nature. It is beautiful, and I don't wonder the trout love to swim in such pure waters.'

'Yes, and don't it make your heart feel sore, when you hook one of the dear little creatures and see him struggle for his life?' asked Ellen.

'I confess it does sometimes,' he replied. 'But then I am so fond of the sport, that I have not much time for such reflections when I have a trout at the end of my line.'

Ah, how true is that remark! Not time for serious reflections, when a beautiful fish is at the end of the line! So it is in the world. Men think not of the consequences of their acts, if those acts only gratify and please them.

We now passed on up the brook, and Ellen scampered ahead of us, until she was fairly out of sight among the trees and bushes. He did not walk very fast, but sauntered along quite at his ease.

'A lovely creature is that Ellen,' he said, placing his arm about my waist to assist me in climbing over some rocks.

'She is, indeed,' I replied. 'She's the most tender-hearted creature I ever saw, and possesses the most delicate taste. O sir, you have no idea how she loves every object in nature.'

'And so do I, when they appear in such a lovely shape as you do,' he said, drawing me close to his side and fastening his lips upon mine, as if he would suck away my breath.

I began to tremble, he held me so long. It was a kind of kissing I had never been accustomed to, and yet I was innocent.—At last I struggled and he let me go, saying. 'O that was the sweetest kiss I ever had in my life. It is better than trout catching. If it had not been sweet I should not have held you so long. There is honey in your lips.'

'I am not aware that bees make a hive of my lips,' I replied, smiling. 'If it were so, you would have been stung when stealing their honey.'

'Capital!' he exclaimed. 'I must have another to pay for that.'

'Not quite,' I said, springing from his reach, and running ahead.

'Stop!' he said. 'I want to talk with you, my dear.'

'You may talk; but you shall not rob the bees of any more honey,' I replied, smiling, and waiting until he came up.

'Speaking of that beautiful Ellen,' he continued. 'Do you know who her parents are?'

I told him that was all a mystery, and informed him how and when she was left with aunt, and further than that all was mystery.

'That is very strange,' he added. 'Does not your aunt or uncle know more of her history than what you have told me?'

'No more,' I answered. 'Even Ellen, herself, knows nothing of her father or mother, nor of any of her connections.'

'A very singular circumstance, truly,' he said. 'And does your uncle support the girl, without knowing who she is, or where she came from?'

'A considerable sum of money was left with aunt when Ellen was given to her,' I replied. 'Aunt put that money at interest, and keeps it. The interest, she says, more than purchases the dresses for Ellen.'

'Strange, indeed, that her parents do not call to see her, if they are living,' he said, again pressing my hand, and drawing me to his side. 'O, I wish you were my daughter! I really love you.'

And again he bent down his head and almost smothered me with kisses. I hardly knew what to make of such treatment.—True, as he said, he did appear to love me exceedingly, so much so, that he seemed for the time to forget his angling.

Ellen's clear voice now rung through the trees and echoed along the valley of the brook. There was music in that voice as it mingled with the tones of the falling waters. She was but a few yards ahead of us, but the trees and bushes were so thick that we could not see her.

'O, come here,' she exclaimed. 'I saw a very beautiful trout leap to the top of the water as I threw in a small piece of bark.'

The angler was now so intent on his sport that he made no reply; but motioned his rod in true angler's style. The big, cunning, old trout didn't rise, but lay concealed under some rocks some feet under the water. The colonel tempted him patiently and faithfully for some time, but without success. He then took out a morocco-covered book, and selected a different fly, but all to no purpose; for the trout could not be tempted from his hiding-place.

'Ah, I missed it terribly,' he said, manifesting much regret. 'When he rose, he looked so big and broke the water so finely, that I was somewhat nervous, and darted the fly away from him at the moment he struck at it. No use to try him longer now; but on our return, he may forget the past, and rise again; I will give him time to forget.'

We now started off up the brook, and Ellen again ran ahead of us, until the bushes hid her from our view.

'O, I regret I could not have hooked that fellow,' said the colonel, slipping his arm under mine, and lifting me over a fallen tree that crossed our way.

I didn't need his help; for I could climb over the obstruction even quicker than he could. After we got over, he did not release his hold, but again drew me close to his side and kissed me. I began to think he did really love me; but then what a disparity in our ages. He even went so far as to ask me to kiss him. I told him I did not kiss any body but aunt and Ellen, and that it was not proper for a girl to kiss a man. He said daughters might kiss their fathers with the utmost propriety. He reasoned on the subject some time, kissed me again, pressed me to his bosom, and said how much he loved me, and how sweet I was; but I didn't kiss him back. I couldn't help thinking of Parson Brown's kissing Aunt Tabitha at this time; but didn't tell him any thing about that. We travelled on up the brook and soon found Ellen gazing upon another waterfall. Here

Le killed some trout, but none of them so large as the big one below. Again we ascended the stream, and found more trout. He, finally, almost filled his basket, and on our return he tried the big trout, but without success. Going home he whispered and told me I must not tell aunt that he had kissed me. I promised I would not tell her, and kept my promise. I thought he was a singular man, but a handsome one.

CHAPTER XL

Domestic scenes. The dinner. The Parson. The birth and parentage of little Ellen. Arrival of the Parson's sister. Matters of taste and habit, &c.

ON our way home, Ellen often capered ahead of us, and sometimes she would fall behind us to examine some flower, or note the particular form of a rock. She seemed to take pleasure in all objects, and could extract delight from the most common things that crossed her vision, while others would pass them with perfect indifference. It always seemed to me she was not only made for his world but also that the world was expressly made for her, so intensely did she enjoy every thing in it. Such innocence, purity, taste, refinement and power to appreciate the glorious works of creation were seldom combined in one person. I loved her because she not only loved me, but every thing else from the bright stars in the firmament above to the minutest object on the earth beneath. The colonel seemed to fancy me more than he did her, and that I thought was very strange, and yet I suppose I possessed the greater share of mere personal beauty.

It was nearly noon when we arrived at the house. Parson Brown having heard of aunt's guest, came over soon after break-

fast and remained until our arrival; for he was anxious to see him and hold some conversation with him. And aside from that anxiety, he could remain very patiently where aunt was.

Uncle introduced the colonel to the parson, who immediately engaged his new acquaintance in conversation. When the colonel was introduced and surveyed the short, dumpy parson from head to foot, I saw upon his countenance a smile. There was a mighty difference between the forms of the two men; and a woman of any taste could not long hesitate to choose between them.

It seemed to me that Aunt Tabitha's sharp eyes rested with more pleasure upon the graceful form of the angler than they did upon the dumpy form of the parson.—The colonel was exceedingly social, and he and the parson cracked a good many innocent jokes.

The parson was invited to stay and dine, which invitation he very readily accepted.

Dinner being over, the parson sought an opportunity to converse with the colonel when Ellen was not present. And as good luck would have it, she went out into the field to gather some flowers of which she was exceedingly fond.

'Don't you think, sir, it is a very great mystery that no one can find out the birth or parentage of Ellen Rose?' inquired the parson, addressing his conversation to the colonel. 'She has been here now ever since she was a child, and she knows not whether she has father or mother. But she is indeed fortunate in being placed in such good hands.'

'You may well say that,' replied the colonel, smiling, and then turning his mild, pleasant eyes upon Aunt Tabitha, who absolutely cringed under the weight of two compliments. 'The mystery is a singular one, and strange that her mother, if she is

living, does not call upon her, for she is a most lovely girl.'

'It is strange indeed,' added the parson. 'I think there is good blood in her veins. Depend upon it, she sprang from no mean parentage. She is an excellent scholar, and a great admirer of Nature's handiworks. I shouldn't be surprised if she one day astonished the world with some poetry, for she appears to be highly gifted in that direction.'

'I perceive, sir, that she possesses some extraordinary gifts,' added the colonel.—Then turning to aunt, he continued. 'I understand that the gentleman who gave her to you also left a sum of money for her support.'

'He did, sir, and that money is still in good hands,' she replied. 'As yet I have only expended the interest of it; for the time may come when she may need the principal more than she does now.'

'Very prudent and very benevolent on your part, madam,' said the colonel. 'But after all, her beautiful face, bewitching manners and fine accomplishments will insure her a wealthy husband.'

'Such qualifications sometimes lead the possessor to ruin and degradation,' said aunt. 'I tremble when I think of the world's temptations. True, in this quiet spot she is removed from them; but the time may come when she will seek another place of residence, where temptations will assail her from every side. She will now soon grow out of her girlhood, and become a young woman. I could wish she might become the wife of some honest, industrious young farmer; but I fear her tastes will lead her in a different direction. She loves the country; but I fear she loves it more than she would the country men.'

'O, aunt, she's yet too young for you to judge her so readily,' I said.

'O, no, my dear,' replied aunt. 'We read, just as the twig is bent the tree is inclined. But I hope you will become a good farmer's wife.'

'I don't know about that,' I pertly replied, smiling, and throwing my eyes upon the handsome face of the colonel. 'I may prefer some gentleman from the city who has an abundance of money and a fine house.'

'There, there,' replied aunt, manifesting some impatience. 'I have heard you talk just so before now; but I hope you will think differently one of these days. Now there's young John Armstrong, the son of Deacon Armstrong, a fine, stout fellow, who has a real turn for farming; he will make some girl an excellent husband. I should rather trust him than any city fellow I have seen. John is honest, industrious, healthy, stout and loves to be in the field.'

'He's healthy, stout, honest and industrious enough,' I answered. 'But then you know, aunt, he has round shoulders, red hair and a freckled face.'

'No matter, so long as his heart is in the right place,' she added.

'I infer from your remarks, madam, that this young man takes a fancy to your niece,' said the colonel, apparently feeling quite an interest to know whether such was the fact or not.

'Why, he calls here frequently; but then both of them are quite too young to think about love yet. Time enough for that these dozen years.'

'O, aunt, that is a good while to put off such a pleasant period of one's life,' I said, laughing.

Aunt took a pinch of snuff, the first one she had taken in the presence of the colonel, and he smiled, asking her for her snuff box.

The birth and parentage of Ellen again came up, and all endeavored to penetrate the mystery. The parson expressed a hope that the colonel would endeavor to ascertain something about it, if an opportunity should offer. The parson very minutely described the appearance of the person who gave Ellen to aunt; but the colonel couldn't recollect of ever having met such a person. Aunt and the parson, too, were pretty well satisfied that the gentleman came from Boston, and the colonel was impressed with the same opinion; but all was darkness and uncertainty.

I now looked out of the window and saw Miss Jemima Brown, the parson's sister, waddling along towards the house. She, too, had a curiosity to see the stranger who had become the guest of Aunt Tabitha, and perhaps, also, she might indulge a secret desire to watch her brother; for she grew more and more fearful that he and aunt were becoming quite too intimate.—Tooth and nail, she was opposed to her brother's marriage to any woman, while she lived; for she flattered herself that no one could keep a parson's house so well as she could; besides, she was opposed to marriage in general. The truth is, and it may as well be told here, as elsewhere, that Miss Jemima Brown, in her earlier days, became attached to a young man who didn't happen to fancy her quite so much, or so enduringly as she did him, and the consequence was, the good woman was disappointed, and hence her bitter feelings towards matrimonial connections. I heard aunt tell the whole story; but not, however, until after she had ascertained that Miss Jemima Brown was opposed to his frequent visits to our house.

Miss Jemima came waddling and panting along as fast as her short limbs would carry her fat corporation, and very soon gently knocked at the door. Aunt ushered her in

and introduced her to the colonel, who rose and received her very gracefully.—But I could plainly see a smile lurking about the corners of his mouth when he looked upon Miss Jemima Brown and her brother.

Now Jemima possessed the gift of gab in a greater measure than her brother. In fact she was an everlasting talker, and her tongue ran like a mill wheel. And she wasn't half so modest and reserved as aunt was in the presence of strangers; for immediately after her introduction to the colonel, she took an enormous pinch of snuff which she sent with a very audible sound clear up into her brain, and then offered her box to aunt, who very respectfully declined taking any.

'What! not take a pinch,' said Jemima, manifestly surprised. 'I have a new recruit, and think it is the best I ever had.'

'I will trouble you for a pinch, madam, if you please,' said the colonel, rising, and gracefully approaching her.

The colonel sneezed several times, much to the amusement of us all. I was particularly well pleased, and laughed loud and long.

'Ah, you little witch,' he said. 'Your'e full of mischief.'

'But thank fortune my nose is not full of that strong snuff, for if it was, I should sneeze my head off,' I said, laughing, while he was still sneezing.

There was now a good hearty laugh all round, and the parson shook his sides as much as any of the company present.—However, I will do aunt the justice to say, that she didn't enjoy the laugh quite so well as he did.

CHAPTER XII.

An old maid's moral lecture. The suspicious mind. A woman's reasoning.—How secrets are kept. The danger of bad examples to the young, &c.

THE sneezing subsided, and the colonel wiped the tears from his eyes, and appeared to be relieved from his spasms.—Miss Jemima Brown kept her tongue running, and so monopolized the conversation that aunt couldn't get in a word edgewise. Evidently, aunt did not like to have Miss Brown take up the attention of the colonel; but she said nothing, and felt the more. These ladies had once been intimate friends, but they were somewhat changed. Circumstances had given a different direction to the current of their feelings.

'Where is Ellen?' asked Miss Brown, soon as the snuff-taking and sneezing had subsided.

'She has gone out into the field to gather some wild-flowers,' I replied.

'The more I think of that girl the more curious I am to learn her parentage,' said Jemima. 'I didn't believe a secret could have been kept so long.'

'A gentleman brought her here I understand, and not a lady, and that circumstance may account for the secret's being so long kept,' said the colonel, smiling, and looking at the parson.

'Very well said,' added the parson, shaking his sides, and enjoying the joke.

'I understand you,' said Jemima. 'You think, I presume, that if a woman had brought Ellen here she would have let out the whole story, not only to Tabitha, but also to all the inhabitants on the banks of the river.'

'I didn't say as much as that,' answered the colonel, smiling. 'But you are at liberty to make any inference you please.'

'I know it has always been said, that a woman can't keep a secret; but I think she can keep one as well as a man,' added Jemima, taking another pinch of snuff, by way of emphasis. 'Who is it that says a woman can't keep a secret? Why, the men of course, and their testimony alone is not to be taken on the subject. True, men will often keep their own secrets, when they are ashamed to have them divulged. Men are prone to do things which they ought to keep secret from the world, or rather, I might say they ought not to have done them at all, and then there would be no secrets to be kept. There is a great mystery hanging over Ellen's birth; but I have no doubt some man is all in the wrong about it. The child was taken from its poor mother, and hurried away out of her sight, and she knows not where her dear one is, if she did, she would flee to it and let the world know where the blame lies. Some scoundrel, rich he may be, and very respectable as the world goes, is the father of Ellen, and her poor mother knows not where she is. O, sir, Boston is a terrible place, and full of both old and young deceivers. If I had a daughter I wouldn't trust her there a single day out of my sight. The men there, think of nothing else but getting money and ruining girls. I know of several most cruel instances where beautiful and innocent girls from the country have been most wofully deceived and also ruined; I have no patience with such men. They are devils upon the earth. There was Sally Spaulding, a handsome, tidy girl as ever breathed. She went to Boston to get employment; for her parents were poor, and there made the acquaintance of a man old enough to be her father, and although he was married and had a wife and several children, yet he most solemnly promised to make a wife of the girl; and upon those

sacred promises, he ruined her, and in consequence of that, she hung herself in the chamber the scoundrel had hired for her, and where he kept her. O, what virtuous woman can think of such outrageous cruelties and not feel their blood boil in their veins? For my part, I have no patience with such black-hearted villains. I want to see them strung right up by their necks!

Some how the colonel seemed to be affected by her severe remarks, and made no immediate reply. He was evidently somewhat embarrassed at the boldness and plain speech of Miss Jemima Brown, who did put it on the men so thick and fast, that there was hardly a chance for any one to reply; if there had been a disposition to do so. Aunt was thunder-struck, and wondered how a woman could let her tongue run on so, and, especially, before a gentleman and a stranger.

The truth is, Miss Jemima Brown believed when she first heard of the colonel's arrival, that he was the father of Ellen, or, at least, she strongly suspected it, and when she came to see him, her suspicions were strengthened. She could not believe that the mere sport of angling for little trout had attraction enough to draw out such a fine looking gentleman from the city and induce him to put up at a plain farm house. No; Miss Jemima Brown's suspicions were aroused, and she imagined that the secret of Ellen's birth would soon come out. Always entertaining a very small idea of the sport of killing little fishes, she could not see sufficient inducement in it to make a man willing to come so far and stay so long as the colonel had. The truth is, she had no conception of the passion some gentlemen indulge for such wild sport, and hence her suspicions. No other person in the house harbored such sus-

picious. Such a thought never occurred to aunt, and uncle never once dreamed of such a thing. I confess such a thought struck my mind when he was kissing me by the brook; but why then more than at any other time I could not tell. The thought I dismissed as idle and vain.

Immediately after Jemima had closed her moral lecture, and while no one was disposed to reply, Ellen came running into the room, holding in her hand a splendid bouquet of wild-flowers. Her cheeks were flushed with her rambling exercises; her dark eyes sparkled like diamonds, and her face was all animation and life.

Running up to the colonel with her beautiful bouquet and presenting it to him, she said. 'Please, sir, accept this. The flowers grew wild, but then they are none the less beautiful for that. See what the country produces. O, I love the fields, the brooks, and the shady forests!'

'I thank you, my dear, most sincerely for this beautiful gift,' he said, taking the flowers, and burying his nose in them.—'O, they are exceedingly fragrant! More sweet than those grown in hot-houses or gardens.'

He now took a gold piece from his vest pocket and gave it to her, which she accepted and thanked him for it. I wished I had such a gold piece; but no sooner than the wish entered my heart, than he thrust his hand once more into his pocket and gave me one. He seemed to know my most secret wishes; at least, so it appeared to me.

'I must serve you both alike,' he said, giving me the piece of money.

I returned him my thanks, and Ellen said, and seriously too, that she was glad he made me a present too. Miss Jemima Brown, during this time kept her keen eyes fastened, first on the colonel and then on Ellen.

And how wonderfully do prejudices and suspicions affect the mind, the judgment and the heart! Jemima Brown, through the medium of her suspicions, saw what she believed to be a strong resemblance between Ellen and the colonel. The expression of their eyes, and the peculiar shape of their mouths when they smiled were strikingly similar, and her suspicions were wonderfully confirmed. She discovered what no others dreamed of; but it would be useless to attempt to convince her of her erroneous impressions. When once formed, no matter what the cause, she never gave them up except positive proof of their foundation in error were produced. No mere opinion in the absence of positive, stubborn fact, could convince her of her errors, nor argument however cogent and conclusive it might be. It was amusing to me to see how intently she first looked on one and then on the other, and to observe how perfectly satisfied she seemed to be in her own conceit.

Aunt now had occasion to leave the room, and Jemima followed her out.— Having a curiosity to know what Jemima would say, I stepped out also. She first took an enormous pinch of yellow snuff, and then looked at me as if my presence was not particularly desirable. I thought I understood the expression of that look; but did not take the hint.

'Now, Alice, you must not divulge for the world what I'm going to say,' she remarked by way of caution. I assured her all secrets were safe in my bosom. Then turning to aunt, she continued. 'The whole mystery is cleared up in my mind. There's no question about it.'

'What mystery?' inquired aunt, at first thinking that Jemima was going to joke her about the colonel; for that seemed to be in her mind.

'What mystery!' repeated Miss Jemima, manifesting much surprise, and taking another pinch of snuff to give her spirit to go through her story. 'Why, don't you see a most striking resemblance between Ellen and that gentleman? I have no doubt he is her father!'

Aunt opened wide her eyes, and both took pinches of snuff simultaneously, and I stood gazing upon their agitated countenances. Soon as aunt had recovered from her surprise, deposited the snuff safely in her nasal cavities and wiped her nose, she said—

'Striking resemblance! Not a bit of it, Miss Brown. Your eyes must be in an eclipse. I can see nothing of the kind.— Ellen's father! O, what a wild imagination! And you're given to such imaginings sometimes, permit me to say.'

'Wild imagination!' repeated Jemima. 'Given to such imaginings! I understand you perfectly, Miss Barber, I see a good many things more than you dream of.'

'Yes, or any one else dreams of,' said aunt. 'You must have a better foundation for your suspicions before I shall receive them for truth, I can assure you.'

'Believe them or not, just as you please. I speak what I believe to be the truth,' replied Jemima. 'Any one with a half an eye can see a very striking resemblance. Besides, didn't you notice how queer he looked when I was giving the men of Boston a lecture! Ah, depend upon it, there was guilt in his countenance! I'm not easily deceived. If ever I saw guilt in a man's face, I then saw it in his.'

'Nonsense! all moonshine!' said aunt, when both at the same moment took out their snuff-boxes and treated themselves to a fresh supply.

'Call it what you please,' said Jemima, showing a little more anger than her re-

ligious profession would seem to warrant. However, I suppose she was angry and sinned not, as the Scriptures have it. 'I believe what I say, and you will find it the truth. Alice, can't you see a strong resemblance in the looks of Ellen and that gentleman?'

'I confess I saw it not,' I replied. 'He don't act like her father; for he has shown more attention to me than he has to Ellen, and surely if she were his daughter he would not do so.'

'Ah, it is his cunning, depend on it,' said Jemima. 'He's a very artful man, and I advise you to beware of him. He can appear very pleasant, when the devil is in his heart. Don't let him touch one of your fingers; I can see all through him!'

'Yes, you can see farther into a millstone than the pickers of it,' replied aunt. 'A wonderful discovery you have made, truly! I remember you once before thought you had discovered Ellen's father, and the next discovery, you will find her mother, I dare say.'

That reference to some past mistakes and errors of opinion was rather a damper on the spirits of Miss Brown; but she did not quail under it.

'Talk as you please, prepare your good dinners for him, give him your best bed and best room; but the day will come when you will learn that you have entertained a black-hearted villain,' replied Jemima, in a most emphatic manner.

'I don't believe one word of what you say,' replied aunt, in quite as positive a manner.

Both took snuff, and gazed upon each other in silence for a few moments, and then separated. Jemima waddled home; but not, however, alone; for she took her brother with her. She was determined that he should stay there no longer.— Aunt expected, and so did I, that the colonel would leave that afternoon; but he did not, and concluded to go a trout fishing

again. The sport was so fine that he could not leave it. He asked me and Ellen to accompany him.

The weather was very fine, and the inducements strong. I confess I could not forget what Miss Jemima said so easily as aunt appeared to forget it. I knew he had hugged and kissed me every chance he could get; but never offered to kiss Ellen. That seemed very strange to me. There was a mystery about that which my young and inexperienced mind could not fathom. Kissing I could not consider a crime, when I had seen the parson kiss my own good aunt. O, how powerful are examples!

CHAPTER XIII.

Another angling excursion. A new character introduced. Comparative value of flies and worms as bait for trout. The scientific angler worsted, &c.

I WOULD not weary the reader's patience with any more angling excursions; but there are some circumstances connected with the one I am about to give that may throw some light upon the coming pages of this narrative.

The colonel was bent upon still remaining another night, and aunt and uncle could not reasonably object. In fact they were not only willing, but rejoiced to have him stay; for the more they saw him the better they liked him. Miss Jemima's moral lectures and her strange suspicions had no influence over them; knowing how apt she was to talk and discover bugbears, they placed but little confidence in her opinions. They did not, however, believe that the woman would utter falsehoods; but they knew very well that she not only had a very limber tongue, but also a naturally suspicious mind.

It was arranged that Ellen and I should again accompany him to the brook. At first aunt objected, because she thought it would fatigue us to go twice in one day; but he appeared so anxious to have us go that she finally consented. The colonel believed that he should kill that big trout, and we were anxious to see the sport.

Half the afternoon was gone before we

started; for the colonel said trout would not bite in the middle of the day so well as they would towards the evening. We started off full of life and animation.—Ellen was in high glee, and capered over the fields like a lamb at his gambols.—And my spirits were in full flow, and we anticipated much pleasure from the excursion. The colonel, too, appeared exceedingly lively and pleasant.

We hurried along, soon crossed the old bridge, and began to travel up the valley of the brook. Ellen ran ahead of us, and then again he began to kiss me; but the words of Miss Jemima Brown, '*don't let him touch one of your fingers,*' came fresh to my memory, and rang in my ears. I didn't treat him so rudely as I ought to have treated him when he was smothering me with his kisses; but these words of the good parson's sister had some effect upon me, and I did not so readily yield to his embraces as I did in the morning.

'O, dear Alice,' said he, while he drew me to his side, and fastened his lips upon mine, 'how much I love you! I have never before seen such a sweet girl!'

'But why don't you kiss Ellen?' I asked, working myself from his embrace, and wishing to know what answer he would make. 'She is one of the most lovely girls in the world.'

'She is a fine girl; but some how I don't fancy her so much as I do you,' he replied. 'You know we all have our own peculiar tastes, and it is well that we differ in such matters.'

'I suppose it is,' I replied, gazing into his handsome face.

He returned my gaze, and appeared as if some thought was struggling for utterance. At last he said. 'How should you like to visit the city?'

'O, I should admire to go; but I don't know as I ever shall,' was my reply.

'If your uncle and aunt would consent, I will carry you to the city and send you to school where you would learn music and drawing. You would excel in music, for you have a beautiful voice,' he said.

'Ellen has a sweeter voice than I have and can learn a tune quicker,' I said.—'Why don't you take her to the city?—O, she would learn music, drawing, or any thing else much quicker than I can. She can draw pictures now.'

'No doubt she is a very bright scholar; but I fancy you the more, and that is reason enough,' he said, attempting to kiss me again; but I gently resisted him, and he did not press the matter very hard at this time.

'I couldn't think of going unless Ellen went too,' I said.

'Not if your aunt is willing?' he asked.

'O, no, I couldn't think of leaving her,' I replied. 'I couldn't sleep without her company.'

'You don't expect to sleep always with her, do you?' he inquired, smiling.

'Perhaps not,' I answered. 'But we don't like to separate now. When we are married we must part, I suppose; but that day is a good way off yet.'

Ellen now came running back, and said she saw some one fishing at the deep trout hole; but didn't see him plain enough through the bushes to know who it was. The colonel expressed much regret at hearing such news, and hurried along.—Ellen kept but a few steps in advance of us, and getting up upon a rock and looking through the bushes, she said:

'Good gracious! it is John Armstrong!'

'Who's John Armstrong?' asked the colonel, somewhat vexed.

'The son of Deacon Armstrong,' I replied. 'He seldom leaves his work to go

a fishing; but when he does, he always catches a good lot of trout. He is considered very lucky; but he hasn't so nice a rod as you have and such flies. He fishes with angle worms.'

We had now ascended a small hill and came in full view of young Armstrong who had just sat down upon a rock and thrown in his hook. He had a light cedar rod which he had kept ever since he was a small boy and first began to go a fishing. Just as we came in full view of him, and stood just above him, he motioned his rod and out came that big old cunning trout which the colonel's fly could not tempt from his hiding-place. He threw the trout over his head, and he fell wiggling near Ellen's feet who was a few paces in advance of us.

'O, he has caught him!' exclaimed Ellen, running down after the trout, as he flopped down over the rocks towards the brook.—'O, he's a fine one; but not too old for John. O, I never! how he does flounce about! I can't get hold of him. Poor fish! I hope he is so cold-blooded that he cannot feel.'

The colonel didn't stir from his tracks; but stood gazing upon Ellen and the trout. His face wore a scowl, and he didn't look half so pleasant and smiling as he did a short time previous when he was kissing me.'

'O, do try one of your beautiful flies,' said Ellen, addressing the colonel.

'I fear he has killed them all,' replied the colonel.

'O, no, sir,' said John. 'There are more in this hole; but perhaps none quite so large as those I have just taken. I have taken a dozen at a time. It is one of the best places on the brook.'

The colonel made no reply; but began slowly to fix his rod. He acted as if he

had some doubts and misgivings about killing any; however, he put his rod together, and then took out his book of flies, which were beautifully arranged for the several months in the year. At last he selected a very bright and shining fly, and attached it to his silken line.

'They are pretty flies; but I reckon the trout had rather eat a worm,' said John.—A gentleman from Boston once gave me some flies, and I tried them; but I could always do better with worms.'

The colonel turned his eyes upon John's freckled face and red blazing hair; but remained silent, seeming too proud to speak to a young farmer.

'O, he caught quite a lot of them with his fly this morning,' said Ellen; 'but none half so big as yours.'

The colonel made no reply; but kept throwing his fly, and drawing it across the stream. At last a small trout broke the water and seized the fly, and the colonel safely landed him.

'He's just about as long as my middle finger,' said John. 'It is a pity to kill such little ones; for they would grow to a respectable size, only let them alone a year or two. I always pick out the largest ones. And I dare say there are some big ones in the hole yet; but they can't be caught with such bait.'

The colonel was silent; but kept at work diligently and patiently.

'I guess the old ones have told the young ones not to bite,' said Ellen, laughing, and holding the little trout the colonel had killed. 'O, what a beautiful creature this is! How red his spots are, and how smooth his skin. I hope the hook didn't hurt him; poor little fellow! His skin is smoother than your cheek, Alice.'

And she put the trout against my cheek, and her musical voice echoed along down

the valley as she laughed most heartily. O, I shall never forget the music of that girlish laugh as the slimy fish came pat against my cheek. I did not like the feeling of the cold slime; but I was never angry with the sweet girl, she was so innocent and joyous. O, how I then wished she could see and know her parents! I believe I loved her the more because she had no father or mother. But she was joyous and happy. The world seemed to be made for her peculiar enjoyment, she so highly and properly appreciated every thing in it.

The colonel patiently plied his fly; but could not raise another trout.

The colonel's sport was evidently spoiled for that day. We didn't go much further up the brook; but returned home before the sun went down. John caught several more, and the colonel only four small ones. John gave us the two largest ones and strung them on a stick with the two we caught, and we went home with lighter hearts than the colonel did.

CHAPTER XIV.

The return from trouting. Our reception.

A consoling of disappointed feelings.—

Talk of going to the city. A scene in a garden, &c.

As we entered the house, followed by the colonel, we met aunt.

'O, what big trout,' she exclaimed.—'What! so many more than you could put into the basket? You must have had rare sport, sir, to have returned so early, too.'

'O, Alice and I caught two big ones, and John Armstrong caught the rest and gave them to us,' replied Ellen, holding up the string of trouts.

'And how many are there in the basket?' asked aunt.

'My luck was nothing to brag of this afternoon,' replied the colonel. 'We found a fellow there before us at the best hole, using worms for bait. I hate worm fishing.'

'That John Armstrong is always lucky,' said aunt. 'They say he always beats every body when he goes a fishing; but he don't often go.'

'O, he says he only goes when the sign is right,' said Ellen.

'Well, he's always very lucky at any rate,' said aunt. And then turning to the colonel, she continued. 'I am sorry the young man interfered with your sport; for I'm sure he would not have done so, if he had known you were going up the brook. He's always very kind to gentlemen who come from a distance after trout. I have known him to give away a good many to gentlemen, and they would go away and say they caught them. That always made John laugh.'

'I never boast over trout that others have killed in that way,' said the colonel.

'O, I presume not,' said aunt. 'I didn't mean to accuse you; for you have furnished good evidence of your skill last night and this morning.'

'But the trout will bite at John's worm quicker than they will at the gentleman's fly,' said Ellen.

'Well, well, you have trout enough for all,' said aunt, noticing that the colonel felt somewhat sore at his bad luck, and wishing to save his feelings as much as was possible. 'Would you like to have some cooked for supper, sir?'

'I think it will be as well,' he replied. 'I confess I regret exceedingly that John, as you call him, was there before us; for I'm confident I should have had fine sport but for him.'

'Very likely,' replied aunt.

While aunt was getting supper, and Ellen was out feeding the chickens, the colonel again kissed me, and urged me to accompany him to Boston, where he said I should live like a lady. He seemed to be exceedingly anxious, and imagined that he could get aunt's consent, provided he could obtain mine. I confess I was pleased with him, and would been glad to accompany him, if Ellen could have gone too. I told him that I would go, if he would take Ellen along too, and let us go to school together, provided uncle and aunt would consent.—He said his carriage was only big enough to carry me, and urged my going with all the eloquence he could muster, telling me some very flattering tales, and sometimes almost inducing me to go; but the thought of leaving Ellen, and sleeping away from her, was more than I could endure. The last time he kissed me, aunt very suddenly opened the door to enter the room and saw him. At first he was somewhat agitated; but soon recovered from his slight embarrassment into which he had been thrown, and laughingly, said.

'Old bachelors will sometimes give young and beautiful girls a sort of fatherly kiss. I have been thinking that I should like to give your niece a musical education. I think she would make, with proper training, a celebrated singer.'

'Our singing master said she and Ellen, too, had fine voices,' replied aunt. 'But I don't know but they can sing well enough now.'

'They sing finely, it is true; but then how much good instruction, such as we have in Boston, would improve them,' he answered. 'I will take Alice home with me and send her to school at my own expense, provided you will give your consent.'

'I shouldn't dare to let her go,' she replied. 'If she were my own daughter, I

might think differently; but she was placed in my care by her parents, and I must exercise that care prudently. She must stay with me until she is eighteen.'

'But suppose, aunt, I should get married before that time?' I asked.

'No fear of that, if I live,' replied aunt. 'I don't approve of girls being married before they are out of their teens. You are not old enough to even think of such things.'

Ellen now came running in, and said.—'How I do love to feed the chickens, they are after the corn so, and pick it up so quick.'

'How should you like, Ellen, to go to Boston and live?' asked aunt. 'Learn music, and see all the fine things.'

'And leave Alice, here?' she asked.—'See the fine things, and leave the old mountains, beautiful brooks, green fields, and all the wild flowers? What finer things can I see than these? And leave you, too, and uncle! O, no, I couldn't do that.'

The colonel gazed upon the animated and enthusiastic girl as she poured out the feelings of her heart in pure and living streams of eloquence, but made no reply. It was evident that I was his choice, and that he did not care to be encumbered with Ellen. It seemed somewhat strange to me that he should pass her by with such apparent indifference, when I loved her so well.

'But suppose Alice should go with you?' continued aunt.

'That would make no difference,' she replied. 'But I should want you and uncle to go too. And O, the little lambs! What would become of them? O, no, I think we'll all stay here, the most beautiful spot I have ever seen on earth.'

'I perceive the girls are very much at-

tached to you and the scenes of their childhood,' said the colonel. 'But if Alice would go with me I would make a great lady of her.'

'She don't want to be a great lady,' said Ellen. 'She is much happier now than she would be if she were a great lady. O, no, sir, she can't go and leave me.'

The colonel made no reply; but stepped to the door and lit a cigar, and then walked slowly back and forward on the green in front of the house. His mind was apparently absorbed in deep and perplexing thoughts.

Supper was soon announced, and uncle and the colonel took their seats at the table. Soon we were all seated; aunt had prepared an excellent meal. Each succeeding one seemed to be better than the previous ones. The colonel complimented aunt's cooking as usual; but he seemed to be unusually sober. Uncle noticed the fact, and asked him if he did not feel well.

'A man couldn't eat as I am eating who felt unwell,' he replied. 'O, no, sir; I'm quite well.'

'I thought you appeared soberer than usual,' said uncle. 'It may be that you feel kind of sorry that you didn't catch these large trout, and perhaps they don't taste so sweet as they would had you killed them yourself.'

'The trout are very fine, sir,' he answered. 'True, it would have given me much pleasure to have killed them, and no doubt I should but for that clodhopper and his worms. Confound worms! A fellow who would angle with nasty worms ought to have have his ears cropped.'

'Yes, yes; I see how it is,' said uncle, smiling. 'I'm sorry John took it into his head to go a fishing to day. He seldom goes.'

'But he always goes when the sign is right,' said Ellen, laughing.

'Nonsense' said the colonel. 'There's nothing in signs.'

'But there is something in worms, then,' quickly added Ellen.

Aunt begun to feel uneasy lest Ellen's sharp shooting might stir up the colonel's wrath; for he was evidently out of sorts.

'Come, come, Ellen; you must not let your tongue run so fast this evening,' said aunt. 'You feel so much pleased that you caught a big trout that you hardly know what you say. I have often told you that little girls should be seen and not heard.'

'Well, then, Alice and I must never sing again,' said Ellen, archly smiling.

Aunt and uncle smiled, and the colonel forced a laugh which he did not seem to feel. Ellen was exceedingly bright and animated; I had seldom seen her more so. After supper, the colonel lit his cigar and again promenaded on the green.—Heavy black clouds came up in the west, threatening a shower. It was quite dark, but not so much so but one could see another across the green, if a sharp look was made.

I stood at the front door, looking at the colonel as he was walking to and fro smoking his cigar. Seeing me, he came near the door, and beckoned me to him. I stepped out upon the grass, and he took me by the hand. At that moment the words of Miss Jemima Brown, '*don't let him touch one of your fingers*,' came rushing into my mind. Instinctively I trembled, and suddenly withdrew my hand from his grasp.

Why those words should have had such an effect upon me at that moment is more than I can tell. But they came like a rushing mighty wind and filled my mind; making me tremble and producing sensations such as I never experienced before. 'Don't let him touch one of your fingers.'

I obeyed the command, and stood firm for one so young and romantic as I was. He was struck with astonishment for the moment, and appeared bewildered; but soon recovered his wonted equilibrium, and smiled.

'Well, my dear Alice, you seemed to be frightened,' he said, laughing, in a low voice. 'The hand I extended to you is a friendly one, and would not harm you for the world. O, no, my dear girl, I love you too well for that. O, if you would but consent to accompany me to the city, you would be much more happy than you can be to remain here. I am sure you would. I feel it in my heart. Come, my dear Alice; let us walk together a few minutes and talk over the matter.'

I hardly knew what to do or say to his request. He seemed to be very anxious; and young as I was, I began to fancy that I was really beloved by a fine looking and an accomplished gentleman. Ellen and I had often talked about such affairs, and told each other what kind of husbands we intended to have, how they must look, and how rich they must be. O, how vain are the dreams of girlhood! And how evanescent and unsubstantial these fancy-formed images! But girls will dream, and their imaginations will soar far away from earth and all its realities. Let me here caution them to restrain their fancies, and to remember that while they dwell in these tabernacles of clay they must expect to grapple with the sober realities of human life, and not to reach those beautiful and dazzling things which fancy forms and pictures before their vision. By sad experience I have been taught these lessons, and they never will be forgotten.

At last I said; 'I don't know as aunt will like it.'

'Why, my good girl, she could not have

the least objection in the world,' he replied. 'How would she object to your walking with me? We shall not be absent but a few minutes.'

I finally consented, though somewhat reluctantly; and we walked across the green to a gate which opened into uncle's garden. He proposed to continue the walk into the garden, and I opened the gate and led the way in.

'O, how pleasant to walk in a garden in the shades of evening with those we love' he said, placing his arm around my waist, and drawing me close to his side. 'It is, indeed, pleasant to smell the perfume of flowers as they are wafted on the evening breezes; but more pleasant still to taste the honey of the lips we love.'

And he bent down his head and almost smothered me with his kisses. For the moment I forget the words of Miss Jemima Brown, the parson's sister; but they soon rushed into my mind, and I struggled out of his embrace. That movement he did not at all fancy, and insisted upon kissing me; but I would not suffer it. He had too much good sense to use his superior physical strength, and so began to talk again.

'Come, my dear Alice, go to the city with me,' he continued. 'And you shall have fine silk dresses, learn music and become a great lady. O, I shall be so happy to have you there and see you grow more beautiful and interesting every day of your life. I will adopt you as my daughter, and you shall have every thing you wish.'

Thus he conversed for some minutes, and I confess his words were not without charms. My young fancy was pleased; but I could not think of leaving Ellen and my uncle and aunt. While he was in the midst of his most eloquent and loving appeals, I heard aunt's voice on the night-

air, calling, 'Alice, Alice.' I immediately ran from the garden, through the gate and across the green, leaving him to his own reflections.

'Where in the world have you been?' aunt inquired.

I told her I had just ran out into the garden a few moments, and the affair passed off very well. Soon after the colonel came in, and he and uncle engaged in conversation and smoking. I did not tell Ellen that night what had happened; but we talked a good deal about going to the city, learning music and wearing fine dresses, until sleep closed our eyes.

CHAPTER XV.

The stranger does not depart. Much excitement in the neighborhood. The accusation. How it was received. The power of prejudice, &c.

COL. CARPENTER did not start on his journey home the next day as we expected he would; but invited me to ride with him in his nice carriage and after his fine horse. Aunt, however, from some cause or other, unknown to me at the time objected, and the ride did not take place.

The colonel was evidently displeased, yet concealed his feelings as well as he could under the circumstances of the case. Probably, she would have consented to our ride, if Ellen had also been invited. The excuse he made for not inviting Ellen, was, that his carriage was scarcely large enough to contain two; but aunt could not be prevailed upon to permit me to go alone with him; a very wise and judicious thing on her part, but one that seemed to me to be very unreasonable at the time; still I was very quiet and humble about it.

Finding he could not ride with me, he

urged me to accompany him to the trout brook once more, and also included Ellen in his invitation; but aunt said we must not be going a fishing any more. A change had come over the spirit of her dream; but I knew not the cause; and yet I half suspected it.

The colonel was somewhat surprised at aunt's refusal, because Ellen was also invited by him. It was evident he was not very well pleased with this decision; but endeavored to appear as if it was all right. He was a shrewd man, and very adroit in his management. However, cunning as he was, aunt was a match for him in shrewdness. She began to suspect that he might be a roguish gentleman. And Miss Jemima Brown had some influence in begetting that suspicion in aunt's mind, although aunt would never acknowledge as much to any one.

After dinner the colonel took his fishing apparatus and started off alone to the brook. While he was gone the good parson came, and he and aunt had a long talk, and the colonel was the subject. The parson's sister had infused into his mind a part of her own suspicions; and he communicated the same to aunt's mind. She, too, began to think that the colonel might be the father of Ellen. And soon it was rumored over the neighborhood that such was the fact. There was a good deal of excitement among the people. Parson Brown had not been at our house more than an hour before his sister came padding and panting along. The more she thought upon the subject the more thoroughly convinced she became that the gentleman was the father of Ellen Rose. That was all quite natural; for every one to whom she communicated her suspicions agreed with her; and the reader will readily infer from her character that she conversed upon the

subject with almost every person she met. In her opinion the veil of mystery that had hung so long over Ellen's birth was now removed, and all appeared as plain as a pikestaff. The neighbors, too, partook of the same opinion.

Miss Jemima came panting into the room where her brother and aunt were cozily talking over the great wonder.

'It is plain enough,' said Jemima. 'That man is no doubt the father of Ellen.—Every person I have talked with is of the same opinion. I can't be mistaken. Why, Tabitha, if you would look sharp into their faces, you can't help seeing a very strong family resemblance. It is quite plain to me; but you thought he was such a fine gentleman and so smooth and oily that he could not for so long a time forsake his own child; but I can inform you such are just the men to have illegitimate children. I have no manner of doubt but he has scores of them scattered about the country. He cares no more about his children than a hen does about her chickens after she has weaned them. O, how I mortally hate such men! I wouldn't trust one city bred man in a hundred. They are like whited sepulchres!'

'Don't be too sanguine, sister,' said the parson. 'We may be mistaken after all. Charity is a great virtue.'

'And so is justice, and if that man had had his deserts he would have been hung long ago,' added Jemima.

'Dear me, sister, thy tongue runs faster than ever,' said the parson. 'We are taught in the good Book, that the tongue is an unruly member.'

'I know that, brother,' she replied; 'but out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. When I see a villain, I believe it is my duty to proclaim him such, that the world may no longer be deceived by him.'

'Yes, sister, that may be true; but then we must exercise charity, and proclaim no one a villain until we have satisfactory proof,' he said.

'Satisfactory proof!' she repeated.—'The family resemblance is proof satisfactory to me. No, no, there can be no doubt about it. The matter is as plain as the nose on your face.'

'If I were you, Tabitha, I would put the question directly to him, and ask him if he is not the father of Ellen,' continued Jemima. 'Of course he will deny it, and turn the affair off with one of his bland smiles; but watch the expression of his countenance, that will tell the truth when his tongue lies.'

'O, I shouldn't dare to go as far as that,' replied aunt.

'Shouldn't dare!' repeated Miss Jemima. 'That man don't live whom I'm afraid to speak to. Confront him and put the question to him strong, and he'll flinch. A guilty conscience will always show itself. He ought to leave with you a large sum of money for Ellen. If he won't take and own her as his daughter, then he ought to give her a lot of money. No doubt he is rich. O, I wish I could only find out who Ellen's mother is! But then, we shall not find that out in a hurry. Poor woman! I pity her. But then she did very wrong! Strange that women will be led away so by the men! Now Tabitha, I hope you will speak to him about Ellen, and make him own up.'

'No, no, I can't do that,' replied Aunt Tabitha. 'You can do that best.'

'Well, I'm not afraid to,' replied the courageous Jemima. 'If you have no objections, I will catechize him.'

'I have not the least objection,' said Aunt Tabitha. 'I confess I do not think so well of him now as I did when he first came here.'

'I am glad you begin to open your eyes,' said Jemima.

Thus they conversed for a long time.—It was agreed that Miss Brown should address the colonel and accuse him of being the father of Ellen. Not only Jemima, but also the parson and Aunt Tabitha were quite well convinced that they had now found the long sought for father of Ellen Rose.

The colonel arrived before the sun was down. I was in the garden when he came. Seeing me, he came through the garden gate, and approached me. Miss Brown sat at the window and saw him.

'What luck, to-day?' I asked. 'The afternoon has been fine.'

'Fine weather, indeed; but I did not enjoy the sport half so well as I should if you had been with me,' he replied. 'The trout grow scarce, and I shall not try them any more. I haven't more than a half a dozen in my basket, and they are small.—To-morrow morning I shall start for the city, and O, how happy I should be to have you accompany me? It seems to me your aunt would give her consent for you to go, if you would but say to her that you desired it.'

'O, no, sir, she would not consent on any condition,' I replied. 'When her mind is made up it cannot be changed.'

'I'm sorry to hear it; but, dear Alice, I shall dream of you when I am far away. And don't you think you shall dream of me?'

'I shall remember you,' I replied, in a voice of trembling.

I confess I felt strangely; but could not define my feelings. There was a charm about him which I have not the power to describe. He noticed my manner, and took courage.

'I will try your aunt once more,' he

said. 'Why should she object to your becoming my adopted daughter? I can see no good reason for her thus objecting.—You would possess advantages which you cannot have here.'

At that moment aunt's voice rang in my ears. She called and said she wanted me. I hastened to the house, and he soon after followed.

'What was he talking about?' anxiously inquired Jemima, as soon as I entered the room.

I told her he was desirous of adopting me as his daughter, and wished me to accompany him to Boston.

'Yes, yes, I understand the villain,' she replied. 'Adopt you as his daughter!—He had better take care of his own daughters before he adopts others. But he is coming!'

Soon he entered the room, and immediately after aunt and the parson came in. Ellen was out in the field with uncle. She was always delighted to be in the field with him. The colonel was very polite, and made himself quite agreeable.

'Not so good luck in my favorite sport this afternoon as I could have wished,' he said, addressing Aunt Tabitha.

'I'm sorry the fish didn't bite better,' she replied, while Jemima was taking two large pinches of snuff to prepare her spirits for the task she had undertaken.

'And so am I; but we must take things in this world just as they come along,' he answered. 'But to change the subject. I have been thinking, my dear madam, of your niece this afternoon. I have money enough, and I know of no way to spend a portion of it so agreeable to my feelings as to adopt Alice as my daughter and give her a thorough education.'

'Wouldn't it be well, sir, for you first to own and educate your own daughters

before you adopt the daughters of others?' he had completely conquered Miss Jemima asked Jemima, in a firm tone of voice, and taking an extra pinch.

'Indeed, madam, your question somewhat surprises me; for I am not aware of having any daughters to own and educate,' replied the colonel, looking Jemima full in the face, and smiling rather contemptuously than blandly.

'No, I suppose not,' she continued; fortifying herself by another pinch, and returning his look with interest. 'Sir, you cannot deceive me. The first time I set eyes on your face I saw a striking resemblance between you and Ellen Rose. You may affect to be surprised, sir; but man has not the power to change the expression of his countenance which was born with him. It is plain to be seen; and now, sir, in presence of these witnesses, I accuse you of being the father of Ellen Rose!—O, shame, where is thy blush! And where is the unfortunate woman whom you deceived and ruined?'

'My dear madame, let me ask you in all sincerity whether you are crazy or not,' he added, laughing immoderately.

'You may laugh; but I'm not crazy, sir,' she quickly responded.

'I hope you are not, madam; for to lose one's senses is a great calamity,' he answered. 'But permit me to say distinctly, that you talk like a crazy woman. I'm no father, but I wish I was father of such a beautiful girl as this Ellen. Now, madam, be calm, and endeavor to collect your scattered senses.'

He then turned to aunt, and remarked that he would like to have his few trout cooked for supper. Jemima took snuff violently, and her brother's fat, round face wore a very peculiar expression, while the colonel promenaded the room and whistled some familiar tune. It seemed to me that

he had completely conquered Miss Jemima Brown; for she knew not what to say, his manners and actions were so peculiar and even pleasing under the accusation. He betrayed not the least sign of guilt. The parson and aunt were partially convinced that the accusation was not true; but not so with Miss Brown. She adhered firmly to her opinion.

After supper, the neighbors kept calling, until the house was quite full, all anxious to see the father of Ellen Rose; for Miss Jemima Brown had spread the news all over the neighborhood.

CHAPTER XVI.

The departure of the colonel. Singular emotions of the female heart. Deaths, and funerals, and marriages. Arrival of a fine young sportsman, &c.

ANOTHER morning came, and the colonel began to make preparations for his departure; not, however, until he had again urged uncle and aunt to permit him to adopt me as his daughter. His efforts were fruitless; and I confess I sometimes regretted it. But for leaving Ellen I should have been willing to accompany him, and throw myself on his protection. He had, during his short stay with us, exercised a strange influence over me; but he found aunt immovable, and gave up the idea of having me for his adopted daughter. When he left in the morning, the tears came into my eyes in spite of all my efforts to restrain them. He saw my tears, and how sweetly he smiled when he pressed my hand and bade me farewell. I could not forget that smile, nor cease to feel the warm pressure of his hand. My feelings I could not define then, neither can I now describe them. I was not old enough to love him; and yet

my feelings were closely bordering on that tender passion, I might have felt towards him as a father; but I will not attempt a description of my emotions. The task is more than I can accomplish in this part of my narrative. In some subsequent pages some light may be thrown upon the subject. He went away and I never expected to see him again. Before he departed he made a generous present to Aunt Tabitha, and offered to pay uncle for keeping him and horse; but uncle would take nothing. The gold pieces he gave to Ellen and me were safely kept and cherished in our memories.

Time passed on. Another winter came and went. Another spring unfolded the beauties of nature, and another summer brought out the wild flowers which Ellen loved to gather so well.

We grew apace, and loved each other more and more. We were constantly together, and felt uneasy when separated even for a very short time. We grew handsome, too, every month, and were fast leaving our girlhood.

John Armstrong was a constant visitor at our house, and every lady thought he was in love with me. If he was he had not the courage to say so. Aunt often thought that when we were old enough we should be married. Even Ellen used to like me upon the subject, but I did not love him, and yet esteemed him highly; for he was worthy of my highest esteem. Alas! the memory of the colonel was still present with me, and his image was constantly in my heart.

How different the form of John Armstrong from that of the highly accomplished colonel. Reader, if thou art a girl still in thy teens, be careful how you cherish beautiful ideals in your heart. Your hopes can never be realized, your aspirations never satisfied. Be rational, and view the world just as it

is. Thousands of girls of amiable dispositions—brilliant imaginations—excellent hearts, and fine intellects; have been made unhappy, and sometimes miserable and degraded by gazing too fondly upon fancy-formed images which are never to be found among the sober realities of life. Be cautious not to remember such dazzling and bewitching dreams.

Two years had hardly elapsed after the departure of the colonel, before my uncle went down to the grave. It was a sad day for us when the cold clods of the side-hill covered his earthly remains; but time is a great assuager of human sorrow.

The death of my uncle gave fresh vigor to the hopes of the parson, and his visits were frequent at our house. Miss Jemima Brown and Aunt Tabitha became much estranged from each other. In fact they became so much offended with each other that they were not on visiting terms, and did not even speak to each other when they happened to meet at church. The people talked, and generally took the parson's side. They knew very well the trouble, and blamed Jemima for so strenuously opposing her brother in what they believed to be a love affair.

The good parson did not wish to have trouble in his own house, and forebore, like a good Christian as he professed to be, and was, as the world goes.

The habit of snuff-taking greatly increased upon Jemima, and very much to the injury of her health. If she was not absolutely crazy, as the colonel once pronounced her, she had become somewhat rattle-brained, as John Armstrong's mother called it. The truth is, Jemima was much troubled on her brother's account, and was in constant fear that he would break away from her restraint and become the husband of Aunt Tabitha. She often declared to

him that she could never survive that event; and the good parson seriously feared that she told the truth, and forebore to do that which might be the death of his sister.—She grew worse and worse every month, and some persons conjectured that she would finally become insane. Fearing that such would be the result, the parson refrained from visiting aunt except once in a great while, and that very slyly. Every time he came home from his pastoral visits, she would take half a dozen pinches of snuff, and ask him if he had been to see Tabitha Barber. She annoyed him much; but he bore it all with Christian fortitude and resignation. His forbearance, kindness and equanimity under such domestic afflictions endeared him more and more to his church and parish. And he certainly was entitled to much credit. But there is a limit to human suffering in this world.

In less than a year after my uncle's death, Miss Jemima Brown was found dead in her bed one morning by her brother. Not making her appearance as usual in the morning, his fears were excited, and he went to her bed-chamber and knocked at the door; but the dead could not hear!—It was the opinion of the physician, that she died in a fit of apoplexy, and such was the general opinion. But the parson had a few enemies in his parish. Who that have not enemies? These enemies endeavored to circulate slyly the rumor that the parson had poisoned his own sister!—That was slander with a vengeance! But I rejoice to record here that such a slanderous report did not obtain general circulation; but public feeling and indignation put it down most essentially.

The woman was buried and a large concourse of people followed her to that narrow house which is made for all the living. The good people of the parson's parish

believed in the overruling of a kind Providence; and the death of Miss Jemima Brown did not lessen but strengthened that belief.

Now the coast was clear, and it was in every person's mouth that the parson would wed Tabitha Barber. He managed his cards very adroitly, and took a very prudent and judicious course. True, his visits to Aunt Tabitha after the death of his sister gradually increased in frequency and in length; but he so adroitly timed them as not to encourage scandal, but rather to disarm it of its rancorous spirit. More than a year elapsed after his sister's death before he enjoyed the fruit of so many years of anxious anticipation.

He and aunt were at last married, and a most happy and loving couple they were. On the day of their marriage, my age was seventeen and Ellen's fifteen. We were grown up young ladies, and beloved by all. We took the lead in the parson's church choir. John Armstrong was the best singer in the choir, and his attentions to me were more and more marked every month. It was the opinion of the people, generally, that we should ere long become united in the holy bands of wedlock; but such was not my opinion. Although I highly esteemed him for his many virtues, yet there was something in my heart that told me I did not love him.

Yes, kind reader, and that something was the image of Colonel Carpenter. I had not seen or heard from him since his first visit to our house, and yet I could not forget his handsome form, graceful manners, and pleasant face. Strange that a man so old could have thus impressed the heart of one so young.

The parson and aunt were married in the spring, and the summer following, a young man with a handsome horse and

carriage drove up. He had with him a gun, fishing-rod, basket and a beautiful spaniel dog. He alighted and knocked at the door while Ellen and me stood at an open window gazing upon him. When I saw him coming up to the lane which led to the house, my heart leaped into my mouth; for I thought it was the long remembered colonel. But a nearer view convinced me of my mistake. I saw he was young as well as handsome.

'Good gracious!' whispered Ellen, putting her hand upon my shoulder, and leaning her cheek against mine as we were both slyly gazing from the window. 'What a handsome fellow! And see what a beautiful dog he has who has just leaped from the carriage?'

'He is handsome,' I replied, drawing back my head a little, lest he should discover us gazing at him, and thinking of the colonel whose image came up fresh before my mental vision.

'He shall be my beau,' said Ellen, smiling. 'He is very genteely formed, and see how his beautiful dog springs up and licks his hand?'

'Perhaps, he will fancy me,' I replied, smiling. 'My hair is the darkest, and don't you see how his black curls shine?'

'Yes, yes, I see them; but I guess he'll take a fancy to me,' said Ellen.

Aunt now came to the door and ushered him in. We were not long in making our way to the room through another door; for we were anxious to hear what he said.—The parson had been looking over the sermons he was to preach the next day which was the Sabbath.

'I hope you will excuse me, sir, for entering your dwelling so unceremoniously,' said the young man.

'No apologies,' replied the parson, or uncle, as I may now call him. 'Our house is always open.'

'Thank you kindly, sir,' said the young man. 'I am very fond of shooting and fishing. And as I was riding along in quest of a place which affords such kind of sport, the thought struck me that I might find some game here.'

'There are trout brooks here, sir, and some partridges,' added uncle.

'Very glad to hear it, and I think from the lay of the land there must be some woodcock here,' replied the young sportsman, 'Is there a public house near here, sir?'

'There is not one very near; but if you will accept the hospitalities of our humble home, you shall be welcome,' said uncle.

'Very much obliged to you, sir,' he said.

'But I shall insist on paying for my entertainment.'

'We will not talk of that,' said uncle, smiling. 'We will first take care of your horse, and then see what we can do for you. A merciful man is merciful to his beast.'

'Very true, indeed,' replied the sportsman. 'I think quite as much of my horse's fare as I do of my own.'

They went out to take of the young man's beautiful gray horse.

'O, he's a fine-looking fellow!' said Ellen, laughing. 'And he looked at me more than he did at you.'

'You may think so, dear, but if I'm not much mistaken, I saw his black eyes fastened upon me several times,' I replied.

'Nonsense, girls!' said aunt, taking a pinch of snuff. 'He won't fancy either of you. He thinks more of his horse, dog and gun than he will of any of you country girls.'

'Perhaps he may,' said Ellen, laughing.

'But I shall set my cap for him.'

'So shall I mine,' I replied; 'for he's a real handsome fellow.'

'You have one beau and that is enough for you,' added Ellen. 'Your friend John would have pumpkin fits, as uncle says, if he should see such a handsome fellow even look at you.'

'Ah, Ellen, you can talk; but we shall see,' I said, laughing.

'Both of you can talk,' said aunt. 'But hush! He's coming in.'

He did come in and brought in his gun and fishing apparatus. They were beautiful; and how freshly the sight of them brought the colonel's handsome form before my mental eyes. But let that pass. He now very politely inquired if we were sisters. Aunt told him we were not.

'One is a niece and the other an adopted daughter,' said uncle.

The young man soon ascertained which was the niece and which the adopted daughter; and I here confess that he seemed on a second interview, more inclined to give his attention to Ellen than to me.—But that did not disturb my philosophy. Any good luck Ellen might meet never did excite my envy. We knew not how to envy each other. We loved each other too much for that. Never did twin sisters love one another more than we did.

The young man gave his name as Frank Stuart, and said he resided in Boston.—Uncle was not slow in worming the secrets out of any one. He found that Frank's father was a rich merchant of Boston, and belonged to the aristocracy of the city.—

He had heard of him, and was much gratified in entertaining the son of such a distinguished man as Mr. Stuart, who had contributed largely of his substance to missionary enterprizes. That single fact alone was enough to make uncle proud of entertaining the young man, and extending to him the hospitalities of his house. Aunt, too, was highly pleased, and treated the young

sportsman with the greatest respect and attention. I was certainly well pleased with our guest, and rejoiced that he happened to call; but Ellen was more than pleased at the first sight of him. It seemed to her that he very much resembled the young man her heart had been looking for. I became perfectly satisfied that he fancied Ellen more than he did me. And I was contented.

CHAPTER XVII.

The power of memory and the strength of early impressions. Going to church.—The curiosity of a country congregation. The evening party, &c.

It was a singular coincidence that the young man's beautiful spaniel's name was Rose, so called from the circumstance of his having a fine curl of hair on his back.—When he called his dog Rose, to go out with him after woodcock soon after he arrived, Ellen blushed up to her eyes, and I had a hearty laugh. Uncle, too, shook his fat sides, and aunt took an extra pinch on the occasion.

'The dog was named after you, Ellen,' I said, laughing.

'O, no, that couldn't be, for he never knew of my existence before,' she replied, covering her face with her hands to hide her blushes.

'No matter, the spaniel's name is Rose, and he is not so old as you are,' I replied.

'O, I now take!' she replied. 'True, he was named after me because I was named first. Well, it is a beautiful name, and he's a beautiful dog.'

'Yes; but not quite so handsome as his master,' I added.

'Perhaps you think so,' she replied, while an arch smile was on her face.

'I know you do,' I quickly replied.—'Don't you wish he had invited you to go out shooting with him?'

'O, no, I am afraid of guns!' she answered. 'I should rather go with him after trout; for it is cruel to kill the beautiful birds.'

'And not cruel to kill the beautiful fishes?' I asked.

'The birds are warm-blooded, and the fish cold,' she replied.

I had forgotten what the colonel had told us several years before; but it was fresh in her recollection, as though he had said it but yesterday. O, how bright was that man's image in my mind at that moment! Well did I remember how he looked when he thus spoke of the nature of the fishes, how the tones of his voice sounded, and what a peculiar expression there was in his large, deep blue eyes. I was sad even in the midst of our joy and hilarity.

'Ah, I see how it is,' said Ellen, smiling. 'You had forgotten for the moment what he told us some time ago. 'It is very strange you should thus forget him. I believe it is not often that you forget what he said.'

This good girl often joked me about the colonel out of mere sport; but she knew not how vividly I remembered him, or how deeply his image was engraven upon my heart. No, no, that was only known to me and to Him who knows the secrets of all hearts. I made no reply to her last remark; but forced a smile upon my face which I did not at the moment feel in my heart. She would have been the last person in the world to awaken remembrances which could wound my heart, if she knew it.

We now assisted aunt in her household affairs; for she was making preparations

for a grand supper. Her guest belonged to the upper circles and she was determined to treat him with the best her house afforded. We, too, were anxious to put the best foot forward, and go to the extent of the style that was within our reach. And the parson, too, entertained the same views and feelings. The young man had truly fallen into good hands so far as kindness, attention and sincerity were concerned.

It was nearly nightfall before he returned; but he had bagged a good many birds, as he termed it, and enjoyed excellent sport. He was in high spirits, and full of laughter and jokes. As Ellen said, he was very easy to get acquainted with. He also made himself quite at home, and that pleased us all.

In the course of the evening he urged us to sing; for he had heard us humming some tunes while we were employed in clearing off the supper table. We sang the Messenger Bird, which pleased him very much. But what was our surprise after we had sang one verse to hear him strike up in the second verse and sing with us? He sang finely; for his voice was very sweet and highly cultivated. It so happened that he could sing every thing we could, and many things beside. He gave us two beautiful songs which really charmed Ellen.

We had, indeed, found excellent company, and the evening passed off most pleasantly. In the night I was awakened by Ellen's voice, singing the first line of the Messenger Bird. '*Thou art come from the Spirit-land.*' I had never before heard her sing while she was asleep.

'Do you really think he came from the Spirit-land?' I asked, laughing.

My voice awoke her, and she said 'who,' as she roused from her sweet dream.

'Why, the young man, of course,' I replied, laughing.

'What was I doing?' she asked, rubbing her eyes, and waking up.

'Singing the Messenger Bird,' I replied. 'And you sung the first line well, but seemed not able to get any further with the tune.'

'Good gracious!' she exclaimed, laughing heartily. 'I now remember. I thought I heard him singing that same tune, and so I suppose I struck in too.'

'Very likely,' I replied. 'Ellen, you are in love!'

'What makes you think so?' she asked, in a voice somewhat trembling.

'Because you sung in your sleep,' I answered. Then assuming a more serious tone, I continued. 'Ellen, guard your heart, and not love him too much before you're sure he loves you.'

'Do you think, Alice, he likes me?' she inquired, half in fun and half in earnest.

'He squints a good deal that way; but you must wait patiently,' I replied.

'Don't you think, Alice, he has a good heart?' she anxiously inquired.

'Upon my word he appears to have; but we shall know more about him before he leaves,' I answered.

'Think he will leave on Monday?' she asked.

'I should think not unless he takes you with him,' I answered.

She hunched my side with her elbow, turned over, and we courted sleep; for we were much fatigued with the excitement and the work we had done. Ellen slept soundly for the remaining part of the night for all I know; for I slept soundly myself.

The morning was beautiful, and we rose earlier than usual to assist aunt in preparing breakfast; for more birds were to be cooked, and the work all to be done in season for church.

The young man did not rise until breakfast was nearly ready, and then he appeared in a very handsome Sunday suit of summer clothes. He looked handsomer than he did the day previous, at least, so thought Ellen. After breakfast, he listened attentively while Uncle read a chapter in the Bible and sent up his morning orison. He had been accustomed to assemble at the Family Altar in his father's house.

After the evening services, we walked out with Frank and showed him the trout brook and some of its nearest cascades.—He was delighted with all he saw. He and Ellen were charmed together. Never did two seem to have tastes more alike than they did. It seemed to me as if they were born for each other, and that a kind Providence had thus thrown them together.—Our walk was a delightful one. We returned just as twilight began to fall upon the river and the green meadows, and clothe them in its soft and dusky garments. I saw Ellen's hand in his, and I almost felt the pressure of the colonel's soft, warm hand! But no more of that now. They were true lovers, and the day might soon come when I must part with Ellen. The thought was disagreeable, and yet I knew it was all right. I wished I might be as fortunate as she appeared to be. I felt as if I could not think of becoming the wife of John Armstrong; yet he was a worthy, intelligent, honest, industrious young man. But those qualities alone did not satisfy me. There was something beyond for which my heart sighed; yes, an indescribable something!

Sunday evening was passed most pleasantly. Every moment Ellen seemed to be drawn closer and closer to her lover, and he appeared to be quite as fond of her.—That evening after we retired, Ellen confessed that she loved him, and thought it

strange that she fell in love so suddenly.— I told her it was just as I expected it would be when she happened to see the right one. It was the first time her heart had ever been touched with the talismanic power of love. And how pure was that love? It was begat by no art or tricks or deception of man. It was a plant that grew up spontaneously, and the rich soil of her heart made it grow apace, budding and bearing blossoms almost in the same day! And yet it was not forced like a greenhouse flower. His love, too, seemed to partake of the same character. Uncle and aunt were surprised at such a sudden development of the tender passion. And why shouldn't they be surprised? Didn't they court for years? Yes; for more years than Ellen had ever lived! A very good reason for their surprise, and no wonder they felt it.

In the evening John Armstrong made us a visit, and was introduced to Frank Stuart. They appeared to enjoy the society of each other much better than I expected they would. John was intelligent for a country born and bred young man. But why do I thus qualify his intelligence? Are not young men in the country quite as intelligent and even more so, in all useful and practical information than those who have always lived in the city? My experience and observation teach me that they are. True, there are some things which the young men of the city know to which the young men of the country are strangers. And fortunate for them and the young ladies with whom they associate, that they are thus ignorant.

John Armstrong was quite a reader, and the owner of a very good, though small library. His knowledge of history far exceeded that of Frank Stuart, and the general laws and constitutions of our country were more familiar to him than they were

to Frank: but in polite literature, in theatrical and musical knowledge, in novel reading and in matters of taste, Frank was his superior, and could repeat more lines of poetry and quote Shakspeare more readily. Such studies had not very extensively engaged the attention of the young farmer.— There were some demonstrations in their intercourse which I now remember with pleasure.

They came together as strangers, but soon became friends, a mark of good dispositions in both. John did not envy Frank for his fine clothes and superior knowledge in mere matters of taste, and Frank did not exhibit a single sign in all their intercourse that he felt above the young Green Mountain farmer.

Pleasant indeed was their intercourse, and at the time it seemed strange to me that it was so; for two young men seldom or ever met who were so dissimilar in outward appearance; John was tall, rather awkward in his movements; with red hair, freckled face, long neck, prominent nose and large mouth; while Frank possessed a very symmetrical form, graceful movements; black, shining, curling hair; a handsome face and beautiful, small white hands. Young ladies are somewhat prone to look at gentlemen's hands, and Frank's were perfect models, while John's were very large, and the skin on the backs much freckled and his fingers were very long.— There was indeed a great contrast in the looks of their hands. I doubt very much if Ellen would have fallen in love with Frank if his hands had been formed like the young farmer's. Her mind was so constituted that she looked for perfection in every thing, and the least thing out of joint gave her pain.

During the evening we sung several pieces of sacred music, very much to the

satisfaction of ourselves, at least. John's voice was full and musical, and he was considered the best bass singer in our town. Frank complimented him very highly for the good qualities of his voice, and John spoke much in praise of Frank's tenor voice. And what was better than all they were sincere in their compliments. Uncle and aunt were highly gratified with our little concert. I never entertained so high an opinion of young Armstrong's good qualities of head and heart as I did on this occasion; and yet I frankly confess his form and manners never appeared worse to me. I could not help continually contrasting them with Frank's. When they were singing, how different the forms of their mouths! But I will not enter into particulars. Comparisons are odious, and I forbear to make them. We passed the evening very pleasantly. And O, how rapidly did the heavenly plant of love grow in the warm hearts of Frank and Ellen!

CHAPTER XVIII.

A parson's notions about love. Preparations for leave-taking. Asking consent. Emotions occasioned by parting with friends. The departure of a guest and lover, &c.

A WEEK had passed since Frank Stuart visited our humble dwelling, and still he lingered, dividing his time between killing birds and making love; but giving to the latter more time and attention than he did to the former. The good parson gave it as his deliberate opinion, that no earthly power ought to be exercised to break up such a happy union of hearts. He said he had never seen any thing like it on earth, and fully believed that such pure and holy affection would be remembered in the Spirit-land.

'I feel warranted in saying, my dear, that such an affection springs from a pure and holy fountain which can never be dried up,' he remarked, addressing aunt. 'It is a subject upon which I have reflected for years, and now come to the conclusion that such sympathy of souls as appears to exist between Ellen and this young gentleman will live through the endless ages of eternity.'

'But in a more perfect state, my dear,' replied aunt, taking a pinch of snuff, while he poured out a volume of smoke from his mouth, and knocked the bowl of his pipe upon one of the andirons to get the ashes out; for he had finished his smoking.

'Very true, my love,' he answered.— 'There will be in the other world continual progress and improvement. But the young man is coming, and we may expect him to say something upon the subject.'

Young Frank entered the room in a very modest, unassuming manner. The expression upon his countenance showed that thoughts of intense interest in his mind were seeking for utterance.

'I fear, sir, I have intruded upon you quite too long already, and think of starting on my journey home on the morrow,' said Frank, in a tremulous voice that showed how deeply he felt.

'No apologies, my young friend,' said the parson, frankly. 'We have been happy with your company, and should be pleased to have it longer, if you can make it convenient to tarry with us.'

'O, yes, you can stay just as long as you can put up with our homely fare,' said aunt. 'We are homespun people and make no pretensions to style and fashion.'

'My dear madame, say nothing of that,' he replied. 'I have never fared better in my life, and I trust you are aware how much I have enjoyed myself. I pre-

sume the thought has occurred to you that I have been somewhat attentive to your adopted daughter, Ellen Rose.'

'We have noticed something of that kind,' said aunt.

'I can assure you that my attentions are honorable,' he continued. 'Heaven knows my heart, and I would not deceive you or *her*.'

The word *her* he pronounced with a peculiar tone of voice, while a single tear stole into his left eye. He was evidently very much agitated; but he soon recovered himself.

'We believe you, my good friend,' replied the parson. 'The young man who could deceive such a beautiful girl as Ellen Rose must have a corrupt heart, indeed.'

'You speak truly,' replied Frank.—'My heart assures me that I have practiced no arts to win Ellen's affection, and surely she has practiced none to win mine. I believe we love each other so much that a separation would endanger the happiness of both; therefore I ask you to give her to me that our happiness may be consummated in honorable marriage.'

'You are aware that Ellen knows no father or mother, and that a great mystery hangs over her birth and parentage,' said aunt.

'Indeed I am,' he replied. 'But that makes no difference with me. The birth of one is a circumstance over which no control can be exercised, and for which no one can be held morally responsible. It is enough for me to know that I love her and believe her to be virtuous.'

'You reason well, my young friend,' added the parson. 'But it is my dear companion who has the disposal of Ellen. She was given to her by a stranger who said he was fully authorized to make the gift.'

'You may take her,' said aunt, in a trembling voice, while the tears stood in her eyes as well as in his; for both were much affected.

'May Heaven bless you,' he said, leaving the room, and hurrying to Ellen to communicate the joyous news to her. I will not undertake to describe their feelings and emotions on that occasion. And the affair was settled to the heart's content of both.

And how I wished I could be so happy as they appeared to be! But my turn had not come. And the thought struck me very forcibly; 'will it ever come?' Kind reader, let not such thoughts disturb the quiet of thy mind! They crowded on my mind and heart at an age quite too early. I can now see the danger of indulging thoughts and feelings like those. They form a romantic and dazzling world which can never be reached. I don't disparage true and heartfelt love. O, no; I am not liable to such an accusation. I think as highly of the tender passion as any one else; but my object is to warn the young and inexperienced not to put all their eggs in a single basket; for surely some of them will be broken, and peradventure all may be broken at one fell crash. And then on what shall we lean for support and comfort? The mind, when properly educated and disciplined, has many resources upon which we can draw in the hours of adversity: but if we train it to love a single object, and that object fails us, on what can we rely? That is a question which may very properly challenge the attention of the young.

Another day came, and Frank Stuart made preparations for leaving the scenes which had so recently become endeared to him. Soon after Ellen awoke, I noticed she was silent and thoughtful. I turned and gazed upon her lovely face as her

head lay upon the pillow among the rich curls of her dark hair. O, how beautiful were that head and face? What a subject for either painter or sculptor! There they were in all their innocence and loveliness. And very soon the beautiful picture was to adorn another pillow, and rest beside another head! Ever since childhood we had slept together, and never parted for a single night. Soon Ellen's bright eyes were filled with tears, and her bosom with emotions, as I silently gazed upon her.

'I know what you are thinking about,' Ellen said, with quivering lips, and eyes brimful of tears, those precious jewels of the soul.

'And pray, dear Ellen, what is that?' I asked.

'That he is going to leave me!' she replied, with a voice choked with emotions.

'Yes; and that you are going to leave me too,' I added.

'O, I almost wish I had never seen him!' she exclaimed, sobbing quite loud. 'O God, pardon me for indulging that wish for a moment! No, no! I don't wish so, I must not! I do not! You must go with me when I leave these green meadows, familiar old hills, the brooks, the cascades, the river, our beautiful maple grove, and all! Yes—yes, you must go with me and then we will be happy still!'

'But we can't sleep together,' I said.

She turned her bright eyes upon me for a moment and then rolled them up to the ceiling overhead. She was silent, and so was I. We remained so some minutes.—Our emotions were intense, and we felt strangely.

'But we shall be with each other all the days and evenings,' she continued.

'So we will,' I replied, throwing my arm about her neck and resting my cheek upon hers.

Again we were silent and thoughtful.—O, thought I, how happy he must be who can occupy my position. How sweet her breath, and how angelic her countenance! But the Fates had so ordered it that I must give place to another, and why should I complain? I shall lose one companion and may find another.

'O, the thought that we shall be together still, makes me happy,' she said, imprinting upon my cheek a warm and affectionate kiss. 'No, no, we will not separate! He will ask you to go with us, I know he will. Yes, dear Alice, we will still live together, until you find one you love as I love him!'

'May Heaven so order it,' I added, returning her warm kiss, and embracing her more closely. O, our love for each other was pure and innocent.

We arose and hurried from our chamber to assist aunt in preparing the last breakfast for our guest. Ellen tried to be cheerful and joyous; but there was a load upon her heart she could not shake off.—Breakfast passed off very pleasantly, morning prayers were offered up, and the beautiful gray horse was taken from the stable and harnessed into the carriage. The little dog, Rose, was all life and animation, and jumped up as if he would kiss Ellen. She had made much of the little spaniel, and he had a great affection for her.

'O, Rose,' she said. 'I wish you were going to stay with me!'

Frank stood in the door, and happened to hear Ellen's remark. He came immediately in, and said. 'Dear Ellen, Rose, shall remain with you until I return. I shall hunt no more at present.'

'No,' I added, smiling. 'You have found all the game you want.'

'Never were words more true, spoken by human lips,' he added.

Ellen blushed, and patted the spaniel's head as he gazed into her face and wagged his bushy tail.

'O, I'm so happy Rose will remain with me,' said Ellen. 'But won't he mourn your absence and be unhappy!'

'He won't mourn his absence more than you will,' I said, laughing.

Ellen turned her eyes upon me; but remained silent. She called Rose, and shut him up in a small closet.

'You must not let him run at large for a day or two, if you do, he will follow the track of the horse,' said Frank.

'O, I will take excellent care of him,' she replied.

'No question of that,' I added, smiling, and endeavoring to joke a little, in order to make their separating the less painful; for I noticed their feelings were worked up to the highest pitch, and still they repressed them as well as they could.

The gun and fishing rod and trunk were put on board the carriage, and the horse was pawing the ground, being anxious to go. Frank shook hands with us all; bid us an affectionate farewell, hurried to his carriage, and drove off. Ellen stood gazing after him until a turn in the road hid him from her sight. She then turned away with her eyes full of tears, and partially opened the door of the closet where the little spaniel was. He thrust his nose through the opening and covered Ellen's face with his affectionate kisses. The dog seemed to know his master was gone; for when he found his carressing Ellen would not procure his liberty, he whined and moaned bitterly. She closed the door, and sought her chamber; for she could not endure the sorrow which Rose manifested.

Now our pleasant guest was gone, we began to return to our old habits of living again. Aunt had exerted herself to the

utmost to please him, and most admirably did she succeed in her efforts. Uncle, too, had acted well his part, and Frank Stuart took his leave well pleased with his treatment at our house.

The day wore away, and Ellen exerted herself to quiet the dog. His instinct told him that his master was gone, and his whining showed how deeply he regretted the separation. Frank would not have left him with any other mortal except Ellen; for he was much attached to him, and always kept him with him.

Night came, and once more Ellen and I were in our bed, the one we had slept in ever since our childhood. Ellen was somewhat sad; but I endeavored to keep up her spirits by occasionally making her laugh. But the task I found much harder than usual. A change had evidently come over the spirit of her dream. It seemed to me she had at once passed from girlhood to womanhood, and I felt she had now found an idol to worship. I was so wicked, if I may use that term in this connection, that as to feel as if she did not love me so much as she did before she saw Frank Stuart; but the thought was unjust to her.

'I suppose now, Ellen, you will not love me so well as you used to,' I said. 'You have found an idol that occupies all your heart.'

'Why, Alice, how can you talk so?' she asked, in a voice of trembling. 'I never loved you more than I do this moment.'

And she then threw her arms about my neck and kissed me as cordially as she ever did in her life. I felt rebuked, and regretted that I had made such a remark, and apologized for it, or rather excused it by saying I was only joking. I found her the same tender-hearted, innocent, virtuous and angelic creature she had always been. I was satisfied there was room enough in her heart for me and Frank, too. And

how I did love her! Who so cold-hearted as not to love her? It was very seldom that she ever said any thing to me about her parents, and I was not so cruel as to broach the subject first. My curiosity was always intense to know from what origin she sprung, and she would have given worlds to have known herself; but that secret seemed to be forever a sealed book to her. I hoped after she was married and taken up her abode in the city that she would find out something about her connections in this life.

The morning broke bright and beautiful; but we were not greeted with the smiles of the young sportsman. He was far distant from us, and would not return until some weeks had elapsed. We commenced our daily tasks as usual, and did a great share of the housework; for aunt had instructed us very faithfully in that art and mystery.

CHAPTER XIX.

The important letter. Celebration of a wedding. The journey to the city.—Incidents on the way. Arrival home. The reception, &c.

'O, ALICE, dear, I have received another letter from Frank!' exclaimed Ellen, as she came running into the house, after having travelled more than a mile to the post office.

'And what does he write?' I asked, gazing into her animated countenance.

'That he will be here next week,' she replied, smiling, and blushing too.

'Yes, yes, that tell-tale blush on your cheeks informs me that he then expects to be married,' I said, smiling.

'He does write something like that,' she said. 'But you will go with us to Boston. I have the consent of your uncle and aunt.'

'But there's one more consent to obtain,' I added.

'And that is easily obtained,' she replied. 'He will be very anxious to have you accompany us; for he once told me as much.'

The above conversation took place some six weeks after Frank Stuart had taken his leave of us, and now we expected to see him again in a few days. Ellen was all excitement, and told Frank's little dog that his master would be here in a few days.—It was really amusing to hear her talk to him just as if he understood every word she said. And he did seem to understand her. He was very much attached to her and followed her whenever she went from the house.

'But, Ellen,' I asked; 'what have you there beside your letter?'

Noticing something in the letter, I asked her the question; but at first she smiled, and refused to let me know.

'Yes, I will tell you, dear Alice,' she said, taking out of the letter a one hundred dollar bank note and handing it to me.

'A splendid present, intended I suppose to purchase the wedding dress,' I said.

And such proved to be the fact; but aunt said, it was not necessary for him to send the money for that, because she had money which was left when Ellen was.

Days and nights quickly passed, and every hour Ellen expected her lover. At last he came with the same gray horse but with a more splendid carriage. Yes, one that contained two seats to which Ellen pointed very significantly.

I shall not undertake to describe the meeting of these warm-hearted lovers; but let the reader imagine for himself. That it was a most enthusiastic one, cannot be doubted. I have never witnessed such a one before nor since.

Preparations were set on foot for the marriage which came off in the course of a week after his arrival. That ceremony I shall pass over by barely saying it was a glorious wedding, and many guests were invited.

The reader may now consider me on a journey to Boston in a carriage with Frank Stuart and his lovely wife. But the reader may be curious to know how I parted with that good, honest, young farmer, John Armstrong. He was at the wedding, and appeared somewhat downcast when he heard I was to accompany the bride and bridegroom to Boston. But it was expected that I should return before winter set in, and that circumstance, in some degree, quieted his mind; and yet he seemed to fear that I might not return so soon, if at all. Now this good fellow had never told me in so many words that he loved me; yet the fact was apparent to all. I entertained no doubts upon the subject, and, therefore, could not feel entirely indifferent towards him; for no girl can feel indifferent towards one who she knows loves her. This young man was a true philosopher, and viewed human character through a correct medium, and in a proper light. He had studied my mind and character well; for he was qualified for such a study.

On the occasion of Ellen's wedding, he found an opportunity to speak to me in private. Now, John Armstrong was not nervous, but could control his feelings at any time, or under any circumstances.

'I'm sorry you are going to leave us even for a short time,' he said. 'But I trust you will safely return and be contented still to live in the country.'

'I presume, I shall,' I replied, gazing into his homely but honest face.

'You may find attractions which will make you forget the scenes in the country,'

he continued. 'But, Alice, be cautious and suffer not yourself to be deceived by outside show and foolish ornament. Human life is of more consequence than to be thus trifled with. A great poet has said, 'The world is still deceived with ornament.' That was true when the words were penned, and it is true now. Villains congregate in cities, where they can find more plunder, and more victims than they can in the country. Be watchful over yourself.'

I thanked him kindly for his good wishes in my behalf, and hoped prosperity would attend him through life. Such was our last interview, and his words were still in my memory; for I knew they came from a true and honest heart.

The weather was fine, and our journey exceedingly pleasant. Frank and Ellen were the happiest mortals I ever saw.—They were completely bound up in each other. O, how lovely in my eyes appeared such an union of hearts! And how could I suppress the wish that I might be thus happy! Often the colonel's image flitted across my fancy; and the thought sometimes occurred to me that I might meet him in the great crowds of the city.—Strange that such thoughts should occasionally rush into my mind, especially since I had not seen or heard from him for so many years! Many years! Yes, they were many to me, although they might seem few to most persons.

We travelled all day, but quite leisurely, and at night put up at a fine public house. There were crowds of people in the village where we stopped, and the hotel appeared to me to be quite full. The more persons I saw the more I thought of the long absent colonel. I looked out of the window upon the crowds passing below, not knowing, yes, and even hoping I might see his handsome form among them;

but I gazed upon the multitude in vain.—His form did not meet my eyes. How distinctly I remembered his declarations of love made to me when I was but a little girl! I believed he was sincere, and that he did love me as ardently as his words indicated. I wondered if he would love me still, should he happen to see me. But why did such thoughts disturb and bewilder my mind! I said to myself, 'he is now, no doubt, a married man with a family of children and a wife whom he loves. And surely he could not love me. He must have forgotten me, or he would again have come to aunt's to see me!'

At the hotel we had a splendid supper by ourselves; for Frank said he would not expose us to the gaze of the common guests who usually sat at the public table. I confess it would have pleased me better to have eaten at the public table where I could have seen more people. I always indulged quite a curiosity to see strangers and new faces. In that respect I was different from Ellen, who cared more about nature's scenes than she did about men or women until she saw Frank Stuart. In passing through the hall, I occasionally saw several well-dressed young men with cigars in their mouths who seemed to gaze upon me very intently. I heard one say to another as I passed along—'That's a devilish fine girl! I wonder where she belongs? Let us go to the register and see who she is.'

They started off I suppose to gratify their curiosity. I did not fancy the young man's form of expression; but the substance of it was rather pleasing than otherwise. A devilish fine girl! One word I thought might have been omitted; and such an omission would have improved the compliment.

The day was fine, and our ride exceedingly pleasant; but we did not reach the

city until the fourth day. Frank was very careful of his horse, and drove leisurely. I was anxious to see the city; but the ride was so pleasant that my patience held out well.

The fourth day, just before sunset, we came in sight of the city. And how much the prospect excited me! Ellen, too, was highly pleased with the variety of views. We were driven up to a splendid house, and soon ushered into a spacious, richly furnished room. What a change from uncle's humble dwelling on the bank of Onion River.

Much time did not elapse before we were introduced to Frank's father and mother. His father appeared much older than his mother. His hair was quite gray, and his health very feeble and his steps tottering; but he was exceedingly polite and affable. The mother was a fine lady, and enjoyed excellent health. She received us with much joy and enthusiasm, especially after she had taken a full view of Ellen's face. She was perfectly satisfied with her son's choice. And what mother would not have been?

O, how pleasant was our meeting with such kind-hearted friends! It was a happy moment for us all. The old gentleman was delighted with his daughter-in-law, and seemed to be very much attached to her in a very short time after she had made her toilette. And to tell the truth, I had no occasion to be envious; for the old gentleman jokingly remarked that his son had not taken the handsomer one, thereby complimenting me. He was a jolly old man for one whose health was so feeble; I was much delighted with him. His wife, too, made herself exceedingly agreeable to both of us, although she was somewhat more reserved than her husband, and would appear to those who were not familiarly acquainted with her a little more aristocratic. My little trunk was carried to the chamber which was appropriated for my use. And what a beautiful room it was, and how elegantly furnished. How vastly superior to the chamber Ellen and I had left! Such splendor and style we had not been accustomed to.

Thus passed the evening, and I retired to my lonely chamber. Yes, it was lonely notwithstanding it was so pleasant and elegantly furnished. It was a long time before I could close my eyes in sleep; and when I did sleep, it was only to dream of home, of John Armstrong, and of that everlasting colonel. I awoke, and my last thoughts were upon that old angler; but I strove to drive him from my mind and think of the thousand novelties that would greet my eyes in the great city. I arose, and how conveniently arranged was every thing in my chamber, and how fresh and comparatively new. I always liked good things; but I never expected to see so many as now surrounded me. I wondered what aunt would say, if she could only take one pinch of snuff in my chamber, and glance her sharp eyes about my room for a few moments. She would think there was much extravagance.

Breakfast came, and how nicely every thing was arranged upon the table, and what splendid dishes! But after all, the cooking was not so good as aunt's; at least, it did not taste so to me.

Two or three young gentlemen, friends of Frank, called in the evening, and a social time was enjoyed. I overheard one of them compliment Frank on the beauty and loveliness of his wife; and at the same time remarked that he thought I was equally beautiful. Frank told him I had always been considered the more beautiful of the two. Those remarks I treasured in my memory. The young gentleman who thus complimented me, was fine-looking; but sedate and sober, in thought and manner. He was a religious young man and very highly esteemed by a large circle of friends and acquaintances. His name was Edwin Sumner. To me he paid very marked attention. But let that pass for the present.

CHAPTER XX.

The progress of events. The ride. The old man's council. The difference in character. A parallel between two young men. The struggle of the heart, &c.

TIME flies swiftly. Two weeks had passed since my arrival in Boston, and they seemed but so many days. Edwin Sumner became quite a frequent visitor at the house. Ellen said he was smitten with me, and old Mr. Stuart took occasion to joke me very often, and spoke in the highest terms of praise of the young man.—And well he might; for Edwin was worthy, and highly intelligent and pure-minded. There was no trick about him; for every thing he said came from the honest convictions of his heart. A stranger to flattery, he spoke the words of truth and soberness; but after all he did not seem to correspond with my beau ideal. I began to believe he loved me, and I had good reasons for that belief. Frank joked me quite hard upon the subject, and Ellen went so far as to say that I need not expect to return to the home of my childhood. Such jokes I bore in patience and fortitude; for I began to think favorably of a city life, and in some good degree to forget the mountains, brooks and meadows of Vermont. I could forget such things more easily than Ellen could. As the reader already knows, she was a most enthusiastic admirer of country scenes; and all the love she bore her husband, and all the splendor and novelty that surrounded her could not make her forget them.

One afternoon, Frank's father invited me to ride with him. The invitation I gladly accepted, and we rode out into the country a few miles among the highly cultivated farms and the pleasant villages.—The old gentleman was feeble, but very

sociable and pleasing. He questioned me about the story of my life, and spoke of my future prospects.

'Ah, my dear girl,' said he, in his musical tone of voice. 'Your charms have won the true affections of the best-hearted young man I was ever acquainted with. I consider Edwin Sumner a prize for any young lady. He became pious at a very early age, and he is studying divinity; and I can assure you, he will make one of the first preachers of the age. His father left him a large estate, and he devotes a good share of it to missionary and other religious purposes; but without a cent of fortune he would be a great prize for any young lady to draw in the lottery of human life. He seems to be above the temptations which lure so many of our young men to ruin.—Didn't you hear him say last evening that he considered this world merely as a dress chamber, in which we are to prepare for a higher and nobler life?'

'I do remember his remark,' I replied, gazing up into his intelligent, benevolent face, and wishing my old age might be as lovely as his.

'My son's wife is a charming woman, and I hope his love for her will restrain him from many follies which he is somewhat inclined to practice. He has been somewhat wild, and too susceptible of sudden impressions; but I hope now he will devote all his time to his wife and to some legitimate employment. He does not intend to be wicked; but I fear some of his former associates were so, and I have trembled for the consequences. I rejoice that he is married to such a good and beautiful woman. My dear girl, I speak plainly to you; but it is for your good. When I have finished my course here I shall leave him a large estate; but I should greatly prefer to see him governed by such

moral and religious principles as young Sumner is, without a fortune, than see him possess all the wealth of this city.—But I pray for him continually, and hope Heaven will hear my prayers. Without true religion there is danger that temptations will lead him astray from those paths in which he has been instructed to walk.'

'O, sir, I think he is a good-hearted young man, and will live a happy and virtuous life,' I added.

'I hope so; but temptations are great!' he replied. 'He has an angel of a wife, and may God grant that her power over him, may restrain him from all those sins which so easily beset young men in our city, and alas! not only young men, but those more advanced in life.'

He now questioned me in relation to the history of Ellen. He had heard that she knew not who her parents were, or whether they were living or not. I related to him all I knew of her history, to which he listened with much attention.

'It is very strange that no more has ever been discovered in relation to her origin,' he said. 'But the Book of Books teaches us to love and respect her just as much as if she was a legitimate member of the most respectable family in the city. She had no control or agency in her birth, and is not responsible for the sins of her parents. O, my dear Alice, I feel as if I loved her the more because she was thus born and left to the care of strangers! I hope it is all for the best that my son went into the country and loved such a woman. The ways of Providence are indeed mysterious: God's ways are above our ways.'

He was now silent for some minutes, and appeared to be wrapped up in deep and earnest meditation. His lips moved, and his countenance shone with peculiar brightness. O, a heavenly expression was in his deep blue eyes—one that I shall

never forget. No doubt, he was in silent prayer to that Being in whom he put all his trust! At last he broke the silence, and said:

'The 2 is another young man who is a constant visitor at our house, with whom my son is very intimate. His name is Charles Homer. What do you think of him? He seems also to show you marked attention.'

'He is a very pleasant and agreeable person,' I replied, wondering why the good old man alluded to him at that moment, after he had been so long silent.

'A handsomer face and form than young Sumner possesses I suppose you think,' continued this shrewd man, who seemed to read my inmost thoughts.

'I do think he is a very handsome young fellow,' I replied. 'Don't you think so?'

'I do,' he quickly replied. 'But what is outward form compared with inward grace? What are graceful manners and light and even pleasing conversation compared with a soul that tenderly loves and constantly adores Him who made it?'

'True,' I remarked, hardly knowing what more to say. I was much better pleased with Charles Homer than I was with Edwin Sumner, and this good old man knew the fact, and hence his solicitude to put me on my guard.

'I see how it is, my dear girl,' he continued, appearing to be aroused and to speak with more fervor and eloquence than usual. 'You are better pleased with him than you are with young Sumner, and I'm sorry to say it, so is my son. Charles Homer has talents and much art and cunning, and Heaven knows I would not do him any injustice in thought or word. His parents were good people but they died when he was quite a boy leaving him a large estate. He was then left without a

guide, and the temptations of a city life have lured him from the path in which young Sumner delights to walk. While Sumner has taken care of his property as a faithful and Christian steward, giving every year a portion of it to the cause of humanity, Homer has wasted a part of his in riotous living, and seeking for those things which yield no substantial pleasure. I fear if some power does not check him in his career, he will ere long become poor and find a dishonorable grave! I could wish that my son was less intimate with him; for I fear his influence over him is not good. I have thus given you a few hints upon which I trust you will improve. You have the gift of personal charms in an extraordinary degree; but such gifts sometimes prove the ruin of their possessors.—The city is oftentimes a fatal market to bring beauty to. I'm now far advanced in years and the grave must soon close over my wasted form; I have seen much wickedness and misery in human life, and have endeavored to relieve it. And God is the sole judge of my motives. When one is miserable and unhappy, the fault generally lies at his own door. True, there is sickness in the world, and we are all born to die and give place to others; but the sum of human misery has not its source in sickness nor in death. The sharpest pains are those of a guilty conscience. Sickness can be borne with fortitude and even patience, and death can be suffered in calm resignation, if the heart is right in the sight of Heaven; but a guilty conscience, who can bear?'

He was now silent and thoughtful; but O, how solemn and truthful were his admonitions! How purely eloquent were his words, and how like a spirit's the tones of his voice! Never, O, never will they cease to live in my memory! I can hear

them now while I am penning these few pages. And would to Heaven the young might hear and cherish them in their heart of hearts!

The sun was quite low when we returned from our ride. The evening came, and with it Edwin Sumner and Charles Homer. I gazed upon them with a deeper interest than ever; for the old gentleman's words were fresh in my memory. I conversed with one and then with the other, and endeavored to be cheerful; but there was a weight upon my heart I could not well shake off. And I even wished I might love young Sumner. But in spite of all the admonitions I had received from the lips of purity and wisdom, young Homer's manner and conversation pleased me the most.

The reader must not infer from this, that I had fallen in love with him. At every interview he seemed more and more interested in me, and to show me more marked attention. That he was a gay liver and fond of pleasure, and even a spendthrift, I had no reason to doubt; for I believed all the good man had told me; and yet the thought crossed my mind that I might have power enough to reform him. Fatal delusion that has deceived thousands. 'A reformed rake makes the best husband!' How often have I heard that maxim quoted! Yes, it is true, that a reformed rake may make a good husband; but who is so foolish as to run the risk? My kind female readers, lay not that flattering unction to your souls! You may fancy you have the power to reform a young man whose morals hang loosely about him; but the safer course is to take one who needs no such reforming.

Charles Homer invited me to a ride with him; but I was not at the moment in the right humor to accept it, and therefore

respectfully declined it. Young Sumner heard the conversation upon the subject, and appeared to be highly gratified with the result; but Ellen's husband was not quite so well pleased; for Homer was his most intimate friend and companion. And Ellen, too, seemed to be more pleased with him than she was with Sumner. But she had not heard what the opinions of the old man eloquent were. The time had not come when he felt at liberty to address her as he had spoken to me. I wished he would give her some gentle hints respecting young Homer; for I even thought more of her happiness and domestic peace than I did of my own. Her marriage had not in the least degree diminished my regard for her, neither did it appear to lessen her esteem of me. We were yet strong friends, and did not believe any earthly power could make us otherwise. I thought of what would be her situation and emotions, if her loving husband should become a spendthrift, waste his property, gamble, drink, or become addicted to any other vice which might estrange his affections from her.—And was there not some danger of such a terrible catastrophe, if there were any truth in the words of the wise old gentleman?—My better reason and judgment told me there was danger, and yet I hoped it was far off. The truth is, I knew she was so good and kind that I thought she could not manage a husband so well as I could; besides, I was two years older, and that circumstance had some influence over me.

I thought of his father's death, and the effect that might have upon him. We had lived together so long that I really felt as if I was yet a sort of guardian over her. Strange that only two years her senior should have given me so much consequence in my own eyes; but such was the fact. Ellen had always adhered to my

council, and advice, I had never known her oppose any opinion advanced. She gave me quite as much credit for prudence and wisdom as I deserved; and to tell the truth, she always gave me more than I was entitled to. But I have one consolation, I am not conscious of ever advising her but for her good. It was not in my heart to do otherwise. It always seemed to me that she could not bear the adverse winds of fortune so well as I could; but why I should feel so strong is more than I can give any good reason for. But such had always been my feelings.

CHAPTER XXI.

The concert. The charms of music. Opera glasses, and their effects. A nervous spasm. The colonel discovered. A girl's soliloquy, &c.

'We are to have a splendid concert this evening, my dear,' said Frank to his wife, 'and you and Alice must go. A celebrated songstress is to make her *debut* before a Boston audience. It promises to be a great musical banquet.'

'I should admire to go,' said Ellen, smiling.

'And you have a double invitation, Alice,' he said, presenting me a note from Charles Homer, in which he extended an invitation to me.'

'I shall be highly pleased to attend,' I said, reading the very polite note, and safely depositing it in my bosom.

'You and Ellen must rig out in your very best style,' he continued, laughing. 'And permit me to say, my friend Homer is in for it.'

'And what do you mean by that?' I asked, smiling.

'O, nothing, only he is smashed all up with your charms,' he replied. 'And I expect there will be many more in the same condition this evening when you show your bright eyes at the concert.'

'I guess they will live through it,' was my reply.

'But seriously, Alice, my friend Homer is decidedly in love with you,' he continued, with a more sober aspect. 'And a better hearted fellow never breathed, O, he would make you a charming husband! He would be all devotion. If I were a girl, I should rather have his little finger than Edwin Sumner's whole body. True, Edwin is well enough in his way, and would make some kind of girls a very good husband; but you ought not to be a parson's wife.'

'Your father thinks very highly of him,' I said.

'O, yes, father thinks highly of any one that is pious, and thinks just as he does on religious subjects,' he answered. 'Piety is well enough; but I don't like to see a young man's face too much elongated.—Such a visage becomes age, but not youth. Why, Sumner's face is now longer than father's, or any church deacon's. Say Deacon Armstrong's, if you please, or his son John's freckled face.'

'Now, husband, you needn't say aught against that young man; for Alice and I have received great kindness from him,' said Ellen, smiling.

'Yes, indeed, we have, and you may depend upon it we shall not soon forget him,' I added. 'I expect to go home before snow covers the old green mountains, and, perhaps, my name may yet be Mrs. Armstrong.'

'Yes, things look very much like it—have, indeed, a very, very hard squint in that direction,' he replied, while an arch smile played about his mouth.

'Stranger things than that have happened,' I said, laughing.

We laughed and joked for awhile, and he left the room. Just before night he returned, and said his friend Homer was the happiest person he ever saw. He was fearful you would not accept his invitation; but when I told him of the result, he was in extacies.

The idea of a handsome young man being in extacies on my account was not altogether displeasing, I can assure the reader. It did flatter my pride and ambition, and yet I had not wholly forgot the words of the good old father. I wondered how he would like my acceptance of young Homer's invitation. I had half a mind to ask him; but Ellen said I had better not, and I took her advice. He did not even know that I attended the concert with him; but supposed I went with Ellen and her husband. True, we all went in one carriage. While we were on the way, young Homer was very lively and cheerful and said a good many smart and witty things. I began to think he was in extacies, as Frank said, and I presume he would have been had I suffered him to hold my hand and keep his arm around my waist in the dark carriage. But the words of the lamented Miss Jemima Brown, '*don't let him touch one of your fingers*,' came fresh to my recollection, and I gently shook him off, very much to his disappointment and chagrin. He seemed to think because I had accepted his invitation to the concert that the whole matter was settled, and that he had a right not only to embrace, but a'so to kiss me, which he attempted to do, while he was whispering his flattering tales in my ear.

We entered the concert room and took some front seats which had been secured for us. It was our first appearance in pub-

lic, except at church. The house was much crowded, and the audience were very fashionably dressed. A circle of brilliant ladies met my eyes, and I longed for the curtain to rise that I might hear the music of which I was extravagantly fond. Young Homer sat at my side with a large opera glass which he used quite often in gazing upon the crowd. He very politely asked me to look through it, but I declined at first; for it did not seem very modest or decorous to be gazing at people through a spy-glass. However, when the curtain rose and the celebrated *cantatrice*, as my gallant called the woman, made her appearance amidst the clapping of hands and the demonstrations of applause, and began to pour forth her song, I took the glass and ventured to look at her. I was perfectly carried away into the upper regions by her music; I had never heard any thing like it before, and Ellen was as much pleased as I was. Her husband, too, had a glass which they used quite often. She sat beside me on the right and Homer on my left.

'That is sweeter music than the cascades of our beautiful brook on whose green banks we passed so many days of our girlhood,' I said to Ellen.

'Both are delicious,' she replied. 'One is Nature's music, and the other Art's. O, they are both delightful. But how the people do gaze at us!'

'True, they do,' I replied. 'But we must pay 'em by gazing back.'

'Capital!' said Homer, hearing my remark and handing me the opera-glass.

How that word did thrill my heart even in that brilliant assembly! 'Capital!'—Yes, that was the colonel's favorite and familiar word, and well did I remember it, I was sorry that Homer uttered it; for I did not wish to have my nerves so played upon at that time; but it had been spoken

and its effect produced. I took the opera-glass, and began to gaze upon the brilliant crowd to see how the ladies were dressed and view the gay and apparently joyous circle. At the same moment more than a score of glasses were levelled at me and Ellen, and in the hands of gentleman, too, both old and young! Do you believe, kind reader, that I gazed upon that crowd and indulged a hope that glass I held to my eye might reveal the manly form and handsome face of Colonel Carpenter? Believe it or not, such was the fact, and it may appear strange it was so.

'Good gracious!' whispered Ellen.—Every glass in the house seems to be levelled at us! And she dropped the glass upon her lap and let them look. But her modest nature shrank from such a gaze. I could brave it with more fortitude.

'Let them gaze to their heart's content,' I replied. 'They cannot look me out of countenance. We are just as good as they are, and look quite as well as any of the ladies, if we are country born and bred.'

'What elderly looking man is he who sits in one of the private boxes?', asked Homer, leaning over me, and addressing Frank. 'He has been gazing at us for a long time as if he recognized us.'

'I don't know the gentleman; but I think I have seen him before,' replied Frank, gazing at him through his opera-glass.

I took Homer's glass and directed it to the gentleman who was quite a distance from us. Gracious God! what a thrill went through my nerves! The glass fell upon my lap, and I trembled in every muscle, and fainted. [See Engraving.]

'You are not faint now, in this great crowd, are you, Alice?' anxiously inquired Ellen, after I had come too.

Homer and Frank noticed my embar-

assment and also manifested some concern. I told them I should soon be better, and that it would not be necessary to leave the concert room for fresher air. I passed it off as well as I could; but my nerves were severely shocked. I did not wish them to know the cause of my strange emotions. I cautiously and timidly turned my eyes to that private box again without the aid of the glass, and there I saw the elderly gentleman's glass still pointed at me. O, heavens! was I mistaken or not? No! no! I could not be; for even my naked eyes could now distinctly see the face and form of Colonel Carpenter, who some half dozen years ago made such warm declarations of love to me. I dared not let Ellen know that I had seen him, and hoped she would not make the discovery I had made. She did not. Before the last song was sung, I noticed that he had left the private box, and expected he would come to me; but he came not, and yet how I wanted to gaze into the depths of his dark blue eyes, and hear his musical voice.

The concert being over, we rose and made our way out among the crowd, I saw him standing beside the door as we passed out, gazing at all as they came out, and he saw me, too; but he didn't venture to address me. Every moment I expected he would speak, and trembled on the arm of my gallant, who remarked that he feared I was not quite well yet. No, I was not quite well, it is true. As we passed out, I saw him follow us and speak to the driver of our carriage in a low tone of voice. I hoped he asked the driver to what house he was going to convey us, and yet I hoped he would not. In truth I hardly knew what to hope or wish for. I was much embarrassed, and found great difficulty in controlling my feelings. But as good luck would have it, Ellen and the others thought it only a turn of ill health.

When we alighted from the carriage, I saw another carriage halt and a gentleman thrust his head out of the window a moment, and then was driven away. I was quite sure it was the colonel, who was determined to know and mark well the house of Mr. Stuart.

Much to the regret of young Homer I did not remain long in the drawing-room, but sought my chamber, where I hoped to quiet my nerves; for with the concert and seeing that man I was much excited. Soon I was in bed, but no sleep or pleasant dreams came to my relief.

'Then he has not forgotten me!' I said to myself, as I rolled over upon the other side, and hoped that change of position would court sleep to my eyes. Perhaps he loves me still and intends to have an interview. Strange, if he resides in this city, that he had never called to see me before I left my country home. I wonder if he is married! I think he is not or he would not have taken the trouble to follow me from the concert home. But how should I act if I should meet him? I wonder if I do love him, or is my feeling only remembrance of girlhood's days?—Truly I cannot tell; but his image has haunted me for a long time, and scarcely a day has passed but he has been the subject of my thoughts!

Thus I communed with my own spirit until the night was far advanced when I fell into a slumber and forgot the world and all its scenes. It was late before I made my morning toilette, and Ellen came up to see whether I was dead or alive.

'O, you are up then,' she said, as she entered my chamber. 'I'm glad to see you stirring; for I was fearful you might be sick.'

'O, no, I'm not sick, dear Ellen,' I replied. 'You know you and I were scarcely ever sick.'

'But you were really nervous last night,' she said. 'I never knew you so nervous before. I hope your gallant was not the cause of it. Do you think you should have been less nervous, if Edwin Sumner had been with you instead of young Homer?'

'That would have made no difference,' I replied, smiling.

'We had glorious music, didn't we?' she asked. 'I never heard a person sing as that lady did. How high she went up on the notes, clear beyond my reach, and then what beautiful shakes or trills! To accomplish that must have acquired practice. Don't you think, Frank says we must go to the theatre one of these evenings; but then he says the old folks musn't know it. By the way, Frank's father had a very bad night, and a physician was called, but he is better this morning. I fear that dear old gentleman is not long for this world. I think I can see he has failed within a week or two. O, I hope he will live many years yet.'

'I hope he will; but my fears are like yours,' I replied. 'O, I hope he will not die while I am here. It would be dreadful to see him die! And yet he is prepared for that change. He is not afraid to die. O, I wish I was as good as he is.'

'O, I love him!' she said. 'But you spoke of leaving. Frank says you will not leave us until next summer, and then we will all go and view those dear old mountains again, the crystal brooks, the green meadows and hear the music of our waterfalls. O, how I long to see them all, and we shall see them next summer.'

'I hope we may,' I replied. 'The sight would gratify me. But I suppose I shall see them months before you do.'

'No, no, you will stay here through the winter,' she said. 'Frank says it isn't half so cold here as it is there, and, besides, you may be married before you ever see those dear old mountains again.'

She stepped out of the room, smiling, before I had time to make any reply, and I heard her light footsteps on the richly carpeted stairs as she hurried down to the parlor, where her dear Frank was reading an account of the last evening's concert in a morning paper. I soon followed, and heard him read a part of the article.—'The most brilliant galaxy of beauty graced the concert that ever was seen within those walls,' he read.

'There, said he, handing me the paper, and smiling, 'and you and Ellen were two of the brightest stars' in that galaxy.'

'It is time for a young gentleman to leave off flattering after he is married,' I said.

'No flattery; but the truth,' he continued. 'More opera-glasses were levelled at you and Ellen than there were to all the ladies in that brilliant circle, and these were in the hands of gentlemen, too.—The ladies were two envious to look at you, but the gentlemen did to their heart's content.'

'I hope their hearts were contented; but I think their arms must have ached holding up the glasses so long,' said Ellen. 'I never was so stared at in my life, and I'm quite sure that Alice was gazed at more than I was. Young Homer was proud to see the glasses thus pointed.—He is quite ambitious, and says if he weds a wife she must be the most beautiful in the city.'

'He is really aspiring,' said I. 'Perhaps he may find the most beautiful yet, if he travels far enough.'

'But he says he has found her,' added Frank, laughing.

'Well, if he thinks so, perhaps she will not consent to become his wife,' I said.

'Then his heart will break,' Frank added, laughing quite loud. 'Ah, Alice,

you will think differently one of these bright moonlit nights, when he is promenading with you on our beautiful Common.'

I made no reply; but continued to read the newspaper article on the concert. The bell rang for breakfast, and how I regretted that the old gentleman's chair was vacant. He was not well enough to take breakfast with us.

CHAPTER XXII.

The letter. The emotions occasioned by its perusal. Reasons for asking council of the aged and experienced. The private interview. The rich chamber and its lessons, &c.

THE next day after the concert, a lad brought me a note, which read as follows:

'MY DEAR ALICE,—How delighted I was to see you last evening! I know I can't be mistaken. It was your dear face I saw; for it could be that of no other woman on earth! How you have grown, and still more beautiful too. Never has your image been erased from my heart, and it never will be. I am the same loving bachelor I was when we wandered together beside the crystal brook far back into the country. O, what happy moments those where. I should have gone to see you, long ere this, but since I saw you I have been to London, to which city business called me. And while I was there among the crowds of millions my thoughts ran upon you. Yes, my dear Alice, your image has always been fresh in my memory, and never for a moment have I lost sight of it. While gazing upon the brilliant circle of ladies last evening, my thoughts were upon you even before I discovered you. And judge even of my surprise when my glass revealed to me that long loved face of yours. O, how my nerves were thrilled, and how my heart beat with emotions. Yesterday, I was thinking of going back into the country to find you; and you were already here! I would call and see you; but I dare not trust myself

to meet you in the presence of others, lest my nerves should show my feelings. I have one request to make, which is this. Meet me to-morrow afternoon, at three o'clock, near the old elm tree on the Common, and I will tell you all. If any thing should happen that you can't come to-morrow, drop a note in the post office when you will meet me. O, Alice, do grant this request, and relieve a heart that has long adored you. You know my name, but I shall sign this note by another, which you will understand. I take this precaution lest this note might fall into other hands than yours. I subscribe myself, yours forever,

THE OLD ANGLER.'

I read the above note through several times; but I will not undertake to describe the strange emotions its perusal awakened in my soul. An abler pen than mine could not perform that task; and the heart can only conceive them. It was fortunate that no one happened to be present when I received the note from the hand of the lad who brought it. Before breaking the seal I retired to my chamber, and there read, where no human eye could see me. The great question in my mind was, whether I should comply with his request or not.—Sometimes my better judgment told me to decline the invitation altogether; but then again my feelings would gain the ascendancy over my judgment. At one moment I thought I would lay the affair before the good old gentleman and ask his council and advice; at the next moment, something whispered me it would be of no use. All that day and the following night, and a part of the next day, I debated the question until I was in a feverish excitement. O, I would have given worlds if I possessed them to have known what was best for me. I dared not consult Ellen or her husband; but why didn't I advise with that good old man? Yes, that is a question the reader may reasonably ask. Yes, why didn't I consult with him whose council I might

have relied upon with the utmost confidence. I knew he was not only good and true, but wise and experienced in the ways of the world.

Ah, kind reader, the true reason why I did not ask his council and advice was because I feared he would persuade me not to go! That was the secret reason of my soul. And let me here say to the young and inexperienced, never refrain from asking the council of the aged and good, because you fear that council will not square with your own feelings and impulses. Remember that, and govern yourself accordingly.

You may yet learn before you have read all these pages that my advice is sound and true and worthy of being cherished in your memories. Would to Heaven I could have always had such a man by my side, and further, that I had always been willing to consult him and abide by his advice! But Heaven itself has no power over the past.

I said nothing; but hurried out to meet him at the time and place designated in his note. How strange were my emotions as I hurried along from one street to another! And O, heavens! how my heart beat when I came in sight of the old elm tree and thought I saw his form leaning against the fence that surrounded that ancient and venerable tree! Yes, it was his form as a nearer view revealed. I stopped and hesitated a moment. The thought struck me to return back; but such a dictate of sound judgment had no mastery over my feelings. I pressed on with beating heart and trembling steps. He saw me! And came towards me! How my heart beat against my sides as if it disdained such narrow bounds! We met, and my hand was in his warm grasp, and his lips fastened upon mine ere a word was spoken by either!

O, Miss Jemima Brown, why had thy words lost their potency! O, good father

Stuart; why did I forget thy advice at that moment? Where were all my senses?—Alas! I had but one thought, and that was on the 'Old Angler.' The feelings and impulses of six long years were crowded into a single moment! O, my young friends dismiss the dreams of your girlhood, and let a cool judgment always govern your actions.

'O, my dear Alice, this is the happiest moment of my life!' he said, as he reluctantly withdrew his lips from mine. 'A kind Providence has again brought us together after so long a separation. Since I saw you the last time before this, I have travelled over Europe, visited all the large cities, seen thousands of ladies; but have not seen one face among them all I love as I do yours. Haven't you often thought of me, my dear Alice? O, how I love that name. How many thousands times have I repeated it aloud that I might hear it when I was lying solitary and alone upon my bed in distant lands.'

'I have sometimes thought of you,' I tremblingly replied.

'Yes, I know you would; for Heaven designed us for each other,' he said, still holding my hand in his nervous grasp.—And I had not the power to withdraw it, even if I had been so disposed.

'We will not stay here where so many are passing,' he said. 'Let us go to my boarding house, and there we can, unmolested, talk over the past. O, I want to inquire all about the folks up in the country; and how I should like to revisit those green meadows, those old mountains and that bubbling brook with you by my side.'

I at first hesitated to comply with his request; but it was useless to resist. We passed to the street, there took a carriage and were conveyed to a large brick house. He rang the door-bell, and a large, fat,

blowsy looking woman ushered us in. She was full of smiles, and appeared very courteous and obliging. Soon we were conducted to a room, where we seated ourselves upon a sofa. The room was handsomely furnished. He sat and gazed upon me a moment, and then said he must kiss me before I told him the story of my life for the last few years. And he did kiss me; but I broke it off ere he desired, and then told him of all that had happened—of the deaths of uncle, and Miss Brown, the marriages of aunt and the parson, and of Ellen and Frank Stuart. He listened with much attention, apparently, and asked me many questions; especially did he question me about the young man who gallanted me to the concert; I frankly told him all.

An hour passed ere I was aware of it. He appeared to be the same cheerful, loving bachelor he was in the country. Time had changed him but a very little, and his travels had even improved his manners; at least such was my impression. He could hardly command words enough to express to me his love. Never did man's tongue run more smoothly.

Before we parted he made me promise to meet him at the same place the next day and at the same time, saying he should never be happy until he could call me his own.

I hurried home as fast as I could! for I had been gone longer than I had intended. And what strange emotions pressed my heart as I hurried my steps towards Mr. Stuart's! Ellen was wondering where I could be; for she was not present when I went out.

'Where in the world have you been?' she asked, as I entered the room where she sat working some lace. She was always very handy with the needle, much more so than I was.

'O, I have been out to take a short walk and the weather was so pleasant that I went to the Common,' I replied.

'You really look as if you had walked a good ways,' she added. 'You look fatigued. Don't you feel so?'

I told her I was not much fatigued; and endeavored to conceal from her keen eyes the feelings that agitated my bosom.

The following night was the most restless one I ever experienced, I rolled and tumbled upon my bed until towards morning before I could calm my nerves to sleep, and then I only slept to dream strange visions. That night, too, old Mr. Stuart was more ill, and sent for a physician, so that I had some excuse to make in the morning for not sleeping well. He continued worse through the day, and a port I hurried on my bonnet and shawl and hastened my steps to the place of meeting. When I went I excused myself to Ellen, that I believed a little exercise would do me good after being about the sick bed so long. Soon I found the spacious brick house, rang the bell, and was ushered in by the woman, who received me with smiles and much apparent kindness. I was a few minutes before the time.

'The colonel is not in at this moment, my dear, but will be shortly,' said the woman, curtesying, and smiling. 'You are very fortunate in having such a lover as Colonel Carpenter. He is one of the best men I ever knew, and very worthy, too.—But few gentlemen possess so much money as he does.'

'He appears to be very kind,' I replied, tremblingly.

'Ah, the young lady who gets him will have reason to bless her stars,' she replied. 'And permit me to say, my dear, I don't wonder he has fallen in love with you. I heard him speaking about a girl a week or two ago, he had once seen in the country

when he was on an angling excursion, and from his remarks I think you must be the same one. I told him then he was so enthusiastic in your praises that he would never see another girl whom he could love, and advised him to go into the country after you. And how fortunate for you both that he happened to see you at the concert.'

Thus she continued to talk until the colonel arrived, when he took me to his room, and almost smothered me with his kisses. He appeared to love me more intensely than ever. I was now certain that he had won the best affections of my heart. That strange feeling which I had so long cherished in my bosom, had suddenly ripened into the most ardent love, I could no longer doubt.

'O, my dear Alice,' he said, in a most musical voice and with the blindest smiles, as he withdrew his lips from mine. 'Age has improved that honey which I tasted so long ago on the bank of the beautiful water brook. Heaven be praised for granting this meeting. The time will very shortly come I trust, when we can be together all the time.'

I tarried with him nearly an hour, and told him how sick Mr. Stuart was and that I must go. He parted with me with much apparent reluctance; but not, however, before I had agreed to meet him the third time.

I hurried home, and just as I entered the house the sick man awoke from his slumber and called for me. I was glad that I arrived so opportunely; and hurried to his room, and a heavenly smile lit up his emaciated countenance as I entered

CHAPTER XXIII.

The chamber of death where the good old man meets his fate. New phases of character developed. The terrible effects of gambling and drinking, &c.

ANOTHER week had rolled away into the ocean of eternity, and at the solemn hour of midnight we were summoned to the chamber of death. The good old man was evidently dying. Two physicians were present and all the family. Such a scene I had never witnessed; for I had never seen a person in the last struggles of dissolution. Struggles did I say? There were no struggles in that chamber, save in the hearts of those who were anxiously gazing upon the dying Christian. He was calm and in full possession of all his senses.—He seemed to suffer no pains.

'My time has come,' he said, in a feeble, but distinct voice. 'Death calls, and I must obey the summons. And O, my Heavenly Father, thy will, and not mine be done! May this scene have its proper effect upon all present. Come here, my dear.'

He spoke to his wife, and she came to the bed-side. He took her by the hand, and bid her farewell. Then his son and his wife were called, and he bid them an affectionate farewell.

Now came my turn, and O, what emotions pressed my heart, as I softly approached his bed. My hand was in his, and he said in a voice scarcely above a whisper; 'Alice, remember my lessons. May God bless you!' At that moment a change came over his countenance, and he gently breathed his last while his skeleton hand was still in mine!

Yes, reader, my hand held a dead man's hand! A serene smile was on his countenance even after his spirit had been conducted by angels to a brighter and a better world as a token to us that all was well with him. Let me draw a sable curtain over that scene. We had lost a wise and safe counsellor, and the church one of its strongest earthly pillars.

The good man was buried, and the son came into possession of a large estate.—Time passed on, and my visits to that spacious brick house continued; but my lover was not satisfied with such short visits, and he began to urge me to make my home at the house where we held our interviews until we were married. I felt as if I could not leave Ellen, so soon after death had entered her windows, and took a few days to consider the matter.—Consider the matter! Wonderful, indeed, is such consideration with a girl in love!—

Yes, I did consider the matter, and the more I considered it, the stronger were my impulses to go. Instead of considering, I ought at once to have said I would not go. But I did no such thing.

In less than three weeks from the death of Mr. Stuart, I was a boarder at the house of a woman whose name was Susan Stormwell. Once I thought I could not leave the scenes of my girlhood; and then that I could not be away from Ellen for scarcely a single day; and now I had left all, and thrown myself on a man almost three times as old as I was for protection. How very strange is the power of love! I fancied myself happy; but yet strange and startling thoughts occasionally rushed into my mind. Ellen and her husband remonstrated with me in vain; and Charles Homer even shed tears in my presence. But his tears did not produce much effect upon my heart; for I never had a very favorable opinion of him, especially after old Mr. Stuart had given me his opinion of him. Towards Edwin Sumner I entertained more respectful feelings; but my heart was in the possession of another.

Susan Stormwell treated me with the utmost kindness and attention. She was apparently so mild and amiable that butter would scarcely melt in her mouth. Her actions were apparently much more amiable than her looks. She was a coarse looking woman; but shrewd and cunning as the ancient Nicholas himself. Never did man receive higher praises from woman than the colonel received from her. And that seemed to me to be all right and just; for I never saw a man whom I esteemed so good and true as I did him. My whole soul was bound up in him. And O, what pleasure I anticipated from a journey with him as my husband to the spot where he first loved me; for such a journey he had

promised to make early the next summer. After I had become a boarder at the brick house, I often visited Ellen, and told her how happy I was.

'O,' said she, 'Alice, I was afraid you had been led astray by some arch villain; but I rejoice to hear you speak so well of your lover, I remember him well; but why does he not come to see me?'

'He will after we are married,' I replied. 'He says he does not wish to come before. He has his own peculiar notions. Don't you remember how particular he was about his fishing-rod? I now call him my old Angler.'

'Well, he is an old angler to catch such a beautiful fish as you,' she said, smiling.

'The same compliment and in the same words, too, he paid me,' I replied. 'Who would have thought that two country girls like us could have risen upon the ladder so high! I wonder what John Armstrong, would say, if he only knew how we are situated?'

'To know how you are situated would not very much gratify him, I reckon,' she replied.

'I conclude not,' I said. 'Well, John Armstrong is a good fellow, and there are girls enough who would be glad to have him.'

A shadow now fell upon the bright face of Ellen, and she appeared thoughtful and even somewhat sad for her. I recognized the cause, and a tear stood trembling in her eye. That tear gave me more pain than a thousand shed by Charles Homer.

'Alice,' she said, in a peculiar tone of voice. 'I know you are my friend, and would not reveal any thing I may say to you.'

I assured her whatever she might say would be safe in my breast. She believed me, and continued. 'O, Alice, Frank

does not come home of evenings so early as he used to before his good father died. Sometimes he stay away until nearly morning. Last night he didn't come home until almost daylight. And O, how I felt to have him stay away so long! And his breath smelt very strong of liquor.'

'What did you say to him when he came home?' I asked.

'O, I could say nothing, I was so glad to see him!' she replied. 'I wonder what he can be doing all night?'

'Indeed, I cannot tell,' I replied, feeling much pained at her story. 'I would say something to him the next time he stays out so late.'

'I will try to do so,' she answered. 'I always sit up until he comes home.'

After conversing awhile longer I went away with a heavy heart; for I remembered the words of the old gentleman, and feared the consequences. A few days after this interview I called upon her again, and found her much troubled in spirit. It was late in the afternoon when I called, and she prevailed on me to tarry all night. I did so, after going to my boarding house and telling Susan Stormwell that I should not return that night. Frank did not come home to tea. Charles Homer had dined with him that day, and they went off together. Ellen was troubled and I endeavored to comfort her to the extent of my power.

Hour after hour passed away and Frank did not come. Midnight passed, and we sat in the parlor waiting for him; but the sound of his footsteps were not yet heard upon the door stone. Two more sad hours passed, and he came not! My patience was almost exhausted and I felt as if I should lecture him when he did come, if his wife had not the courage to do it. Three hours more had now gone. And

yet he had not come. I will not relate the conversation that passed that night between this lovely wife and myself. But many tears were shed and strange emotions felt.

After five o'clock we heard a noise at the door, and Ellen sprang to open it.—Having unbolted it she rushed back and threw herself upon a sofa and sobbed like a child. I hastened to the door, and there were three men, one of whom was Frank, in a state of intoxication.

'Is this your home, you drunken fool,' said one of the attendants who proved to be a watchman.

Frank staggered and pawed the door with his hands; but made no reply.

'I think this is the house where the fellow lives,' said the other watchman. 'It is a pity his mother lets him go out.'

'This is the house, gentlemen, and will you please to lead him in,' I said.

'You are his wife, I suppose,' said the first watchman.

'No, sir, I'm not,' was my reply.

'Then you are a fortunate woman,' he said, putting his arm round Frank's waist, and helping him in with the assistance of the other.

They took him in and laid him upon the carpet. I thanked them for their kindness, and they departed. Ellen's face was buried in her handkerchief, and I distinctly heard her sobs while her husband was upon the floor drunk, and breathing very hard.—What a spectacle was there! My heart bled as I gazed upon the once happy lovers.

Soon his mother made her appearance, and O, what an expression was upon her countenance! What pangs wrung her heart!

'I have long feared it,' said the mother, 'My dear father feared it, too! I wish

Charles Homer would never darken these doors again; I learned no longer ago than yesterday that Homer is a gambler, and associates with blacklegs. I can endure the sight no longer!

And she turned away with a heavy heart and sought her chamber. The secret was out, and the good father's prophecy was fulfilled. Not only Charles Homer, but Frank Stuart was a gambler, also. O, how my heart beat with strange emotions. I was glad I was with Ellen at this trying scene; and yet wished I might never have witnessed it.

The city clocks told the hour of six in the morning, and still the young gambler snored in his drunken fit. I sat and watched over him. At my request Ellen left the room; but she soon returned, for she could not stay away from all she held dear on earth. O, the strength of a woman's love, and of such a woman as Ellen. His sleep was a troubled one, especially towards the last of it. O, how much more appalling than death is the drunkard's sleep! Indeed it seemed so to me. If he had been brought home dead, the sight would not have been so appalling to me.—In the course of a long hour he began to rouse up. Such motions made Ellen tremble as if she would drop into a thousand pieces. I advised her to leave the room; but she would not, for she wanted to hear his voice once more. He roused and sat upon the floor, rubbing his eyes. Soon he gazed upon me and then upon his wife.—That gaze was a terrible one to her.

'O, Frank!' she exclaimed, rushing towards him, and then suddenly stopping midway.

'Well, what of it?' he muttered, looking cross, and troubled. 'Why don't you go to bed?'

Ellen's voice was choked with violent emotions, and she could not speak.

'It is morning, Frank,' I replied. 'It is rather time to rise than to retire.'

It is, eh? he grumbled, gazing at me with his swollen eyes. 'You have grown very wise since you have found a new boarding place. How's your old man?'

A flash of lightning from out of the clear blue sky could not have struck me with more astonishment than his remark did.—For one moment I was thrown from my balance, and Ellen trembled from head to foot. I soon recovered, and my spirits were aroused. Never did such feelings press my heart before. I knew not before that such emotions could be awakened in my bosom; and I cannot even now characterize them. I stood firm before him with flashing eyes, and quivering lips! I could not endure the thought of his thus abasing Ellen and treating her so gruffly.

'O, wretched young man!' I exclaimed. 'How can you thus degrade yourself and wring a young and doating wife's heart with such keen anguish? Have you fallen so suddenly; or have you so long deceived us in relation to your true character? Speak, and let us know the truth and nothing but the truth!'

'O, Alice, spare him!' exclaimed the loving wife. 'Do spare him! He has been deceived!'

He first gazed upon his wife and then turned to me, and said. 'Look out for yourself, and not trouble yourself about that which is none of your business. No wanton shall lecture me and not receive as good as they send.'

'Wanton!' I repeated, with feelings of indignation which I could not express.—'Wanton! What mean you, you degraded young man? Call me not wanton, or you may yet feel a woman's revenge! You would have me become the wife of Charles Homer, your pot companion, and brother blackleg. Wanton, indeed! O, how very

strangely have you fallen? What a consummate hypocrite you are, and have been. Would to Heaven you had never visited the green hills of my girlhood's home?"

While I was thus giving vent to feelings that I once supposed I never could possess, Ellen sank upon the floor in a state of insensibility. I flew to her assistance and raised her up, when the mother came in, and we carried her from the room. I then returned, and again confronted him. But alas! the evil spirit of gambling and the deadening effects of alcohol had blunted his moral senses, and changed his nature and disposition. He told me to go home and mind my own business. His true character was now fully developed; and how changed his look and manner.

I left him seated upon a sofa, with his eyes intently fixed upon the floor, and hastened to Ellen, who had partially recovered under the kind treatment of Mrs. Stuart.

I remained until Ellen was full restored to her senses, and then repaired to my boarding house. While on my way, the word wanton, was a terrible sound in my ears. My whole soul from its inmost depths was stirred up, and I entered my chamber in great excitement. It seemed to me my whole nature was changed. I was not aware before there was such powers within me as the conduct of Frank Stuart had called forth. I had not long been in the room before my lover entered, and was greatly surprised to see me in such a state of excitement. He was more loving than ever if possible, and endeavored to quiet my nerves after I had told him of the scene I had witnessed.

'Then the young man is both gambler and drunkard,' he said. 'That is much to be regretted; for when a young man gambles he ought not to drink; for the

latter habit stupifies his senses and he loses his money. The professional gambler seldom drinks, or if he does, he always drinks moderately in order to lure his victims into that vortex which he himself is sure to avoid.'

'And wouldn't his gambling without his drinking be a circumstance much to be regretted?' I quickly asked; feeling as if he did not view the sin of gambling as being so very bad unless it was accompanied by drinking.

'O, surely,' he replied, perceiving the point upon which my mind bordered, and wishing to excuse his remark, or qualify it so as to please me. 'Gambling is a great sin of itself; but when accompanied by drinking it destroys the victim much sooner. From your account of the matter I should think the young man would soon waste all his estate, and make his beautiful wife very miserable.'

'Miserable, indeed! I replied, 'O, that young and lovely woman's heart will break and she will find an early grave, if her husband continues such practices and habits. The father, while he lived, was a great restraint upon his son; but now the fellow has full swing; for his good mother has no control over him. O, what will become of that angelic woman? Don't you think you could have some influence over the young husband?'

'If such a lovely wife will not restrain him, I fear my power would avail nothing,' he replied.

'O, if you could save him, I would give you another loving heart if I had it to give,' I said, gazing fondly up into his face.

'My dear Alice, I feel as if I had one true heart and don't aspire to the possession of another,' he answered, pressing my hand, and leaning his cheek against mine.

How warm your cheek is! The excitement of last night has stirred your blood. I shall not be willing for you to spend another night there; for I'm afraid it will injure your health.'

'O, I wish Ellen's husband was as kind and as good as you are,' I said.

The wish I expressed was an honest, sincere one, and he gave me a kiss for the compliment. My happiness would have been almost perfect, had it not been for my thoughts of poor Ellen. They gave me

pain; for it always seemed to me she could not face the rough winds of adversity with the fortitude I could.

Kind reader, don't judge me too severely, or too fast; I had not yet fallen from that virtue which my sex prize so high. The colonel was an artful man, and studied my character well. I believed he was honest and sincere, and expected soon to become his legal, loving wife.

CHAPTER XXIV.

The rapidity of a downward career. A sojourn in the country. The fall of woman. A boarding house disturbance.—Lying and cunning. The plot thickens. The wounded and dying, &c.

STRANGE as it may seem to the reader, I had not yet learned the true character of the house in which I lodged. Every thing was managed with so much skill and adroitness that I did not even suspect what the reader is quite sure of, that Susan Stormwell was a bad woman, and kept a bad house. Several weeks had expired before I was permitted to discover any thing that might awaken my suspicions. True, persons came and went, of both sexes; but I supposed that was the way in a boarding house. As yet I was quite ignorant of many phases of city life which I have since learned.

The keeper of the house was a woman of consummate art and skill; but of terrible passions when they were aroused. No hell had a worse fury than her hate; and yet she always appeared to me affable and even

amiable. Amiable! God save the mark! But I will not go before my story. I set out to relate a plain, unvarnished tale, and intend to pursue that intention.

Frank Stuart did not reform as I vainly hoped he would after seeing how terrible the effects of his conduct were upon his wife. But the passion for gambling had seized upon him so strongly, and his stomach had become so diseased with intoxicating liquors that he could not, or he would not, break off those terrible sins which so easily beset him.

His downward career was indeed a swift one. He had become the victim not only of his own passions, but also the victim of some accomplished and artful blackleg; for his estate wasted away like dew in a warm morning's sun, and his nerves became much shattered and deranged. I often visited his wife, but seldom saw him. And how my heart did bleed when I saw the roses fading from her cheeks, and her countenance losing its beautiful expression. Her health, too, seemed gradually to fail, and her spirits to grow sad and sorrowful. It was a sad spectacle to me. Charles Ho-

mer's condition was even much worse than Ellen's husband; for he had wasted every cent of his property and been convicted and imprisoned for stealing Frank's money. He had drank so much that when shut up in prison, he was seized with a fit of delirium tremens from which he never recovered, but died a miserable death in his cell. I hoped that his terrible death would have some beneficial effect upon Ellen's husband, and restrain him in his downward career; but my hope was in vain.

Time flew on rapid wings, and the autumnal frosts had changed the aspect of nature. I had received one letter from aunt and two from uncle in answer to some I had written to them. They said it was time for me to come home. In my first letters to them I described how happy Eden and I were, and how splendidly she was situated; but in my last letters I said but little about her, and intimated that they must not be surprised if they should hear of my marriage. Aunt was anxious to know if I had made any discoveries in relation to Ellen's birth and parentage.—Such was our correspondence. Uncle wrote some very amusing, and some very serious things in his letters. That was his nature.

One night I heard an unusual disturbance in my boarding house. There were loud voices and apparent wrangling in the dead hours of the night. I arose from my bed, (reader, I slept alone) and opened my chamber door so that I could hear more distinctly. O, heavens! such swearing I never heard before and from female voices, too, as well as from male voices. Above all the rest, I recognized Susan Stormwell's angry voice. She uttered terrible oaths and imprecations, which made the blood curdle in my veins, and sent a sickening chill to my heart. I might have been mis-

taken I thought, and hoped, and passed along the hall to a place where I could hear more distinctly. No, I was not mistaken! It was her voice! And I heard blows given, too, as well as terrible swearing. I was exceedingly nervous, and listened intently to hear my lover's voice; but I heard it not. I wondered where he could be; for it seemed to me the noise must have awakened him and every sleeper in the house. I stood listening a few minutes, and heard Susan Stormwell's voice, exclaim. 'Put her out! Throw the —— into the street!'

I will not repeat all the words that woman used on the occasion! Sick at heart, I retraced my steps, and locked myself again in my chamber; but not to sleep, for my nerves were too much excited for that. Morning came, and I was glad to behold its light once more.

Soon my lover came; but before he made his appearance, I saw Susan Stormwell suddenly pass through the hall to her own room with a handkerchief bound about her head and passing down over her left eye. I saw at a glance that she was a wounded woman.

'O, didn't you hear the disturbance last evening?' I anxiously inquired. 'There was a terrible noise, of fighting and swearing!'

'No, my love, I did not hear it,' he calmly replied. 'My business detained me last evening until a late hour, and I slept soundly.'

'Didn't hear it?' I repeated, with surprise. 'Why, it was enough almost to rouse the dead from their slumbers! What was the trouble? I feel greatly alarmed to reside in a house where there's fighting and such swearing.'

'O, it didn't amount to much,' he answered. 'Such things will sometimes occur in city boarding houses. Miss Storm-

well ascertained that one of her female boarders was a bad character and had come home with her paramour and she was determined to put her out of the house.—That was all.

'And I think that is quite enough,' I added. 'But why was there so much swearing?'

'These bad girls will swear like pirates,' he replied, apparently indifferent.

'But why did Miss Stormwell swear so terribly?' I asked, gazing full into his face, and closely watching the movement of every muscle thereof; for my suspicions were aroused that all was not right.

He smiled, and said. 'My love, I think you must have been mistaken; I never knew of Miss Stormwell's swearing. Being aroused from a sound sleep and being alarmed, you imagined you heard what you did not really hear.'

'O, no, I can't be mistaken; for I arose from my bed and passed along the hall where I could hear distinctly; for they were quite near me; besides, I saw Miss Stormwell with her head bound up. O, I think there must have been a terrible fight; and I am afraid to remain in this house!'

'Why, my dear Alice, you are needlessly excited,' he said. 'Miss Stormwell is a very worthy woman, and is always exceedingly careful in the selection of her boarders. But here she comes and can answer for herself.'

'O, dear me, I never had my nerves so tried as they were last night,' said this cunning woman. 'Don't you think one of my boarders proves to be a bad girl, and came home with a man. Yes, with a man! O, I never felt so in my life! I suspected her somewhat, and last night was determined to detect her if she was guilty. And sure enough I did detect her; and found her in

her room with a man! Yes, with a man. And O, how my blood boiled! If any thing in this world makes it boil, it is such an occurrence as happened last night!—My dear Miss Barber, you must have heard the disturbance. And O, may Heaven forgive me for using such language! I never did before, and it now seems like a dream. But I was so excited! And don't you think the miserable, degraded girl struck me in my eye, and hurt me very much! I was almost crazy, and knew not what I said! O, this keeping a boarding house in the city where so many bad characters apply! It is almost impossible to keep entirely clear of them. I blush for my sex. That girl appeared as well as any young lady I ever boarded at first, and completely deceived me; but such characters cannot deceive me very long, thank fortune. I turned her out of my house, bag and baggage at midnight, and she will never again darken my doors.'

Having finished her speech, she sank upon a sofa and appeared much affected.

'There, my dear Alice, you have the whole truth,' said the colonel. 'You were not so much mistaken after all as I supposed you were. I think I might have almost sworn myself, if I had been placed in Miss Stormwell's condition.'

Thus I was in some good degree, quieted, and the affair passed off; still the woman never looked to me as she did before.—Her awful language I could never forget. I remained in the house; but was more observant afterwards, and Miss Stormwell was more cautious and cunning than ever, and even more kind and attentive to me than she had been previously.

In less than a week after that night's disturbance and brawl, my lover said his business called him a few miles in the country and invited me to accompany him. I gladly

accepted his invitation; and a few hours brought us to a pleasant country village where we stopped at a public hotel. We remained there nearly a month, and during the time my lover was exceedingly attentive and kind. No man was ever more so. He longed for the day to come which should make us one in law as we were one in love.

The colonel's excuse for postponing our marriage, was that he expected his brother from the South, who was anxious to be present at the celebration of our nuptials. He could not find it in his heart to disappoint his good brother, and therefore put off our promised marriage. When his brother arrived the ceremony should be formed at once, and then in company with his brother and wife, we would take a journey to the South, and pass the winter on his brother's plantation in the warm and sunny South, and the following summer return and spend a few weeks among the green hills and beside the running brooks where he first saw and loved me. That was indeed a flattering tale, and unfolded bright and beautiful prospects. O, what pleasure I anticipated; for I had the utmost confidence not only in his love, but also in his honor and integrity. O, what bright and dazzling visions my imagination conjured up. I was sailing on a smooth sea and among green and beautiful islands. But alas! there was one sad drawback upon my pleasures, Ellen's condition and prospects would often come up fresh in my memory and sadden my spirits. My love for her was not diminished, and no earthly power could diminish it. And the brighter and more dazzling my prospects grew, the more deepened became my interest for her. I longed to go back to the city, that I might see her.

During our sojourn in this pleasant

country village, we occasionally rode out and enjoyed the fine scenery in the Indian Summer; for the late autumn was exceedingly pleasant and the weather fine.

At last we returned to the city. But O, my God! what a journey to the country that proved to me! I had fallen!! But I forbear to give my readers any more pain than is possible.

A change of scene—a different location—a pleasant village—beautiful rides—the variegated tints of the autumnal leaves that yet clung to the branches of the trees—the clear blue sky of an Indian Summer—the beautiful harvest-moon—the bubbling brooks—the sparkling Champagne—all—all—but O, heavens! I cannot proceed!

Let the dark folds of a sable curtain fall between me and my readers! Let those scenes about that country village be forever shrouded in darkness and gloom! I desire not to look behind that curtain again. Let them pass; but reader, take warning as they pass!

Soon as we arrived in the city, I hurried to see Ellen. And O, what a change had come over her spirit in one short month! Her eyes were sunken, her cheeks pale, a deep shade of grief was upon her countenance, and her steps were tottering!—Her husband was then upon his bed, groaning and suffering from a severe and fatal wound he had received two nights previous in a gambling hell. A knife had been plunged into his side, and his life was fast oozing out from the wound. O, I cannot describe that scene! I went into the room and stood by the bed side of the wounded and dying young husband. He had gambled away his estate, and the deep stains of sin was upon his soul! I left the room with trembling steps and a heavy

heart

'O, Ellen, dear Ellen!' I exclaimed, as I met her in the parlor. And I fell on her neck, and wept like a child. She, too, wept, and our tears mingled and run down upon the floor in streams! Our emotions were too big for utterance. It was some time before either could speak. All was silent save our sobbing.

At last she broke the terrible silence, and in broken accents of grief said. 'He will never see his child! He will die before it sees the light and he hears its cry! It will see no one whom it can call father! O, dear Alice, that thought is dreadful!'

How touching were those simple words uttered by that angelic young wife. Yes, she expected to become a mother; but not until after she was a widow. But alas! I feared she would not long survive her husband's death. My heart was so full that I could not speak. O, God, I, too, might become a mother, and find no one whom my child could call father. The thought was overwhelming for the moment; but I drove it from my mind, and still relied upon the solemn promises of my lover.—O, no, I thought, he was too good to deceive me, and loved me too well. His brother would soon come, and I should be saved from infamy and disgrace.

Before I left, I once more entered the room where Frank was. He had somewhat aroused from the stupor in which I first found him. He turned his blood-shot eyes towards me, and remained silent. O, what a change in that handsome face! Intemperance had done its perfect work.—His face was bloated, his eyes swollen and bloodshot, and the horrid evils of drinking was too plainly telegraphed in the flesh to be mistaken. But from those he might have recovered, and yet lived; but the wound in his side was painful.

'Drink! give me drink,' he muttered, turning his eyes upon his mother who sat by the bed-side in tears.

She gave him drink, and how he did swallow it. There was morphine in it; and he soon fell into a drowsy and muttered incoherent and broken sentences. Soon his physician came and I left. I had seen enough, and more than I could well bear. As I passed from the house, upon the sidewalk I saw a gentleman standing near who gazed upon me so intently that it excited my curiosity. However, I passed on and he followed me. He overtook and passed me, when he turned round and spoke, saying. 'Excuse me for addressing a strange lady in the public street; but I have a few words to say which may interest you.'

I begged him to proceed; for my curiosity was excited to the highest pitch.

He continued. 'You are acquainted with those who reside in that house you have just left I presume. The young man will die I conclude from what I hear.'

I told him I didn't think it was possible for him to survive that wound.

'He is truly an unfortunate young man,' he continued. 'And so is his wife, indeed, unfortunate. Has she ever ascertained who her parents were?'

'Never!' I replied. 'Speak, and tell me if you know aught about them.'

'Be calm,' he added, 'and you shall hear all I know. That young wife when she was a little girl, quite a young, but beautiful creature, I was employed to carry into the country. I did so, and left her with a maiden lady together with a sum of money for her support.'

'I know,' I quickly replied. 'But who are her parents? Are they living?—Speak!'

'Be quiet,' he continued. 'Her mother was a celebrated actress, and a very talented and beautiful English lady who died in less than a year after I conveyed her child into

the country. She was unfortunate, as beautiful actresses sometimes are. Had she lived she would have taken her child back in two or three years.'

'But the father?' I said; 'Is he living. Tell me that quickly. Tell me that quickly!'

He is living, and I once thought he was the prince of good fellows; but he has treated me shamefully within a short time, and I will expose him. He has been an actor of much celebrity, and for awhile a stage director and lessee of theatres, not only in this city, but in New York and Philadelphia. He has quit the stage, and is now a most adroit and accomplished gambler. Has won thousands from that wounded young man whom you have just seen. *He has talents but no heart.* He is known to you by the name of Colonel Carpenter, but that is not his true name.'

Before I had time to reply, the stranger had left me in a bewildered state.

CHAPTER XXV.

The closing scenes. Truth really stranger than fiction.

Soon as I could recover sufficient strength to do so, I hurried to my boarding house, and retired to my chamber. It seemed to me that all was lost! Could the story of that stranger be true? Why not? I asked myself. But how could I believe what was said about my lover? '*He has talents but no heart!*' These words were fastened upon my soul with hooks of steel. I threw myself upon the bed and cried! I arose and walked the room—gazed from the window into the street, stood before the mirror and saw the reflection of my agitated countenance—fell on the bed again—cried—sobbed—wished I had never been

born—thought of poor Ellen—wished we might die in each other's arms—prayed for girlhood again that I might commence a new career.

Yes—a thousand conflicting thoughts entered my mind, and a thousand strange emotions pressed my heart. And yet in the midst of all that agony, I hoped the stranger had borne false testimony. But how did he know that Ellen, when but a child was conveyed into the country and given to Aunt Tabitha? That question troubled me exceedingly; but love whispered me that the colonel might have revealed such facts to the stranger, and upon those facts the stranger had concocted his story to injure my lover. I was entirely bewildered for a time. 'I said within myself, I have power and will exercise it, I must find out the truth or falsehood of that man's story. I will cautiously introduce the subject to my lover and mark well the workings of his countenance.' Such was my resolution. And O, how I prayed for calmness and discretion and even shrewdness in the hour of my grief.

Long had I desired to know the parents of Ellen, but I did not dream of such accompaniments to that information; for at the moment my curiosity was gratified, a terrible blow was struck at my peace and happiness, and my prospects blighted forever. I had not now much time to think of poor Ellen; for my own situation demanded all my powers.

Susan Stormwell saw my agitation when I entered the house; but I hurried by her to my chamber without uttering a word in her hearing; for I had already begun to hate her and to believe she was a bad woman, and a great hypocrite.

I calmed my nerves as well as I could, and prepared myself for an interview with my lover, or seducer; for I knew not in what category to place him since I had heard the story of the stranger.

Some time passed ere he came; but at last I heard his footsteps upon the stairs.— They had always been music to my ears; but now they made me tremble. However, I nerved myself for the occasion, and appeared quite calm considering the heavy load upon my heart.

He entered and greeted me with smiles and kisses. God, forgive me! I returned his kisses! But I had an object in view. I was most earnestly in search of truth; but love, they say, is blind, and will cover a multitude of faults. And that saying is true. But there is a crisis in the affairs of lovers where love sometimes turns to hate. That crisis had not yet arrived; for I loved him still; but some degree of suspicion was aroused. He seemed to know that I had been much agitated. And no doubt, Susan Stormwell had given him a description of my looks and manner when I entered the house.

'No, tidings from your brother yet, I suppose,' was my first question.

'No dear Alice,' he replied. 'I fear he or some member of his family may be indisposed.'

'And then I should think he would write you,' I added.

'He is a singular man about writing,' he said. He means to take me by surprise and come before I am aware of it. He seldom writes. I am often provoked with him for his neglect in answering my letters. However, I don't expect one for a few weeks yet; for his fall business will detain him. Soon as he disposes of his cotton, and regulates his affairs he will be here. He is quite anxious to know what kind of a choice of a wife I have made; for he is aware of my peculiar notions, and always said I never should see a woman I could love; but he will find himself mistaken in that. Before I saw you at the

concert, I was satisfied if ever I was married, the little girl I saw in the country must surely be my wife; for none other could I love. How mysterious is the power of love! How your image did cling to my soul. But enough. A good Providence has ordered all for the best.'

'I hope so,' I replied. 'How long is it since you quit the theatre to engage in some other avocations?'

He suddenly started as if he had been pricked with a sharp instrument in spite of all his power of self-possession, which was very great. I never knew a man to have more self-possession. Give him a moment's warning and he could govern himself under any circumstances. That warning I was determined not to give him on the present occasion.

'Quit the theatre!' he repeated, laughing quite heartily, and giving me a kiss.— 'What in the world put that into your head?'

'O, some bird flies about,' I replied, gazing intently into his face, and assuming a more grave look than he had ever before seen on my face.

'Now, my dear Alice, you are quite humorous and full of your jokes to-day,' he said, after a moment's pause, and watching my gravity of countenance. 'I love to hear your jokes; for the joking person is always happy. And when I see you happy, it makes me so. Quit the theatre! Capital! The best joke of the season.'

And he shook his sides with laughter. That word, *capital*! How it did call up the scenes of my girlhood when I sauntered by the side of the water-brook and heard his musical voice so often pronounce the same word! It almost made me forget the present, so vividly was the past brought to my memory. But the happiness of my life was at stake, and I called upon all the

power within me to ferret out the truth; but how difficult such a task when love blinds the eyes and bewilders the judgment! However, I resolved to persevere.

'Then you have not been an actor, a stage-director and lessee of theatres in this city, New York and Philadelphia, have you?' I inquired, in a voice and manner still more grave and serious.

'Never! my dear Alice,' he replied, looking rather wild and embarrassed in spite of all his power of self-control.— 'Who has been filling your head with such nonsense?'

'O, that little bird,' I replied. 'Now I think of it. Where you ever particularly intimate with a celebrated English actress of great beauty and accomplishments?'

'Capital!' he exclaimed, laughing; but that laugh seemed hollow, and wanting in vitality. To my ears it had not the true, genuine ring, as if it came from the soul.

'Capital!' he continued. 'I have never seen you so humorous. Go on. Your pleasant humor and wit pleases me.'

'Did that actress give birth to a beautiful daughter, and was the child conveyed into the country and given to a maiden lady?' I asked, fastening my eyes upon him in one intense and burning gaze. For a moment the word capital had lost its charm, and he seemed somewhat embarrassed, and walked the room.

'Well, my love, you have gone on as I requested,' he said, stepping before me, and smiling.

'And I can go further,' I quickly replied. 'Did that mother die and never see her lovely child after it was carried into the country and thus given away?'

'Capital!' he said. 'Excellent! Why, my love, you could write a very interesting romance, your imagination is so fertile!'

'It is said truth is stranger than fiction,'

I answered, gravely. 'I will proceed and give you the materials of a romance, and you can write it at your leisure. Surely you could make it very dramatic. Did that beautiful child grow up into a lovely girl, and become the wife of a young angler of this city? And did the old angler quit the theatre, turn gambler, and rob that young husband of his money and drug his very soul with the stupefying poison of alcoholic drinks? O, my God! Touch the heart with thy power and let the truth be spoken!'

In spite of all his wonderful powers of self-government, he was for a moment much embarrassed, and betrayed signs of guilt! Soon, however, he recovered his wonted balance, and laughed more heartily than ever. Apparently he was in high glee.

'By heavens, my dear Alice, I love you more than ever!' he exclaimed, seizing me about the waist, and almost smothering me with kisses. 'You develope mental powers that I did not know you possessed, and I love you more intensely on that account.'

He spoke the truth when he alluded to the development of new mental powers: for I exhibited powers and spoke in a voice which I never before manifested in his presence, and which I did not imagine I possessed.

'And is your true name Colonel Carpenter, or must I call you the old angler?' I anxiously inquired.

'Capital!' he quickly replied. 'The old angler forever! For haven't I caught the most beautiful trout in all the brooks? Capital! You humorous joker. How I love you!'

And he strained me to his bosom, and kissed me more warmly than ever. O, my soul, how magical is the power of love.—

The future was forgotten, the past scarcely

remembered and I lived in the extatic dreams of the present moment. It seemed to me that I must have done him great injustice both in thought and word. How could I doubt the depth and sincerity of his love? Ah, he acted well his part.

'But to be serious, my dear Alice, why have you thus questioned me?' he asked.

'O, I cannot tell,' I replied. 'Strange thoughts run in my heated brain.'

'Strange, indeed,' he added. 'Dismiss them, dear Alice, and believe not any tales your fancy may conjure up, or envious persons may tell.'

He remained sometime, and how could I believe the tale the stranger had told me? I was left alone, and what strange emotions agitated my soul. In my calmer moment I reviewed the past, considered the present, and tried to look into the future; but one moment the future looked dark and gloomy, at another, hope would revive, the magic power of love would bewilder and dazzle, and my prospects would brighten. Thus I continued through that day and night. My lover was more attentive than ever; at least so he seemed to me. His promises of marriage appeared more and more solemn, earnest and sincere.

The next afternoon I visited Ellen and found her in extreme trouble. The night of despair seemed to gather around her once brilliant and animated soul. Her husband was fast sinking into the grave.—I was at his bed side alone; for his mother when I came sought a few moment's rest. Ellen would stay in the room but a moment, and then would leave with trembling steps and sobbing soul. I wondered if he could speak, or was nature too much exhausted to give utterance to any emotion it might feel? I smoothed back the hair from his marble brow, wet his lips and held

some hartshorn to his nose. He seemed to revive, and gazed upon me. O, what emotions that look excited in my heart! I thought the words of a dying man would tell the truth, and how I longed to question him in relation to my lover? At last I ventured to speak.

'Frank!' I said. 'Do you know me?'

'Yes,' was his feeble response. My courage revived.

'Do you know one Colonel Carpenter?' I continued.

He shook his head; but made no other reply. I then asked him if he knew a man about fifty-five years old who was once an actor and now a gambler. A good looking man, with dark blue eyes, and dark hair, somewhat gray.

'O, my God!' he exclaimed, raising his right hand, and rolling up his eyes, 'I know him too well! He has won my money and ruined me.'

'His name?' I asked, most anxiously.—

'Who is he, where did he come from?'

'He calls his name Clarendon; but that's not his true name,' he replied. 'I can't now remember his name; but I once knew it. He once managed a theatre here, as I have been informed. He's an Englishman, and a great scoundrel. Would to heaven I had never seen him! But that wish comes too late! All's lost now! May God forgive me? Where's Ellen! O, how dark and misty it grows! Raise the curtains! Give me more light! O, God!—There's no air to breathe!'

Those were his last words. His exertions to answer my questions had completely exhausted him. Nature was fast sinking. I called Ellen and his mother. I believed he was dying. They came in and a servant ran for a physician. Soon Edwin Sumner entered the room. O what emotions the sight of him excited in

my breast! But I had power, and nerved myself for the occasion.

Ellen ran to the bed side, kissed his pallid cheek, wrung her hands and sobbed like a child. He turned his eyes upon her; but could not speak. His lips moved; but no words were uttered. His eyes began to glaze over and to lose their expression. A few sudden twitches of his muscles, and all was over. He was a corpse. The soul had departed from its earthly habitation! Edwin Sumner was calm, but solemn. I gazed upon his calm, benevolent countenance, but I will not undertake to describe my feelings! No human tongue nor pen, however ready, can portray them.

'His spirit has gone to a just God!' said Edwin Sumner, in a tone of voice which even now rings in my ears, and stirs my soul with strange emotions.

I led Ellen from the chamber of death to another apartment, and tried to console her. Her agony was terrible. How I loved and pitied her! For a time I even forgot my own troubles in caring for her. She urged me to remain with her. I told her I would; but must first go to my boarding house. I went, and as I stepped upon the door-stone, again I saw that strange gentleman. I passed on, and he walked by my side.

'Is he dead?' he asked. I told him he was, and gazed anxiously into his face. He knew from my looks what I most desired.

'I told you nothing but truth the other day respecting your pretended lover,' he said.

'Pretended lover!' I repeated. 'Does he not love me?'

'Yes, as the hawk loves the chicken and the lamb!' he replied. 'Since I saw you he has had an angry interview with me, and swears that I told you what you

know of him; for it could come from no other source. Well might he say that.—Once we were friends; but now implacable enemies. Make him give you money, for you will need it. He is armed with deadly weapons. So am I. One or the other must die. He is a heartless villain and a gambler. So have I been! He has money. Make him hand over before it is too late. His hand may be cold in death, and then it cannot give!'

I was overwhelmed by my emotions, and before I could again speak, he had left me and was lost in the crowd thronging the streets. I hurried on, and O, how my soul was agitated to its depths. I sought my chamber, and endeavored to calm my nerves before I met my lover. I succeeded beyond my expectations. There was an unseen power that sustained me. Not long after I entered my chamber before I heard him coming. Strange that I could appear so calm. He entered the room, smiling, and pleasant as usual, and apparently even more so. His very looks almost disarmed me. But the words of a dying man were fresh in my memory. He kissed me.—And I thought could that be the kiss of a scoundrel?

'Is the young man living?' he asked.

'He's dead, and told me with his dying breath that a man calling himself Mr. Clarendon had robbed him of his money, and ruined him,' I replied, in such tones as he never heard before.

Suddenly he started, and looked rather strangely; but soon collected his scattering thoughts, and replied—

'My dear Alice. I see how it is. You begin to doubt my love. And O, that's the sharpest pang of all. You will believe the words of a dying gambler and drunkard sooner than you will believe me. That gives me pain and wrings my heart with

the keenest anguish. Suppose some enemy should tell me you were not virtuous and true, do you think I should believe him? O, no, I should hate and spurn him from me. I would not suffer the foul breath of slander to tarnish your name. No—no, dear Alice. God forbid! I once thought you loved me, and was happy; but now, alas!—

'I do love you?' I quickly replied, feeling as if I had abused his love, and falling on his neck and weeping.

Love for the time had conquered all.—The words of the dying gambler were forgotten, and the stranger's declarations were not believed.

O, take warning, kind reader. Take warning. Beware of the magic power of love. It is too often blind. I did not remain long; but hurried back to Ellen. I found her still weeping in her chamber.

'O, you have come,' she said, in broken accents. 'You must not leave me again, I feel so.'

I assured her I would not. 'I slept with her that night in the house of death. How changed she was. We talked over the past and tried to live in it; for there were all our joys. I did not tell her of what I heard about her father, mother, and other matters. Those things were locked up in my breast. It was no time for such revelations, even if I had believed them; besides I had a presentiment that she would not long survive the death of her husband and of all her earthly hopes.

Time passed, and the grave hid from her view all she once held most dear; but her spirits revived not, and her health gradually failed. If she must die, I dared to hope she might die before she gave birth to her infant. But that thought was most appalling, and I feared such a hope ought not to be indulged.

Often I had interviews with my lover

while I continued with Ellen; but he was never inclined to visit her. That circumstance was strange to me. His ingenuity, however, framed many plausible excuses. I heard no more from the strange gentleman, and hoped for the best.

In less than a month from the death of her husband, the sweet and lovely Ellen fell into that sleep which knows no waking. Calmly did her spirit pass to that bourne whence no traveller has ever returned, and both mother and the unborn infant found one grave. I was constantly with her until she calmly fell asleep in death. I could not if I would describe the interviews we had during the last month of her earthly existence. Our love for each other did not diminish, but constantly grew more ardent and intense. Sisters never loved more affectionately and warmly.

After I had closed my dear Ellen's eyes in death, and the cold clods of the valley pressed heavily upon her bosom, I had more time to reflect upon my situation.—It seemed to me at times that my lover's attentions grew somewhat cold; but I might have been mistaken, and so complained not.

No letter came from his brother, and our marriage was postponed from week to week. Sometimes my patience was exhausted and I would weep; but his presence and promises would revive my drooping spirits.

A few days after Ellen's death, I heard another midnight disturbance and much swearing. Susan Stormwell's voice was loud above all the rest. Previous to this, I had been more convinced than ever that she kept a bad house; still all evidences of it were studiously concealed from me. My lover and I had our meals in a private room and I did not mingle in the company of the other inmates of that establishment. I

had frequently urged him to remove me to some other house; but his answer was that we should be married ere long and journey to the South.

Winter had fairly set in, and a furious north-east snow storm was driving through the streets. This was some six weeks after Ellen's death.

My lover had apparently grown cold and less attentive to me; and I began to complain and express to him the fearful apprehensions I entertained; but his smooth tongue and magic acting would calm my nerves and revive my hopes.

The storm beat about the house, and I thought of the snow storms I had witnessed when riding to school in uncle's sleigh with the lamented Ellen by my side. I could not sleep, the storm raged so without, and my thoughts were so busy within. At last just after the clock struck two, I heard much noise and confusion below. I arose and stole softly along the hall, and then listened. O, my God! what sounds!

'Do you think the wound fatal?' asked Susan Stormwell.

'I think so,' replied a rough voice.—'We heard the report of the pistol, and hastened to the spot; we found this man groaning and weltering in his blood; but the assassin had escaped in the darkness and fury of the storm. He wished to be brought here, and so we have brought him.'

The thought instantly struck me that the strange man had shot my lover. I fell upon the floor where I stood. But an unseen power soon raised me again. I hurried to my chamber, partially dressed myself, and went down. O, horror of horrors. The wounded man was my lover. Two watchmen were standing over him as he lay upon the floor, and Susan Stormwell was kneeling down and slyly thrusting her hand, partially concealed by her shawl, into

one of his pockets. I saw the movement and exclaimed. 'Take your hand from his pocket!'

My voice roused the wounded man, and he instantly put his hand down over the pocket which this vile woman intended to rob.

'That's Alice's voice,' said he, in a weak, trembling voice. 'Come here.'

I bent my head down, and asked if he knew me.

'O, yes,' he replied, pulling from his pocket a large, well-filled pocket-book, and handing it to me. 'Take this. It is yours, if I die. Keep it'

'That's right!' said one of the watchmen, smiling. 'Beauty always wins.'—Then turning to the disappointed and agitated Susan Stormwell, he continued.—'You didn't succeed that time, old thing, did you? The pocket-book and all its contents belong to this young woman.'

'I'm his wife,' exclaimed the enraged woman.

'She lies,' said my lover, rousing up, and gazing wildly upon Susan. 'I owe her nothing; but she owes me more than a thousand dollars, borrowed money.'

The vile woman trembled and stormed and raged in a manner quite unbecoming a woman, on the tragical occasion.

The wounded man sank back much exhausted. He motioned one of the watchmen to bend down his head, and said.—'Stay here and you shall be well paid, or that dear girl may be cheated out of her rights.'

By this time quite a company of half-dressed girls and some fellows had gathered round, whom I had never seen before although I had long resided under the same roof with most of them.

Both watchmen remained, and soon a physician came, and the wounded man was taken from the floor and placed upon

a sofa. I wondered at the strength that supported me on this trying occasion; but I was supported, thanks to an ever watchful and kind Providence.

The physician dressed the wound; but told me it was fatal, and that he might live a day or two, or die before morning.—After his wound was dressed, he seemed to revive somewhat.

The physician left; and I sat beside the sofa. The task of describing my feelings I shall not undertake. O, how I longed to hear him speak and show signs of repentance if he was a sinful man.—Many crowded into the room; but he wished them all to leave, save me and the watchmen who seemed to be rough, honest men. And O, how kindly I now remember them. All left the room but us and Susan Stormwell. One of the watchmen asked her to leave: but she refused. Then he threatened to put her out, and also to have her brought before the court. The last threat had the desired effect, and she reluctantly left.

'O,' groaned the dying man. 'I have abused you; but pardon me. My sins are many, and more than I can bear. How strangely things look to me. You have my pocket-book, I believe.'

'I have,' I tremblingly replied. 'And do with it what you please.'

'It is yours, and contains not only money, but evidences of my property. Do good with it, and pray for my soul. I must soon die. O, my God. How dark the future,' said the dying man.

'Who wounded you?' I anxiously inquired.

'He who told you all, and told the truth,' he replied.

'Then Ellen was your daughter?' I continued.

'Yes, and you were her best friend,' he

replied. 'Keep what ought to have been hers. I did ruin her husband, and how black my crimes now look. O, God, forgive me for not owning her while she lived. But alas, she is dead. The pains of my wound increases; but what are they compared with the stings of a guilty conscience. I am an Englishman; I have brothers and one sister in Europe.'

'Your name?' I anxiously asked.

'That can never pass my lips; for I would not have them know how I died by the hand of an assassin whom I have shamefully wronged,' he replied. 'O, my God. What more can I say? O, yes. One thing. Take up the body of Ellen and remove it to the green fields where she passed her girlhood and bury it amid the scenes she loved so well.'

Those were the last words he uttered, and they seemed to come from the depths of a repentant soul. He attempted to speak again several times; but he was filling up with blood, and died before the morning broke or the storm ceased. He was buried among strangers and in a strange land.

The earthly remains of Ellen were removed as her father directed, and I often visit her grave. Yes, dear reader, I can see it on yonder side-hill from the room in which I am now writing.

My kind uncle and aunt have both gone down to the grave; but not before they witnessed my shame. I live in the same humble dwelling in which Ellen and I passed so many happy days. Here I shall die, and when I am dead, my body must lie beside hers. Such is the provision made in my will. I have worldly wealth, and God helping me, it shall be devoted to relieving the distresses of humanity.

John Armstrong is a wedded man, a good and happy one

Edwin Sumner has become an eminent divine, and occasionally receives through the post office sums of money to be devoted to charitable and religious purposes; but he knows not the hand that sends it, neither does the world. Time may disclose the secret.

There may be some living now who know some of the facts in my history, and if I had given real names instead of fictitious ones, they would remember more distinctly, many of the scenes portrayed in this narrative.

The world will call this a novel, a story of fiction, engendered in some idle brain. But the only fiction is the names. I began with expressing a hope that the story of my life might do good in the world; and my prayer now is, that such may be its effects upon the hearts of all my readers.

THE END

Once I could have exclaimed in the language of Hamlet.

'O, God! O God!

How weary, stale, flat and unprofitable
Seem to me all the uses of the world!
Fie on't! O, fie, 'tis an unweeded garden,

That grows to seed; things rank and gross in nature,
Possess it merely.'

But sweet are the uses of adversity, says the same great man; and may I live to atone for that one sin which so beset me. I say not easily, because there was a long and severe struggle against the power of love.

Be warned, my kind readers of all ages and of both sexes. Beware of those who possess talents; but have no hearts. In the expressive language of the lamented Miss *Jemima Brown*. 'LET THEM TOUCH NOT ONE OF YOUR FINGERS.'

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